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Student Engagement in Online English Language Courses for Vocational Education in Colombia

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine student engagement in online English language courses in a vocational education institution (i.e., National Service of Learning, SENA) in Colombia to understand the extent to which the current curriculum and assessment and instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in learning. In addition, it aimed to identify the factors beyond the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy employed in the institution's online English courses, which might have facilitated or hindered student engagement. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the SENA online English language curriculum and assessment tasks were analyzed. In addition, online surveys were administered to students enrolled in the online English language courses and their instructors. The online survey data were also supplemented with one-on-one, in-depth student and instructor interviews.

The design features of the SENA English language curriculum were found to be limited in terms of the provision of opportunities for students to collaborate and engage in active learning. Student and instructor participants' self-reported data indicated a high level of instructor teaching presence in online English language courses. However, student participants held less favorable perceptions of instructors' use of the following strategies: *Promoting Active Learning* and for strategies of *Collaboration and Interactivity*. The interview data highlighted the need for giving more agency to the instructors even at the stage of course design and for finding effective ways to engage students in collaboration. Instructors may also need continuing professional development in the design and facilitation of online learning activities and authentic English language assessments. Both student and instructor participants reported that the top three contributing factors of student engagement in online English language courses were: students'

self-discipline, students' attitude toward the English language, and students' study habits. As a result of the study, recommendations were proposed for SENA to improve the quality of the English language curriculum and assessment for instructors and students. In sum, the study findings shed light on future directions of the SENA online English language courses and may inform policy makers who are interested in developing or adapting online English language programs for their citizens, especially for those who are in trades.

Keywords: student engagement, vocational education, English language courses, online learning, instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, curriculum and assessment, mixed methods

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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to God. He gave me the strength and opportunity to complete my doctoral studies. To my husband Jorge Afanador, thank you for your companionship in my study trip to Calgary, Canada. I could not have undertaken this journey without your companionship. Finally, mom and siblings, thank you all for your support.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This mixed-methods study sought to investigate how online English language courses promote student engagement as a strategy to overcome high attrition rates in the context of vocational education in Colombia. More specifically, it aimed to understand how the design of the curriculum and assessment, as well as instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contributed to student engagement in an online learning environment. It also identified the factors beyond the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy employed in the online English courses, which facilitated and hindered student engagement in the online learning environment.

Considerable numbers of students worldwide have benefited richly from access to online learning in education and the number continues to grow during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ease of access and lower costs for the education have been particularly attractive, and the quality that comes with traditional face-to-face learning was found to be similar (Dixson, 2010; Tarone, 2015). In the United States, for example, Allen and Seaman (2013) found that 32% of higher education students across 2,820 institutions took at least one online course. These authors reported an increase of online course enrollments in higher education from 1.6 million to 7.1 million between 2002 and 2012. In addition, a survey with 34 high-ranking universities in 13 Latin American countries with the largest population revealed that 35% of the universities have already adopted either online or blended (hybrid) learning models. A majority of these universities have also developed online education strategies, which include changes in their policies for the implementation of online programs and the adoption of a learning management system (LMS) (OECD, 2015). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 680 universities in Latin America have joined Coursera for Campus, an online platform, which enables institutions

and instructors to offer their learners online courses and develop their own curricula. According to Coursera's statistics, 21 million learners have joined the platform, but they required online skills to fully benefit from the online learning environment (Coursera, 2021).

Even before the pandemic, online English language learning has become increasingly important in vocational education untaken by a significant number of Latin American students who are more inclined to pursue their careers in trades (e.g., mechanics, plumbing, electricity, and so forth; OECD, 2015). Many of these online English language students are of lower socioeconomic status and have limited access to a more formal education. Hence, the opportunity for them to learn and master English language through free online courses will enable them to succeed in a competitive globalized economy. According to UNESCO (2004), vocational education is essential if we are to "alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development" (p. 10). Vocational education has played and will continue to play a fundamental role in promoting socio-economic growth and development for trained workers, their families, communities, and society as a whole (Hollander & Mar, 2009), especially in Latin America.

Despite the importance of online learning, the attrition rate in this educational mode is 10-20% higher than the traditional face-to-face delivery mode (Carr, 2000; Laing & Laing, 2015; Levy, 2007). In the case of English language in vocational education in Latin America, reports have shown that there is an increasing attrition rate over the past five years (SENA, 2017). The high attrition rate is reportedly attributed to low levels of student engagement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Student engagement, or "the extent of students' involvement and active participation in learning activities" (Cole & Chan, 1994, p. 259) is fundamental to students' persistence in online courses and their successful learning (Finn &

Zimmer, 2012; Khan et al., 2017; Ryu & Lombardi, 2015). The curriculum and assessment in online English courses can be purposefully planned and designed by course designers and instructors to increase student engagement (Gobert et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2017).

Engaging students, especially those in online vocational education, can be challenging due to the type of students and students' sense of isolation (Meyer, 2014). Vocational education in Colombia aimed at preparing individuals to "carry out trades and occupations required by the productive and social sectors, to the purpose of satisfying the needs of the new talent or the qualification of workers—linked or not to the labor market—in the operational, technical or technological levels. The length of such programs varies from 880 to 3520 hours." (Ministerio Del Trabajo, 2022, p. 1). More specifically, the vocational programs have three phases: (1) Schooling Phase – a student is involved in Global Professional Training activities in classrooms; (2) Productive Phase – the student is required to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills from the schooling phase. The productive phase also involves companies to provide training to the student; and (3) Technological Phase – the student is required to take part in a training program and learns as an apprentice to acquire communicative skills to apply the technical and technological knowledge towards solving real-world problems in their trades and occupations. In each of these phases, a Colombian student's command of English language will add value to his/her vocational training.

In the context of Colombia, students who are enrolled in online English courses may range from adolescents to part-time or full-time working adults to homemakers with family responsibilities. In addition, the isolation online students may experience due to the physical separation from the instructor and peers can lead to their attrition at any time during the course (Hefferman, 2018; Khan et al., 2017). When course designers and instructors are aware of the

negative impacts of these challenges and other hindering factors on students' engagement, they may intentionally design curriculum and assessment, as well as adopt effective pedagogical strategies to promote students' engagement and retention in online language courses (Hew, 2016; Li & Wang, 2012; Yang, 2011).

Design of Curriculum and Assessment in Online English Language Courses

Research has shown that curriculum and assessment design can impact student engagement and learning (Gettinger & Walter, 2012; Meyer, 2014; Rovai, 2002). An online learning environment that can effectively engage students is attributed to careful and thorough curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation (Cuesta, 2010; Wang, 2014). It is also grounded on "sound instructional design principles" (Ally, 2008, p. 6). The "Seven Principles for Good Practice", developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) for face-to-face undergraduate education, has been applied with benefits to online course design (Bigatel et al., 2012). Based on the constructivist paradigm (Vygotsky, 1978), these seven principles promote student engagement, high levels of communication, and student collaboration, all key components of student-centered learning (Beaudoin et al., 2009). According to Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles, students are more engaged when the instruction 1) increases contact between students and faculty; 2) provides opportunities for students to work on cooperation; 3) encourages students to use active learning strategies; 4) provides timely feedback on students' academic progression; 5) requires students to spend quality time on academic or learning tasks; 6) establishes high standards for acceptable academic work; and 7) addresses different learning needs in the teaching process.

Each of the principles is described in detail below:

First, an online course that encourages high levels of student-instructor interaction and provides continuing support to students will decrease students' potential feelings of isolation due to physical separation from the instructor (Bigatel et al., 2012; White, 2003). It sets effective channels of communication with clear guidelines on when and how to get instructor support.

Second, to keep students engaged, online course design capitalizes on cooperative and collaborative learning. Collaboration can be established in course design by including project work, problem-solving activities, and discussion boards where students negotiate meaning and scaffold (facilitate) each other's learning (Murphy, 2004).

Third, active learning activities, which involve hands-on activities and group work, allow students to make sense of their learning experiences by promoting high levels of involvement in the course learning tasks (Hampel & Pleines, 2013; Khan et al., 2017).

Fourth, timely and constructive feedback keeps students engaged in online learning. Feedback from both the instructor and peers is a useful formative assessment strategy because it helps identify learning difficulties and gives students the opportunity to improve the quality of their work (Shepard et al., 2005). It also creates an online learning environment of continuous improvement which encourages learners to keep working to achieve their learning goals.

Fifth, student engagement correlates to the quality of time students spending in their academic duties. Therefore, informing students about the time they are expected to spend on doing their assignments, and supporting them in the development of their management skills will contribute to achieve this principle in online learning environments (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Sixth, a course that engages students needs to be intellectually challenging in terms of the learning activities and assessment tasks (assignments) (Mupinga et al., 2006; Koh & Luke, 2009;

Newman et al., 1996). It encourages them to work to their highest potential, as aptly pointed out by Young (2006), “the best courses are the ones in which instructors demand high-quality work from the students.” Nevertheless, the design of learning activities and assessment tasks have to be realistic in terms of what students can achieve (Hara & Kling, 2000).

Finally, a highly engaging online course includes various pedagogical strategies to accommodate students’ different learning needs and preferences. It is flexible enough to support students working at different rates; it includes course resources, assessment tasks, and feedback in different formats; and it provides pedagogical and technological support to encourage students’ persistence in achieving learning goals (Mupinga et al., 2006).

Design principles for authentic learning have also provided insights to enhance student engagement in online learning environments (Herrington et al., 2007). As most online students are adults, authentic tasks meet their expectations in different ways. First, these tasks have real-world relevance, so students find them to be worthy of doing. The problems embedded in authentic tasks are often ill-defined which allows multiple solutions and which promotes collaboration and reflective work among students (Koh, 2017). In addition, authentic tasks comprise complex activities which keep students digging into them over a sustained period of time. Tasks designed authentically also welcome different perspectives and resources for their understandings which is facilitated by online technological tools. Moreover, authentic tasks are transdisciplinary and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes. These tasks are also seamlessly integrated with assessment and create refined products that are valuable in their own right. Finally, authentic tasks allow competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes.

Instructor Teaching Presence and Pedagogical Strategies

Instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies can contribute to increased student engagement (Dixson, 2010; Gettinger & Walter, 2012). Teaching presence is one component of Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, one of the most popular online teaching and learning models (Meyer, 2014). According to Anderson et al. (2001), teaching presence refers to "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 5). Teaching presence is considered the key role that an instructor plays in an online environment (Shea et al., 2006). It is an important element in teacher professional development programs that seek to effectively implement online learning that engage students (Vaughan, 2004). According to the CoI framework, teaching presence can be established: first, in the design and organization of the course; second, through the facilitation of classroom discourse; and third, by means of direct instruction (Anderson, 2003).

In relation to the first strategy for establishing teaching presence, Anderson (2008) argued that when instructors participate in course design, they can instill their personal teaching style to address student needs and interests. In addition, instructors can establish their presence at this stage by creating meaningful and authentic teaching materials and tasks that mimic real-life problems, and by negotiating course timelines with course designers (Bender, 2011; Mitchell, 2014).

To achieve the second strategy, that is, facilitating the discourse (i.e., helping student's process of reasoning) (Anderson, 2008), instructors need to create a safe and trustful environment that encourages students to engage actively in the course. Facilitating the discourse involves, on the one side, reading and responding to individual students' contributions and

inquiries, and on the other, supporting the development of the expected learning community which will contribute to each student's engagement and learning (Anderson, 2008; Berge, 2011; Shea et al., 2006).

One of the most important components of teaching presence, which relates to facilitating discourse, is student assessment. Online instructors who implement formative assessment in their courses foster student learning and engagement by using different strategies (Shepard, et al., 2005). One of them is providing students with high quality feedback supported with well-designed rubrics (Koh, 2011). Another strategy is promoting students' involvement in their own learning by encouraging self-assessment. Self-assessment promotes students' self-regulated learning and lifelong learning, which help them to succeed beyond the online experience. In addition, instructors need to consider the impact assessment has on students' motivation and confidence in learning so that they know how to provide clear and fair assessments for students to persist on their learning. Finally, teaching should be constantly adjusted based on assessment results or data by the instructor to contribute to students' successful learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Such formative assessment practices are highly important in an online teaching and learning environment (Koh et al., 2022).

Finally, the provision of direct instruction is another strategy for establishing teaching presence in online learning environments (Anderson, 2008). Although effective online learning is student-centered, at some point, students may require the instructor's explicit teaching for a better understanding of course content. The pedagogical strategies chosen and used by the instructor are mainly determined by the level of their knowledge and confidence in the subject matter (Shulman, 1987) and the principles of learning theories that inform their teaching. When instructors feel confident about their knowledge and skills, they can design different learning

activities and assessment tasks where students, in addition to understanding the course content, apply them to solving real-life problems and engage in their learning.

Problem Statement

In view of the importance of preparing its workforce for the competitive marketplace, the *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA, National Service of Learning) was established by the Colombian government in 1957 (SENA, 2018a). SENA has played a pivotal role in promoting vocational students' English language learning through its *English for All Colombians* online program, which was launched in 2008. After encountering high costs in the implementation of commercial programs such as English Discoveries Online, Rosetta Stone, and Tell Me More, SENA decided to design its own program (SENA, 2018b). The program consists of free online English language courses at ten different levels ranging from Beginning to Advanced Level. In essence, the 10-level-online English language courses were designed and delivered to develop students' English language proficiency up to level B1 (Threshold level – independent user) of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The online courses are delivered using the Blackboard as the learning management system (LMS). Each level lasts 60 hours and involves synchronous (concurrently) and asynchronous (not concurrently) activities supported by an instructor. In 2016, 905,284 students took part in SENA's face-to-face and online English courses. Although English is a prerequisite for graduation purposes, the program has experienced a very high attrition rate. For example, the attrition rate in 2016 was about 60% (SENA, 2017).

Attrition is understood as students' lack of persistence in a course or program that impedes them to complete it (Angelino et al., 2009). High attrition rates may denote institutional failure to retain students (Haydarov et al., 2013). However, this phenomenon does not only affect

the institution reputation in terms of the quality of its courses but also in serious waste of resources invested in faculty and learning equipment and material (Willging & Johnson, 2009). Similarly, course attrition impacts the student economically and personally considering the frustration and lack of self-confidence it can produce (Tinto, 2007). For vocational education in developing countries including Colombia, where this study was conducted, the cost of dropping out a program impacts not only students, but also their families and communities. When students do not complete their vocational programs, they have fewer possibilities to enter the labor market and improve their own and their family's life conditions. Some researchers (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Khan et al., 2017; Meyer, 2014) have pointed out that students' attritions are due to their low levels of engagement in an online learning environment. Low student engagement is often associated with feelings of isolation; difficulty to balance study, family, and work responsibilities; and other challenges posed by online course delivery (Hefferman, 2018; Khan et al., 2017; Sun, 2014). Hence, it is of paramount importance to understand how the curriculum and assessment, and instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies may contribute to increase Colombian students' engagement in online English language learning. Empirical findings from this doctoral study can inform the redesign of course content, learning activities, and assessment tasks, as well as the provision of opportunities for instructor professional development. Such efforts may indirectly enable vocational students in the SENA institute to persist in their purpose of making of English language an effective communication tool that supports their access to better job opportunities in Colombia and in other countries of the world (SENA, 2018b).

Purpose of the Study

This mixed-methods study was designed to understand student engagement in the online English language courses offered by the SENA program in Colombia. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate how the existing English language curriculum and assessment, as well as instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in an online learning environment. In addition, the study aimed to identify the factors beyond the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy employed in the online English courses, which could have facilitated and/or hindered student engagement. Following an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2015)**,** document and artifact analysis included SENA's online English language course outlines/syllabi and assessment tasks. Two online surveys were administered to students who were enrolled in SENA's online English language courses and instructors who taught those courses, respectively. The online survey data were complemented by one-on-one, in-depth interviews with a subsample of students and instructors who completed the surveys.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this study is: How do online English language courses in vocational education promote student engagement? Specifically, the following sub-questions were answered: (1) To promote student engagement in learning, what design features of the curriculum and assessment should online English language courses consider; (2) How do instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in online English language courses; and (3) What other factors facilitate or hinder students' engagement in online English language learning?

Frameworks Guiding the Study

This study was guided by the following theoretical frameworks: Seven Principles for Good Practice by Chickering and Gamson (1987), the design principles for authentic learning by Herrington et al.'s (2007), the effective teaching presence guidelines in the COP framework by Garrison et al. (2000), and the formative assessment strategies (Shepard et al., 2005). Each of these are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Significance of the Study

This study is of particular interest in the Colombian context to address online English language courses in vocational education, a sector that has experienced a high student attrition rate. By understanding the design features of the existing English Language curriculum and assessment, an effective course design framework can be proposed to engage students in online English language learning. The English language course content, learning activities, and assessment tasks can also be reviewed and redesigned, thereby improving the quality of online English language courses offered to students. This may enable them to persist in their courses and develop their English language skills that are required for a better access to the competitive labor market. Hopefully, it will have a positive impact on the students' lives, careers, and families, as well as the Colombian society.

A deeper understanding of instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies that affect student engagement, and other factors that facilitate or hinder student engagement in an online learning environment will be key to enhancing the quality of training and professional development for online English language instructors in Colombia. As Koepke and O'Brien (2012) contend: "Instructor training and support is critical to online program success… and implies that training should be focused on instructional design principles" (p. 73). The design

principles for the English curriculum and assessment provide a solid foundation for the design and facilitation of professional development programs that build instructors' capacity to design, select, and use innovative learning activities and assessment tasks to engage students in an online learning environment. In addition, the analysis of factors beyond the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy that contribute to or hinder student engagement in online English language learning provides empirical evidence for SENA in particular and the Colombian government in general to address policies related to these factors in order to reduce the attrition rate of students.

Finally, because Colombia, like other developing countries, is in the process of establishing online learning as an effective strategy to provide access to high quality vocational education, this study can contribute by offering supported guidelines for policy makers to rule on standards for online courses to address the characteristics of those local contexts rather than relying on research done in developed countries (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017). Similarly, as there is little research in online English language courses in vocational education in the context of Latin America, the current study aimed to address this gap (Herrera-Díaz & González-Miy, 2017). This, in turn, will contribute to the literature on online language learning by providing support to course design and English instructors' preparation programs that expect to meet the needs of future online education.

Definition of Key Terms

Many terms were defined to improve the understanding of the research study in this dissertation.

Design of Curriculum and Assessment. The curriculum and assessment in online English courses can be purposefully planned and designed by course designers and instructors to increase student engagement (Gobert et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2017). The analysis of SENA's English language course materials and assessment tasks are informed by the Seven Principles for Good

Practice by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and the design principles for authentic learning by Herrington et al.'s (2007).

English Language Courses. English language courses offered to students who were enrolled in SENA's programs.

Instructors. Educators who were hired by SENA to teach online English language courses to students who pursued vocational education. In an online environment, instructors are responsible for determining pedagogical paradigms, undertaking new roles, and developing specific teaching and assessment strategies to engage students in effective learning (Compton, 2009; Kipp, 2013; White, 2003).

Pedagogical Strategies. Pedagogic strategies refer to a general abstract teaching method. They can influence instructors' teaching and assessment practice. Instructors' pedagogical strategies are the techniques or methods they use to operationalize the learning theory or theories that ground a course design to achieve student learning outcomes. These strategies play a significant role in establishing teaching presence and contribute to student engagement (Dixson, 2010; Gettinger & Walter, 2012).

Student Engagement. Student engagement describes the ways in which students take part in the learning process and the development of their own knowledge. An increase in student engagement is thought to be linked to an increase in student learning. Student engagement is often tied to active learning techniques and student motivation (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015).

Teaching Presence. Teaching presence is defined by Anderson et al. (2001) as "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes." (p. 5). Teaching presence is one component of Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry

framework, the most popular online learning model (Meyer, 2014). As Garrison (2015) states, "Through the interdependent core elements of cognitive, social, and teaching presence, the Community of Inquiry framework described the dynamic context for thinking and learning collaboratively" (p. 9). Teaching presence includes the instructor's facilitating role in the learning process and the course design elements that contribute to achieving expected outcomes.

Vocational Education. Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The goal of this literature review was to provide an understanding of the research topic to justify the study as a contribution to the existing knowledge in the field. To achieve that purpose, an extensive search for journal articles, books, and dissertations containing the study's main topics (e.g., student/learner engagement, online learning, English language learning, curriculum and assessment, instructor/teacher teaching presence, pedagogical strategies, factors affecting student engagement) was carried out on the following databases: Educational Sources, ERIC, PsycInfo, Academic Search Complete, and Taylor & Francis, and Willey. This led to the retrieval of a wide body of literature in the field of student engagement in online learning environments, in general and in English language learning, in particular. The search revealed the multifaceted and often overlapping themes associated with this complex topic. However, only the research literature that was considered pertinent to the study has been included in this review.

Organization of the Related Literature

For the purposes of the review, the related literature was organized into the following areas: student engagement, online language learning, design of curriculum and assessment, influence of instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies on student engagement, other factors influencing student engagement, and research on student engagement in online learning, especially in the context of vocational education.

Student Engagement

Background. Student engagement has been identified as an important construct in the field of education and fundamental for meaningful learning to take place (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Hew, 2016). While analyzing how the construct has been conceptualized depending on how

knowing, learning, and teaching are understood, a significant change is evident from paradigms which focused on teaching and transmission modes of fragmented knowledge and skills to those which favor a student-centered perspective where learning, rather than teaching, is emphasized in a more comprehensive and holistic way.

For example, from the behaviorist learning theory that treats learning as resulting from rewards for appropriate behaviors and punishment for inappropriate ones (Woollard, 2010), changing students' behaviors is the purpose of schooling and it is achieved through stimuli-response. Extrinsic motivation, or the desire to learn something based on tangible rewards that come from outside the student (Lee et al., 2005), is used to achieve the expected curricular objectives, which are evaluated by pre-established standards (Davis et al., 2015; Greeno et al., 1996).

On the contrary, the constructivist theory of learning, which sees students as knowledge builders (Barrett & Long, 2012; Meyer, 2014), highlights the role of the student in making meaning of their experiences rather than acquiring information, as expected by the behaviorist theory of learning. From this paradigm, students' active participation is driven by their intrinsic motivation or their natural interest in learning (Greeno et al., 1996; Lee et al., 2005). Learning involves exploration supported not only from the teacher, but also from textbooks and other resources, and the development of metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 2015; Winne & Azevedo, 2014), which allow learners to be aware of their cognitive processes or how they learn.

Similarly, Piaget's genetic epistemology (Fosnot, 1996; Tsou, 2006) underscores the importance of understanding how learners construct and keep webs of association, as well as their developmental stages of thinking. In that sense, student learning goes beyond acquiring knowledge to becoming engaged in wider understandings through the processes of assimilation

and accommodation. Assimilation deals with an unconscious process in which understanding results from the connection of new experiences with old experiences or schema. Accommodation, on the contrary, is a conscious process resulting from the revisiting of the schema to make meaning of the new experience. From this cognitive perspective of learning, knowledge implies the understanding of concepts and theories and the development of cognitive abilities such as reasoning, planning, and solving problems. Learners will develop abstract mental representations arisen from their schema (Greeno et al., 1996; Nathan & Sawyer, 2014).

From a more social perspective, John Dewey's pragmatism (Hickman et al., 2009) stresses the social context of learning as well as the active role of the student in the learning process. From Dewey's perspective, learners need to engage with their environment for learning to take place. He emphasizes how people learn by doing as well as the role of the teacher as a facilitator in the process (Dewey, 1897). Considering the learners' natural interest in learning, Dewey advocated using more engaging ways for the learners to get involved in the learning of the different subjects (Nathan & Sawyer, 2014).

Similarly, learning theories such as social constructionism, situated cognition, sociocultural theory, cultural-historical theory, activity theory, actor-network theory, distributed cognition, and semiotic pedagogy, which are grounded on Lev Vygotsky's understanding of learning as resulting from both the learner's cognitive processes and the mediating role of the socio-cultural context, mainly related to language (Davis et al., 2015), see knowledge as distributed among people/actors in the learning environment. Learning takes place when students participate actively in the process and when they attune with the constraints and affordances of the learning environment (Greeno et al.,1996). Therefore, the main purpose of teaching is to empower learners to get involved in different actions that will benefit the society (Crick, 2007).

From this perspective, learner or student engagement occurs when the learner or student participates actively in the learning process and this participation is highly valued by him or her (Greeno et al., 1996).

This review of the different paradigms that have influenced how student engagement is conceptualized, shed light on supporting the study of student engagement in online English learning in the context of vocational education in Colombia from a constructivist paradigm.

Unpacking the construct of student engagement. The interest of researchers and educators in finding ways to enhance learning has made student engagement a fundamental topic in educational research for the last four decades (e.g., Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Lee & Shute, 2010; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). While there is a consensus that student engagement is a multidimensional and multifaceted construct and is key for learning (Fredricks et al., 2004), researchers disagree on a common definition and its components (Azevedo, 2015; Hefferman, 2018; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Li & Wang, 2012). In addition, the vast majority of the studies have examined student engagement in the context of face-to-face K-12 school, and higher education contexts (Davis & McPartland, 2012; Gettinger & Walter, 2012; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012; Voelkl, 2012). Research is focused less on online learning environments where student engagement is more challenging (Coates, 2007; Fredrickson, 2015; Khan et al., 2017) and "more critical for success" (Hefferman, 2018, p. 184).

In defining student engagement, it is necessary to separate it from school engagement (Eccles & Wang, 2012; Sinatra et al., 2015; Zyngier, 2008). School engagement involves a student's perspective on the school goals that move her or him to devote effort for learning purposes (Chiu et al., 2012; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Kuh, 2009). When the student has a positive attitude toward their school, the student invests energy to meet

the academic demands, which include higher grades and overall achievement (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The student commits to improving his/her learning strategies and developing self-regulation skills (Bulger et al., 2008; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004). School engagement goes beyond student involvement in academic tasks to the point where the student develops a sense of school belonging and shares the school's values. This in turn enables the student to participate not only in academic activities but also in extracurricular events (Kuh, 2003; Willms et al., 2009). Engagement from this perspective mediates the relationship among learning outcomes, the student, and the learning environment (home, school, community) and makes the learner's context as a determinant of engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Fredricks et al., 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2012)

Student engagement differs from school engagement in its scope. It refers to student actions and efforts "oriented toward learning that is intended by the system's designers" (Gobert et al., 2015, p. 44). Understood this way, student engagement refers to a student's commitment to respond to learning activities and assessment tasks or assignments in a course (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Li & Wang, 2012; Yang, 2011), or "the extent of students' involvement and active participation in learning activities" (Cole & Chan, 1994, p. 259), which is the working definition for this study. Student engagement goes hand in hand with student learning: "Only if students participate in academic activities with both 'hands-on' and 'heads-on' will the time they spend in classroom result in the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012, p. 22). Unlike school engagement, student engagement does not require students to develop a sense of school belonging or even participation in extracurricular activities (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Sinatra et al., 2015). This means that curriculum designers and educators need

to focus on how student engagement can lead to the achievement of expected learning outcomes in a course or subject (Li & Wang, 2012).

In addition to understating the relationship between student engagement and learning success, two more assumptions need to be addressed for clarity purposes and to define pedagogical strategies to enhance student engagement. The first is the difference between student engagement and motivation, and the second is the malleability feature of student engagement (Lawson & Lawson, 2013). Concerning the first assumption, although some people use the term engagement interchangeably with motivation, there are elements that make them different. Reeve (2012) defined student engagement as the actual manifestation of motivation. Motivation is the reason that makes the student act (Assor, 2012). Similarly, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) identified engagement as "the outward manifestation of motivation". Motivation involves psychological processes like "energy, purpose, and durability of human action" (p. 22). The energy, as seen by these authors, is represented in "the effort, exertion, vigor, intensity, vitality, zest, and enthusiasm" (p. 22) that push the student to become interested, focused, and persistent in their learning. Engagement is the noticeable action resulting from that energy.

In relation to the second assumption of student engagement in which it is seen as a malleable process rather than a static one, it has a significant power in the educational context considering that it offers the possibility to take action to improve it for different purposes, including enhancing learning, or supporting student persistence in a course or program. Student engagement is amenable to improve via pedagogy and other interventions (Watson & Watson, 2012), which encourages course designers and educators to put all their effort into visualizing strategic ways to impact student engagement positively. This can be done by matching students'

needs with learning outcomes in a course, promoting students' active participation in the class activities, supporting students' collaboration, and so forth.

As far as types of engagement are concerned, Reschly and Christenson (2012) reported models ranging from two to four types. A basic type incorporates "participatory behavior and some affective component" (p. 11). Another type involves cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement, which comprise academic (time on task, homework) and behavioral engagement (participation, following class rules) (Griffiths et al., 2012; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012).

Finn and Zimmer (2012) highlight academic, social, cognitive, and affective components as the most popular while defining engagement. Academic engagement has to do with actions the learner takes to influence directly the learning process. They include doing classroom tasks and homework. Finn and Zimmer (2012) also pointed out that for learning to take place, a minimum of academic engagement is necessary. Social engagement refers to the extent to which students are able to follow classroom rules. Examples of these rules include: attending classes, being punctual, respecting the teacher and classmates, etc. Cognitive engagement has to do with students' commitment to deep understanding of complex ideas and their ability to advance beyond a basic understanding of topics. It implies questioning, asking for clarification, reviewing material, and critiquing information (Fredericks et al., 2004). Cognitively engaged students develop self-regulation and metacognitive strategies to support their learning (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012; Lam et al., 2012). Finally, affective engagement is evidenced on the students' feelings that make them to get involved in the school activities because they acknowledge the value school has for them (Ainley, 2012; Appleton et al., 2008).

In a more recent study, Hefferman (2018) provided an engagement framework for online learning in higher education, which apart from emotional, social, cognitive, and behavioral

engagement, includes collaborative engagement. Collaborative engagement highlights the role of collaboration and networking to support student learning by considering the impossibility of course participants to meet physically in the same place. A significant contribution of Hefferman's study to the literature on engagement in online environments is the specificity it offers in terms of indicators (criteria) to identify elements of engagement in practice. These indicators can be included when assessing student engagement in online environment as presented below.

Assessment of student engagement. Student self-report surveys, experience sampling, interviews, and observations, are the most commonly used methods of assessing student engagement (Fredericks & McColskey, 2012; Henrie, 2016). Each method offers different possibilities, but also challenges. For example, student self-report is the most popular and practical method for assessing emotional and cognitive engagement considering the difficulty to observe students by other means (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Greene, 2015). The reliability of self-reports is often criticized due to issues related to students' possible dishonesty or social desirability in their responses. Experience sampling, on the contrary, allows students to follow up specific engaging events by means of electronic devices and report them directly in questionnaires (Hektner et al., 2007). Although the information provided by experience sampling is more objective, it requires resources, time, and student commitment.

Interviews offer different possibilities to assess student engagement. By acknowledging students' perspectives on how they engage in specific situations, and how they make meaning in those situations, interviews provide useful research information (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Missett et al., 2010). The limitation of interviews involves researcher bias and skills, which can affect the quality of the data collected. Finally, observations supply valuable data of contextual

factors affecting student engagement and allow researchers to validate data provided by other methods such as surveys and interviews (Bluemink & Järvelä, 2004; Figg & Jamani, 2011). However, observations are time consuming, and the resulting data can be influenced by the observer's subjectivity (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012).

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Kuh, 2003) is developed as a self-reported instrument to measure students' engagement in traditional face-to-face undergraduate programs (Meyer, 2014; Wiebe et al., 2014). Although it has been adapted to assess student engagement in online learning environments with some modifications to the face-to-face terminologies (Dumford & Miller, 2018), it includes different descriptors related to school engagement in traditional undergraduate programs that are of longer term than online language courses or programs. It is also developed for the US and Canadian contexts. Hence, the NSSE may not be suitable for assessing student engagement in short-term online language courses and in other higher education contexts.

Assessing student engagement in online learning environments requires measuring instruments that address the characteristics of these environments (e.g., physical separation of students and instructor). For example, Dixson's (2010) Online Student Engagement Scale (OSE) assesses skills engagement, emotional engagement, and participation engagement in online learning environments. Skill engagement refers to student organization and study skills and student-content interaction. Emotional engagement deals with the extent to which students make course materials appealing and relevant to their life. Participation engagement means student interaction with peers. The OSE instrument was validated in 2015, showing strong validity and reliability (Dixson, 2015). As such, it can be used to support research in online curriculum

design in terms of the evidence of student engagement derived from course design elements and the evidence of effective teaching strategies

A variety of measuring instruments are available to assess student engagement. By acknowledging the possibilities and challenges these instruments offer, researchers are able to make informed decisions. Hence, when the goal is to assess student engagement in online learning environments, decisions should be made by taking into consideration of the characteristics of these environments.

Online Language Learning

Evolution. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is the term used in the field of language learning to refer to learning supported by computers. The internet and most of its developments have made language learning more interactive and revolutionized online language learning since 1993. CALL, with its main focus on learning rather than teaching, is informed by online language learning theory and practice (Han et al., 2011). CALL aims at facilitating language learning by making use of the affordances (i.e., potential utility) of computers to expose learners to language input, to provide learning materials in a variety of formats (e.g., visual, auditory), and to promote interactions. As pointed out by Blake (2011), in its initial stages and in terms of course design, CALL provided language learners mainly with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice in the mechanical form of *'drill-and-kill'* (p. 21) exercises which did not promote linguistic interaction.

On a second stage, artificial intelligence studies influenced CALL by providing software for a more individualized instruction and feedback. Working on sentence construction, reading comprehension, and speaking practice with voice recognition tools characterized CALL designs

in this stage. CALL software allowed learners to monitor their mistakes as a strategy to promote learning.

Blake (2011) characterized the last stage of CALL as social since it was influenced by computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC supports asynchronous communication (not concurrent communication) with tools, such as wikis, blogs, and email, and synchronous communication (concurrent communication) through instant messaging and skype. In relation to student engagement, the evolution of CALL and the different means chosen for exposing the students to the target language, for example, blogs, skype, etc., may determine the time students spend working on those tools, which in turn may enhance language learning. However, Thomas, et al. (2013) highlighted the need for CALL to inform the use of technology for language learning on pedagogical principles so as to gain a better understanding of how students' learning is supported by technology.

Learning theories. Considering learning theories that have influenced second language acquisition (SLA) and consequently CALL and online language learning, Lamy and Hampel (2007) underlined the contributions of cognitive and socio-cultural theories. Drawing on Psychology and Linguistics, the cognitive SLA theory sees language learning as resulting from the processing of input and output; "input being the language the learner is exposed to and output the language s/he produces" (p. 20). From this theory, language learning is seen as "a process that occurs in isolation in the mind of the individual" (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 70). Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis is one of the most popular theories used to understand SLA from the cognitive perspective. For Krashen, as cited in Lamy and Hampel (2007), comprehensive input or "the input that is just a little beyond the learner's competence but is nevertheless understood" (p. 21) is a key factor in SLA. Therefore, second language learning environments need to

provide comprehensive input "through meaningful and communicative activities" (p. 21). Lamy and Hampel (2007) found Krashen's lack of attention given to output and interaction as one of the limitations of his theory.

In terms of interaction and output as part of SLA, Lamy and Hampel (2007) cited Gass et al.'s (1998) ideas on the importance of interaction with peers for meaning making. "The effects of language modifications, elaborations, confirmation, and comprehension checks, clarification requests and recasts – is to increase input comprehensibility" (p. 21), which guides the learner to notice breakouts in communication as part of the learning process. Similarly, Swain's (1985) perspective on comprehensive output for SLA highlighted the role of noticing in learning. For Swain, by monitoring comprehensive output, students are able to see how they are using their language and correct it to produce an appropriate output. This awareness process supports SLA process. Assessment tasks and course materials, including those used to enhance input processing, are designed for online language programs supported by the cognitivist perspective (Petersen, 2014).

The second SLA theory described by Lamy and Hampel (2007) is associated with sociocultural theory. Supplementing the cognitive perspective of learning, in the socio-cultural theory, language learning results in social interaction (Ellis, 2000). According to Lamy and Hampel (2007), sociocultural theory bridges learning as a psychological process with learning as situated in the context: "for developmental processes to occur in learner's minds, social interaction is understood to be necessary" (p. 24). In other words, people are biologically equipped to learn a language, but it is not enough. They also need to interact with others in order to make meaning (Thomas et al., 2013). This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory of learning.

Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) ideas on the social nature of learning, interaction is key for language learning (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). As stated by Thomas et al. (2013), from the sociocultural perspective, language learning is seen as "a process that occurs in the social realm first and the meaning that is made in the social realm is then internalized" (p. 70). For the internalization of language, Vygotsky's (1978) conception of the zone of proximal development (i.e., area in learning process supported by a more knowledgeable one) stresses the importance of scaffolding in the learning process. Scaffolding happens, for example, when interaction among the teacher and learners allows those more capable learners or the teacher to support less capable ones to solve problems in collaboration (Reiser & Tabak, 2014). Lamy and Hampel (2007) also argued that learners self mediate by means of their private speech, and by artifact mediation including language, activities, and technological tools.

According to Thomas et al. (2013), seeing cultural artifacts as contributing to language learning opens the possibilities on how computers can influence language learning by facilitating the process and enriching the learning environments. Hence, online language learning environments driven by socio-cultural theory should create learning environments for learners to co-construct knowledge through interaction, not only among learners and the teacher, but also with all the different tools and artifacts provided (Petersen, 2014).

Since the purpose of this study is to understand student engagement in the context of online language learning, my review of the evolution of online language learning based on the delivery methods used, combined with the identification of the main features of the SLA theories, which have informed the design of most of the contemporary online language programs, was twofold.

First, to highlight the potential impact computer-mediated communication may have on student engagement so that course designers and instructors in online English language learning foresee how to deal with situations that can limit students' learning and engagement. For example, whether students are able to log in and use the learning management system (LMS), or different software supporting the course, or the comfort level they experience using different types of social networking tools will influence the time and energy students are willing to invest in the online language course or program.

Second, to identify how the SLA theory envisioned in a language course design can provide certain types of language input, tasks, and assessment, that will influence student behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. In addition, the chosen SLA theory will determine the type of interaction that takes place in the course. For example, more individual work will respond to SLA cognitive theory, whereas a sociocultural theory will require high levels of interaction with the instructor, peers, and course resources and all these factors again contribute to student engagement.

The online language instructor. Instructors' impact on student learning and engagement in both face-to-face and online environments is undebatable. Considering the characteristics of online language learning, instructors have been challenged to change their teaching paradigms, undertake new roles, and develop specific skills to engage students and promote learning (Compton, 2009; Kipp, 2013; White, 2003).

In terms of teaching paradigms, current learner-centered approaches, which make students active participants in the learning process, require that instructors give students more control of their learning experiences (White, 2003). In most online learning environments, students determine when, where, and how they interact with the course content, their peers, and

even the instructor (Sun et al., 2013). This change in control, not only influences instructors' decisions on time, space, instructional strategies, and assessment methods, but also how they engage students using different communication tools that an online learning environment can afford (Easton, 2003).

In addition, teaching languages in an online learning environment requires instructors to understand the differences between online and face-to-face teaching, as well as the differences between language and other subjects. Borg (2006) stated that the characteristics of foreign language (FL) teaching is different from the teaching of other subjects due to the following five factors. First, the nature of language teaching itself. While teaching a language, both the object of study and the teaching means are the same. As such, it has implications on student engagement since students may feel frustrated when they do not understand what the instructor says. It can cause not only communication breakouts, but also difficulty for students to advance in their content knowledge. Second, interaction is fundamental for language learning. For effective language learning to take place, both pair and group work are needed. Third, for language instructors to keep their language proficiency, they need to get involved in communication rather than relying on textbooks to learn facts and acquire procedural knowledge. Fourth, language instructors may face isolation compared to instructors in other subjects, which may have more colleagues. This is often due to the shortage of language instructors in some institutions. Fifth, language instructors require external support for learning their subject. They need to find room for exposure to the language in environments different from the school.

In relation to the role of the online instructor, researchers (e.g., Comas-Quinn, 2011; Kipp, 2013) agree that it goes beyond being a facilitator of student learning. Instructors are also seen as having a critical role for students to succeed in their learning purposes (Kipp, 2013). This

means that instructors are “the embodiment of the course and the institution, one of the key components which can make or break their whole learning experience” (Comas-Quinn, 2011, p. 219). From this perspective, instructor engagement with the course will in turn influence student engagement.

Since the role of instructors comprises different functions, for example, “teacher, administrator, trouble shooter, and co-learner” accompanied with a variety of teaching styles (i.e., affective, cognitive), instructors need to develop new teaching skills to help students succeed in their online learning experience (Hauck & Stickler, 2006, p. 465). These skills involve more than technical knowledge. They require that instructors use different strategies to help students identify and benefit from the affordances of the online environment (Bennett & Marsh, 2002), but also to encourage interaction and socialization for an active participation of the students in the learning process (Hampel & Stickler, 2005).

Different models have focused on identifying online language instructors’ skills and competences (Compton, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Sun, 2011). What these models share is the integration of pedagogical and technical elements to support online teaching. For example, Hampel and Stickler’s (2005) skill pyramid framework, which was criticized for being “vague and general” (Sun, 2011, p. 429), places in its first three lower levels basic technical competences to deal with information and communication technologies, hardware and software (level 1, basic ICT competence; level 2, specific technical competence for the software; level 3, dealing with constraints and possibilities of the medium). Level 4 (online socialization) and Level 5 (facilitating communicative competence) address specific online language teaching competences. Levels 6 (creativity and choice) and 7 (own style) can be open to the teaching of any subject online. Compton (2009) provided two additional criticisms to Hampel and Stickler’s

(2005) model. First, the model intends to address specific competences for online language instructors. However, only two of the competences are specific for language teaching (levels 4 and 5), the others apply to the teaching of any subjects online. Second, competences develop in a rigid sequential order. In real life, they need to be developed concurrently in order to support each other.

By acknowledging the complexity to determine instructors' language teaching skills, Compton's (2009) proposed a more comprehensive model that supplements technological and pedagogical competences with assessment/evaluation competences. For each component, she specified skills for novice, proficient, and expert teachers or instructors. In the pedagogical component, a novice instructor is deemed to be familiar with strategies for online community building while the expert instructor is more creative in facilitating online socialization and community building. In terms of technological competences, a novice instructor is expected to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different types of software while an expert instructor will know about programming languages. In the assessment/evaluation competences, instructors' skills move from basic knowledge of summative evaluation to the design of more integrated formative assessment to facilitate students' learning in an online language learning environment. Compton's (2009) model was also criticized due to the lack of practical guidelines for its implementation. As Sun (2011) pointed out, "A frustrated overnight-classroom-turned-online-teacher could find very few practical guidelines or immediate help in the proposal. The answers as to what to do and how to do it, or *what not to do* are still anyone's guess" (p. 431). In addition, Sun (2011) advocated for new pedagogical approaches that correspond to the specific profiles of online language learning students in each context. Whether students want to work on their own, or within small groups, the instructor needs to adapt to those new teaching realities.

Further, changes in the online students' behaviors may influence how online learning communities are configured. Hence, online instructors need to personalize their contact with students.

Design of Curriculum and Assessment

Curriculum and assessment design can impact student engagement and learning (Gettinger & Walter, 2012; Meyer, 2014, Rovai, 2002). An online learning environment that engages students results from careful and thorough curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation, all of which articulate the curriculum components: outcomes, content, methodology, and assessment (Cuesta, 2014; Wang, 2014). An online learning environment will support student engagement and learning because it is based on "sound instructional design principles" (Ally, 2008, p. 6). In addition, student engagement is promoted when the course design provides students with high levels of authenticity, interactivity, and collaboration in the learning activities and assessments (Ally, 2008; Herrington & Herrington, 2006; Ozverir, Herrington, & Osam, 2016).

In terms of instructional design principles, the "Seven Principles for Good Practice," which Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed for face-to-face undergraduate education, has been applied with benefit to online course design (Bigatel et al., 2012). Based on the constructivist paradigm, these seven principles promote student engagement, high levels of communication, and student collaboration, which are the three key components of student-centered learning (Beaudoin et al., 2009). According to Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles, students are more engaged when the instruction 1) increases contact between students and faculty; 2) provides opportunities for students to engage in cooperative and collaborative work; 3) encourages students to use active learning strategies; 4) provides timely feedback on

students' academic progression; 5) requires students to spend quality time on academic or learning tasks; 6) establishes high standards for acceptable academic work; and 7) addresses different learning needs in the teaching process.

In relation to the first principle that highlights the interaction between students and instructors, Chickering and Gamson (1987) emphasized the supporting role instructors can play when students find difficulties in learning. In addition, this interaction plays a significant role in an online learning environment to avoid students' feelings of isolation due to the physical separation from their instructor (Bigatel et al., 2012; White, 2003). To design a course that addresses this principle, clear guidelines need to be established on different activities—announcements, news, emails, discussion boards, and synchronous sessions—that the course can offer to students so they can be in touch with the instructor. Several studies on online learning support this principle (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013; Molinillo et al., 2018; Sher, 2009). In online language learning, Fredrickson (2015) found that the instructor's interaction and support benefited an online collaborative writing project. However, the author found that the effectiveness of group projects depended on the quality of their design by pointing out that "any design flaw in the group project will be accentuated when implemented at a distance" (p. 138).

The second principle of Chickering and Gamson (1987) capitalizes on cooperative and collaborative work to enhance engagement and learning. According to them, students learn more deeply when they share their perspectives with peers and when different opinions are listened to and discussed. Collaboration supports knowledge construction and deeper critical thinking (Robinson et al., 2017). Collaboration can also intentionally be established in course design by including project work, problem-solving activities, and discussion boards in which students can negotiate meaning and provide feedback each other's work (Murphy, 2004). In language

learning, collaboration provides the students with the possibility of using the language with communicative purposes to develop their language skills (Hampel, 2009). Promoting collaborative work in online learning environments can be challenging due to the physical distance among participants and considering that some students are more willing to work independently rather than interacting and collaborating with peers, which can also be considered as a way of student engagement (Hampel, 2009).

In their third principle, Chickering and Gamson (1987) identify the role of active learning (hands-on activities, group work), rather than passive learning (lecturing, textbook reading), to encourage student engagement. This principle is consistent with constructivism where students make meaning of their learning experiences when they get actively involved in learning activities and assessment tasks (Fredrickson, 2015; Hampel, 2009; Khan et al., 2017). For an effective implementation of active learning, instructional activities that promote student engagement are required (Molinillo et al., 2018). Therefore, and in agreement with the previous principle, more collaborative, cooperative, and problem-based learning should be included in online course design to achieve this purpose (Prince, 2004). However, considering the variety of students' learning preferences in online courses, how active learning is implemented needs special attention since there is also empirical evidence that indicates that active learning activities do not increase students' levels of engagement, but rather contribute to develop students' social presence and help students to avoid feelings of isolation in their learning (Dixson, 2010).

Providing prompt feedback to students is the following Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principle to keep students engaged in their learning. As a continuous assessment strategy, timely formative feedback allows teachers and students to identify and intervene students' difficulties in their learning and at the same time create an environment of continuous improvement.

Accordingly, in her study, intended to explore the role of interaction and engagement in online environments, Hampel (2009) found that student participation in the online course was increased by connecting course activities with assessment and providing enough instructor input and feedback. Guo et al. (2014) also stressed the role of formative assessment through use of an e-portfolio which allows the instructor to provide ongoing feedback to suit student needs and engage students in computer-mediated Chinese learning. In an online language learning environment, as White (2003) argued, "Feedback plays a critical role for distance language learners, not only as a response to their performance, but also as a means of providing support, encouragement and motivation to continue" (p. 187).

Student engagement correlates to the quality of time students spend in their academic duties. In this sixth principle, Chickering and Gamson (1987) encourage instructors to inform students about the time they are expected to spend on doing their assignments or assessment tasks. In addition, they highlight the need to support students in the development of their time management skills. According to Hampel and Pleines (2013), "[The] time factor plays a large role as adult distance learners in particular have to deal with competing demands of working, study, and family commitments" (p. 360). Hence, in their study, a perception of the course being overloaded was cited as the most important barrier to engaging students in online activities and tasks.

In addressing the sixth principle, Chickering and Gamson (1987) underscore the importance of setting and informing students about the course or program high expectations. Higher expectations require more effort and keep student persisting in their achievement, so a course that promotes student engagement needs to be intellectually challenging (Mupinga et al., 2006) and to encourage students to work at their highest potential as "the best courses are the

ones in which instructors demand high-quality work from the students" (Young, 2006, p. 74), but also those who are realistic about what students are able to achieve (Hara & Kling, 2000). Therefore, the provision of authentic language assessment tasks to students would help enhance their engagement (Koh et al., 2018). Online students expect their courses to be intellectually challenging (Scager et al., 2017). In addition, Young (2006) highlights the importance of keeping students effectively informed on course expectations and avoid overwhelming them with a high number of email messages.

Finally, Chickering and Gamson (1987) emphasize the need for instructors to include a variety of pedagogical strategies that can accommodate to the different learning students' needs and preferences. These strategies need to be flexible so that students who require more support and practice can have it. Assessment and feedback can also be provided in different formats (e.g., review quizzes, short projects), tools (e.g., emails, discussion boards), and at different times. Course resources should also be chosen with a variety of students' learning preferences in mind (Mupinga et al., 2006). This suggests that course designers need to identify student needs in terms of pedagogical and technological support and make decisions on how to address them effectively to promote student engagement and learning.

Herrington et al.'s (2007) design principles for authentic learning have the potential to create effective online environments to promote students' engagement in learning English as a second or foreign language. The principles state that authentic tasks (a) have real world-relevance; (b) the problems embedded in the tasks are messy and ill-defined (Koh, 2017; Wiggins, 1989); c) comprise complex activities to be investigated over a sustained period of time; (d) provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives using a variety of resources; (e) provide the opportunity to collaborate; (f) provide the

opportunity to reflect; (g) can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes; (h) are seamlessly integrated with assessment; (i) create polished products that are valuable in their own right; and (j) allow competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes. Most of these principles align with the design principles of authentic assessment recommended by Newman et al. (1996), Wiggins (1989), and Koh (2017). In their design-based research study intended for use in an authentic e-learning environment in an English language course at a university preparatory school, Ozverir et al. (2016) found that an online learning environment, including authentic tasks, engages language learners meaningfully and facilitates learning. They highlighted the affordances of emerging technologies to provide "realistic contexts for language learning" (p. 485). An important contribution of the study was the addition of two principles addressing the characteristics of language learning environments: authentic activities provide motivational factors and are conductive to both learning and communicating. In addition, students valued an environment that provided for using English in a contextualized way, working with real life problems, discussion of different solutions for those problems which favors language skill development, self-reflection of the learning tool, and using the language for real communicative purposes. The results of the study are limited considering the interviews carried out as part of the research process took place while the students were still engaged with the activities. This engagement could have influenced positively the participants' opinions toward the authentic learning environment (i.e., the novelty effect). Furthermore, the framework resulting from the study should be used in a different context by acknowledging the specific features each context affords.

Another element is to understand how course curriculum and assessment impact student engagement in online learning. This consists of identifying the learning theory that course

designers adopt to inform their decisions in strategies that keep students engaged, facilitate learning, promote and encourage student interaction, support feedback, and so forth (Ally, 2008). There is no unique learning theory that supports online learning course design. Instead, the combination of different approaches and learning theories in online course design has positively impacted student engagement (Ally, 2008; Andrade, 2014; Khan et al., 2017; Wang, 2014). This integration makes possible meeting the learning needs of diverse students who enrol in online courses and the configuration of a more effective learning environment that capitalizes on the key features those approaches and theories provide to student engagement and learning. For example, Andrade (2017) combined principles from distance learning theory, learning theory in general, and language acquisition theory in the design of online English language courses in the United States to assist students in developing English language proficiency so they could access higher education or enter the labor market. His purpose went beyond developing students' language skills. He also intended to capitalize on students' autonomy to respond to the demands of a collaborative learning environment.

Andrade (2017) integrated distance learning theories that address the concepts of control and collaborative control (Anderson & Garrison, 1998; White, 2003) with the purpose of encouraging interaction between instructor and students, among students themselves, and between student and course material. Andrade also wanted to provide students with the necessary skills to act autonomously so that they would be able to make decisions on their learning process. In addition, principles of Moore's (1993) transactional distance theory were integrated. Moore's theory combines dialogue (e.g., by means of email, forums, and announcements), structure (e.g., assignment, due dates, and instructions), and autonomy (self-direction) to support the way students surf the online learning environment.

In terms of learning theory, Andrade (2017) integrated elements of the constructionist approach (Garrison, 2009) which highlights the role of the instructor for encouraging interaction among students. She also integrated connectivism (Siemens, 2005), which focuses on student networking, and self-regulated learning with its dimensions of motive, method, time, physical and social environments, and performance (Andrade, 2014; Zimmerman, 1994) to support student effectiveness in learning.

Finally, Andrade (2017) incorporated into her course design language acquisition theory, mainly the principles of Nation's (2001) four-strand framework to language learning that involves meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, deliberate language study, and fluency development. Andrade's case examples hold promise for understanding how the design was operationalized to promote interaction and development of student autonomy and self-regulation, all to support student English language proficiency. However, the transferability of the results may be determined by the contexts where they are implemented.

A similar example that combines different theories is Wang's (2015) study which examined the integration of task engagement in the design of an online foreign language and culture course. This task engagement is understood as "involvement" (p. 23) along the learning process, and it explains how students learn and why they want to learn. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) Flow Theory is part of task engagement theory that posits that when students are deeply engaged, they have clear purposes that inform the task and they focus on their learning without worrying about the time spent or drawbacks that arise. Lutz et al. (2006) identified task engagement as involving different dimensions (affective, behavioral, cognitive, social). Therefore, when students are engaged in a learning task, in their affective dimension, they express their happiness to learn. In their behavioral dimension, they participate actively in the

learning task. In the cognitive, they display more use of learning strategies. And at the social level, they share their achievements and connect with other students. Wang (2015) proposed a framework for online language learning design based on instructional design models, as well as a system approach to learning design and language learning theory. She took into consideration the impact of collaboration on the online environment and specifically on using the language communicatively. Wang's design considered principles of task engagement theory which included the importance of addressing the student learning needs, matching student skills with the level of difficulties of tasks, helping students establish learning goals, and providing them with the necessary guidance to complete their tasks. Her framework is still in the process of refinement, and this limits the possibility of it being considered as a well-defined framework for the design of courses promoting student engagement.

Teaching Presence, Pedagogical Strategies, and Student Engagement

Instructors' pedagogical strategies denote the techniques or methods they use to operationalize the learning theory or theories that inform a course design to achieve student learning outcomes. These strategies play a significant role in establishing teaching presence and contribute to student engagement (Dixson, 2010; Gettinger & Walter, 2012). Teaching presence is one component of Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, the most popular online learning model (Meyer, 2014). As Garrison (2015) states, "Through the interdependent core elements of cognitive, social, and teaching presence, the Community of Inquiry framework described the dynamic context for thinking and learning collaboratively" (p. 9). Teaching presence includes the instructor's facilitating role in the learning process and the course design elements that contribute to achieving expected outcomes. Social presence involves

interaction among learners, instructor, and course content, whereas cognitive presence addresses the different stages learners need to follow to solve problems (Garrison, 2015).

Teaching presence is considered the core role that the online instructor plays (Shea et al., 2006). Accordingly, it is an unavoidable topic in teacher professional development programs that seek to effectively implement online learning (Vaughan, 2004). Based on the CoI framework, teaching presence can be established, first, in the design and organization of the course; second, through the facilitation discourse, and third, by means of direct instruction (Anderson, 2003). In relation to the first strategy of establishing teaching presence, Anderson (2008) argued that when instructors take part in course design, they can instill their personal teaching style to address student needs and interests. According to Anderson (2008), "Techniques, such as illustration of content issues with personal reflections, anecdotes, and discussions of the teacher's own struggles and successes as they have gained mastery of the content, have been inspirational and motivating to students" (p. 347). In addition, instructors can establish their presence at this stage of the process by creating teaching materials and negotiating course timelines with course designers (Bender, 2011; Mitchell, 2014).

The second strategy to establish teaching presence in an online course is directly related to the way instructors facilitate the discourse and help the student's process of reasoning. This involves, on the one side, reading and responding to student contributions and inquiries, and on the other, supporting the development of the expected learning community which will contribute to students' engagement and learning (Berge, 2011; Garrison, 2008; Shea et al., 2006). To achieve these purposes, instructors need to create a safe and trustful environment that encourages the students to engage the course. Strategies such as asking students to post their introductions and using icebreakers contribute effectively to this purpose (Mitchell, 2014). In the same way,

activities that consider students' previous knowledge and make them active participants in the process (e.g., projects, simulations, role play, problem-solving) should also be included (Berge, 2011).

One of the most important components of teaching presence, which relates to facilitating discourse, is student assessment. The learning activities and assessment tasks in a course should be supported with the "method of assessing students' participation that reflects the time and effort required to engage in critical discourse" (Rourke & Kanuka, 2007, p. 105). Online instructors need to be capable of implementing formative assessment in their courses to foster student learning and engagement by using different strategies (Shepard et al., 2005).

First, instructors need to provide students with valuable feedback supported with well-designed rubrics. As Anderson (2008) claimed, "Effective teaching presence demands explicit and detailed discussion of the criteria by which student learning will be assessed" (p. 352). In addition to feedback, instructors need to promote high levels of student involvement in their own learning by encouraging self-assessment. Self-assessment promotes students' self-regulated learning and long-life learning which help student succeed beyond the online experience. Another aspect instructors need to consider in terms of formative assessment is the impact assessment has on students' motivation, confidence, and learning which demands that instructors provide clear and fair assessment for students to persist on their learning. Finally, teaching should be constantly adjusted based on assessment results so that it contributes to successful learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002).

Similarly, research in online learning has evidenced that assessment contributes to student engagement when it is detailed, close to the assessment event (as soon as possible as the students complete their course assignments), honest, and accompanied with indications on how

the task can be improved (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard, 2000). Instructors also need to bear in mind that most online students are willing to participate in activities that are assessed rather than those supplementary activities provided for additional practice (Anderson, 2008).

Finally, the provision of direct instruction is another strategy for establishing teaching presence in online learning environments. Anderson (2008) argued, "The online teacher must be able to set and communicate the intellectual climate of the course, and model the qualities of a scholar, including sensitivity, integrity, and commitment to the unrelenting pursuit of truth" (p. 357). To achieve this purpose, the strategies instructors use for direct teaching are mainly determined by the level of their knowledge and confidence in the subject matter and the principles of learning theory that inform their teaching. When instructors feel confident about their knowledge and skills, they can design different activities where students, in addition to understanding the course content, apply them to solving real-life problems. When learning theory guides instructors' decisions on the type of activities to use for direct instruction, different possibilities arise. For example, from a constructivist perspective where the instructor's role is that of a facilitator who scaffolds student learning, the instructor can become the more knowledgeable one who guides students to reach the expected learning outcomes.

In addition to analyzing the instructor's teaching presence for understanding how their pedagogical strategies impact student engagement, research on teachers' best practices (Corry et al., 2014), although addressing K to 12 schooling levels, adds different strategies that contribute to this purpose in other teaching contexts. Four best practices were found impacting online learning positively: teacher flexibility, clear communication, relationship building, and personalized learning.

First, when instructors are flexible, they can deal with the different rates by which students learn and adapt their pedagogical strategies to help all learners to succeed in the process (Berge, 2011). Second, students value an online environment in which clear, transparent, and open communication generates a trusting learning environment. Different strategies can be used to achieve clear communication. These include videos in which instructors provide guidelines and criteria for assignments, assessment rubrics, student work exemplars, etc. Third, by building supportive relationships between instructors and students, instructors can use a variety of pedagogical strategies and activities for making the learning experience more satisfying for all. For example, instructors can share their life experiences and share additional resources to deepen the understanding of a common, interesting topic (Mitchell, 2014). Building supportive relationships among students develops students' sense of belonging to the course. It can be facilitated by team projects, discussion boards with social purposes, students moderating discussions, and using social networks for cooperative work (Black et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2014). Finally, personalized learning as one of the best practices of online learning, can be addressed from the beginning of the process in the course planning and design stage (Corry et al., 2014). Instructors achieve to personalize learning by addressing each student in a particular way (by first names), rephrasing instructions so that students can understand them easily, and following up how individual students deal with course content (Bender, 2011; Black et al., 2009).

Other Factors Influencing Student Engagement

In addition to curriculum and assessment, design and instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, other factors may influence student engagement in an online learning environment. For instance, students' contextual factors need to be considered when analyzing their engagement in learning so that "they could help build a more level playing field for all

instructors and raise the over-all quality of the online educational experience they provide" (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005, p. 124). Technological characteristics including software platforms, functionality, quality and reliability, and media bandwidth may foster or hinder student engagement in an online course. Blackboard and WebCT are the most popular online platforms. Their purpose is to centralize course contents and resources for instructor and students' access. How engaging those platforms result for students depends on how students perceive them supporting their learning experience, whether they are user-friendly, easy to use, intuitive, and so forth. Their functionality to provide content, collaboration, and assessment tools is also a determinant of student perceptions of learning management systems (Xia et al., 2013).

In addition, course characteristics need to be considered, for example, class size, students' educational level (vocational, undergraduate, graduate), participant dispersion (geographic location), course format (online, blended), and discipline-specific characteristics. Class size may impact the time instructors spend supporting students and the teaching strategies to choose (Nagel & Kotzé, 2010). The larger the group, fewer the possibilities for more personalized support. Different studies have analyzed the effect of class size on student learning and have found it negatively associated with student learning (Arbaugh & Duray, 2002). Groups between 25 to 30 students per instructor have been found an optimal group size (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005). In the context of developing countries, where online learning has been adopted to provide access to a higher number of students at lower cost, large class size is the constant. However, empirical studies addressing this issue in relation to student engagement were not found.

In addition to class size, student educational level can make the difference in terms of student engagement in online learning. Undergraduate students are more willing to participate in

online courses due to their familiarity and skills with different technological tools used in these environments (Wernet et al., 2000). Whereas students in vocational institutions, who are usually older than undergraduate students, may lack some technological skills, which in turn, can impact the online learning experience negatively by requiring longer time to work on course assignments or assessment tasks. In terms of student geographical location in online courses, studies have not found it impacting student's online learning. However, more studies are needed to identify the impact of students' and instructors' cultural differences on the online learning experiences (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fitch, 2005).

Finally, institutional characteristics such as technological and administrative support, and policy issues may impact student engagement in online-delivery courses. Institutions which offer online learning requires the establishment of strategies to support both students and instructors with technical support considering the characteristics of the technological infrastructure required for effective implementation of this type of learning, which may fail and become outdated easily. Furthermore, online learning requires that institutions provide a more flexible administrative support due to the characteristics of online learners who may not adjust their schedules to match the administrative structures found in on-campus environments. Institutions are also expected to establish instructors' professional development strategies that keep them updated on the best pedagogical strategies to support online students' learning and engagement and persistence in their learning process (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005).

Students' personal characteristics may also influence student engagement in online learning environments. These characteristics are more challenging to identify in online learning due to the impossibility to observe them directly as happens in face-to-face environments (Wang & Newlin, 2000). Schrum and Hong (2002) identified access to tools, technology experience,

learning preferences, study habits and skills, goals and purposes, and lifestyle factors as influencing students' online learning experiences. Identifying these factors at the outset of the online course allows instructors to address them promptly and directly to support students who may disengage or decide to dropout.

Students' personal factors such as gender, age, motivation, computer confidence, and locus of control (people's perception of their control of events) have been found impacting students' engagement and learning in online environments (Arbaugh, 2000; Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hilts & Shea, 2005; Osborn, 2001). In terms of gender, adult female students find online environments favoring their learning and outperformed adult male students (Price, 2006). This may be due to female students' higher interest in keeping continuous communication with instructors compared to their male counterparts. In terms of student age, older students (36-46) are more satisfied with the online learning delivery compared to students who are under the age of 25. Motivation also matters. Students with extrinsic motivation, such as those taking an online course because it was the only option available, reported lower levels of engagement and learning. Whereas those students with intrinsic motivation, who valued the flexibility of these environments, had a better learning experience.

In relation to students' psychological factors influencing their online learning, some studies analyzed the impact of personality type and cognitive style on students' learning (Hiltz & Shea, 2005). Self-disciplined students are more effective in online learning (Wang et al., 2001). A student's self-efficacy or personal belief about their own ability to accomplish what is expected (Bandura, 1997), was also found to be supporting online learning mainly when it was used to understand course topics and to deal with technological issues (Osborn, 2001). In relation to cognitive styles or ways in which students process information, independent students who do

not require too much support from their instructors, were found to achieve higher grades in online courses than dependent students who usually rely on instructor's support (Diaz, 2000).

While measuring learning components such as students' attitude, time management, concentration, ways of selecting main ideas, and study aids, Loomis (2000) identified that attitudes related directly to course persistence or lack of. Management skills and using appropriate study aides were positively correlated to students' achievement. The flexibility of online courses was found to be counterproductive for procrastinators. All in all, what the literature shows is the need for more empirical studies that examine the impacts of different factors on online student engagement and learning (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005; Hiltz & Shea, 2005). However, the existing information on these factors, combined with supported research on the role curriculum and assessment design, and instructors' pedagogical strategies play in promoting students' engagement in an online learning environment, provide solid foundation for the design of online instructor professional development programs that develop the required competences for instructors to face the challenges and complexities of successful online teaching in general and particularly on online English language teaching

Research on Student Engagement in Online Learning

Research on student engagement is seen as fundamental for policy making and teaching practice. Students are expected not only to graduate from high school but to continue their technical, technological, and professional careers to contribute to the human capital required by the global economy (Lawson & Lawson, 2013). Student engagement research is even more needed "for students attending schools located in segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods and isolated rural communities" where "engagement research, policy, and practice must become more nuanced and less formulaic "(p. 432). Different trends have characterized research on

student engagement. Henrie's (2016) review on student engagement in technology-mediated environments, which include online learning, evidenced "a lack of cohesion around definitions, models, and operationalization of student engagement" as the main challenge on research on student engagement in these environments. This challenge is attributed to the multifaceted and multidimensional features of student engagement which are still in the process of conceptualization (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Most studies operationalized engagement based on the behavioral perspective and were measured considering the number of assignments completed, discussion board posts, and frequency of logins to the online platform. Cognitive engagement, which involves students' beliefs, cognitive strategies use, and planning strategies, which are difficult to observe, were analyzed by means of self-report instruments. Self-report surveys were also used to gather data related to emotional engagement (Young & Bruce, 2011). Self-report surveys and interviews are the most common instruments to measure student engagements, and researchers usually use only one method of measurement.

In terms of research designs, quantitative online surveys have been the most popular measure of student engagement in online learning environments. This is due to the fact that surveys have been found being the most effective instruments to provide data on psychological and cognitive elements of student engagement, and the facility of delivery they offer supported by the use of software like Qualtrics, Google Forms, and Survey Monkey. The Academic Engagement form (Richardson et al., 2004), the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (Ouimet & Smallwood, 2005), the Classroom Engagement Survey (Hurford & Hamilton, 2008), and the Engagement Scale (Fredricks et al., 2005) were the most commonly used surveys to measure student engagement.

Qualitative approaches are the second most frequent approaches to measure student engagement in online learning (Henrie, 2016). They make use of video, screen captures of students' behaviors in the learning process, one-on-one or focus group interviews, or analysis of discussion board posts or interactions in other digital communication tools. Student engagement research has focused on learning mediated by different technological tools such as clickers, virtual reality (Second Life), learning management systems, video lectures, mobile application, social media like Twitter, and Facebook; online discussion forums, websites, learning management systems, videos, and computer software were found the most studied technological tools impacting positively student engagement (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013; Han & Finkelstein, 2013; Junco et al., 2011; Wise et al., 2013).

Research on Design of Curriculum and Assessment

Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," supported by 50 years of extensive research (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), has been used as a lens to explore the quality of face-to-face and online learning at different educational levels (Graham et al., 2001; Tirrell & Quick, 2012). The original principles have been modified to address characteristics of online learning, and the resulting criteria have been used in many studies (Chickering & Gamson, 1999). Research addressing high attrition rates in online learning environments has benefited from Chickerin and Gamson's comprehensive framework. For example, Tirrell and Quick's (2012) survey identified to what extent faculty used Chickering and Gamson's principles in their online courses and how its implementation related to attrition rates in online learning at a community college. First, they confirmed the validity of the framework for evaluating course design and online teaching. Second, their study provided evidence of faculty strengths and weaknesses in applying the principles. Third, they showed a disparity between the

skills that faculty used, and the skills needed for effective online teaching. Based on these results, the authors recommended professional development strategies that focus more on teaching and assessment strategies and less on technology use.

Chickering and Gamson' (1987) principles also anchored Hew's (2016) research which aimed at exploring engagement on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS). Hew found five of Chickering and Gamson' principles influencing student engagement on MOOCS: student-faculty contact, student-student contact, active learning, prompt feedback, and accommodating the environment for diverse learning preferences. Hew's case study collected various data sources that combined participant observations and reflections. His study provided three additional principles for engaging students in an online learning environment; namely, "instructor's in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, genuine enthusiasm in the course topic, and interest in teaching the course" (p. 19). The study also provided specific guidelines for course design to promote student engagement. However, the extent to which the results can be applied in other contexts is limited due to small sample size, possible bias on the participant' reflections who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study, and lack of analysis of factors that could disengage students.

Other studies, which address student engagement in online language learning, support one or two of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles and their results can provide insights for curriculum and assessment design and instructors' professional development to improve their use of pedagogical strategies. For example, Young and Bruce (2011) correlated student engagement in online learning and online classroom community. Quantitative data were gathered by means of an online survey administered to 1,410 undergraduate students. The authors found that for students to engage in learning communities, instructors need to use strategies that help

them establish stronger relationships with their classmates and the instructor. In addition, the study evidenced that course designs involving students in meaningful learning and assessment tasks improved students' perceptions of their online engagement.

In relation to the role of feedback to encourage student engagement, Alharbi (2017) used screencasts to provide feedback to students enrolled in an online English as a foreign language course at a British university. Data were collected by means of an online student survey administered after students received assessment feedback and analyzed considering theoretical support on engagement as derived from feedback (Carless, 2006; Thompson & Lee, 2012; Walker, 2009). Students found video e-feedback to be an integral part of their learning and to provide a better understanding of their assessments by means of audio and visual resources. Students spent more time reviewing their e-feedback, finding it more beneficial compared to written feedback and scaffolding their learning in a more effective way. In addition, students found this type of feedback more personal despite its asynchronous characteristic. Effective implementation of this feedback strategy needs to be supported with instructors' training in relation to technical requirements.

Research on Teaching Presence, Pedagogical Strategies, and Student Engagement

A significant number of studies have investigated the role of instructors' pedagogical strategies on successful learning in K to 12 and higher education online environments. However, fewer studies address the influence those strategies have on student engagement in online English language learning in the context of vocational education. Geographically, those studies have taken place in developed countries, and scarce ones in developing countries such as those in Latin America. Therefore, the connection between teaching presence and online student engagement in these contexts requires stronger support in the literature.

The Garrison et al. (2000) CoI framework is one of the most used frameworks to examine teaching presence in online learning. The framework has been validated in different studies. For example, Shea and Bidjerano (2009) validated it with 5,000 online students to articulate the relationship among teaching, social, and cognitive presences. By means of cluster analysis, the researchers found the framework supporting online course design and instruction with and appropriate balance among the three presences (teaching, cognitive, and social). Shea and Bidjerano's study also provided additional items to consider in relation to the instructor role in assessment, mainly the use of formative feedback for supporting student knowledge construction. Furthermore, the study found students' age predicted cognitive presence, with older students reporting higher levels of this presence. Since most online students are adults, these results may have important implications for future research addressing this topic. The limitations of the study involve: first, the ones related to self-reports (participant subjectivity); second, the limited response rates which could have affected the representativeness of the sample; and third, the superiority of the course design determined a high quality and experienced design team that could influence students' cognitive presence.

Similarly, Sun et al. (2017) drew on the CoI framework to investigate the existence of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence on a discussion forum used to prepare students for the GRE Analytical Writing section in an online learning community in China. The researchers used transcript analysis and adapted the CoI survey to understand the perceived teaching, social, and cognitive presences in the GRE writing forum. The survey was translated into Mandarin to obtain higher response rate and to avoid misinterpretations of the information. The results showed strong evidence of the three types of presences and how a well-designed technological environment with shared teaching presence between moderators and participants in

the discussion forums supported learning. In addition, the study encouraged online instructors to allow students to take part on the choice of the forum topics to address their individual needs and increase their participation and engagement. Relevance of course assignments was also found impacting students' motivation and critical thinking. The low response rate is the limitation of the study considering the difficulty to identify if the respondents represented the target population.

Shea et al. (2006) analyzed the relationship between teaching presence and student sense of learning community by means of multi-institutional study. This survey research measured teaching presence in 1,067 students by designing The Teaching Presence Scale drawn on Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework. The results showed a clear connection between perceived teaching presence and students' sense of learning community. Effective instructional design and organization, and direct facilitation of discourse were found to increase students' sense of learning community. Student characteristics such as gender and work responsibilities were noted to impact the results. In short, Shea et al.'s (2006) study provided relevant guidelines on how to increase teaching presence and improve course design to support students' sense of learning community so as to promote students' engagement.

Nagel and Kotzé (2010) drew on the CoI framework to analyze teaching presence and student engagement in a large online course (122 students). The results of this mixed-methods study indicated that a consistent course design, effective teaching strategies, and appropriate technological tools contribute to student success in large online English writing courses. In terms of design, the course contained high quality materials which guided the development of students' writing skills without instructor support. Most teaching presence was provided with timely feedback from instructor and peers supported with different technological tools offered by the

learning management system which kept the students informed on due dates and course timeline. The quality of the course was also supported by high levels of student responsibility.

In the field of English language learning in the Latin American context, Herrera-Díaz and González-Miy (2017) supported their mixed-methods study on the development of the student oral skills in an online Basic English course with the CoI framework. Students found teaching presence, in its components of design and organization (i.e., communicating learning goals, due dates, course guidelines), as supporting to effectively completing the course. Instructor facilitation was the second CoI component students perceived as contributing to their engagement in the course, whereas direct facilitation (instructor feedback) was in the last position. In the analysis on how CoI supported the development of student English oral language skills, direct instruction was perceived as having the highest impact on the learning of grammar and lexical items. The study stressed the role of the instructor in the development of the students' oral language skills and how teaching presence needs to be strengthened in course design. However, more research needs to be done in order to analyze the effects of the cognitive and social presences in English language learning since the study evidenced that limited English language proficiency discourages student participation in discussion boards and productive dialogue in English.

Summary

This chapter provided both theoretical and empirical support on the main study topics and foresaw the contributions it can make to educational research. Initially, the review of the evolution, definition, and assessment of student engagement shed light on the possibilities that a constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) provides to analyze student engagement in online English language learning. Student engagement definition for the study was delimited to student

involvement in learning activities and assessment tasks in the course rather than school sense of belonging (Cole & Chan, 1994; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). In terms of assessment of student engagement, strengths and weaknesses of self-reports and interviews were identified to support the use of these methods in this study. Then, online language learning was also analyzed based on its evolution, learning theories, and instructors' teaching paradigms, roles, and skills required to support student engagement for further analysis of instructor pedagogical strategies as one of the research questions of the study.

In addition, principles to consider for curriculum and assessment design to promote student engagement were analyzed. Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," and Herrington et al.'s (2007) design principles for authentic learning provided significant contributions to this purpose due to their student-centered focus which respond to the tenets of the constructivist paradigm. The following section analyzed the influence of instructors' pedagogical strategies on student engagement by drawing on Anderson et al.'s (2001) CoI framework, mainly on its component of teaching presence. Teaching presence in terms of design and organization of the course; facilitation discourse, and direct instruction were reviewed, giving especial attention to the role of formative assessment ass part of teaching presence (Anderson, 2003).

Considering that the researcher aimed to analyze factors beyond the curriculum and assessment design, and instructor pedagogical strategies impacting student engagement, this review also identified factors such as student contextual factors (technological tools, class size, institutional characteristics), and student personal factors (gender, age, motivation) to be considered when analyzing student engagement in online learning environments. Finally, general characteristics of research on student engagement in online learning were provided. They were

supplemented with examples of empirical studies addressing both the influence of curriculum and assessments design, and instructor pedagogical strategies on student engagement highlighting their main findings and limitations to be considered in further studies such as this one.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods research design to investigate students' engagement in online English language courses in vocational education. Student engagement, a multifaceted and multidimensional construct that supports student learning (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004), requires a research design that allows exploration from different perspectives. The choice of a mixed methods research design offered this possibility by combining strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative paradigms to allow a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creamer, 2016). The mixed methods design enabled the researcher to collect multiple sources of data using a variety of data collection methods, which aligned with her pragmatist epistemology and ontology. It does this so the resulting combination has "multiple (convergent and divergent) and complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 107).

A mixed methods design was also valuable because it "involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). Further, Creswell and Plano Clark elaborated,

> [Mixed methods] focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (p. 5)

As a way to examine student engagement in online English language courses in vocational education, as in the SENA program in Colombia, this mixed methods study aimed to understand the extent to which the current curriculum and assessment, and the instructors'

teaching presence and pedagogical strategies helped promote student engagement. In addition, it aimed to identify the factors beyond the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical strategies employed in the online English courses that could have enhanced or hindered student engagement. Hence, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2015) was selected with the purpose of, first, collecting and analyzing quantitative survey data, and then, based on the results, choosing a sub-sample that provided more detailed qualitative interview data. In addition, qualitative data was collected from documental and artifact analysis. Once this was done, qualitative and quantitative data were mixed to be analyzed for the complementarity of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene et al., 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and a better understanding of student engagement in the SENA online English program.

This chapter includes the following sections: rationale for choosing a mixed methods design, research sample, research site, research design, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical considerations, reliability and validity of survey data, issues of trustworthiness for the qualitative data, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Design

Even though this method has been around since the 1950s, in the last three decades it has come to be recognized as a valuable approach to answer research questions that quantitative and qualitative paradigms could not fully address on their own (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; McKim, 2017). Mixed methods research does not intend to diminish the potential quantitative and qualitative paradigms offer when guiding a research study separately. What mixed methods researchers argue is that the combination of components of each paradigm “offers the best chance of answering their specific research questions” (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 15).

Therefore, what determines the need of combining different paradigms is the research purpose and the expected level of understanding of its conclusions (Creamer, 2016).

Paradigms are used to justify the selection of a research design (Hall, 2013). To understand what paradigm justifies mixed methods research, Morgan (2007) analyzed paradigms from three different perspectives. First, they are seen as worldviews or philosophical assumptions that orient a research study (Creswell, 2009). Second, "paradigms treat the best known epistemological stances (e.g., realism and constructivism) as distinctive belief systems that influence how research questions are asked and answered and takes a narrower approach by concentrating on one's worldviews about issues within the philosophy of knowledge" (Morgan, 2007, p. 52). Third, paradigms are seen as beliefs which guide researchers to select the research questions of their studies and the steps to follow to answer them. Morgan argued that these three positions limit the possibility of mixing paradigms since they prescribe the research methods quantitative and qualitative paradigms need to follow and exclude others. Quantitative research rests on the positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) and analyzes social phenomena as "a separate entity that exists independently of the observer to be prescribed objectively in time- and context-free generalizations" (Tay, 2011, p. 88). On the contrary, qualitative research "rests on a naturalistic or constructivist paradigm where the known and knower cannot be separated and so time- and context-free generalizations are neither desirable or possible" (p. 88).

From the methodological literature, mixed methods research design demands a paradigm that is open to different methods and that "does not expect to find unvarying causal links or truths but aims to interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate research method" (Bryman, 2007, p. 8). Pragmatism, as an alternative paradigm "sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, accepts, philosophically, that there are

singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the real world" (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) support pragmatism by citing three well-known pragmatists: Peirce (1878), James (1995), and Dewey (1948) who suggest that for people to make meaning of ideas, beliefs, and things, they should also examine their practical and empirical consequences. Peirce argued that in understanding the meaning of things, people "should consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the objects" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). For James (1995), "the pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable…. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its perspective practical consequences" (p. 18). Dewey (1948) connected understanding the meaning of ideas with their consequences: "in order to discover the meaning of the idea, we must ask for its consequences" (p. 132). Taken together, Peirce, James, and Dewey's ideas provide the guideline for mixed methods researchers to analyze empirical and practical consequences of the judgments they make and to opt for a determined philosophical position or other steps to follow with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

From a pragmatic perspective, "research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). By acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative paradigms, mixed methods research draws on the philosophy of pragmatism which sees it as "an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints,

perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 113). This study benefited from the possibility that the quantitative survey component provided the researcher with an opportunity to study an initial large sample of students in the SENA English language courses.

The quantitative survey method provided objective and accurate numeric data. In the same way, the strengths of qualitative research were reflected in the depth and breadth provided by both interview data from a smaller sub-sample of participants who expanded and explained their survey data, and the resulting document and artifact analysis of the curriculum and assessment of SENA's online English courses for clarification and corroboration purposes. By combining quantitative and qualitative paradigms, the weaknesses of one paradigm were alleviated with the strengths of the other. Accordingly, the quantitative component supported the generalizability of the results whereas the qualitative component provided more details or nuances on contextual or local factors which are usually absent in abstract and general results from quantitative data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Different reasons support a mixed methods research design for this study. On the one side, this research is in the field of education which is an applied field. As such, students and instructors in the SENA program, as the main participants, contributed their understandings and experiences to address the research questions in a comprehensive way (Creamer, 2016). On the other side, a mixed methods design offered the possibility of understanding student engagement as an educational phenomenon in its complexities more effectively as a result of the combination of different epistemological and methodological paradigms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Such complementarity increased the validity of the data. Finally, the researcher felt more confident in the result interpretations and study conclusions based on the triangulation of both

quantitative and qualitative data, one of the key objectives of employing a mixed methods research design (McKim, 2017).

Rationale for Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design

This study employed an explanatory two-phase, mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2015). First, quantitative data were collected by student and instructor online surveys. Second, qualitative data included, on the one hand, one-on-one interviews with students and instructors of SENA's online English courses, and on the other, document and artifact analysis of the curriculum and assessment of these courses. The interview data and the document and artifact analysis were intended to further explain, elaborate, and interpret the quantitative findings from the surveys. The analysis of the quantitative data during Phase 1 of the study guided the selection of the sub-sample for the qualitative interviews in Phase 2 of the study. The integration of the data happened at the interpretation phase (Creamer, 2016; Creswell et al., 2003).

Greene et al. (1989) provide five reasons to support the mixed methods methodology: (1) triangulation, used for convergence, and corroboration; (2) complementarity, which allows further elaboration; (3) development, where one method informs the other; (4) initiation, which uncovers contradictions for reorienting the study; and (5) expansion, employed to increase the breadth of the study. The second reason, complementarity, was the main reason for choosing the explanatory sequential mixed methods design in this study to gain more significant and comprehensive results (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Data from student and instructor interviews were used to further elaborate, illustrate, and clarify the data provided by student and instructor online surveys. This was done to identify the features of the curriculum and assessment, instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, and other factors that

facilitated or hindered student engagement in SENA's online English language courses. Table 1 presents a visual model of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design for this study:

Table 1

Visual Model of the Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design of this Study

Sequence	**Procedures**	**Data Sources**	Products
QUAN Participants Recruitment	Random stratified sampling	List of student and instructor survey participants	
QUAN Data Collection	Administration of online surveys to students and instructors in the SENA program	Research Questions #2 & 3: ● Survey data on students' and instructors' perceptions on how instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement; as well as on other factors facilitating or hindering student engagement ● Instructors' and students' demographic data	
QUAN Data Analysis	SPSS descriptive statistics		Percentages, means, and standard deviations
Qual Participants Selection	Extreme case sampling	List of interviewees selected from the survey data	
Qual Data Collection	● One-on-one student and instructor interviews ● Curriculum documents and assessment task analyses	Research Questions #1, 2, & 3: ● Interview transcripts ● Document and artifact analyses	
Qual Data Analysis	Coding and Thematic Analysis		Codes and themes
Synthesizing **QUAN** – **qual** results	Discussion of Qual findings in relation to QUAN results	Synthesis of quantitative and qualitative results	Conclusions

Research Sample

Sampling Approach. When the characteristics of this study were considered, a random stratified sample was used for selecting the participants for the quantitative phase (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The entire population of SENA students enrolled in technical and technological programs, who at the same time were taking the online English course when the data collection took place, were separated into two groups. One group of students enrolled in the Beginner Level to Level 3, and the other group of students enrolled in the Levels 4–6. A representative random sample was selected from each group. Similarly, the entire population of instructors teaching SENA's online English courses were separated into two groups. One group of instructors taught Beginner Level to Level 3, the other group of teachers taught Levels 4–6, and representative sample of instructors was selected from each group. The online student survey was administered to 471 students who were enrolled in SENA's online English language courses from the Beginner Level to Level 6 from February 1 to March 7, 2019. Students taking Levels 7–9 were not included in the study since those levels are not a graduation requirement for students taking technical or technological SENA programs. The online instructor survey was administered to 80 instructors who taught the same courses of the student participants within the same period of time. Twenty students and 17 instructors also participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher.

The qualitative phase employed an extreme case sampling approach enabling the researcher to select participants with unique or special characteristics (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). A sub-sample of the student participants who completed the online student survey were selected from each English language proficiency level for one-on-one interviews. Similarly, a sub-sample of the instructor participants who responded to the instructor online survey participated in one-on-one interviews. These one-on-one, in-depth interviews provided thick,

rich data and allowed for the achievement of data saturation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). With the purpose of supplementing, elaborating, and illustrating the results of the quantitative phase, those participants with significant quantitative results, unexpected non-significant results, or extreme cases were selected for the one-on-one, in-depth interviews (Bergman, 2008; Greene et al., 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2013).

Participants. *Student participants*. SENA students who were enrolled in technical and technological programs in different trades (industry, services, agriculture, banking, etc.) participated in this study. Typically, they were between 18 and 50 years old. Most of them studied and worked at the same time and had family responsibilities. They belonged to the lowest socioeconomic strata, both in the rural and urban areas of Colombia. Some of them studied during the day, at night, or on weekends and others took technical or technological fully online programs. Most of them had only studied English in high school so their level of proficiency in the language was low. This meant most students had to start the program at the Beginner Level. They were required to take SENA's online English courses as a graduation requirement in their technical or technological programs where the courses were not offered face-to-face in their training centers.

Four-hundred and seventy-one students participated in the study. Two-hundred and thirty-eight (50.5%) were female, and 215 (45.6%) were male. Most student participants (180) were between the ages 21 and 30 years (38.2%) and between 31 and 40 years (29.3%). Considering their educational level, most of the participants completed high school (34%), followed by 32.9% of participants who undertook technical training, and 15.5% with technological education. In terms of employment status, 45.2% of the student participants were unemployed, 45% were full-time employees, and 9.8% held part-time jobs. Two hundred and

seventy-seven (58.8%) of the student participants were enrolled in technological programs at SENA, while 136 (28.9%) students were enrolled in technical programs. The majority of the student participants were enrolled in the lowest English level courses: one-hundred and sixty-eight students (35.7%) were enrolled in Level 1, followed by 120 (25.5%) registered in Beginner Level and 120 students (21.2%) in Level 2. Most students accessed their online course from home computers (69%), and 11% had access to their online course from office computers. Approximately 45.9% of the student participants reported that they spent less than five hours per week working in their online English courses, while 40.3% devoted between five and 10 hours. Finally, most student participants (68.4%) had taken more than one online course compared to 31.6% who took their first online course at the time of the data collection.

Student participants' demographic characteristics, vocational programs, and status in the SENA online English language course were presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Student Participants' Demographic Information, Vocational Programs, and Status in SENA's Online English Language Courses

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	238	50.5%
Male	215	45.6%
Prefer not to reveal	4	0.8%
I identify as ____	14	3%
Total	471	100%
Age range		
Under 20	93	19.7%
21–30	180	38.2%
31–40	138	29.3%
51–50	44	9.3%
Over 50	16	3.4%
Total	471	100%
Educational level		
High school	160	34%
Technical	155	32.9%

Technological	73	15.5%
Undergraduate	61	13%
Other	22	4.7%
Total	471	100%
Employment status		
Full-time	212	45%
Part-time	46	9.8%
Unemployed	213	45.2%
Total	471	100%
Vocational program enrolled		
Technical	136	28.9%
Technological	277	58.8%
Other	58	12.3%
Total	471	100%
Term in vocational program		
1–3	242	51.4%
4–6	120	25.5%
7–8	109	23.1%
Total	471	100%
Shift in vocational program		
Morning-Afternoon	69	14.6%
Only mornings	69	14.6%
Only afternoons	49	10.4%
At night	112	23.8%
Weekends	28	5.9%
Completely online	104	22.1%
Other	40	8.5%
Total	471	100%
English course enrolled		
Beginner Level	120	25.5%
Level 1	168	35.7%
Level 2	100	21.2%
Level 3	37	7.9%
Level 4	26	5.5%
Level 5	8	1.7%
Level 6	12	2.5%
Total	471	100%
Online course access		
Home computer	325	69%
Office computer	53	11%
Computer at the institution	25	5.3%
Other	69	14.6%
Total	471	100%
Hours per week in English course		
Less than 5	216	45.9%
5–10	190	40.3%

11–15	28	5.9%
16–20	23	4.9%
More than 20	14	3.0%
Total	471	100%
First online course		
Yes	149	31.6%
No	322	68.4%
Total	471	100%

Instructor Participants. To become a SENA's English language instructor, an individual was required to hold a professional degree and demonstrate B2 level English language proficiency based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). They were also required to have at least two years teaching experience and Blackboard knowledge certification. Those instructors who did not hold a degree in education needed to provide a pedagogical training certificate (SENA, 2018b).

Eighty instructors participated in the study. Fifty-one (63.7%) were females, 27 (33.8%) were males, and two (2.5%) identified their gender in a different way. Among the participants, 46.2% were in the age range of 31 and 40 years old, followed by 20% who were between 22 and 30 years old, and 13.8% were between 50 and 60 years old. Most of the instructor participants, that is, 41.2% held a master's degree, 38.8% had undertaken undergraduate programs, and 20% reported holding other educational levels. Most instructor participants (86.2%) reported having been trained in online teaching. In terms of teaching experience, 45% of the instructors had taught online courses between six and 10 years, 23.8% had an online teaching experience between three and five years, and 18.8% had less than two years of online teaching experience. Only 2.4% of the instructors had more than 16 years of teaching experience in an online environment. Finally, 28.6% of the instructors taught Level 1 of SENA's English language program, 20% taught Beginner Level, and 16.3% were teaching Level 2 of SENA's online

English program. At the advanced level of the language program, 12% instructors taught Level 4 and 6.3% taught Levels 5 and 6 each.

Table 3 provides a summary of the instructor participants' demographic characteristics and online teaching experiences.

Table 3

Instructor Participants' Demographic Information and Online Teaching Experiences

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	51	63.7%
Male	27	33.8%
I identify as	2	2.5%
Total	80	100%
Age range		
22–30	16	20%
31–40	37	46.2%
41–50	16	20%
50–60	11	13.8%
Total	80	100%
Educational level		
Undergraduate	31	38.8%
Masters	33	41.2%
Other	26	20%
Total	80	100%
Online teaching training		
Yes	69	86.2%
No	11	13.8%
Total	80	100%
Online teaching experience		
0–2 years	15	18.8%
3–5 years	19	23.8%
6–10 years	36	45%
11–15 years	8	10%
More than 16 years	2	2.4%
Total	80	100%
Face-to-face teaching experience		
0–2 years	19	23.8%
3–5 years	18	22.5%
6–10 years	23	28.7%

11–15 years	9	11.3%
More than 16 years	11	13.7%
Total	80	100%
English course teaching		
Beginner Level	16	20%
Level 1	23	28.6%
Level 2	13	16.3%
Level 3	8	10%
Level 4	10	12.5%
Level 5	5	6.3%
Level 6	5	6.3%
Total	80	100%

Research site. This study took place at the *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA, National Service of Learning) in Colombia. SENA was founded by the Ministry of Labor in 1957. Its mission is "to fulfill the state function of investing in the social and technical development of Colombian workers, by providing comprehensive training that allows workers to access the labor market and contribute to the country´s social, economic, and technological development" (SENA, 2018a). SENA provides fee-free training for operators (6–12 months), technicians (12 months), and technologists (24 months) in different trade areas. In addition, SENA offers technical and technological specializations, supplementary courses, and training programs for the unemployed and vulnerable groups. SENA programs are offered in either face-to-face or online delivery. SENA has 117 training centers throughout the country and plays a pivotal role in the training of 55% of the total technical and technological students of the country (OECD, 2015). For example, in 2017 about 276,000 students graduated from SENA's technical and technological programs (SENA, 2017).

SENA's online English language program. English Dot Works is SENA's online English language program. It comprises 10, 60-hour levels or courses. A student who completes the 10 program levels is expected to reach level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference

(CEFR), so they are independent users of the English language which means that they can understand the main points of familiar matters they encounter in daily life at work, school, home, etc. (Council of Europe, 2001). The program draws on the communicative approach to develop students' language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) (Richards, & Rodgers, 2014, Chapter 7). The courses are offered through Blackboard as its learning management system where instructor and students interact, and all the course contents, assignments or assessments, contents, and resources are provided. Most of the courses are asynchronous and are supported with at least four synchronous sessions, which are held through Blackboard Collaborate which is the tool this learning management system offers for these types of sessions (SENA, 2018b).

Participating in the synchronous sessions is highly encouraged and students who do not attend them are expected to review the session recordings. In addition, instructors need to be available for additional synchronous support at least one hour per week for each course. On average, 80 students are enrolled in a course, which is guided by an instructor. A full-time instructor is expected to teach four courses every six weeks. SENA students in technical programs (one-year program) are required to take at least three courses of the online English program (180 hours) for graduation while students in technological programs (two-year program) need to complete at least six courses (360 hours). Students are given the flexibility to enrol themselves in the courses and determine when they want to take the courses before the end of their technical or technological programs.

Research Design Overview

Research questions. The overarching question of this study was: How do online English language courses in vocational education promote student engagement? Specifically, the following questions were asked: (1) To promote student engagement in learning, what design

features of the curriculum and assessment should online English language courses consider; (2) How do instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in online English language courses; and (3) What other factors facilitate or hinder students' engagement in online English language learning?

Data Collection Methods

In 2019, I went back to Colombia to collect both survey and interview data. Instructors and students were contacted by SENA administrators by e-mails, telling them the purpose of the study and inviting them to participate in the study. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB).

Online student and instructor surveys. The purpose of the online student and instructor surveys was to collect data in relation to instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies and other factors which the study participants identified that contributed to or hindered student engagement in learning in the SENA online English courses. These factors may include contextual factors (software and learning management system characteristics, class size, institutional support), student personal factors (age, gender, learning preferences), and psychological factors (personality type, self-efficacy, cognitive style) (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005; Hiltz & Shea, 2005; Nagel & Kotzé, 2010). The data enabled the researcher to answer Research Questions 2 and 3 of this study.

The student and instructor surveys were cross-sectional, self-reported surveys (Creswell, 2009) which included four sections. The first section included 17 items adapted from Shea et al.'s (2006) Teaching Presence Scale. The second section included 18 items related to instructor pedagogical strategies informed by the literature on best practices in online teaching strategies (Hanover Research Council, HRC, 2009). The third section included four items asking about

other factors that may have contributed to or hindered student engagement in an online learning environment. The last section included 13 items related to participants' demographic information which was used to describe the participants' characteristics. Teaching presence was measured by means of Shea et al.'s (2006) Teaching Presence Scale which has been validated to measure the most effective online instruction practices (Miller et al., 2014). The decision to include similar questions in the student and instructor surveys was made in order to triangulate the data (Creswell, 2015; McKim, 2017). The questions in the two first sessions were 5-point Likert scaled questions (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) which are a reliable way to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviors (Jamieson, 2004). The two last sections included ranking questions, close-ended questions, and some open-ended questions to ask for additional responses (Creswell, 2015) (see Appendixes A and B).

Considering that the student participants were in the process of developing their English language proficiency, their surveys were translated into Spanish. It ensured that they were able to understand the instructions, questions, and response formats clearly, which helped minimize measurement bias (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014). However, the instructor survey was written in English since SENA requires them to have a B2 level English language proficiency based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) which allowed them an accurate understanding of the survey questions. Both student and instructor surveys were tried out by a small number of students and instructors, respectively, in the Fall of 2018 prior to the main study. Their feedback was used to ensure that the directions, item wordings, and response formats in the online surveys were clear and

comprehensible. Some words in the Spanish version of the Teaching Presence Scale (i.e., student survey) were revised to improve its comparability with the original English version.

In the main study, the two surveys were administered via Qualtrics, a software program which offers the possibility of designing, collecting, and analyzing extensive survey data with tested forms and sample questions (Creswell, 2015). Survey data were collected from February 1 to March 7, 2019. Each survey required the participant to spend 25 minutes responding to the questions. The surveys included the informed consent form following the requirements of the CFREB of the University of Calgary. The links to access the surveys were provided through Blackboard from the beginning of the course and were available until one week before the end of the course, so that final grades of the course did not modify students' responses. Email messages encouraging students and instructors to take the surveys were sent weekly to attain a higher response rate. An optimal response rate for the study was considered to be 50% or better which follows what leading educational journals report in similar studies (Creswell, 2015).

One-on-one student and instructor interviews. Interviewing is a powerful research collection technique which provides rich and thick descriptions and offers the possibility to supply additional information and elucidate unclear statements (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Merriam, 2009). As a process in which the researcher and the study participants engage in a conversation based on questions related to the research study, interviewing can provide specific and detailed data to understand the phenomenon under study (deMarrais, 2003). It is also a way to "enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341), and to access the context of participants' behaviors which allows the researcher "to understand the meaning of that behavior" (Seidman, 2006, p. 10).

Interviews can be highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Highly structured interview questions limit participants to a particular type of information, whereas unstructured interviews include open-ended questions and are used to explore areas the researcher is not familiar with (Merriam, 2009). The goal of the qualitative phase in this study is to complement, elaborate, and illustrate on the results of the quantitative phase (Greene et al., 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2013), hence the participants with significant quantitative results, unexpected non-significant results, or extreme cases (Bergman, 2008), were selected for the one-on-one, in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were carried out based on a list of questions determined from the student and instructor surveys with the possibility of emerging topics and perceptions enriching the study data. For reliability purposes, Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement Framework was used to prepare instructor and student semi-structured interviews (see Appendixes C and D for the interview protocols). First, questions were reviewed to determine if they aligned with the research questions. Second, the interview protocol was developed to promote an inquiry-based conversation. Third, feedback on the interview protocol was solicited and received from the researcher supervisor and researcher colleagues. Finally, the interview protocol was piloted with some students and instructors in the context where the study took place. The interview protocol included introductory, transition, key, and closing questions in two main domains: SENA instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies that promote or do not promote student engagement, and other factors participants considered that facilitated or hindered student engagement in SENA online English language courses. Considering the characteristics of the study participants who lived in different parts of Colombia, the interviews took place face-to-face or on Skype or telephone. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Document and artifact analysis. According to Bowen (2009), a systematic analysis of the documents and artifacts will provide additional evidence to corroborate findings provided by other data sources. These documents and artifacts have the potential for helping the researcher understand and reveal relevant information, which other data sources may not uncover, and which contribute to answer the research questions (Merriam, 1988). Bowen (2009) also argues that it increases credibility of the findings and can reduce potential biases when it is included in the triangulation process (Patton, 2002). With the purpose of answering the first research question of this study which sought to identify the design features of SENA's online English language curriculum and assessment that promotes student engagement in learning, institutional documents referring to the program were reviewed and analyzed. These documents included: institutional documents supporting the design and development of the SENA program, SENA's English language program documents for Beginner Level to Level 6 (curriculum, handbooks/manuals, resources, guidelines, registration and assessment procedures, learning and assessment tasks (at least 20), rubrics, learning management system, technical support software), student and instructor regulations, course registration and assessment procedures, among others that may appear in the document exploration phase. O'Leary's (2014) steps for document analysis was followed (i.e., gathering, organization, exploration, analysis).

Data Analysis

Quantitative strand. Both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS Version 24 were conducted to analyze both student and instructor online survey data. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to describe the characteristics of the participants and the patterns of instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, as well as to quantify other factors that were deemed by the participants to have facilitated or

hindered student engagement in the SENA online English language courses. Inferential statistics such as *t*-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to examine mean differences of the perspectives between the student and instructor participants.

Qualitative strand. One-on-one student and instructor interview data were analyzed using open coding (Creswell, 2015). Steps in the qualitative analysis included: (1) preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the transcripts to get a general sense of the main themes and their possible organization; (2) coding the data by segmenting and labeling the text with the purpose of narrowing the themes and; (3) examining codes for overlap and redundancy; (4) collapsing codes into broad themes; and (5) disregarding data which did not provide evidence of the study topic. Codes were used to describe and develop themes from the data to answer the research questions. The credibility of the findings was secured by triangulating different sources of information, member checking, and rich and thick descriptions (Creswell, 2015; Miles et al., 2014).

The document and artifact analyses were guided by Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice". Therefore, written documents in relation to SENA's online English courses curriculum and assessment was analyzed to verify to what extent they encouraged contact between students and faculty, provided opportunities for students to work on cooperation, encouraged students to use active learning strategies, encouraged instructors to provide timely feedback on students' academic progression, required students to spend quality time on academic or learning tasks, established high standards for acceptable academic work, and addressed different learning needs in the teaching process. In addition, SENA's online English course tasks were analyzed drawing on Herrington et al.'s (2007) design principles for authentic learning, which served as a guidepost for the development of online courses to promote

student engagement and learning. The principles state that authentic tasks (a) have real world-relevance; (b) are messy and ill-defined; c) comprise complex activities to be investigated over a sustained period of time; (d) provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives using a variety of resources; (e) provide the opportunity to collaborate; (f) provide the opportunity to reflect; (g) can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes; (h) are seamlessly integrated with assessment for learning; (i) create polished products that are valuable in their own right; and (j) allow competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes.

Based on the aforementioned principles, an analytic rubric was developed by the researcher for the analysis of the course outlines and assessment tasks used in the SENA program.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made sure the study followed the established ethical considerations for research involving human beings. Before data collection, the researcher sought ethics approval from the CFREB of the University of Calgary and followed all its guidelines strictly. Initially, SENA was asked to give permission to the researcher to collect data for this research study. SENA was informed of the study purpose and scope and how the institution could benefit from the study. The researcher also requested access to the program documents and artifacts, resources, students, and instructors. In addition, the researcher committed to confidentiality and the appropriate use of the information, as well as the avoidance of disruption of sites (learning management system) along the research process.

Students were provided with a consent form which informed them about the study purpose, their voluntary decision to participate, and the possibility of withdrawal from the study

at any time. In the quantitative phase of the research, anonymity was ensured by assigning participants numeric passwords to access the online survey. In the qualitative phase, the participants selected were assigned fictitious names to keep their responses confidential. When using quotations for illustration in the analysis of findings, names and gender related markers were removed.

In addition to the previous ethical considerations, participants were informed of the potential risks or consequences involved in the research. The researcher ensured that the information provided by the participants was kept strictly confidential. Instructors did not know the status of the students' participation in the study, and therefore did not have a bearing upon their course grades. Instructors were also informed that the information they provided was kept confidential and that SENA or any other institution would not use it for decisions related to hiring purposes. At the beginning of each interview, participants were advised that they were free to decline to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Interview transcriptions were sent to participants to enable them to check the accuracy of their accounts and to make any changes (i.e., member checking).

Data were collected and appropriately stored following the guidelines of the University's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board. Email correspondences with participants and consent forms were saved in password-protected files. Recordings of the participant interviews and the interview transcripts were saved electronically with pseudonyms only and in electronic password-protected files.

Relationship to Participants

As the researcher, it is important to identify her position in the study context. Given that she was given the study leave to pursue her doctoral study, she had neither academic nor

administrative appointments in the SENA program when the study took place. As such, there was no consequence on the instructors and student participants. To minimize researcher bias, she often checked her own assumptions about the research site, the participants, and the program with my doctoral supervisor and peers. Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design, the researcher believed that the qualitative findings derived from the interview data helped complement the quantitative survey data. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), one of the strengths of mixed methods is that it allows researchers to seek convergence and corroboration of results from different methods. The instructor and student survey data were collected anonymously and were from a large representative sample. It was highly unlikely that the researcher could have influenced the participants' responses and statistical analyses. In the section follows, the technical evidence on the survey data was presented.

Reliability and Validity of Quantitative Data

The reliability of data can be established by examining either the consistency of scores over time (i.e., test-retest reliability) or how well the items on a test or survey measure the same construct (i.e., internal consistency reliability). In the study, internal consistency reliability was used as an indicator of the reliability of the survey data that were derived from the students and instructors, given that the online surveys were only administered to the participants at one time point (Creswell, 2015). Prior to the actual data collection, the instructor and student surveys were piloted to ensure the clarity of the instructions, items, and response formats. Cronbach's alpha coefficients, an index of internal consistency reliability was computed for both the instructor and student survey data collected in the main study (Creswell, 2015). Such a quantitative measure was important for ensuring that the items in both the surveys were measuring the same construct.

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures the specific concept or construct that the researcher intends to measure (Thorndike, 1997). The validity of the student and instructor survey data was tested in terms of their content (representativeness and relevance), internal structure (consistency of items with the conceptual framework), and criterion-related validity (relation to other variables outside of the instrument) (Creswell, 2015). For this purpose, both surveys were reviewed by experts in the field of student engagement. Based on the experts' comments, items that were not clear or ambiguous were reworded. In addition, an analysis of the pilot study data enabled the researcher to determine the quality of the survey items. Items that were ineffective or did not contribute to the expected construct were discarded.

Cronbach's alpha (α) was computed to ensure the internal consistency reliability of the 17 items of the Teaching Presence Scale (Shea et al., 2006) and the 18 items of the Instructor Pedagogical Strategies, designed and developed by the researcher based on the literature. For survey data, Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or above are considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). At the overall survey level, Cronbach's alpha for the Likert-type survey items of the Teaching Presence Scale was found to be 0.96 for the student survey data and 0.97 for the instructor survey data, indicating high internal consistency reliability. The alpha coefficients for each of the subscales for both instructor and student surveys were summarized in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Student Survey Cronbach's α for Each Teaching Presence Subscale

Subscale	α
Instructional design and organization	.90
Facilitating discourse	.93
Direct instruction	.90
Overall	.96

Table 5

Instructor Survey Cronbach's α for Each Teaching Presence Subscale

Subscale	α
Instructional design and organization	.94
Facilitating discourse	.91
Direct instruction	.88
Overall	.97

The reliability of the Teaching Present Scale, both for student and instructor surveys confirmed Shea et al.'s (2006) coefficients of the Teaching Presence Scale and its subscales, which were 0.98 for instructional design and organization, 0.97, for facilitating discourses, and 0.93 for direct instruction.

Tables 6 and 7 present the Cronbach's alpha for the overall and subscales of the Instructor Pedagogical Strategies student and instructor survey data. The coefficients indicate that the subscales and overall surveys have good to excellent internal consistency reliabilities.

Table 6

Student Survey Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Instructor Pedagogical Strategies Subscales

Subscale	α
Creating a warm atmosphere	.75
Promoting active learning	.88
Modelling online interaction	.93
Collaboration and interactivity	.73
Overall	.93

Table 7

Instructor Survey Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Instructor Pedagogical Strategies Subscales

Subscale	α
Creating a warm atmosphere	.69
Promoting active learning	.91
Modelling online interaction	.89
Collaboration and interactivity	.85
Overall	.94

Trustworthiness for Qualitative Data

Trustworthiness (i.e., accuracy or credibility) of qualitative data is usually achieved by means of triangulation, member checking, or auditing (Creswell, 2015). Triangulation means corroborating evidence among individuals, different types of data, or methods of data collection. Member checking involves asking participants to review the information transcribed or interpreted for its accuracy and representativeness. External auditing refers to the possibility of asking someone outside the research to verify the study strengths and weaknesses. In this study, triangulation of qualitative data (student and instructor interviews, and document and artifact analyses) was carried out to increase the study's trustworthiness (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Member checking was also implemented by asking instructors and students who participated in the interviews to review their interview transcriptions and to review the main themes identified.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations. Limitations are referred as the potential weaknesses of a study which are out of the researcher control (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Simon & Goes, 2013). In this study, the transferability of its results could be limited by issues related to self-reported surveys in

which participants might have lied in their responses and had the tendency to respond to items in a manner that would be viewed favorably by the researcher (i.e., social desirability bias). Low response rate could also affect the results of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2003; Fowler, 2009; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). Researcher bias can interfere in the interpretation of interview data and affect the study results and conclusions (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). To minimize researcher bias, her coding and interpretations were checked by the supervisor.

Delimitations. Delimitations are those features which limit the scope of a study, determine its boundaries, and are in control of the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Simon & Goes, 2013). Therefore, this study was confined to SENA online English language courses which has particular characteristics and make it difficult to generalize the findings to other contexts (Creswell, 2003). It was also limited to students enrolled in Beginner Level throughout Level Sixth of SENA online English language courses considering that they are a graduation requirement for SENA. So, students in the most advanced levels (7−9) were not included. The findings were limited to understanding student engagement in online language environments which differs from student engagement in face-to-face learning environments. It was also delimited by the research purpose and questions (Ivankova, 2004). Therefore, the study did not intend to measure student engagement as such, but to examine how SENA's online English language courses promote student engagement based on the analysis of the features of its curriculum and assessment and students and instructors' perceptions on the contributions of instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, and other factors on student engagement.

Summary

This chapter provided the methodological support for this mixed methods study aimed at investigating student engagement in SENA's online English language courses in Colombia. A mixed methods design was chosen for this research since the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provided a better understanding of the research problem. As an explanatory two-phase, mixed methods design, the findings in the qualitative and the quantitative phases were mixed for the complementarity purposes. A sample of 300 students and 200 instructors of SENA online English courses took part in the study. Online student and instructor surveys were used for collecting quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected in the form of student and instructor one-on-one interviews, as well as SENA's curriculum and assessment documental analysis to further explain, elaborate, and interpret the findings of the quantitative phase. The quantitative strand used descriptive and inferential statistics for the analysis, whereas open coding was used to analyze interview data. The document and artifact analyses were guided by Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice" and Herrington et al.'s (2007) design principles for authentic learning. The chapter ended with a discussion of ethical considerations, reliability and validity of survey data, issues of trustworthiness for the qualitative data, and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study investigated how online English language courses in vocational education can be designed and delivered to promote student engagement in the learning of English as second or foreign language. Drawing upon the data collected using mixed methods such as document analyses, surveys, and one-one-one interviews, the following three research questions were answered: (1) What design features of the curriculum and assessment in online English language courses should vocational education consider in order to promote student engagement in learning? (2) How do instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies promote student engagement in online English language courses in vocational education? And (3) What other factors, different from the curriculum and assessment, and instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, facilitated or hindered vocational education students' engagement in online English language learning?

This chapter first presents the document and artifact analyses of the online English language courses' outlines and assessment tasks in the SENA program in order to identify the design features of the online English language curricula and assessment tasks that help promote vocational students' engagement. Second, the chapter presents the findings derived from quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews related to instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies to promote student engagement. Third, the quantitative survey and qualitative interview results in response to other facilitating and hindering factors to student engagement in online English language courses in the SENA program are described. Finally, the design principles of the assessment tasks are discussed. A summary of the key findings is provided at the end of the chapter.

Design Features of Curriculum and Assessment to Promote Student Engagement

SENA's Guidelines for the Teaching on Online Learning Environments (SENA, 2019) were established to ensure the quality of SENA's online English language programs offered to vocational students in Colombia. These guidelines mainly focus on the functions that online instructors need to follow to achieve the institutional purposes in using online modality as a platform to deliver quality English courses to vocational students. They are mandatory for all the instructors who teach online courses and are utilized in instructors' evaluations. According to these guidelines, instructors' tutorial function in online environments should be aimed at guiding the students to make course content more easily understandable, procedures more easily interpreted, time on task more appropriate, and in general, solutions more personalized.

More specifically, the Guidelines for the Teaching on Online Learning Environments require instructors to follow five functions when guiding and assisting students: organizational, orienting, social, technical, and academic. The organizational assistance involves the instructor's role of planning and preparing the teaching environment (e.g., structuring the course, providing course rules and times, etc.). The orienting function has to do with the personalized guidance to students in terms of teaching techniques and strategies. It mainly focuses on guiding, teaching, and advising students in their learning processes. The social function deals with the instructor's actions to reduce students' sense of isolation, and lack of motivation, among others. It encourages instructors to foster and strengthen their interaction with students. The technical function involves the development of students' technical skills in the online learning environment (e.g., chat, email, etc.), as well as encouraging students to understand the learning environment's technical functioning and communication abilities. Finally, instructors' academic

function requires that instructors who teach online be skillful and knowledgeable in the specific course content and SENA's pedagogical and methodological focuses.

Below I present and describe the findings from document and artifact analyses of the online English language course outlines and learning tasks (assessments) based on each of the criteria in the analytic rubric, which was guided by Chickering and Gamson's (1987). "Seven Principles for Good Practice."

Promoting Students' and Instructor's Contact or Communication

The rubric applied to the course outlines showed that the courses specified enough opportunities for students' and their instructors' communication and interaction. For example, SENA's Guidelines for the Teaching on Online Learning Environments establish that the instructor's contact information should be updated and available before the courses start to foster students' and the instructor's interaction. Instructors are also asked to post their office hours and technological tools to be used for those encounters. The SENA Guidelines also establish one working day for course enlistment which may not be enough for students to familiarize themselves with the instructor's contact information. In addition, the learning management system's navigation bar included a section with instructor information which displays the instructor's contact information. It also includes an announcements section for instructors to maintain continuous communication with students. Instructors may communicate with students by email, phone calls, and/or text messaging. Further, the SENA Guidelines require instructors to send a welcoming message to students once they are enrolled in the course. The message must include guidelines for access and initiation of the course. The navigation bar also includes a communication area in which the instructor and students can send email messages, get information about synchronous sessions, and have access to online discussion forums. Each

online English language instructor is expected to post at least four weekly announcements such as unit opening, unit closing, web conference invitation, and unit development or motivation. In addition, instructors must devote two hours per week to provide synchronous support to students by means of the Learning Management System (LMS)'s chat tool. These hours are different from the web conference each instructor provides to students in each thematic unit. Web conference sessions are recorded and shared with students who are not able to attend them. Instructors are considered motivating agents in an online learning environment. Hence, they are expected to send students a considerable number of messages to encourage and acknowledge their participation, offering support, and providing feedback to improve students' work. Each course's Learning Guide, in the section of Initial Reflection Activities, encourages students to post their questions on the Doubts and Questions Forum to get support from the instructor.

Based on the abovementioned reasons, the online English language curriculum was rated as Level 3 on a four-point rating for the criterion "Promoting students' and instructor's contact or communication" in the rubric (see Table 8).

Table 8

Criterion 1: Promoting Students' and Instructor's Contact or Communication

Criterion 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Promoting students' and instructor's contact or communication	The curriculum does not specify opportunities for students and instructor's contact or communication.	The curriculum specifies limited opportunities for students and instructor's contact or communication.	The curriculum specifies enough opportunities for students and instructor's contact or communication.	The curriculum specifies extensive opportunities for students and instructor's contact or communication.

Providing Opportunities for Students to Work on Cooperation and/or Collaboration

From the analysis of the course outlines and learning tasks using a 4-point rubric, it was evident that the SENA online English language curriculum specified limited opportunities for students to work cooperatively and/or collaboratively even though the curriculum described collaborative work as one the four sources of information for knowledge construction (SENA 2013 curriculum and methodological strategy). Online discussion forums are the place where collaboration is supposed to happen. Consequently, instructors need to ensure that the courses provide three discussion forums: social forum, doubts and questions forum, and thematic forum, which must be available from the beginning to the end of the course. Discussion forums are seen as the main communication tool in the online learning environment to generate debates and solve students' questions. There is also an open and asynchronous participation space for students and the instructor to discuss course topics, share opinions, reflect on experiences, etc. However, it is not clear enough how the online discussion forums promoted students' collaboration and/or cooperation. This finding is supported by the research participants' interviews. In fact, a considerable number of students agreed that collaborative work did not take place in their online English language courses. As such, we can conclude that most courses were designed for students to work individually.

On the Criterion "Providing Opportunities for Students to Work on Cooperation and/or Collaboration", the online English curriculum was rated as Level 1 (see Rubric in Table 9).

Table 9

Criterion 2: Providing Opportunities for Students to Work on Cooperation and/or Collaboration

Criterion 2	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Providing opportunities for students to work on cooperation and/or collaboration	The curriculum does not specify opportunities for students to work on cooperation and/or collaboration.	The curriculum specifies limited opportunities for students to work cooperation and/or collaboration.	The curriculum specifies sufficient opportunities for students to work on cooperation and/or collaboration.	The curriculum specifies extensive opportunities for students to work on cooperation and/or collaboration.

Encouraging Students to Use Active Learning Strategies

Using the 4-point rubric to analyze the course outlines and learning tasks, the curriculum of SENA's online English language was found to have created limited opportunities for students to use active learning strategies even though the Instructor Guidelines did establish that the instructor needs to dynamize the web conference sessions by means of active learning techniques to encourage students' participation. Online discussion forums should allow interaction, learning, and argumentation. The guidelines require instructors to follow up the discussion daily by providing replies and prompt feedback both individually and in small groups.

The methodological strategies stated in the English language curriculum aim at autonomous construction to promote quality training in which project learning and the use of active pedagogical strategies (e.g., projects and case studies) encourage solutions to real and simulated problems. The curriculum also claims that based on the use of the information and communication technologies in the online learning environments, the practice allows students to recreate the productive context and help students to make connections with daily reality and competence development. Methodological strategies are expected to constantly encourage

students' self-assessment and reflection on their work and learning results which is achieved by an active connection between the instructor, the learning environment, the information and communication technologies, and the collaborative work.

The Course Learning Guides include an initial reflection activity which mainly asks the students to engage in activities such as updating the student's personal information, completing a previous knowledge poll, introducing themselves to the social discussion forum, and posting their personal course platform knowledge on the forum. Students are also encouraged to read the course information and materials, and to find additional sources to deepen their understanding of course topics (Level 2, learning activities 2013). See Table 10 for the rating.

Table 10

Criterion 3: Encouraging Students to Use Active Learning Strategies

Criterion 3	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Encouraging students to use active learning strategies	The curriculum does not specify opportunities for students to use active learning strategies.	The curriculum specifies limited opportunities for students use active learning strategies.	The curriculum specifies adequate opportunities for students to use active learning strategies.	The curriculum specifies lots of opportunities for students to use active learning strategies.

Encouraging Instructors to Provide Timely and Quality Feedback on Students' Academic Progression

As a result of the analysis of the learning tasks, it was determined that they adequately encourage instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on student academic progression. In fact, the Instructor Guidelines establish the importance of timely and quality feedback given to students so that they can identify their misconceptions and correct their mistakes. In this sense,

instructors need to provide suggestions to highlight students' strengths and improve the quality of students' work. The instructor's feedback provided should help students fill in the gap between the current and desired performance (Sadler, 1987). It is optional for the instructor to use rubrics or other assessment tools to assess students' tasks. However, these tools can provide a general assessment of the quality of understanding of the expected learning outcomes. Instructors also need to provide an additional comment which makes it effective feedback for the student.

Similarly, according to the Guidelines, effective feedback addresses students' work and encourages them to improve it. This feedback, though challenging for students, needs to be timely, personalized, and based on concrete and reachable actions. Feedback should be clear, brief, and easily understood by students, as well as descriptive, motivating, and constructive. Instructor's comments should focus on the learning processes and outcomes, refer to concrete situations, and avoid generalizations that may confuse students. Feedback templates are not allowed. Specifically, for online English language courses, the instructor may decide to provide feedback in Spanish or English depending on the student's proficiency level, specific topic, explanation complexity, and the feedback purpose. Instructors may provide feedback directly on the assignment or by using the LMS toolbox. In any case, feedback needs to be personalized while pointing out assignment errors.

Instructors must follow up students' activity submission and participation as a retention strategy. The Instructor Guidelines establish that instructors have 24 hours to respond to discussion forums and 48 hours to provide feedback to course assignments. However, the Instructor Guidelines also establish that students have the chance to send their assignments until two days before the course ends. This may negatively affect the quality of instructor feedback

considering the large number of students enrolled in the online English language courses. According to the course guidelines, students' late submissions of their assignments should not be penalized.

For online English language courses, students should be provided feedback individually considering that each student needs particular corrections in their language use. Group feedback is also allowed in the social forum. See Rubric in Table 11 for the rating.

Table 11

Criterion 4: Encouraging Instructors to Provide Timely and Quality Feedback on Students' Academic Progression

Criterion 4	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Encouraging instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on students' academic progression	The curriculum does not encourage instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on students' academic progression.	The curriculum poorly encourages instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on student academic progression.	The curriculum adequately encourages instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on student academic progression.	The curriculum highly encourages instructors to provide timely and quality feedback on student academic progression.

Requiring Students to Spend Quality Time on Learning Tasks

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the learning tasks or assignments require students to spend quality time on them to an adequate extent. Instructors need to provide the course timetable following the institutional guidelines. It should display the learning results/outcomes students need to achieve in each course topic with dates and times specified for synchronous sessions and assessment tasks' submissions.

Each course provides the students with four learning guides. Each guide states the number of hours students need to spend to achieve the learning results. For example, for Level 2, students need to spend 20 hours working on each of the first and fourth learning guides, and ten hours for each of the second and third learning guides in the SENA program. See Table 12 for the rating.

Table 12

Criterion 5: Requiring Students to Spend Quality Time on Learning Tasks

Criterion 5	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Requiring students to spend quality time on learning tasks	Learning tasks do not require students to spend quality time on them.	Learning tasks require students to spend quality time on them to a limited extent.	Learning tasks require students to spend quality time on them to an adequate extent.	Learning tasks require students to spend quality time on them extensively.

Establishing High Standards for Acceptable Academic Work

The document analysis shows that the courses adequately establish high standards for acceptable academic work to an adequate extent. For instance, instructors need to make sure that the course description and timetable are updated and available for students. They include the course expectations in terms of time students need to spend working on course materials, resources, and learning tasks/assignments in order to achieve the expected learning results/outcomes.

Instructors may modify up to 20% of the total of course activities but they need to make sure that they do not risk the achievement of the expected learning results. Some of the courses' assessment tasks can be autonomously modified or omitted by instructors. These activities include mainly course consolidation activities and wiki assignments. Instructors are also required

to continuously inform students of the expected products in each of the assessment tasks and assessment criteria.

For the purpose of improving the quality of learning, students are provided with a course evaluation survey some days before the course ends. It allows students to self-assess their learning process and evaluate the course, the instructor's management, course contents, activities, assessment, and their level of satisfaction with the SENA online English program. Similarly, the curriculum clearly states the learning results to be achieved in each course. For instance, for Level 2 on the rubric, students will be able to discuss about human and natural history based on pertinent historical and linguistic elements. In the same vein, the curriculum presents the concepts and principal knowledge that students will gain from each course (i.e., grammar topics, vocabulary themes, expressions). Moreover, the curriculum states process knowledge for each level, such as identifying information about cities and countries including places of interest, landmarks, and weather. The curriculum clearly defines the assessment criteria for each course. For example, for Level 2 of the English language course, it states that students' express similarities and differences between cities or countries both orally and in the written form, based on the information about tourist places and weather (See Table 13).

Table 13

Criterion 6: Establishing High Standards for Acceptable Academic Work

Criterion 6	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Establishing high standards for acceptable academic work	The curriculum does not establish high standards for acceptable academic work.	The curriculum vaguely establishes high standards for acceptable academic work.	The curriculum adequately establishes high standards for acceptable academic work to an adequate extent.	The curriculum clearly establishes high standards for acceptable academic work.

Addressing Different Learning Needs in the Teaching Process

The analysis shows that the online English language curriculum adequately addressed different learning needs in the teaching process. For instance, the Instructor Guidelines establish that all the course content and assignments need to be available for students from the beginning to the end of the course, which may allow students to work according to their learning pace and time availability. Instructors are also required to customize the editable documents of the learning environment which might allow them to address different students' learning needs.

An important aspect which may also help students engage in their learning has to do with instructors needing to help students become familiar with the online learning environment. Hence, instructors must provide students with tutorials and videos about the course platform and have test sessions to verify the optimal functioning of the LMS tools. Providing students with this practice upfront is especially significant for engaging those students who may not have the expected technological skills or online learning experience.

However, the Instructor Guidelines establish the way the navigation bar needs to be organized, which may limit the possibilities for the instructor to adapt it based on the students' characteristics. In addition, something which may help students persist in their learning is that instructors should allow students to submit course assignments/learning tasks until two days before the course ends without affecting grading. However, it may also affect the quality of the feedback students receive considering that the instructor will not be able to devote enough time to this process.

Finally, course announcements and communication with students of the lowest language proficiency courses need to be in Spanish, which may assist students' interactions. It may help students feel more confident to look for support and lower the anxiety level that students feel by

interacting in a language that they converse in naturally. Communication in the highest language proficiency courses needs to be in English which students in these levels may find engaging considering that they are interacting in the language in an authentic way. Please refer to the rubric in Table 14 for the rating.

Table 14

Criterion 7: Addressing Different Learning Needs in the Teaching Process

Criterion 7	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Addressing different learning needs in the teaching process	The curriculum does not address different learning needs in the teaching process.	The curriculum vaguely addresses different learning needs in the teaching process.	The curriculum adequately addresses different learning needs in the teaching process.	The curriculum extensively addresses different learning needs in the teaching process.

In the following sections, the quantitative survey findings are presented and described.

Instructor Teaching Presence and Pedagogical Strategies to Promote Student Engagement

The purpose of the first two sections of the online student and instructor surveys was to collect data in relation to students' and instructors' perceptions of instructor teaching presence and pedagogical strategies that promoted student engagement in online English language learning. Analyses of the survey data were conducted using SPSS Version 24. Descriptive and inferential statistics were reported in the sections below.

Student and instructor participants reported a high level of instructor teaching presence in their online English language courses. Similar mean scores were found in the following teaching presence domains: *Instructional Design and Organization*, and *Facilitating Discourse, and Design Instruction* had the lowest mean scores (See Table 15).

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Teaching Presence

	Students (N = 471)		Instructors (N = 80)	
Teaching presence	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Instructional design and organization	4.24	.872	4.49	.793
Facilitating discourse	4.02	.936	4.22	.815
Direct instruction	3.95	.964	4.21	.845

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation.

The results of the student and instructor survey on instructor's pedagogical strategies were somewhat different. For example, the mean scores of students' perceptions of instructors' use of strategies were lower than those of the instructors in the following domains: *Modelling Effective Online Interaction* and *Creating a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere*. The lowest means resulted for strategies related to *Promoting Active Learning* and for strategies of *Collaboration and Interactivity* (See Table 16).

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics for Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Instructor Pedagogical Strategies

	Students (N = 471)		*Instructors (N = 80)*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Creating a warm atmosphere	4.10	.996	4.34	.920
Promoting active learning	3.81	.995	3.62	1.005
Modelling online interaction	4.17	.851	4.61	.752
Collaboration and interactivity	3.74	1.035	3.67	1.029

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation.

The quantitative results were complemented by the analyses of the interview data. From my coding of the student and instructor interview data, six themes emerged. They were *encouragement strategies, content understanding strategies, feedback strategies, connection*

strategies, *resource provision strategies*, and *interaction and collaboration strategies* as summarized in Table 17.

Table 17

Instructor Pedagogical Strategies Interview Data Matrix

Themes	Instructor pedagogical strategies
Encouragement	Contacting students ● Finding ways to meet students who require support (direct, individual contact) ● Encouraging students to ask for support ● Connecting with students frequently ● Providing continuous support ● Reminding due dates ● Offering support to students ● Encouraging students to participate in course activities by different means (announcements, new, email messages) ● Sending motivating messages ● Connecting with students ● Sending massive emails ● Encouraging students' participation ● Offering continuous support ● Sending messages about course activities ● Creating WhatsApp groups to encourage participation ● Sending encouraging messages ● Constant communication with students ● Encouraging students in synchronous sessions ● Sending email messages ● Motivating students continuously ● Contacting students directly in technical classes Keeping students on task ● Sending lists of students who were on task ● Sending activity reminders ● Being a motivator of self-learning ● Encouraging students' self-confidence ● Encouraging active participation ● Helping students to keep on task ● Encouraging students to be proactive learners Course assignments ● Acknowledging students' participation, individually and in groups

	● Sharing examples of students' good work ● Acknowledging students' work ● Posting a honor roll ● Leaving course activities available all the time ● Accepting resubmission of assignments ● Providing incentives to students (additional points in assignments) ● Negotiating with students to avoid conflicts due to activities requirements Being an example to follow ● Participating in the course as a student ● Being nice and polite ● Making students feel confident, comfortable to speak ● Being persistent ● Instructor's participation in discussion forums Students' needs and preferences ● Addressing students' skills and preferences ● Capitalizing on students' preferences ● Being attentive to students' needs and preferences ● Showing interest in student learning
Content understanding	Course topics ● Guiding students to understanding topics ● Explaining topics in different ways: synchronous sessions discussion forums, etc. ● Providing resources in different formats (video tutorials, PPTs) ● Providing examples from students' contexts ● Showing pictures in synchronous sessions ● Answering questions ● Asking questions ● Direct teaching in synchronous sessions for grammar topics ● Focusing on key information ● Highlighting key information ● Presenting content ● Asking or addressing grammar topics ● Personalizing examples. ● Using simple examples for language practice Language practice ● Practicing English with students ● Providing opportunities for students to use the language ● Using discussion forums for language practice

	● Providing students with additional tools/resources to meet people to use English in real contexts ● Reflections on course topics in synchronous session ● Providing opportunities to reflect ● Asking questions in discussion forum ● Instructor's participation in discussion forums ● Providing examples of expected posts
Feedback	Considerations ● Highlighting positive aspects of student assignment or student work ● Correcting mistakes ● Providing multiple examples ● Providing positive feedback ● Commenting on students' work ● Providing additional resources to clarify topics ● Asking for more information to complete assignments ● Sending motivational messages ● Using the sandwich method to provide feedback ● Providing instructions to correct and improve assignments What ● Providing feedback beyond grammar and vocabulary in discussion forums for higher levels ● Providing feedback in discussion forum Grading ● Not being too strict on grading course assignments ● Allowing students to resubmit assignments Who ● Providing instructor feedback ● Peer feedback How ● Providing massive feedback ● Providing individual feedback
Connection	Community building ● Contacting students one day before the course begins ● Introducing to students by email messages ● Posting a welcoming message ● Sending initial course announcements ● Posting a personal introduction with informal tone for better connection with students ● Posting instructor introduction on discussion board

	● Creating What's app groups ● Communicating with students ● Making students feel part of a community ● Sending welcoming messages by different ways Course activities ● Encouraging students to participate in discussion forums ● Interacting with students in synchronous sessions ● Encouraging students to participate in synchronous sessions ● Scheduling synchronous sessions at different times Communication ● Being respectful but assertive in communication ● Making students feel confident ● Being kind and warm in communication with students ● Being informal/informal ● Making students feel comfortable Peers ● Encouraging students to connect with peers ● Encouraging peer support ● Encouraging students to get support from peers ● Encouraging students to connect with peers
Resource provision	Course topics ● Sending different websites to deepen understanding of course topics ● Providing links on grammar practice ● Providing an online dictionary ● Encouraging students to use a translator ● Providing news websites ● Sharing links with games (flashcards) ● Providing additional resources for listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary practice ● Providing students with additional tools/resources to meet people to use English in real contexts ● Providing dialogues in synchronous sessions Course platform and activities ● Providing course information ● Sending tutorials with course information ● Providing course instructions ● Sending course timetables ● Sending course tutorials ● Sending course information

	● Providing summaries to update students on course activities ● Providing additional resources to do course assignments ● Providing additional resources if requested by students ● Providing information ● Providing easy, clear, and explanatory guidelines to do activities Student preferences ● Providing resources to improve learning ● Providing additional resources requested by students ● Providing downloadable resources ● Providing resources in different formats (video tutorials, PPTs)
Interaction & collaboration	Discussion forums ● Encouraging students to participate in discussion forums ● Encouraging students to reply to peer posts ● Providing examples on discussion forums to encourage students to keep posting ● Responding to forum posts ● Having true/authentic debates in discussion forums ● Posting provocative questions in discussion forums Other activities ● Providing opportunities for teamwork ● Teamwork in forum discussions and synchronous sessions ● Using case studies, team debates, and role plays to promote peer interaction

Each of the themes presented in Table 17 are explained below.

Encouragement strategies. The majority of student and instructor participants commented that continuous instructor encouragement is key to students' active involvement in the online English language courses. Encouragement strategies went beyond cheering up or motivating students to participate in the course activities. They involved those strategies instructors used to show interest in students' learning and support them to achieve their learning goals.

With the purpose of encouraging students, instructor participants considered it fundamental to contact students to offer and provide individual and group support, to provide students with the necessary course information, to keep in touch and to motivate them to participate. Other group of encouragement strategies were used to keep students on task. With this in mind, instructor participants sent ongoing activity reminders to a list of students who were on task and encouraged them to be proactive learners. In addition, instructor participants also used encouragement strategies directly related to learning activities or assignments. These included: acknowledging students' participation, sharing examples of good work, and posting an honor roll. Finally, to encourage students to participate, instructors became an example or a role model to follow, so they participated in the course as students (e.g., posting on discussion forums), made students feel confident and comfortable to participate, and were persistent and polite.

In relation to the first group of encouragement strategies which deal with providing students with the necessary course information, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants and most of the student participants agreed that this information supported students' engagement in their learning because students knew what to expect and what to do to achieve their learning goals. Examples of student and instructor participants' comments:

> It helps a lot because it is a guide to get familiar with the course contents, what I'm going to learn in the course, and the time that I am going to spend. So, it is really important to get this information early in the course. (Patty, student participant)
>
> Well, I think students have clear what they have to do. For them, it would be easier to do the activities. So, if we don't give them like clear instructions on what the activities are

about, so I consider they would be lost about what they have to do. (Jose, instructor participant)

So, if you don't communicate with one on one, the dates, or how they're going to be able to get into the program, you won't be able to receive any work from them. That's basically why I agree with this. All you need to do is to get some preparation and that's why you need give them all the information and to tell them what is necessary in only for them to get to know the course, when it starts, or when it ends or how they are going to work, or what are activities that you need to make in time a certain period of time, that's what I believe. (Cau, instructor participant)

And I think that when they know what they have to do, their participation it is higher, maybe the comments are clear or maybe the use of the language for the instructions other than students to write to participate, I don't know, addresses them to write, to participate, to communicate with their tutor in a better way. That's why I think it was really important, those aspects really contribute to the students. (Tabata, instructor participant)

Well, first they have a specific purpose, they need to handle the platform, at the same time they are learning a foreign language, they need to include the tools that are within the platform by themselves following instructions, they are receiving support by myself, with some conceptions, everyday 2 hours per day and I help with the questions. Besides I use other gadgets like WhatsApp or my email, yes, in order, for instance, make a chance, in order to complete the evidences correctly, for example one activity is a presentation with recording, a voice recording, so some of them are only uploading just the presentation, but it is missing the recording, so with this gadgets we give the chance to the Apprentices to upload the evidences correctly. (Luisfer, instructor participant)

In regard to the way in which the course information was provided, the majority of the study participants contended that although it was provided in the course platform, most of the instructor participants managed to provide it by different means (e.g., email messages, course announcements, and synchronous session) to make sure that their students really knew it: “When he [the instructor] had any information related to the course, for example about the synchronous sessions, he did not only used the platform, he informed it by email... so it was very clear” (Yaco, student participant).

Another student noted:

> What I see in the online course is the instructor’s intention to provide us with the information, there are posts, there are discussion forums. In addition, there instruction to participate in the synchronous sessions. So, the instructor’s intention is evident. (Yiliver, student participant)

However, for a few of the instructor participants the way the information was presented in the course platform was not engaging for students. For instance, one of the instructors pointed out: “I invite students to check the information. The information is not sent directly. I do not think that counting with the information helps [students] to engage more in their learning, in the way it is presented” (Matias, instructor participant). This instructor’s perspective might be related to the fact that instructors did not take part in the design and organization of the course. An overwhelming majority of the instructor participants agreed with this:

> I’ve got to be honest. When we have to work on the online courses, we receive something that is called the seed. That's all we need to do is to go to the guidelines, go to the curriculum of the courses, where we can read all the objectives, all the evidences and activities that the students need to do in order to get the goals. That's it. Probably the only

thing we do as a design is when we work on the online sections then then and we need to develop a little bit the curriculum by ourselves in order to explain them what are the questions or doubts that explain them understand what the teacher responsibilities are before or in terms of the design of the courses, are null. I mean, I don't need to work on that. I just get assigned to the level. All I need to do is just to follow a couple of curriculums designed that I already got from the seed. (Cau, instructor participant)

I don't take part, any part. The course is designed already. So, we just have to organize the material and check that the menu accomplishes the organization. We so we have to post the announcements... we have to organize the menu, check that the order of the menu, accomplish the parameters from the guide we have. And it's basically that. And also, to create the forums and the information in the forums. (Gabriela, instructor participant)

I'm just here as a tutor. To help them to find their way through the course. And in many occasions, you meet up on activities that are not well-design, you meet on errors and all we can do with those mistakes, grammatical mistakes, or things like that, is just send a report to your coordinator. That's it. I have realized that they are not sometimes even taken into account. Sometimes the same mistakes appear in the different levels again. (Nemo, instructor participant)

So, the only thing we really need to do is to provide with the announcements, and the emails, and the feedback. I think that's our most important role. And all my schedules, of course, but not really with the structure or the design of the course. We must keep the same design that they provide to us. (Johanna, instructor participant)

Not involving instructors in course design and organization creates an additional challenge for the instructor participants. It is because instructors' actions were prescribed. They were required to adhere to institutional guidelines so that their evaluations were not negatively affected. As Mariela, one of the instructor participants, indicated: "I believe they [students] engage a lot when, let's say, that information [course information] is offered. However, what happens is that those things are too pre-determined." This *prescription* was also identified by some student participants, for example, "What she [the instructor] did was to adhere to the guidelines that I think she has. She presented the course and so on. Too guided, too prescribed" (Jose, student participant). Consequently, as a way to make the course more engaging for students, the majority of the instructor participants expressed that they would like to be involved in course design and organization. This would enable them to make the changes they consider to be helpful for their students:

> I think that would be amazing because some of the activities, well, I would have done it in a different way, but I think that most instructors will see all the same way. I have not had the chance of taking part of any of the design of the activities, but they are provided. So, I think that if I would do it, I would do them in a different way, because some of the activities do not actually follow the curriculum. I have to say. In some of the courses, English 1, 2, 3 and 4, most of the courses that we are always doing, they don't follow the course structure for students to be able to move on to the next course. If you move from 1 to 2, there are some, I don't know, there are some learning blanks that I must do in my online sessions, because I don't think they took that into account in developing the course. (Johanna, instructor participant)

In terms of contacting students to offer and provide individual and group support, to keep in touch, and to motivate them to participate, an overwhelming majority of the instructor participants agreed that it must be done at the beginning of the course since they did not have access to students before the starting date:

> First, what I do is sending messages from SenaSofia Plus [institutional management software]. Second day by email in the system and in the platform, I send that through the same Blackboard program, I invite them to chat with me.... I give them an announcement and another message, then I also try to write motivational phrases, so they get engaged and that they feel comfortable to write and comfortable to start the program, and ask me questions, so, with good manner of vocabulary, good writing, I give them confidence to talk to me and to ask any questions, and for them, they are very engaging, and they start writing, teacher I cannot start now, but I would have start on the weekend… Can you help me?... That's the way I do it. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

> It is possible but it is very difficult. It is difficult because you cannot get all of them involved, but most of them, yes. How do I do it? Sending messages, by motivating them all the time, not writing all the time, like I am bothering you, or something like that, but I'm helping you, so that you can do these things and you can do that. So, it is not impossible but it's difficult, but you can do it, not with all the students but with 8 or 10 people, because most of them are working, they developed a program at night, very late or very early in the morning. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

In regard to the time when encouragement strategies should be used, the majority of the instructor participants agreed that they needed to do so throughout the course and not only at the beginning of the course. A participant in the online survey stated, “Yes, it helps, yeah. Because if

you don't do it, it is going to be worse for you. It can be worse for the program, so it is always better to do it all the time." (María, instructor participant)

One of the main reasons for the instructor participants' decisions on contacting students at the beginning of the course was supporting students on how to navigate the course's online platform. They also intended to make sure that students knew where and how to work on course activities and assignments considering that some of them were not familiar with the course platform, which in turn, might have negatively affected students' performances in the course. For example, two of the instructors found that:

> Students drop out more due to the lack of skills to use the platform than for the course contents themselves. So, when we [instructors] send students a tutorial on how to access the course, they try to log in and do not succeed, so they do not try again, they say "it is too difficult, if it is always going to be like this, so, I quit." But when you [the instructors] guide the student, when you, as an online student, get an email message that tells you what you are going to study and what you need to do and how to do it, and how to submit your assignments, obviously it is much easier and the student is much more successful. In that way we [instructors] have a better students' participation in the course. (Isabela, instructor participant)

> Well, I think that when they [students] are developing any evidence or any activity, some of the questions are always the same ones, so if you [the instructor] answer them before hand, because you know they will have those questions, even though the instructions are clear on the platform, they really appreciate that you take the time and the effort to explain once again to any means all the activities that they need to do. So, if you can send them an email, if you can then talk about it again on the online sessions, if you post an

> announcement as well, that will help them to develop the evidences and that will help them to develop them in in a correct way. Because sometimes they do not see the instructions, sometimes they do not do that, so I think it is very important for them because whenever they are frustrated, I think some of them quit, that's what happens, I cannot do this, I'm going to quit. (Johanna, instructor participant)

Similarly, the SENA institution expects that communication between students and instructors takes place mostly through the course platform's discussion forums and internal messaging. However, email was the most commonly means used by all instructor participants to contact their students. In addition, some instructors created WhatsApp groups to take advantage of the immediacy this tool offered to respond to students' questions promptly.

> To guide the students to find the material, the support material in order to have a better performance in the course, I mean, I always send emails, I always try to record video tutorials where I always explain how to explore the platform. How to find the activities, how to find a material to study, that's my most important role...in the platform.
>
> (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

> Well, I usually post some announcements with the deadlines for each activity, and since I started these virtual classes, I've been creating some WhatsApp groups where I just keep telling them the deadlines for these activities. I mean those are like my two keys, my two tools to get them know the deadlines of the activities. (Jose, instructor participant)

Some instructor participants agreed that their effort to support students was not achieved when students did not receive the information instructors sent to them:

> But sometimes the problem is communication because I do my best to let them know about the starting date of the week, everything, the rules, everything. But the students, I

> don't know why they just don't receive the information. So, for example in the previous courses one apprentice told me: teacher, but I don't understand, if I did the whole thing, all the activities, but I didn't approve the course. Why? When I checked she was doing the activities in the material, the material of study, not the activities." (Gabriela, instructor participant)

This might happen for various reasons: First, because students' email addresses were not updated or were inaccurate in the institution databases. Second, due to students' own decision, as one of the student participants argued:

> It is both sides, ...because an invite needs to be accepted to be functional. I mean, the instructor did his part of motivating students, but students are free to get that message. Sometimes, some students accept to be motivated, but others don't. (Ten, student participant)

In relation to encouragement strategies that instructor participants used, which were directly related to course activities or assignments, instructors acknowledged students' participation and students' individual and group work. They shared examples of students' good work, posted honor rolls, provided incentives to students (i.e., additional points in assignments), made course activities available all the time, accepted resubmission of assignments, and negotiated with students to avoid conflicts due to activity requirements.

In regard to instructor strategy of acknowledging students' participation, individual and group work, the majority of the students found this strategy supporting their engagement in learning. For example, one of the student participants commented: "With the grades, he posted our grades and he replied to each student's forum post by saying what was right or wrong to improve" (Alvaro, student participant).

However, for some student participants, who were struggling with the course, mainly due to their low level of English language proficiency, receiving these types of messages generated negative emotions:

> Well, I was disappointed, sad, bored because I also wanted my name to be there, because if I had enrolled in the course, it was because I was personally committed. For me, to learn the language has become a challenge, an obsession. Because... I am 48 years old, and it would be great if I could talk to a person or understand... or read an article in other language. (Dayluz, student participant)

In addition, instructors encouraged students to participate in the courses by providing exemplars or examples of students' good work:

> What I usually do, for example in the forum, I give them some engagement, like some positive comments like, thanks for your posting, I appreciate what you wrote, and I gave them some feedback. Besides we have some video conference every week, and in those video conferences, I always read up some activities and homework that they did during the week and told them, look at this, this is a real example, and that example was done, for example, by Alexandra. And as it was, it met the requirements... Alexandra did an excellent job. That's the way I acknowledge her homework. (Jose, instructor participant)

Or some instructor participants posted an honor roll:

> Yes, I remind them, remind them the schedule every week. I say, dear students, today is April 22nd, we are working in these activities, please, hurry up, remember that this weekend we have to do the activities, we have to do all the activities, if you want to be in the honor roll, because I publish an honor roll when students do all the proposed

> activities for the week, they are going to appear in these honor roll. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

Most student participants (more than 50%) found encouraging to keep working in the course: “That part was good, ... I think that from the third week and on, he starts posting like an honor chart... and it encourages me to be in that chart” (Darwin, student participant). Another student stated: “By means of an honor chart, where the name of the students who were on task appeared... It is motivating because it is a way to acknowledge students who are doing the things well, it is an incentive for other students to do the same” (Edward, student participant).

Providing incentives or challenging students in the course were also found to have supported student engagement in the online learning environment by some of the instructor participants:

> Because they [students], they feel like that they have to be responsible to develop an activity, because it is giving them points, or an extra grade, so they feel happy to do it, so it is like a game, it is a competence, you can give them like a challenge and when you challenge them, it is a good way to motivate them. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

This was acknowledged by some of the student participants:

> because people like to be acknowledged by their work, so I think they make an effort to be in the online course... to learn a new language and it is reflected in this way, for example, it encourages a lot. (Patty, student participant)

In terms of availability of course activities and assignments, they must be made available for the students all the time, that is, from the beginning to the end of the course, according to institutional guidelines. For the majority of instructor and student participants, it was an effective

strategy to keep students working in the course, as Matias (instructor participant) mentioned: "Yes, that part is good. When an activity is closed, the student drops out.

> Sometimes the [course assignment's] due dates were extended, and it helps because when we [students] cannot meet the due dates, ... and we are given the opportunity, we put a lot of effort into being able to submit the assignments, so it is an excellent opportunity (Buenaventura, student participant)

In addition, availability of course activities increased student participation, as Isabela (instructor participant) commented:

> Currently, there are more participation because they [students] know that course activities are available 24/7 from the first to the last day. It gives them the relief and flexibility to do them at any time. It will make them more active. I have to say that before we used to certify from four to five students, or maximum 10 per course and I closed the courses last Tuesday with 98 certified students and that's a high certification rate.

However, as Rochi, another instructor participant indicated that having activities available all the time favored students who really wanted to learn the language and were aware of the importance of learning English. For those students who were taking the course as a graduation requirement (e.g., technical and technological students), it became an opportunity to cheat since they ended up sending classmates' course assignments on the last day of the course. Similarly, for some instructor participants, this flexibility could have affected students' learning process negatively considering that students might develop activities in a different order to the expected and skipped information that was required to be studied previously, as Nemo (instructor participant) indicated:

> Well. Initially when we began a few years ago, with this type of online learning, students had to, they were obligated to follow the schedule because you could only, only develop certain parts of the activities only those you'd find online. One week, certain activities, but for the following week, those activities were not available and then you would have to develop only the activities for the other week, and at the end of the course you have all your activities online that you go back and see probably which one I can change, what can I do here, what can I do there, not all activities are online at the same time, so students choose which one they want to develop, okay and sometimes they begin at the last activity, and then come from forward. No, it's not good for them because they are not accustomed to online activities.

Allowing students to resubmitting course assignments was another strategy, which the majority of the instructor and student participants found contributing to students' persistence in the course. It provided an opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes, which was highly valued by many of them:

> Because for example if an apprentice sends as evidence, and the evidence isn't good because he committed some mistakes, when you give this type of feedback, they can understand why they committed a mistake, they have to do it again, and they have the opportunity to correct it, so they don't feel it like I failed, or I cannot do anything, that way, they say, the teacher is telling me that I can do it again, that I can continue. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

> It helps us [students] understand why we are wrong, because, for example, if someone tell me, you did X wrong, repeat it and I do not know what to correct, how do I know to determine if I actually have to correct it and what I have to correct, so she [the instructor]

> gives me three options: first she provides the material, and so I can work on it and review what the instructor says and if it is necessary to correct it again. I think I can become more perfectionist, and concepts are easier. It makes me aware she makes me repeat the activities until they are right. I like it." (Kelly, student participant)

Considering instructor encouragement strategies to keep students on task, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants were really concerned that students submitted assignments on the due dates. With that purpose, the majority of instructors usually sent lists of students who were on tasks and posted considerable number of massive assignment reminders:

> We have the established timetable, I post it and send reminders. I add explanatory information in the course announcements but with pedagogical work because I notice that students get blocked and do not continue in the course and get demotivated. (Matias, instructor participant)

> Well, I usually post some announcements with the deadlines for each activity, and since I started these virtual classes, I been creating some WhatsApp groups where I just keep telling them the deadlines for these activities. I mean those are like my two keys, my two tools to get them know the deadlines of the activities. (Jose, instructor participant)

> The instructor sent a message to congratulate the students who were sending the course assignments timely. The instructor acknowledged students' participation…. It was done in the platform and there were email messages with those congratulation to someone and someone.... (Dayluz, student participant)

Although students appreciated instructors "course reminders supporting students" engagement in learning, for students those messages were more effective when they were addressed individually, as Darwin, one of the student participants argued:

> I sent the activities I think on the last day, because the timetable was not clear for me, I had not seen it. So, that is why I think it is a good idea that the instructor sent an individual email message to make it clear that the assignment due date is approaching.

In regard to strategies to encouraging students to be proactive learners, the majority of instructor participants asked students to log on into the course frequently, submit activities on time, and participate in online discussion forums. For instructor participants, this encouragement supported students' engagement in learning because it helped students plan their time to work in the course and to get in touch with the instructor. For example, User1 (instructor participant) explained:

> It will engage them even more because language is....to communicate, to be in permanent contact. And the more time they are studying, the more they are going to learn. Although we know that online courses give more flexibility, and the person who is enrolled in an online course is because that person needs to schedule their time to review, to study, to analyze, and to contact the teacher in some cases for solving themes, solve doubts, for recommendations and the things that they need to do to complete, to understand, to continue. That's why being proactive will help students.

In addition, some instructor participants were aware of the positive effect of encouraging students to be proactive learners in terms of submitting assignments before the due date and their acknowledgement on the quality of the assignments (students' work). For instance, Luisfer (instructor participant) noted:

> Yeah, on the platform the instructor can see when the student has logged in the platform, yeah. And the active role of them, some apprentices for instance, they upload the learning activities before the time, before the deadline, their commitment is really good when they

> have the opportunity to solve, they understand the topic, and take an active role, with the evidences because they read the comments, ... they provide a comment about the evidences, they say it is easy or difficult for me. Or well I enjoyed this activity, those are the comments that they say.

However, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants indicated that even though students were encouraged to be proactive learners, a significant number of students sent the course assignments or their work on the last days of the course. Unfortunately, this might have negatively affected the quality of feedback instructors provided to meet the institutional time requirements:

> Well, because that's one of the things that is frustrating the most. Because on the last four days of the course you get 200, 300, evidences. So, it is very frustrating, and I haven't found a way for them to upload them on time. (Johanna, instructor participant).

Finally, in terms of instructors being an example or a role model to follow as an encouragement strategy, some instructor participants showed themselves their teaching engagement, by participating in the course as learners; being nice, polite, and persistent; and making students feel confident and comfortable to participate:

> For example, if they don’t do it good, or if they don't want to participate, I involve myself as an apprentice, so they see that I'm not only the teacher, but I'm part of the group of the work so they can feel pressure. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

In turn, some students acknowledged instructors’ qualities as encouraging them to be more engaged in their learning. For example, Yiliver (student participant) stated: “I think the instructor has been disciplined and persistent in that exercise, on the forum discussions, on the email, and even more on the synchronous sessions.”

The last group of encouragement strategies instructor participants considered that supported student engagement in online English learning related to different ways that they used to identify and address students' needs, preferences, and skills in order to capitalize on them and to show interest in students' learning. For example, Cau, one of the instructor participants, has been attentive to students' information provided in the social forums:

> That's that I believe that me as a teacher or everyone as SENA's instructors there, they need to understand the environment, where the students are working, or the reasons why they are in the English levels. And that's exactly where you need to go deeply in terms of getting more information because to be useful in their jobs, life or I don't know, their courses or English courses, whatever they are the reasons why they are in those courses... what you need to pay a lot of attention, a lot of attention when they introduce themselves in the social Forum because those are the key reasons that make you understand probably the reasons why they are in that level, so what do you want to do with that information, so that's my strategy. I believe that's a few teachers' strategy too because I have had to work with them too, and there is when you get more information related to the reasons why they are in that level, etc.

Content understanding strategies. These strategies included the different actions taken by the instructors to help students understand the English course content. The participants were able to identify: first, strategies used by the instructors to present and explain course topics, such as explaining grammar topics in synchronous sessions and discussion forums, asking and answering questions, personalizing examples, and highlighting key information. Second, strategies used for promoting English language practice, namely, providing examples of expected posts, interacting

in English in synchronous sessions, and providing resources or tools for students to use the language in real contexts.

In terms of pedagogical strategies that instructors used with the purpose of explaining course topics, most student and instructor participants agreed that they happened if students asked for them since the course provided the content with explanations, practice, and supplementary resources:

> I start clarifying things that maybe they don't have at that time some points. Also, there are some points in the materials that are explained but there are some missing points. And when they ask me, I just try to complete those pieces that maybe are missing for them. (User1, instructor participant)
>
> I did not have too much contact to ask about each thing. What I didn't understand, I asked it punctually and he (the instructor) responded exactly that. But there are people who ask too much especially on the synchronous sessions.... (Roger, student participant)

In addition, both instructor and student participants remarked that online discussion forums and synchronous sessions were the most common places where instructor's explanation of course topics happened: "In the online sessions, we [students] expected the instructor responded... we asked directly and he [the instructor] answered the questions directly. He asked if the doubts had been solved of if there were need of additional information" (Yaco, student participant).

> For example, when they have some questions, some specific questions, they use the Questions and Concerns Forum. So, they write some questions about some specific topics, so we have an online session and maybe we have the opportunity to interact with the students sometimes. If they have any questions, we have the opportunity to explain

> some specific items or grammar, or information, or something like that. (Tabata, instructor participant)
>
> Well, in the synchronous sessions, he [the instructor] answer our questions, he types [on the chat room], while we [students] are responding, he also interacts with us. And in the course by means of the messages that he posts, for example in the discussion forums, he responds to our questions... and he incentives us to continue. (Patty, student participant)

In regard to synchronous sessions, most instructor and student participants acknowledged the contribution these sessions made for students to engage in their learning considering that it was a space to meet course participants and to clarify students' doubts about the course content and the assignments. Examples of responses from several students and an instructor included the following: "When there are doubts, we [students] have the option to contact him [the instructor], and it helps a lot in our learning" (Angie, student participant).

> Well, the first thing for me is the online session, it is the biggest tool. What I do is that I always provide them [students] with a PowerPoint Presentation or PowerPoint slides. And in these slides, I give them.... The online sessions are only on sharing the platform, and what they should do in the platform so that's clearer of what they should do. What I do is to make a class. So, we're going to talk about the Simple present. So, this is the structure, this is the theme, this is the grammatical structure, or the points they need to fulfill in the evidence. And then, I would tell them how they download the document. The material, where they find it. And one example about how the evidence should be developed. I think I think that is how I do and it has worked. But what is the thing with that? that not all the students access the online session. (Johanna, instructor participant).

> Yes, they [synchronous sessions] are very important. When I cannot attend them, I see and listen to the recordings, and for me it's very important that the instructor is there, he clarifies a lot of doubts, we[students] can make questions. Although we also have Doubts and Questions forum, but here it is more direct...so it is easier to interact with him. (Patty, student participant)

Even though synchronous sessions were considered fundamental to support students' engagement and learning, an overwhelming majority of student and instructor participants agreed that attendance to these sessions was considerable low. This is what Jose Luis, one of the instructors, mentioned:

> In the online sessions. At this moment I have 240 students. And when I schedule an online session, I have 20 students, no more. Twenty out of 240. I have yeah 240 students and only 20 people show up on the online sessions.

Different reasons were given to explain this low participation in synchronous sessions. First, and most importantly, students did not have the time availability to attend the sessions even though instructors scheduled them at night or at different times during the week when they considered the timing was more convenient: "They are working, they have family, they don't have the time. I have those online sessions at night, at 7 pm" (Jose Luis, instructor participant). Second, some students did not count with the technological skills or software to participate in the sessions or they did not find the sessions meeting their expectations:

> Maybe they [students] don't have the Internet connection, they don't have the software installed in their computers, sometimes I receive some emails where people say teacher, I couldn't see the online session, I don't know what happens to my computer. Maybe they don't have the software requirements, so I have to tell them that there are some software

> requirements that they have to install in their computers in order to attend the online sessions. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)
>
> They [instructors] have to do a synchronous session where they what practically do is reading the guide, provide feedback and solve students' doubts about the guide.... In that case I agreed with the feedback... everything is too rigid, and I do not think education should be like that.... (Andres, student participant)

Third, some instructors concurred that those students who were not really interested in learning English and who were taking the course as a requirement might not find synchronous sessions useful, as one of the instructor participants added:

> Well, I think it depends on the goals they have in the course. Because if they just want to certificate the levels, they will find the way to send the evidences and that's it. But if they really want to learn, those are the ones that attend the sessions, they are the ones who are interested in what I am talking about, what I am teaching, they are asking questions. (Johanna, instructor participant)

Finally, synchronous sessions were not graded, and some instructors agreed that it might become a reason for students not to attend those sessions. For example, Matias, one of the instructor participants, stated:

> It is a good idea, but synchronous sessions are not mandatory, the students do not participate. If they were mandatory, we could possibly promote them. The course itself should promote it. It would be a fundamental too. Students engage with activities that are gradable.

In terms of resources instructors used to facilitate students' understanding of course topics, instructor participants mentioned the use of pictures, video tutorials, examples, among

others: “I like to show a lot of pictures when I provide my explanation to make sure that they understand” (Maria, instructor participant). Instructors also tried to find the best way to contact students who required support and provide them with different resources that students could use to clarify topics. For example, Mapuckae (instructor participant) explained:

> First, I try to contact them by a direct message to tell them if we can be online at the same time, by the chat that is in Blackboard or I try to give them links and explain them by examples, the same method in English. I also use YouTube tutorials, so for example, they say: ‘teacher, I have difficulties with a, b, or c.’ So, I look for some videos in YouTube .... and let me know if it is good if they are ok.’ Most of the time the apprentices understand, what I like to do is to write by email, and give them examples, examples like of daily things for them to understand the grammar structure.

In regard to strategies that instructors used to promote English language practice, the majority of instructor and student participants agreed that they took place mainly in synchronous sessions and in discussion forums: “I think it happens mostly in the discussion forums... every instructor posts an example, and we respond based on that” (Darwin, student participant). Some instructor participants adapted the level of difficulty of English language examples and encouraged students to personalize those examples in such a way that reminded them and made them part of their conversation in English:

> If I want to explain for example the present continuous, I always tell my students that they have to think on the activities that they do every day. Something that could be for them easier, not complex examples, for example in some books I always find examples that are difficult for students are for beginner students, right? They are always, they are always waiting for, for easier examples. For example, on the online sessions I asked

> questions about their own daily routines. For example, what were you doing this morning? So, they remind those activities, and it is easier for them to express it in English. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)
>
> Well, there are different ways. For example, when we are taking the synchronous sessions or Web Conference, I speak with them in English all the time, in order to clarify their doubts, vocabulary also. When we are chatting, for instance on WhatsApp, the feedback is similar, in English. When they need to submit the information that is within the content or through the Forum, they make emphasis on the activity. But apart from that, they provide comments to the apprentices, if they agree or disagree with an aspect or make emphasis on the extra help that they receive. (Luisfer, instructor participant)

Most instructor participants encouraged students to use English in synchronous sessions which some students found it engaging and effective for applying what they were studying in the course: “It was interesting that English is to be used in real life and not to have it inside a classroom” (Ten, student participant). However, some instructor participants, mainly those in English lower-proficiency courses found that students were not willing to speak in English. In some cases, it was because students did not feel confident in using the language. For instance, Acuario68, one of the instructors reported what one of his students expressed: “OK teacher, if it is going to be in English, so I quit, because I do not understand anything.” In other cases, because some students were shy and reluctant to speak English, as Nemo (instructor participant) explained:

> Well. Right now, the students I work with are like a little shy because, well, normally there like written participations. But whenever I ask them to make a spoken participation, speak out, say what you want to say, don’t write, okay then, the percentage of

> participation just goes right up. They are shy, they don't want to participate, but without talking you won't be able to improve your speaking ability.

Strategies for English language practice also took place in online discussion forums in which instructors encouraged students' participation by asking additional questions and encouraged students to keep asking:

> For example, on the forums, we have the opportunity to ask them some specific questions. It depends on the level they are. For example, the thematic forum, I don't know a specific situation, when they participate, you have the opportunity to write them a question, a specific situation, they have to participate again, so they have to think about them, they have, they have to create a new question, and you answer about the question. It is an alternative to motivate to students to write more. (Tabata, instructor participant)

Feedback strategies. These strategies related to instructors' actions to follow up students' progress along the process to support students' learning. Similar to previous studies (e.g., Shepard et al., 2005), this study also evidenced the fundamental role instructor feedback plays in helping students engage in their learning and to keep participating actively in the course:

> Feedback is very important.... It helps me to know if I'm doing the things in the right or wrong way, so the comments she made with each grade, for example, she said "practice this a little bit more, work more on this...." So, I understood I had to improve in this or that. So, it is very good, because it is not about the grade but about student's learning. (Jorge Armando, student participant)

In addition, feedback is an opportunity that instructor participants have to connect with students and make them aware of their advance in the course. For example, Cau, one of the instructor participants, stated:

> The feedback is basically that pill that you need to give them for them to keep sending the information and the activities, the feedback is a great, a great moment when you have the chance to talk to them, or tell them, or write to them, if they fulfilled the objective of the activity or not.

Importantly, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants concurred that providing feedback was their key role in the instructional process, which demanded most of their time and energy. Mariela, one of the instructors, for example commented: “We [instructors] are like mediators... who are there accompanying the process, and the most fundamental[role] is providing feedback to activities, that’s the key.” Similarly, students were usually expectant of receiving prompt instructor feedback as evidence of continuous support and encouragement, as instructor and student participants mentioned: “I did an assignment which was incorrect... and he [the instructor] was there with timely feedback” (Wendy, student participant).

> They are waiting for the grade. They wait for feedback; they wait for the grade. If I don't grade every day, if I don't give feedback every day, for example if I give feedback every 3 days, not day by day, they are going to get bored, because they think that the teacher doesn't have the compromise with them. But if I grade and give feedback every day, they are they're going to feel confident; they are going to feel comfortable. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

In terms of instructor feedback content, the majority of instructor participants agreed on the need of providing quality feedback to students’ assignments, as Johanna remarked: “It is very important for students to see good feedback, not only to say, ‘good job’.” In that sense, the majority of the instructor participants concurred that they highlighted the positive aspects of the

assignment or student work, corrected mistakes, and provided additional resources to clarify course topics:

> The way I give feedback I use the sandwich method, because first you give them like a good commentary, 'you did good', 'you did great', 'thank you for your activity', 'this is awesome.' OK, in the middle, you tell them, ok, 'these are the mistakes, you have to correct this, remember, remember the verb to be is used like this'.... And at the end, I include something that tells, 'you did it good, you can keep it up, you can continue. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

Most instructor and student participants also highlighted that most students highly valued this explanatory feedback which made students aware of their achievements, strategies for improvement, and ways to meet assessment task expectations. This, in turn, supported students' learning. For example, Jose, one of the instructor participants, argued:

> Okay, well, what I usually do when a student sends me homework, I just write or type, the good things about their homework and then I give them some feedback about the wrong things or the mistakes they are making. Okay I usually give them like two or three things to improve for next activity. And sometimes I include links, or I included yeah mostly links for them to review a specific topic, especially grammatical topics.... I think it is engaging for them because some of them have told me in the WhatsApp group that they liked the feedback I gave them, and that it was useful for them to improve.
>
> For example, in one of the assignments I sent last week...in which we had to use There is, There are, with the parts of the house, she sent a supporting material, a good explanation on the grammar structure to be able to do the assignment in the right way.... So, she made

> corrections and wrote how There is and There should be used with countable nouns. (Buenaventura, student participant)

In addition, instructor participants' decisions on feedback content were determined by the English course level they were teaching. For instance, in the lowest levels (e.g., Beginner, and Levels 1 and 2), most instructors focused on the language structure such as grammar and spelling; whereas, in the most advanced levels (e.g., Levels 5 and 6), instructors commented on paragraph construction and ideas. User1, one of the instructor participants, explained:

> It depends on the course level. If I am in the beginner level, they [students] participate with simple things. It is understandable. The idea is to check the construction, vocabulary, grammar, the writing part, but in upper levels that is a little bit like a more content. Maybe more detailed content to practice, and in that sense, you can give them a little bit of feedback related their concepts, not only about the writing but also the writing in the sense of grammar structure also in terms of the coherence, cohesion, question.

Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants did not use the rubrics provided by the institution to assess their students' course assignments. Despite this, some of the instructor participants found the rubrics to be useful in their assessment of students' work and for their students to understand the assessment task expectations. For example, Pavo, one of the instructors, mentioned: "It's good, I think it is better to have the rubric, because before they send the activity ..., they could see what they are graded. They know what they are graded"; using those rubrics, according to some of the instructor participants, did not allow them to provide an accurate assessment, limited the instructor's autonomy in terms of providing the type of feedback which they considered to be more supportive of students' learning. Moreover, the provision of quality feedback was time consuming:

> I'd like feedback in which, I, as an instructor, can tell the students what they were wrong: "Good morning student, you used the expected grammar structures for this assignment, for example in the use of frequency adverbs, but when we are talking about frequency adverbs with the verb 'to be', it is placed differently." I'd like to give students that clarity about what was wrong.... But, by following step by step what the TIGRE rubric includes, so we will spend an hour providing feedback. (Isabela, instructor participant)

Similarly, some student participants expected that their instructors expanded feedback beyond the rubric and commented punctually on their assignments. This would enable them to be aware of the improvements needed to achieve the learning goals in the course.

> So, for example, instructors should make use of the word document of the student assignment to make observations and comments and in this way, learning would be more interactive and personal. They could make comments, similar to a conversation in the same document... for us to understand the mistakes and be able to make the necessary corrections in the same document. It is the interactive part I am talking about and I think it would work better. (Andres, student participant)

Finally, some instructor participants found that their feedback content and quality were affected by the time frames they needed to meet to provide feedback to students' assignments as mandated by the institution (i.e., 24 hours for forum posts and 48 hours for other assignments). This is due, on the one side, to the high number of course assignments (17 assignments in six weeks) and, on the other, to the number of students enrolled in each class (80 students and a full-time instructor usually teaches four courses in the SENA program) considering that instructors were required to provide individualized feedback:

> All the time, as I told you before it is not easy because of time, because you have to hurry up in order to be able to accomplish everything in the time we have. So sometimes I cannot spend more time. We have one 24 hours to answer the forums, 48 hours to answer the rest of the activities. (Gabriela, instructor participants)

In regard to how student and instructor participants considered that the feedback strategies implemented by instructors were useful to support student engagement in learning, different perspectives were identified. For example, for most of the student participants, instructor feedback supported their engagement only when it was timely and personalized, and only when the feedback showed that the instructor's commitment to improve student learning: "everything was timely, I liked that because as soon as I submitted an assignment, in the following day I had my feedback" (Jorge Armando, student participant).

> With the instructor in my Photoshop there was always personalized feedback where she noted individual changes, improvement, assignment mistakes... in English the feedback was massive. I find it informative... it would be better if it was more personalized for the student to see the mistakes. (Ten, student participant)

> It is important, because when we do an assignment... in the instructor's feedback we realize that he took the time to read it, to review it, because for us it is positive that he gives time to correct it... when it is very detailed, we understand that he took the time to read... not only to know if we approved or not approved... it demonstrated that he took the time to review each of the done activities. (Yaco, student participant)

For the majority of (more than 50%) the instructor participants, their feedback had a positive effect on students who were really interested in their English language learning, who took the time to read the instructor's feedback, and who took immediate actions accordingly:

> For those who want to learn, it will be positive to read the feedback. And they have told me, they have told me, teacher, very good, you wrote to me something very special, and it was a great experience for me to read it. They have told me because they read the information .... The teacher congratulated me because I did a very good audio, I practiced before sending the evidence. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

In fact, the majority of the instructor and student participants found that allowing students to resubmit their assignments, as a result of instructor feedback, was an effective strategy for the students to keep participating in the course:

> I think some of them do, some read them, and they emailed me with the corrections, they asked if they should send it on the platform, I always tell them...if you get the question from me, you take the time to correct it, that would be amazing. It's not about grading, it's about learning. (Maria, instructor participant)

> Because for example if an apprentice sends an evidence, and the evidence isn't good because he committed some mistakes, when you give this type of feedback, they can understand why they committed a mistake, they have to do it again, and they have the opportunity to correct it, so they don't feel it like I failed, or I cannot do anything, that way, they say, the teacher is telling me that I can do it again, that I can continue. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

> In fact, I failed two course assignments because I made mistakes. He graded the assignment as failing, but he made a comment where he explained where the mistake was and why it was made. That’s the way there is an opportunity to learn to correct it. (Yiliver, student participant)

On the contrary, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants were on agreement that some students, for example, those who were taking the course as a requirement, did not usually take the time to read the instructors' feedback because they were mainly interested in knowing the grade so that their English proficiency levels were certified. Surprisingly, almost all of the instructor participants emphasized the need for the institution to update the course assignments which had been used for years. Because of this, students could find and download the answers from the Internet, and submitted their assignments merely for summative assessment purposes.

> Because all of them are in the Internet. So, they can see the answers, they can download the evidences, they don't have to do anything, they just get the answers, and they didn't study anything, and they get a certification without doing anything, so I would change that. And I would modify some of the activities, not all of them because there are some did you have to read, you have to develop your own material, with your own words, with your information. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)
>
> SENA has to design more material, more activities, they have to change the activities. Because for example the same activities for the same year. And after five years, English Dot Works level Beginner with the same activities.... (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

The need of updating the course assignments was also supported by one of the student participants. She commented on how she took the same course at different times and had the same course assignments:

> In English, for example, I have done this course various times and so at any point we [students] know how the assignments are, we learn them by heart, because the assignments are always the same, we never see changes. I had downloaded them and I

> knew what were the required activities, but there were times that I got my feedback by email, but it was not the same, I could not understand and finally I said: I give up because I don't understand what is what the instructor needs and I don't know how to get what he expects and he is not explaining to me, so I decided to leave like that. (Danna, student participant)

Connection strategies. Connection strategies refer to those strategies that instructors use to establish or foster course participants' relationships to support engagement and learning. Although for a few students the length of the course did not favor community building since each level in the online English program lasted only 60 hours:

> What happens is that the courses are too short, so that purpose is not achieved...and the students in each of the courses are different, so it is not achieved. Let's say that in other course that I'm taking at SENA, it [community building] happens because it is a technological program and the same students are along the course, but in this case of short courses, this cohesion is not achieved. There is interaction by means of the discussion forums, but it is not the kind of interaction in which that purpose is reached. (Roger, student participant)

For the majority of the student participants, being connected with course participants was found to be helpful to persist in their learning: "there is nothing better than learning with someone else and I think that teamwork is very important to succeed in certain projects. In fact, we can help other people to motivate to continue, to get engaged" (Jorge Armando, student participant).

Connection strategies involve, first, community building strategies such as posting a welcoming message, posting instructor personal introduction, making students feel part of a

community. Second, communication strategies such as being respectful and assertive, making students feel confident to connect, and being kind and warm in the communication with students. Finally, peer connection strategies which involve encouraging students to connect with peers to ask for and provide support.

In terms of instructor strategies intended to create an inviting atmosphere to build a learning community, all the instructor participants agreed that they welcomed students at the beginning of the course, posted a personal introduction, and encouraged students to post their self-introduction to the online discussion forum. In terms of instructor participants' personal introductions, they were usually short, with basic information such as name and teaching experience. In fact, some instructor participants did not include additional personal information because they considered that it might not be appropriate:

> My introduction is very formal. I tell them my profile and for how many years I have worked with SENA. But other than.... I don't share personal information. I see that was a very good point that I did in a previous course that I have I talked about my favorite read, my favorite talk, or my favorite movies, or something like that.... But I'm not sure, I don't do that, I thought it was not very professional. (Johanna, instructor participant).

In addition, instructor participants' personal introductions were usually formal, mainly as a result of institutional guidelines, and also because they considered it to be more respectful for the students: "I always try to be like formal in my speech, so what I try to do in the introduction and mainly in all announcements is to be as formal as I can" (Jose, instructor participant).

> Indeed, I need to be formal. I need to be a kind of example for them. We are in an educational environment and we need to be the example.... Also there is a specific part in the standard at SENA that tells us that we need to be respectful. In other things, in those

> things I use the communication tools I try to be neutral in terms of levels of formality but being respectful. Sometimes depending on this kind of person on the kinds of student, you know, you know if you can be a little closer.... (User1, instructor participant)

Similarly, the majority of student participants agreed that most of their instructors used formal language in their communication, which they found to be appropriate, considering the academic context in which they were participating. Nevertheless, an instructor's formality did not affect students' engagement in their learning: "She was not informal, she used the words appropriately" (Buenaventura, student participant); "Her introduction was very formal, organized, and a good example for us [students]" (Joseph, student participant); "Her introduction included her occupation, her educational studies, her teaching experience....it [being formal] does not influence keeping on the course or not" (Yaco, student participant).

Interestingly, few student and instructor participants considered that being informal in instructors' personal introductions would make them more approachable for students and encourage students to participate more actively in the course: "In my introduction, I don't know if it is informal. By experience, there would be more empathy with instructors who are more informal and closer. It would make students feel more comfortable" (Matias, instructor participant). This is echoed by a student: "It was interesting because he was very close to students... his introduction was nice and generated trust, he made us [students] keep going. It is very important" (Angie, student participant).

> I think it's like a bit informal, but in order to invite them to feel free, to feel comfortable to write about their lives, their personal information, so if you are too formal, it's impossible how to motivate them to write, so it's better if you do it as a friend maybe but you are the teacher at the same time. (Tabata, instructor participant)

> She is a little informal, but we [students] don't feel disrespected, we feel being in a familiar and trustful environment. She [the instructor] sends email messages and writes for example: I am available at certain times, but if you need me at a different time, if I can help making you activities available, or providing support on course assignments, I'm ok with that, we can manage that. (Kelly, student participant)

Communication with students was key for the instructor participants to help students engage in their learning:

> I think one of the tools we have is when we have the opportunity to send them emails, for example, if they are participating or if they are uploading some activities, or evidences and maybe they don't have time to upload one of the activities, I send him or her an email in order to motivate them to participate in the activities. So, I think communication is really important to motivate students in the course. (Tabata, instructor participant)

Consequently, in the second group of connection strategies, most of the instructor participants highlighted the importance of maintaining a respectful and assertive communication with students. This was highly valued by some student participants:

> He [the instructor] used the platform, where we log in to do the course activities. There is one component that is the announcements. They [instructors] post weekly announcements, at the beginning, middle, and end of the week where they post about which course week, we [students] are in, assignments' due dates, reminders or forum posts. In those announcements, communication is very assertive because they use the accurate words... it is easy to understand. In addition, the announcements are copied to students' emails. (Kelly, student participant)

In addition, most of instructors made students feel confident to connect. Most instructor participants were found to be kind and warm in their communication with students. For example, they considered helping students to connect with them for support, as Nemo (instructor participant) remarked: “Well, I guess having confidence in a group will help you do the activities and whenever you have difficulties, you will get in contact with the person or people that will be able to help you.”

Similarly, the majority of the instructor and student participants were aware of the need to help students practice acceptable behaviors in online learning environments and agreed that when students understood that the learning environment was safe, they were more willing to continue their participation in the course:

> I agree with those rules because if they [students] know how to behave in an online course, they are able to feel engaged because they know they are going to be respectful and they are going to receive respectful manners. Sometimes, well, until this moment I haven't had this experience, but in courses before for example, people in Beginner write in capital letters, that means that maybe they are angry or maybe that they are greedy. When I invite them to read the behavioral rules and also to give a specific detail in the comment, telling them that it means that maybe that they are greedy or maybe that they are angry, and I say, please, check the behavioral rules for more information, they start to know me some tips for them to behave better. So, I agree with those rules. I agree that SENA provides the standard rules to interact in the forums. (User1, instructor participant)
>
> Well, basically, they [netiquette rules] contributed to avoid discrimination or any type of pointing or use of rude words. Everything was kept in a polite environment, without excess of familiarity, or any kind of things that could hurt people or inappropriate

> behaviors. There was an invite to be respectful with classmates who could not have the same knowledge and skills to avoid conflict.... It helped a lot, for example in the synchronous sessions because there were people who felt embarrassed with their pronunciation due to lack of knowledge. So, it generated a space for everyone to feel welcome to participate and being ware that we were there to correct and being corrected and not to be laughed at. (Ten, student participant)

Unfortunately, a few of the instructor participants decidedly encouraged students to read and practice the netiquette rules posted in the platform:

> Okay, I took a look at that and I said no I am not doing that. I'm not telling them what the appropriate behaviors are, how they... they should act, how they should talk to the instructor. And then I found in my previous courses they were some kind of rude, like demanding things and not in a very polite way. So, what I did this time, after taking the survey, I showed them some of the e-learning like etiquette. (Johanna, instructor participant).

> I send it from Announcements in the platform, there is one that says that you can go to a certain place to see the rules for Netiquette. And in the first video conference I also show them and tell them about it.... I think it's just information. (Gabriela, instructor participant)

> Okay, again according to the institution, they have provided all this information, so we as instructors, as tutors, do not have to intervene in those parts.... Exactly, is it is included in the course, well, all we've got to do is to remind them to go and read the information about these aspects. (Nemo, instructor participant)

The final group of connection strategies instructor participants used were those related to encouraging students to connect with peers for mutual support. Although an overwhelming majority of instructor and student participants agreed that the course itself did not encourage collaboration in group work:

> Any activity in the course promotes peer work, only individual work. If students understood that they were part of a learning community, they would engage more with their learning. They wouldn't wait only for the instructor's support. Students would be able to support each other when instructors are off duties. (Matias, instructor participant)
>
> [If there were more connection with students], we [students] would work together and there would be more communication with other classmate. I think that communication would be the other tool apart from the platform and the synchronous sessions where we could interact with the other students and it does not happen. (Ten, student participant)

Some of the student and instructor participants considered connecting with peers would help students engage in their learning due the mutual support it generated:

> Well, when you know someone in an online activity, it helps you to be more engaged. It is really important because you commit with that person, with the instructor and with the course in general to manage to do an activity. (Danna, student participant)
>
> Part of asking them or telling them how to be more active in the course is that whenever a student needs support, they do not only expect it from the instructor, but also from the other students, to their classmates, so one way of being active is to give answer and support other classmates. (Nemo, instructor participant)

Resource provision strategies. The majority of instructor and student participants remarked that students felt that they were supported when instructors provided the necessary resources to

understand the course topics, to navigate the online course platform and activities, and to address students' learning preferences. This, in turn, helped students to engage in their learning. For example, one of the student participants pointed out: "They [resources] helped a lot because since I knew about the course topics, I was able to find information on my own and review in advance what we [students] were going to study" (Alexandra, student participant). Another student explained: "Resources help because I like the English language, they encouraged me to deepen my understanding of topics to improve my English level" (German, student participant).

In terms of resources related to course topics, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants agreed that they provided additional resources only if students requested them given that the course content was complete or in some cases overloaded: "Well, once I was trained to use SENA's online library, where I could find some interesting books. In other occasion, I wrote to the instructor about a course topic, or a reading, and he sent me some websites" (Angie, student participant).

In addition, because some students sometimes did not read the course materials provided by their instructors: "I know the instructor provided the material, because in some courses, instructors provide additional resources for students to study, so I think it is like 50/50, it depends on the instructor, but it also depends on the student" (Buenaventura, student participant).

> No. I really don't [provide additional material]. Because there is a general material that they need to study, whenever there is a student who really wants to improve on what they are learning, they contact to me to give them additional information, then I will do it. Because what I realize there is a follow-up of the material that students will access and

> read, and we noticed that less than 50% of the students are reading the materials. (Nemo, instructor participant)
>
> For example, we can suggest some other activities or some websites if they are interested in learning about some specific topics, for example, teacher, I want to know about specific items or vocabulary, or we can give them some specific website, so they are really interested. Not all of them but of course we have some students that get interested in some specific topics, so we can offer them some important websites, and I don't know, links. (Tabata, instructor participant)

One additional reason for not providing students with additional resources related to course content had to do with the fact that the institution encouraged instructors to guide students to work on the course content or to use only institutional resources:

> I do not recommend other websites because we have been said from the pedagogical support team that we should reference our own resources... so that we should invite students to work on SENA's resources, that students use all the material the course provides. (Isabela, instructor participant)

For some of the instructor participants, the course activities which the majority of students found to be engaging in the online English language courses were the interactive activities (i.e., scorn activities), which provided most of the course explanations and practice. Hence, some instructor participants considered that these types of activities should be extended to other course components:

> But in the platform, I think that the only thing it has is the interactive activities, which are very fun for them. I think if it had more interactive activities, they would appreciate it and

> they would have fun during all the course, but there is only one per activity, only one. In activities 1, 2, 3, and 4. (Johanna, instructor participant)

In terms of the additional resources that some instructor participants provided to help students understand or practice course content, they mostly included online dictionaries, news websites, links for grammar, listening, and pronunciation practice, YouTube videos, and TED talks. Most of these resources were intended to help students deepen their understanding of the course contents, get additional practice of their English language skills, support course assignment or student work, and encourage more English language exposure:

> Well, one [resource] I remember well and that I currently use is to improve pronunciation.... In this application I can type the word and you can learn how to pronounce it, and you can practice your pronunciation. So, it was very helpful because we [students] have to record audios and we sometimes do not know how to pronounce some words... The instructor provided resource to be able to do the course assignments and to learn more about pronunciation. (Patty, student participant)

> I have used websites, with flash cards, they like to play them out. I have shared websites that they can use for listening, for pronunciation. In addition, I have shared different materials that I have found on the Internet so that they can use it if they want to study a little bit more. (Maria, instructor participant)

> Or I send pages about news, ABC, CNN, and all the information or Ted Talks, and also according to the topic of the course. For example, if they are in level 3, the topic is the environment, and it is related to how to protect the planet, about that, I also send them links about the topic in English. (Gabriela, instructor participant)

> Well, in this course, for example, that are topics in relation to the Past simple, the past perfect. The SENA's material provides nice examples, appropriate examples with explanations and extra exercises, at what I notice when I grade, some, some tasks are that they don't know how to apply them in some situations or how to conjugate in these tenses. So, that's why I provide them with links, extra links related to regular verbs, rules for regular verbs, a list of common irregular verbs. In that sense they know the list in relation to regular verbs and irregular verbs, they know how to conjugate, and they would know how to write a sentence in that tense. (User1, instructor participant)

Considering the resource provision strategies that the instructor participants used to support students with platform use and course activity work, an overwhelming majority of instructor participants indicated that they sent tutorials and email messages with course information, provided easy, clear, and explanatory guidelines for learning activities, and shared additional resources for students to complete their course assignments. According to these instructors, students found the resources useful for them to engage in language learning since they provided the required information to guide students to benefit from the course content, as well as to develop and submit course assignments accurately and timely:

> Well, I think that when they are developing any evidence or any activity, some of the questions are always the same ones, so if you answer them before hand, because you know they will have those questions, even though the instructions are clear on the platform, they really appreciate that you take the time and the effort to explain once again to any means all the activities that they need to do. So, if you can send them an email, if you can then talk about it again on the online sessions, if you post an announcement as well, that will help them to develop the evidences and that will help them to develop them

> in in a correct way. Because sometimes they do not see the instructions, sometimes they do not do that, so I think it is very important for them because whenever they are frustrated, I think some of them quit, that's what happens, I cannot do this, I'm going to quit. (Johanna, instructor participant)

Similarly, the majority of instructor participants agreed on the need to provide resources and information to support students as a strategy to keep students engaged in their learning. However, for those instructors, sending too much information could be overwhelming to students and affected their online engagement negatively:

> When I explain, in the first video conference, that is a welcome video conference, welcoming video conference, I explained to them about what the name is of the most important in the platform, and what they have to focus. Because there is a lot of information there. Too much and for me, I think it's important that they have less. Sometimes they don't know where to go and when they find a lot of information there. So, when I explain this, I think it helps them to understand where to go clearly. And also, when I explain the material in the video conference, I tried to reinforce and tell them again and again where the clue information is, where they have to go. (Gabriela, instructor participant).

Finally, some instructor participants were attentive to their students' needs and provided students with resources to improve learning. The resources were in different formats (e.g., video and PowerPoints) including downloadable materials which students requested. In fact, some student participants found the downloadable materials particularly useful to support their learning after the end of the course when students did not have access to the online course. For example, one student participant commented: "It was good that we had those resources in our

email, because when the course ends, you do not have access to the course platform, if you download them, you miss them" (Alvaro, student participant). His response was supported by an instructor:

> I tried to use online materials, I like to use from Oxford, Cambridge. I tried to find resources that they can download... that are interactive, tutorials that we can find in YouTube. For example, someone wants to improve any topic, I look for those resources, and I tell them, look, you can download this PDF, you can print it, or you can develop them online. (Mapuckae, instructor participant)

However, some instructor participants were concerned about, first: students' lack of reading of the information provided, and second, students' absence in synchronous sessions where most course information was provided:

> It is much, it is much what it is done for students to engage, but unfortunately, students do not read what we send. It affects in the sense that most of the time they (students) are disoriented and doing the course activities in the wrong way, because they do not read the sent information. (Acuario 68, instructor participant)

> It's difficult because sometimes it's not in my hands, is out of my control, I'd like to reach everybody and so that's why I didn't completely agree because, for example they skip video conferences and I explain their material, the learning material in the platform. So the group of people who participate check or get my information, but the others who are not there, they won't get my material, so the same thing about communication, but I think that I try to send information and let them know what is the material and the activities and what is the core material, but they just don't receive it. (Gabriela, instructor participant)

Interaction and collaboration strategies. These strategies were identified as instructors' actions for students to engage in collaborative work, to interact, and to support each other. Both instructor and student participants agreed on the need to provide interaction and collaboration strategies in the online English language courses. When considering the potential for students to practise English language in real-world contexts and to encourage peer support, some of the student and instructor participants made the following comments:

> Interacting is very important because we [students] are practicing a different language.... and we learn vocabulary, we are not afraid to talk, it is very important." (Angie, student participant)
>
> I think that in online learning, it [collaboration] is important... because, for example, you are working on a course topic and you have your peer to support you. If your classmate makes a mistake, you [the student] correct him... he/she reminds you due dates, we feel that there is someone else with us... we feel accompanied...and that's very good. (Kelly, student participant)
>
> Yes, of course. That would be very meaningful. Yes, because I think that if you offer more chances, they would have more opportunities to get feedback from students, to get into a conversation or to do their work in a better way in the platform. (Johanna, instructor participant)

An overwhelming majority of the instructor participants concurred that SENA's online English courses were designed for students to work individually: "All the activities are individual, they don't have collaborative... some other platforms maybe they have those kinds of activities but SENA activities are not in that way" (Tabata, instructor participant). Which, in turn, was confirmed by an overwhelming majority of student participants. For example, "No,

there was not teamwork, all the work was individual" (Patty, student participant) and "I had no teamwork. If it had happened, I'd have had peer support and would have understood in a better way" (Dayluz, student participant). However, some of the instructor participants encouraged interaction and collaboration mainly on the online discussion forums (e.g., the thematic forum), and in the synchronous sessions. For example, one of the instructors noted: "The only teamwork that they can do or perform during the course is by publishing, or posting things on the forums and maybe through their participation in the online sessions" (User1, instructor participant). The instructor's statement was supported by other instructors and some student participants: "The only teamwork we did was in discussion forums and synchronous sessions" (Alexandra, student participant).

> Maybe in the forum in the platform. Maybe in the thematic forum, for example, they answer the questions, or for example, in this case, they are talking about my interest, they have to respond the four questions giving the reasons and they have to respond to another student's participation. I think this is a way to implement teamwork activities. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)
>
> Oh, I don't think the course promotes collaborative learning. I think it is designed for individual learning, the only thing that the course provides which is collaborative maybe the discussion forums and there is only one in the whole learning process. Most of the activities are just for them to do at home by themselves.... (Jose, instructor participant)

In terms of discussion forums, an overwhelming majority of the instructor participants agreed that the SENA English language courses provided the forum questions and format which they needed to follow. As a result, neither instructors nor students took part in the design of the forum questions. Also, they were not given the opportunity to participate in course planning and

assessment design meetings and small group discussions among the instructors and the course designers within a short period of time. Examples from the instructor interview data are as follows:

> No, really, really. The topics are there, institution puts all the topics. And we just put them to work on it, okay... No, no. Just the already format that is placed there. Okay, just because there are formats that are set there, we can make some additions to those different formats but, by experience, whenever you add any material, it seems that we don't get it clear which materials we can use and which materials shouldn't use and then we get like in some difficulties and misunderstandings with the leaders and coordinators. Then, you just follow what is there. (Nemo, instructor participant)

> What we do as tutors in the thematic forum, is just to participate, to post on the Forum, reply and then the students follow our idea, but, but the first post, that is the tutor's post, the tutor's post is in relation to the information given by SENA. The thing is that we repeat, like to repeat what they say. For instance, in this case, the Forum Banner explains what are the ideas that we should talk about, what they should write. What we do is just to copy the banner information to post it on the Forum and then the students follow those ideas. (User1, instructor participant)

Unfortunately, the majority of instructor participants did not find online discussion forums, the way they were designed and guided, supporting student engagement in learning due to various reasons. First, students might not find the discussion forum questions personally appealing, as evidenced in the interview transcripts: “I didn’t find the [forum] questions interesting. In fact, the most interesting question was the one about a video we had to post, but the purpose of the course was learning English, not making the video” (Roger, student

participant). Second, the expected interaction did not take place, as one of the student participants stated: “We replied to a peer’s post and my peer replied again and asked about a family member, but being very engaged, no, it didn’t happen” (Joseph, student participant). This lack of student engagement probably had to do with students’ personality traits such as being shy or afraid to be exposed when they did not meet the activity or task expectations in terms of English language proficiency, especially when the online discussion forums were about academic work and were not graded in the same format as those for social purposes:

> because the forums are not very productive, not very efficient. They have the same questions over and over again. And they don’t answer to my questions. They don’t read about my feedback on the forum. They share something and I say read the feedback and add something else to have a conversation. It doesn’t really happen. But most of the time they, don't answer back... I think it is the way the forum works. (Johanna, instructor participant)
>
> Some of them. Most of them only do what is necessary. So, if they are supposed to read instructions and, and describe your eating habits, they will tell you what they eat in the morning, at noon, for lunch or for dinner, most of them would just say that. Very few ones like to read other posts and ask more questions. I only have like three that have checked again my comments and their corrections, and decided to interact with others, with partners, very few ones. But they do what it is asked them to do. They follow the instructions, most of them do it. (Maria, instructor participant)

Third, the discussion forums did not meet the expected purpose of generating authentic debates. Examples of students’ comments include: “The instructor posted a question and each student replied to it. Basically, every student commented on a student’s post. That was all. There

were not discussions" (Yaco, student participant); and "There should be a little more of creativity in the discussion forums. We would expect more debate, that's what I think" (Angie, student participant). It probably happened. On one side the discussion forum questions were intended to only allow students to apply language topics (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) and on the other side because students might not count with the necessary language and critical thinking skills required for these types of debates. This might have made some instructor participants think that the discussion forums should only be promoted in the higher-level English language courses:

> And for example another thing that I would like to change if I had the possibility, is to include the thematic forum just in the upper levels.... Because for example, the thematic forum at the Beginner level, at the Level 1, I consider that they participate as a kind of evidence, but not in the sentence for a forum is. The forum is for them to read an idea, to give an opinion about that idea, then the other classmates read the ideas and add something extra.... But what I see in the forum is that it is like an individual evidence because every single student participates just with the information, they need in terms of grammar structure, vocabulary but no more. Even though the course invites the apprentice to be or to support ideas, to comment, it doesn't happen. And I understand that at the beginning if a student enrols in the Beginner level is because they need to learn from the beginning. So, I think that the forum, that the sense is to give opinions, to participate, to criticize, analyze, etc., those thematic forums should be at higher levels. (User1, instructor participant)

Importantly, most student and instructor participants found that peer interaction could support student engagement: "I completely agree because it is a shared commitment, as it is said, where someone goes, the other people follow them" (Andrés, student participant). However, for

the majority of the instructor participants, interaction in online discussion forums mainly took place between the instructor and students. Some instructors remarked that it resulted from institutional guidelines which dictated that the instructor needs to respond to all the students' posts so that it does not affect instructor's evaluation results, which in turn may discourage peer interaction:

> An adverse aspect is the way in which instructors are evaluated by people in charge of instructor follow-up. As instructors, we have to reply all students' posts. If we reply, students do not have the chance to interact among themselves. (Matias, instructor participant)

Similarly, providing opportunities for teamwork, and using case studies, team debates and role plays were also strategies that the majority of the participants found potentially useful to engage the students in their online English language learning even though they agreed that the course design did not include them: "The content does not provide the possibility for role plays or the activities that you have just mentioned" (Jose, instructor participant).

In terms of teamwork, some student and instructor participants considered that when teamwork was encouraged, the inherent shared responsibility which it entailed, motivated students to work continuously in the course assignments: "It could be, because it is a kind of responsibility that commit you with other people, so it makes you get more engaged with the activity" (German, student participant).

> Teamwork could be engaging.... When you have another classmate and you have the responsibility to deliver a task, you would log into the platform more often and check if your classmate did it or made you did something, or you have given some feedback. I have done some courses before in another university, in other platform, and the

> teamwork was very very good... and you don´t want to be the irresponsible one. (Johanna, instructor participant)

For some of the student and instructor participants, teamwork was found to have encouraged peer support. For example, students with lower levels of English language proficiency could benefit from the knowledge and skills of those more proficient or knowledgeable ones:

> It was very good because we all [students] were very interested, there were people with a good level of English, people who had been abroad for a long time, and they knew a lot...interacting with other people is always good. (Angie, student participant)
>
> The teamwork, yes, of course. It helps. Sometimes we know that in that course there are different levels and if they share their ideas, students who have a kind of lower-level will be thankful if they have the opportunity to share, to receive information from those students who know a little more. (User1, instructor participant)

However, the majority of the instructor participants found that promoting teamwork in the SENA online English courses was challenging due to students' time constraints and distance learning. Examples of comments made by instructor participants: "It is difficult to create groups, because it is difficult for them [students] to meet, because they say that they do not have time" (Johanna, instructor participant).

> Because we don't do that. I think it is so hard. I mean, I can get students to do their work, but I think that if I ask them to do teamwork the results won't be so good. Because they wouldn't have the time, they have their own schedule, you know, it's harder, and I think that would affect the results. (Maria, instructor participant)

> And I think that it is useful, teamwork really works, but for these courses, because they are short, there is no teamwork, also, anyway, the courses are provided in a way that we cannot modify, as I told you, the only teamwork that they can do or perform during the course is by publishing, or posting things on the forums and maybe through their participation in the online sessions. (User1, instructor participant)

Similarly, some of the student participants concurred with the teamwork challenges as identified by the instructor participants: "We [students] also work well individually...teamwork in online learning would be very complicated because students live in different places" (Buenaventura, student participant). Roger (student participant) also added:

> In the online environment each person manages their time. And for collaborative work, time management would change from person to person. There are people who rush to do the assignments and who do not care if they are accurate, whereas there are others who really care for good work... so I think that collaborative work would give more trouble than solutions.

In addition, for some of the instructor participants, teamwork could also be challenging considering that not all the students committed to teamwork in the same way, as one of the instructors said in the interview: "But the thing is that when they are doing activities in groups, teamwork for instance with five apprentices, two are solving the task and 3 are copying it" (Luisfer, instructor participant).

In regard to using case studies, team debates, and role plays, student participants and instructor participants found them useful. These authentic assessment tasks enabled students to use English language in real-world situations and to get peer support, especially from those who possessed a high level of English language proficiency: "Because in those activities, we learn in

a better way... we interact and learn in a different way" (Edward, student participant). And Angie (student participant), added: "Because in these activities, we do have to use the language, look for more vocabulary. We feel more comfortable speaking because when we speak a language different from our native language, we are afraid ... so we learn more."

> Yes because of the interactions, because in these interactive activities, they will have the opportunity to apply what they have learned with other students, not only from the teacher, but from other students as well for them. So, for them, it would be more exciting. It's great because in the same course I have the opportunity to apply what I learned. So that's why when I started this process, I created the WhatsApp group because we got application there are applying what they learned. (Jose, instructor participant)
>
> Well, because they would be different activities for them. And it's going to be a different environment, different topics, more information, where they have the possibility to learn more about their mates, giving opinions. Listening to teachers' opinions, their feedback. It's possible, it's possible to get more knowledge and to get more engaged with the course. (Jose Luis, instructor participant)

Similar to teamwork, most instructor participants were unclear about how to implement case studies, team debates, and role plays in online English language courses, as well as under what conditions they would work better. As pointed out by two of the instructors:

> Yes, I guess. I suppose that for the levels that I have been working on, during these years, probably is it is not well because I work with low levels, from Beginner to Level 4. So no, at these levels, it's not the best...they are more engaged and have a better option, but in low levels students come with this mentality of translating. Just, give me a

word, and they translate, and then they think that they learned English. So, in low levels, it is a little difficult to use, use cases and then let them think and express their opinions. (Nemo, instructor participant)

...since everything is online and they [students] have different schedules, that's the only limitation, because obviously, it would be very enriching, but how would we do it? Can it be possible with people who live in the same city? I don't know. I think it is a little complex to deal with. It will be important, but I find that limitation. Maybe the use of technological tools. (Mariela, instructor participant)

Contributing and Hindering Factors of Student Engagement

For students, the top three contributing factors of student engagement were: students' self-discipline, students' attitude toward the English language, and students' study habits. These findings agreed with instructors' perceptions to some extent. For instructors, the most contributing factor was students' attitude toward the English language, followed by students' self-discipline and students' technological skills (see Tables 18 and 19).

Table 18

Students' Perceptions of Contributing Factors to Student Engagement (N = 407)

	M	*SD*
Student's self-discipline	3.57	2.372
Student's attitude towards the English Language	3.86	2.387
Student's study habits	4.73	2.452
The course platform (Blackboard)	4.86	2.667
Student's technological skills	5.17	2.798
The course format (online)	5.27	2.472
Student's learning preferences	5.33	2.341
Student's personality	6.41	2.719
SENA's administrative support	6.69	2.513
Student's classmates	8.87	1.967

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation. 1 being the factor that most contributes to your learning engagement and 10 the least contributing factor.

Table 19

Instructors' Perceptions of Contributing Factors to Student Engagement (N = 79)

	M	*SD*
Students' attitude toward the English language	3.18	2.417
Students' self-discipline	3.82	2.749
Students' technological skills	4.34	2.501
The course platform (Blackboard)	4.67	2.448
The course format (online)	5.05	2.616
SENA's administrative support	6.76	3.035
Students' study habits	5.08	2.258
Students' learning preferences	5.52	1.986
Students' personality	7.16	2.267
Students' classmates	8.76	1.855

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation. 1 being the factor that most contributes to your learning engagement and 10 the least contributing factor.

The open-ended survey data were complemented by students' interview data. With regard to the hindering factors, students identified their job and family responsibilities as the most limiting factors followed by access to computer and the Internet. For instructors, students' interest in the English language is the most hindering factor of students' engagement. They also identified students' Internet and computer access and students' job responsibilities as limiting students' engagement (see Tables 20 and 21).

Table 20

Students' Perceptions of Hindering Factors to Student Engagement (N = 404)

	M	*SD*
Student's job responsibilities	3.23	2.705
Student's family responsibilities	4.36	2.525
Internet and computer access	4.86	2.955
Student's English language proficiency	5.02	2.637
Student's lifestyle	5.03	2.461
Student's computer confidence	6.00	2.267
Class size	6.29	3.009
Student's interest in the English language	6.35	2.625
Student's educational level	6.46	2.619
Student's age	7.67	2.561

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation. 1 being the factor that most hinders your learning engagement and 10 the least limiting factor.

Table 21

Instructors' Perceptions of Hindering Factors to Student Engagement Instructor Survey (N = 79)

	M	*SD*
Students' interest in the English language	3.42	2.575
Students' Internet and computer access	3.90	2.426
Students' job responsibilities	4.30	2.647
Students' English language proficiency	4.99	2.504
Students' computer confidence	5.23	2.298
Students' educational level	5.41	2.715
Students' family responsibilities	5.97	2.418
Students' lifestyle	6.37	2.398
Students' age	7.41	2.356
Class size	7.63	3.446

Note. *M* = mean score; *SD* = standard deviation. 1 being the factor that most hinders your learning engagement and 10 the least limiting factor.

Design Principles of the Assessment Tasks to Promote Student Engagement

SENA's learning tasks or assessments used in the online English language courses were also analyzed using an analytic rubric developed based on Herrington et al.'s (2007) design principles for authentic learning, which served as a guidepost for the development of online courses to promote student engagement and learning. The principles state that authentic tasks (a) have real world-relevance; (b) are messy and ill-defined; c) comprise complex activities to be investigated over a sustained period of time; (d) provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives using a variety of resources; (e) provide the opportunity to collaborate; (f) provide the opportunity to reflect; (g) can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes; (h) are seamlessly integrated with assessment for learning; (i) create polished products that are valuable in their own right; and (j) allow competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes.

The results derived from the researcher's analyses of the assessment tasks in the SENA English program and course outlines are presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Analysis of the English language Assessment Tasks Using Herrington et al.'s (2007) Assessment Design Principles

Principles	Determination
Tasks have real world relevance	Limited real-world connections were found in the assessment tasks in the lowest EL levels which were grammar and vocabulary-focused. On the contrary, tasks in higher levels enabled students to link their learning with their real-world context.
Tasks are complex and ill-defined	The assessment tasks used in the lowest EL proficiency levels were neither complex nor ill-defined. They focused on only drill-and-practice of grammar and vocabulary. As the course levels get higher, the assessment tasks made higher cognitive demands, which allowed for more creativity.
Tasks provide the opportunity to understand perspectives and use a variety of resources	Assessment tasks in Levels 4 through 6 encouraged students to analyze the tasks from different lenses.
Tasks provide students the opportunity to collaborate	Discussion forums, Blog and Wiki's entries and replies were included as assessment tasks. Unfortunately, participants commented that they did not benefit from task collaboration.
Tasks provide the opportunity to reflect	Most assessment tasks involved reflections in terms of the language use, topics, and task preparation. Nevertheless, most participants did not understand the purpose of having self-reflections.
Tasks lead beyond domain and skill specific outputs	Most tasks in the lowest levels focused on single one-dimensional responses. In contrast, tasks in the highest levels allowed students to work on multiple skills related to real life (e.g., designing and presenting a poster with solutions to a social issue).
Tasks are seamlessly integrated with assessment for learning	Most assessment tasks in the lowest levels were aimed at assessment of learning. However, at the advanced levels, tasks provided opportunities for students to reflect on their learning process.
Tasks lead to polished products that are valuable in their own right	Tasks including email and letter writing were mainly used in the higher-level courses. They enabled students to develop the skills in the target language context.
Tasks allow for competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes	Tasks at the higher levels included Wiki and Blog entries, and writing activities, which encouraged students to come up with a variety of creative solutions and alternative outcomes.
Tasks are conductive to both learning and communicating in the new language	A significant number of tasks were language-focused in most of the courses. More language use in real-world context was provided in the tasks at the higher levels.

Table 22 identifies a notable difference in assessment tasks between the lower and higher levels of the English language courses. Meaningful authentic assessment tasks in the lower levels of English courses were lacking, indicating a heavy focus on assessment *of* learning rather than assessment *for* learning. Most of the assessment tasks for students who were enrolled in the lower levels of the English courses tended to be closed-ended and less authentic (i.e., limited applications of English in real-world contexts). As such, students tended to copy and paste answers, without the opportunity to reflect and build on their previous learning.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the mixed methods results of my study. Her analyses of the design features of the SENA English language curriculum indicate that there were limited opportunities for students to collaborate and engage in active learning despite an adequate focus on instructors' timely and quality feedback, as well as high standards for students' academic work. Both student and instructor participants reported a high level of instructor teaching presence in their online English language courses. However, student participants held less favorable perceptions of instructors' use of the following strategies: *Promoting Active Learning* and for strategies of *Collaboration and Interactivity*. This result is consistent with those from the analysis of the design features of the English language curriculum. The interview data highlighted the need for giving more agency to the instructors even at the stage of course design and for finding effective ways to engage students in collaboration. Instructors may also need continuing professional development in the design and facilitation of online learning activities and authentic English language assessments. Unsurprisingly, time constraints had become a hurdle for students to effectively engage in online distance learning. Both student and instructor participants reported that the top three contributing factors of student

engagement in online English language courses were: students' self-discipline, students' attitude toward the English language, and students' study habits. However, student and instructor participants differed in terms of their ranking of hindering factors of student engagement. Student participants ranked their job and family responsibilities as the most hindering factors followed by access to computer and the Internet. For instructors, the top three hindering factors were students' interest in the English language, students' Internet and computer access, and students' job responsibilities.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings from my mixed methods research that investigates student engagement in online English language courses which were offered to vocational students in the SENA program in Colombia. Specifically, the study addresses the research questions by examining 1) design features of the English language curriculum and assessment, 2) instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies employed in the online learning environment, and 3) other facilitating or hindering factors of vocational students' online engagement in learning English as a foreign language. To answer the research questions, survey data were collected from 471 students and 80 instructors in the SENA program. In addition, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 students and 17 instructors, a subsample of the questionnaire data. The questionnaire and interview data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, respectively. A rubric was developed to analyze the curriculum materials and assessment tasks in the English language courses.

Students' and Instructors' Agency as a Key Factor for Student Engagement

Upon completion of the data analysis, it was determined that there were many positive and well considered aspects to the online English language courses for vocational education in Colombia. An important factor, however, and constant thread in the data that needs more consideration and promotion within the program is that of instructor and student agency.

The research findings indicate that it is important to support English language learners' agency through creating opportunities for them to engage in critical reflections on their own work and to interact with their peers actively in an online learning environment. Notably, social interactions with native English speakers and active involvement in error correction were found

to be effective in supporting students' English proficiency (Basharina, 2009; Basharina et al., 2008).

Lindgren and McDaniel (2012) argued for attempting to "facilitate student agency by presenting students with consequential choices and adapting both the course curriculum and assessment to accommodate those choices" (p. 346) in online learning environments. Diversifying learning modules and assessment tasks to enable learners to approach the topics through choosing projects of their interest, while offering shared learning modules to support learners' fundamental understanding and developing common grounds could support learners' critical thinking and engagement with the learning topics. Assessment through adaptive exams based on learners' chosen learning modules and authentic assessments such as projects which enable the provision of timely and quality feedback on students' language learning are more meaningful to students (Lindgren & McDaniel, 2012).

The agency of the instructor and the learners can be perceived as a mutual concept, whereby both the instructor and the students adapt their actions and expectations based on their understanding of themselves, each other, and the learning context (Charteris & Thomas, 2017; Deed et al., 2014). This is particularly evident in more open environments where more flexibility and even personalization to specific needs and talents are accommodated. In such contexts, both the instructor and the learners have to constantly make sense of the uncertainty of the new environment and the complexities associated with the behaviors and choices of the other party (Deed et al., 2014). In light of the theme of student and instructor agency as a consideration that I deemed lacking in the SENA English language curriculum and assessment task design, as well as instructors' pedagogical strategies, I explore and present in more detail the positive aspects of the program and how the notion of the mutuality of agency for students and instructors could

enhance student engagement in online English language courses for vocational education. The discussion is hence presented in three sections. Section one focuses on implications for student and instructor agency in curriculum and assessment task design, section two is on how student and instructor agency is deeply connected to instructors' pedagogy and teaching presence, and section three explores the contributing and hindering factors and how student and instructor agency are impacted and may be promoted.

Considering Curriculum and Assessment Task Design for Teacher and Student Agency

Curriculum and Assessment Task Design. In analyzing the curriculum and assessment tasks utilizing Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice" and Herrington et al.'s (2007) "Design Principles for Authentic Learning," I found that the Colombian online English language curriculum was limited in providing opportunities for students to engage in cooperation and collaboration, as well as in using active learning strategies. The curriculum was found to be adequate in the other five principles for good practice but there is still room for improvement. Additionally, the assessment tasks for students who were enrolled in lower-level (Beginning Level to Level 3) English language courses failed to focus on students' use of English in real-world contexts. Rather, students could copy and paste answers while completing their assignments. This finding suggests that the assessment tasks lack authenticity.

I surmise that the curriculum was *intended* to abide by the "Seven Principles for Good Practice;" however, this does not always appear to be the case. Though the curriculum provides enough opportunities for student and instructor contact, once the contact has been established, there was a disconnect between the stated or intended curriculum and the actual instruction (or enacted curriculum). Part of this might be due to a lack of professional development

opportunities for the SENA instructors, particularly in the areas of designing effective curriculum, assessment, and online environments to facilitate students' active learning and collaboration (also addressed in the next section). Some of the disconnect, however, is linked to the curriculum design. For example, because of the way in which the curriculum and assessment tasks were presented in the online format, there was little opportunity for instructors and students to make changes to address individual students' learning needs, indicating a lack of students' and instructors' agency in the SENA online English language program. There is a need for increasing the mutuality of understanding, whereby both the instructors and students are encouraged to adapt their actions and expectations based on the needs of each other in an online learning context (Charteris & Thomas, 2017; Deed et al., 2014). SENA's instructors should be given more flexibility in adapting their pedagogical strategies to promote active learning and collaboration (Berge, 2011), thereby increasing students' engagement.

Further, the curriculum was designed to address different levels of learning needs, but there were important features that could be improved to scaffold and enhance students' online experiences. For example, the lower course levels could be taught in both Spanish and English to facilitate accessibility for students. In addition, consideration needs to be given to both students' language learning needs *and* their technology learning needs. Those students who have limited experience in using technology for learning may face unknown roadblocks in the language learning aspects of the course (Arbaugh & Duray, 2002; Callo & Yazon, 2020; Chong & Reinders, 2020).

The study's participants indicated there were limited opportunities for collaboration. Indeed, instructors and students reported that they were unsure of what collaboration was in the course and what it might look like. For example, students' posts on the discussion forums about

their families were rarely revisited by classmates. There was no expectation for them to respond to other students' posts. This suggests that there was minimal or no collaborative and meaningful written dialogue among the students.

Lack of expectation for online interactions reduced opportunities for students to engage in active learning. For their part, instructors were also unsure of what was meant by active learning and how they might enact it on the online platform with their students. As such, students did not see themselves as active learners who are engaged in making authentic conversations or dialogues using English. Rather, they were passive recipients of the designated course content with expectations to complete assessment tasks for which they had no agency in the design and learning.

This lack of agency had ramifications for the giving and receiving of feedback, which was in part due to the structure of the English language courses. Students were allowed to hand in their assignments at the end of the course, which meant there was no opportunity for the provision of ongoing feedback throughout the course to help them improve the quality of their work and develop their English language proficiency over time.

Although the principles of the curriculum state that students were meant to receive quality feedback from their instructors, the design of the English language courses and assessment tasks did little to promote ongoing, genuine, individual, and collective reflections. Additionally, students and instructors lacked understanding about the purposes of using student reflections as an assessment for learning strategy to promote student engagement.

Timely feedback provided by instructors and peers could enable students' critical reflections on their own learning path and support their ongoing setting of accessible goals. This could be specifically promoted in a designed collaborative English learning environment that

helps students exchange their points of view and provides multiple entry points for students to engage with learning topics and be reflective on their work. Students' communications with their instructors and peers in a learning environment could create a sense of community where individual students felt to be recognized by members of the community. This could support students to become active participants of their community (Lawrence, 2013; Namaziandoost et al., 2019).

Framing future courses using theoretical principles, such as those embedded in Andrade's (2017) case examples, which were designed to promote interaction, student autonomy, and self-regulation with the goal of attaining English language proficiency could be considered. Going further, inviting teachers as co-designers in course development (Anderson, 2008) and iterative testing of designs would promote agency on their part, while developing pedagogical understanding. Engaging instructors as co-designers of curriculum might also promote the notion of co-design with their students—of both curriculum and assessment.

A starting point for students and instructors to experience co-design may be in the co-creation of small assessment tasks. From a curricular standpoint, the assessment tasks currently presented are not too many and not meaningful, suggesting that they do not support students' authentic learning of English to meet their needs in their vocations. Assessment as a crucial aspect of the curriculum in terms of self-regulation (Andrade & Heritage, 2018) and engagement in authentic language learning needs to be considered. To develop and maintain student engagement, instructors may provide opportunities for students to co-design assessment tasks that are authentic and meaningful *for* learning at the beginning and throughout their online English language course.

In addition, research shows that "students' participation will be influenced by the participant models teachers offer to students" (Andrade & Heritage, 2018, p. 20). Therefore, it is important that instructors provide models for practice opportunities for assessment and feedback, as that has been shown to benefit students' self-regulation and achievement (Panadero et al., 2019; Stenalt & Lassesen, 2021).

The assessment tasks in the English language curriculum had a major focus on writing: through composition, discussion forums, blogs, and wikis. While some assessment tasks also included audio recordings, there was no indication that multimodal approaches to English language learning and language use was considered. Current multimodal social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have provided opportunities for students to engage in active learning (Kivunja, 2015). They may serve to encourage students in multi-modal expressions when learning English as a second or foreign language. Instructors may need to scaffold the learning process for students. Research has shown that social media can be used pedagogically to support student self-regulation in the learning of second and foreign languages (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2011; Jahromi, 2020; Malik & Asnur, 2019; Reinhardt, 2019).

Overall, the design and use of authentic English language assessment tasks along with the aid of some learning technologies will enable a shift from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning. Assessment for learning is essential for students to begin to develop agency for their own learning.

Teaching Presence and Pedagogical Strategies for Instructor and Student Agency

There was a discrepancy between how participants viewed teaching presence and pedagogy. This observation indicates that although the students acknowledged the instructors' desire to establish teaching presence through encouragement and connection (See Table 23),

their implementation of specific pedagogical strategies, particularly those that promoted a sociocultural approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2019) to learning (i.e., promoting interaction and collaboration) were not recognized (See Table 23).

Student and instructor participants reported a high level of instructor teaching presence in their online EL courses. Similar mean scores were found in the following teaching presence domains (Anderson, 2003): (a) instructional design and organization and (b) facilitating discourse, with (c) design instruction having the lowest mean scores. Although participants' surveys indicated a high level of instructor teaching presence, aspects of each teaching presence domain suggest some disconnects between the survey results and reality. For example, in relation to (a) instructional design and organization, although student and instructor participants may have recognized instructors' use of their own teaching materials as well as personal reflections and anecdotes to inspire and motivate students, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that instructors participated in course design to address students' learning needs, even in terms of negotiating course timelines as per Anderson's suggestion. With regard to (b) facilitating discourse, although instructors facilitated online written discourse between students and themselves, they seldom engaged students actively in the learning process (Berge, 2011). The fact that (c) direct instruction had the lowest mean scores, could suggest that student engagement within traditional modes of curriculum delivery was lacking.

Student and instructor survey results on instructor's pedagogical strategies, however, were somewhat different. For example, the mean scores of students' perceptions of instructors' use of strategies were lower than those of the instructor participants on the following domains: *Modelling Effective Online Interaction* and *Creating a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere*. The lowest means resulted for strategies related to *Promoting Active Learning* and for strategies of

Collaboration and Interactivity. In this case, the quantitative findings were consistent with the qualitative findings. The discrepancy suggests that although instructors' willingness and desire to create a dynamic learning environment, students perceived that their instructors lacked the knowledge to use effective pedagogical strategies in an online environment, particularly in relation to collaboration and active learning. This might have also hampered teaching presence in these areas (Dixson, 2010; Gettinger & Walter, 2012).

Specifically in the context of online learning with potentially higher attrition rates as compared with face-to-face teaching, teaching presence was shown to have a significant impact on student engagement and retention (Anderson, 2003). Of note, the present instructor can provide students feedback, create a sense of belonging to an online learning community, add a human element rather than students dealing with a passive online system. This is more evident where the instructor is open to being contacted by students, actively engages with them, and provides timely and quality feedback (Stone & Springer, 2019).

Six themes emerged from the coding of the student and instructor interview data regarding SENA instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies. They were encouragement strategies, content understanding strategies, feedback strategies, connection strategies, resource provision strategies, and interaction and collaboration strategies. The researcher elaborated on each of them in Table 23.

Table 23

Instructor Pedagogical Strategies and Teaching Presence Identified in the Interview Data

Encouragement	Continuous instructor's encouragement was highlighted as key for students to get actively involved in the English language courses. Instructors considered fundamental to use strategies to address students' needs and preferences which confirmed Mupinga et al.'s (2006) findings.
Content understanding	These strategies involve, first, those related to the ways in which instructors present course topics, and second, the strategies they used for promoting EL practice.
Feedback	Similar to previous studies (e.g., Shepard et al., 2005), this study also evidenced the fundamental role instructor feedback played in helping students engage in their learning, as one of the instructors stated: "It is very important for students to see good feedback, not only to say 'good job'" (Johanna). Students expected instructors to highlight positive aspects of assignments, correct mistakes, and provide additional resources to clarify course topics.
Connection	Although each course lasted only 60 hours, students indicated that being connected with their course mates helped them persist in their own learning. Roger, one of the students indicated: "Although the course was online, there was connection." Connection strategies that were identified involved community building, clear communication, and connection in course activities.
Resource provision	Students indicated they felt supported when their instructors provided the necessary resources to help them understand course topics, to navigate the course platform and activities, and to address students' learning preferences.
Interaction and collaboration	Student participants agreed that scarce interaction took place in the courses: "Interaction in the platform happens only if it is graded" (Yiliver). However, participants understood that interaction had the potential to encourage language practice in real-world contexts. Collaboration strategies were not used in most of the online EL courses because course designers did not include them. Participants also found them difficult to promote in online settings.

Though the recognition by the students of a high level of teaching presence is heartening, as indicated by the encouragement strategies, the disconnect between student and instructor recognition of pedagogical strategies suggests that although instructors might *think* that their pedagogical strategies were able to engage students, the survey data indicate otherwise. Instructors may need support in envisioning online pedagogy, particularly when it comes to implementing learning activities that promote collaboration, interactivity, and active learning

(Stone & Springer, 2019). This includes the provision of examples of active learning activities as well as continuing professional development in the following areas: design and selection of pedagogical strategies that support active and collaborative learning, facilitation of assessment co-design as an approach to active learning (Agbo et al., 2021) and promoting student agency, strategies and suggestions for facilitating the giving and receiving of timely and quality feedback, and adoption of reflectivity as an approach to improving students' English language usage (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

When considering feedback as a way to foster student agency, specific, ongoing, meaningful, and personal feedback has been linked not only to self-regulation, but also student achievement (Panadero et al., 2018; Stenalt & Lassesen, 2019). Engaging students in the process of giving, receiving, and soliciting specific feedback on their learning with the instructors and their peers or classmates could promote reflection and agency in their learning process (Andrade & Heritage, 2018; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Stenalt & Lassesen, 2021). Scholars purport that the key to developing student agency in online environments is the social (Stenalt, 2021) and interactive aspects (Basharina, 2009) of the environment. This aligns with research that contends that assessment is also a social process (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Shepard et al., 2005) leading learners to feelings of agency. As indicated by Andrade and Heritage (2018), "The social processes of assessment have an impact not only on students' learning but also on their motivation and feelings of self-efficacy" (p. 20). Therefore, designing curriculum and assessment, and providing instructors with support and professional development in using learner-centered pedagogical strategies (e.g., problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning) to facilitate students' active, collaborative learning must be a central consideration in the overall English language program.

Contributing and Hindering Factors of Student Engagement

There were also other contributing and hindering factors of student engagement in the SENA online learning environments. According to student participants, the top three contributing factors of student engagement were: students' self-discipline, students' attitude toward the English language, and students' study habits. These findings agreed with instructors' perceptions to some extent. Based on the instructor participants' self-reported survey data, the most contributing factor was students' attitude toward the English language, followed by students' self-discipline and students' technological skills.

With regard to the hindering factors, students identified their job and family responsibilities as the most limiting factors, followed by access to a computer and the Internet. For instructors, students' interest in the English language is the most hindering factor of students' engagement. They also identified students' Internet and computer access and students' job responsibilities as limiting students' engagement. These findings were consistent with Wang et al.'s (2001) study which found that students' self-discipline was the most influencing factor of effective online learning. Similarly, the findings supported Schrum and Hong's (2002) and Callo and Yazon's (2020) findings on the importance of students' access to tools, technology experiences, study habits, and being self-motivated in online learning experience. Finally, the study evidenced the need to address students' attitudes towards the English language considering that it is key for students to engage in online EL learning.

There were institutional factors that also hindered students' engagement, including large class sizes, which made it difficult for instructors to provide adequate personalized instruction and feedback. The process for determining student placement in courses was found to be problematic. Students often waited months for an instructor, were unable to choose the course

they wanted, and could not register in two courses. This meant they were extremely restricted in terms of selection of the course which best met their needs, which had impact on their feelings of agency in relation to their learning (Lindgren & McDaniel, 2012).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher's discussion of the key findings derived from the mixed methods data was articulated based on the relevant literature. Overall, building on the current SENA's English language program by reconsidering all facets of the design and implementation of the English language courses, as well as by examining instructors' teaching presence and pedagogical strategies, and understanding other contributing and hindering factors of student engagement in the online learning environment will not only help inform program review and redesign, but also the provision of continuing professional development for SENA English language instructors. In the concluding chapter, the researcher discusses the implications of her research findings and presents some specific suggestions that could guide future research and practice.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study explored student engagement in online English language courses in a vocational education system in Colombia to investigate the extent to which curriculum, assessment, instructor teaching presence and pedagogy, and additional factors contributed to student learning. Using a mixed methods research design, that included analysis of student and instructor survey data, interviews of student and instructor participants, and document analyses, the researcher identified specific strengths and noted areas for improvement specifically related to student engagement in an online learning environment. Implications of the research findings on SENA's online English language curriculum and assessment design, as well as recommendations for instructor professional development, institutional policy, instructional and assessment practice, and future research are discussed below.

Intentionally Building Teacher and Student Agency

A driving outcome from the analysis that could serve to underpin other recommendations is the intentional consideration of instructor and student agency in all decisions related to design changes in future iterations of the SENA English language program. Creating opportunities for instructors and students to enact agential changes to the courses to support contextual learning based on student interest and need will lead to a more personalized experience for all participants (Lindgren & McDaniel, 2012). This will also mean that the instructor and learners can co-create and adapt the learning tasks. Such an approach supports learners' agency and critical reflection, thereby resulting in improved language proficiency (Basharina, 2009).

Improving Learning and Assessment Tasks in Lower-Level English Courses

As determined in the research findings, the learning tasks in the lower levels (Beginning to Level 3) of the SENA English language courses had little real-world connection. The

problems embedded in the English language assessment tasks were neither complex nor ill-defined. This led to a focus on drill and practice of basic English language skills, which the researcher posits may have led to student disengagement in learning English from the very beginning of the course work. This is especially important for learners who are undertaking vocational programs. They need to see that the assessment tasks in the SENA English language courses prepare them for success in their professional and personal lives. These students are different from those in academic programs because the purpose of their registration in the SENA English language program is to learn English for practical use in their careers in trades (e.g., mechanics, plumbing, electricity, and so forth). Without a focus on real-world application of the language, they will lose their engagement in an online learning environment. This is especially so when they also face a litany of challenges in their daily life and work. Therefore, engaging learners from the beginning levels is important. Taken together, these suggest that it is time for SENA senior administrators and curriculum designer to review and rethink how the learning and assessment tasks at the lower levels can be redesigned to better meet the needs of students. A focus on more complex and authentic tasks would lead to a rethinking of pedagogical strategies in the English courses. Instead of providing students with shallow and superficial right/wrong tests of English language proficiency with a focus on assessment *of* learning, as indicated in the study's findings, authentic language assessment tasks serve as a viable approach because they can be linked to students' real-world contexts and offer opportunities for both the instructors and students to engage in assessment *for* learning practices, which may include formative feedback, self-assessment and reflection, explicit sharing of success criteria (Herrington et al., 2007; Koh et al., 2018; Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Redesigning Assessment Tasks with a Focus on Assessment *for* Learning

Prioritizing assessment for learning over assessment of learning should lead to the application of fewer assessment tasks that are well integrated and connected to the contextualized complexity of real-life language use, with a focus on learning and communicating, as opposed to demonstrating simple competencies (Herrington et al., 2007; Koh et al., 2018). This would mean that opportunities for self-reflection as well as instructor and peer feedback become an important aspect of the course and assessment design (Namaziandost et al., 2019). This will prevent minimal or no occasions for feedback and improvement. Instructors, for example, may consider one to three complex tasks, with multiple points in a course where the students and the instructor give and receive feedback leading to continual improved iterations of English language use.

Considering Multimodal Social Media Apps as An Entry Point

The use of multimodal social media apps (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok) as an entry point for language learning is a new research area. However, considering the possibilities inherent in these apps as meaning making opportunities in English language learning, their roles should not be downplayed (Malik & Asner, 2019; Mondahl & Razmerita, 2014; Reinhardt, 2019). Benefits to multimodal apps in language learning in relation to SENA's online English language courses may include that they: (a) have real-world relevance and potential for contextual interaction and connection, (b) use multimodalities to promote the effective use of English as a second or foreign language, (c) allow for abbreviated occasions to practice the language in a fun way, and (d) offer a wide-ranging audience with which to engage. Needless to say, instructor use of aforementioned apps would require professional learning and

pedagogical support, but they should be considered as an engagement strategy in all levels of the SENA English language courses.

Instructor Professional Development Related to Active Learning and Collaboration

Providing ongoing professional development for instructors, with a particular focus in the areas of active learning and collaboration, would assist them in developing the pedagogical expertise required for developing engagement in online environments (Stone & Springer, 2019). The professional development focus should not only include exploration of the pedagogy supporting the use of active learning and collaboration in online environments, but also provide exemplars for instructors to consider, modify, and test in their own context. Furthermore, creating opportunities for instructors to reflect, share successes and failures, and test and implement changes with teaching colleagues could promote a reciprocal and supportive environment to encourage pedagogical growth particularly in relation to interaction and collaboration in the online environment, which may carry over and impact teaching presence.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The SENA administrators may consider policies related to instructors' English language proficiency to ensure that quality language instruction can be provided to students in vocational education. In addition, it is important to determine students' levels of English language proficiency by administering a placement test prior to the instruction so that their English instruction matches their language abilities. Students should also participate in a placement test related to their technological literacy. If technological instruction is needed, students should be provided technology instruction in Spanish at the beginning of their online English language instruction.

SENA's instructors need to be supported with assessment workshops that place greater emphasis on formative assessment, including the use of feedback loops, rather than summative assessment. One of the institutional policies could be instructor assessment literacy, in particular in assessment task design and implementation. It is important to ensure that the same assessment tasks are not repeated and answers from the previous cohorts of students are not made available on the Internet. Rather, the English assessment tasks should be updated continually, based on the backgrounds and interests of individual students. Such a strategy will prevent students from plagiarism. In addition, the assessment tasks need to focus on students' learning needs and be of interest to them. This means the tasks need to connect to the students' vocational program and what they are studying, the type of project they are doing, and the vocabulary they are using, so it will be relevant and meaningful for them. Involving students in self-assessment is also essential. They will feel that they have the agency to determine the topics that could be included in the course and the types of assessment tasks they might engage in. These assessment strategies would increase their online engagement.

The online English courses are 60 hours in length with the expectation that students should study two hours every day. Given that many of the students are adult learners who are working full time, the provision for extra study and practice time for them would be one important facilitating factor in the design and delivery of the SENA English program. In addition, the number of students per instructor needs to be reasonable so that the instructor will have the time and opportunity to provide formative feedback that can assist students to make progress in English language learning.

Instructors and course designers need to be encouraged to continue seeking creative ways to incorporate technological tools for engaging students in online collaboration and interactions,

including the use of blogs, wikis and other emerging social media (e.g., Twitter, Tik Tok and Instagram). English language learning can made more authentic by promoting students' narrations of their personal stories in the form of a video. This suggests that instructors and students need to be trained to keep abreast of the pedagogical advantages of new technological tools.

Finally, the researcher is hopeful that one positive outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it will allow more people from around the world to see the potential of online English language program. The study's findings suggest that it is important to understand curriculum and assessment design, instructor teaching presence and instructional strategies, as well as other factors that facilitate and/or hinder vocational students' engagement in an online learning environment. One size doesn't fit all. More empirical studies need to be conducted to investigate the possibilities, potential, and challenges in online English language learning across different sociocultural contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on SENA administrators' perspectives of online English program design and delivery to adult learners and the challenges faced by the institution. The design of high-quality professional development workshops for SENA instructors is deemed to build instructor capacity in the implementation of authentic English language assessment tasks to effectively engage students in an online learning environment. Future research may delve into the effects of instructor professional development on their online instructional strategies and assessment practices in SENA English language courses.

Final Reflections

While reflecting on the process of completing this doctoral degree, the researcher felt honored that she was able to consider a research problem that arise from her own experience in teaching English online in Colombia. She found a high attrition rate in the online English learning program at SENA and told herself that she must do something to help. The doctoral research has enabled the researcher to upgrade her research skills, in particular in learning how to write a critical review of the relevant literature, as well as how to plan and execute an explanatory sequential mixed methods study. It was a steep learning curve since her master's program in Colombia. Methodologically, prior to starting her PhD study, she did not know anything about mixed methods because her MA study involved only collecting qualitative interview data and artifacts from instructors.

Using a mixed methods research design really helped the researcher to think deeply about the different data sources, and to consider how to integrate them meaningfully to answer the research questions. More importantly, the use of a mixed methods approach helped stengthen the research findings, which led to more meaningful implications for policy, practice, and future research. At the completion of her doctoral study, the researcher gained a better understanding of being a pragmatist in educational research. She learned how to appreciate both numbers and narratives in writing up research methodology and findings. Such a combination enabled her to make more holistic recommendations to improve student engagement in online English language courses that are so important in Colombia's vocational programs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to explore how SENA's online English language courses promoted student engagement through the analysis of

the curriculum and the assessment tasks used in the English language program, as well as online surveys and one-on-on interviews with students and instructors. These multiple sources of data have enabled me to triangulate the findings. However, given that the focus of the study was confined to SENA's online English language courses with its unique characteristics, it is difficult to generalize the findings to other contexts.

Despite the researcher's unexpected health challenges, she hopes the analysis, discussion, and recommendations in this study help shed light on future directions of the SENA online English language courses. The mixed methods findings may also provide insights to government agencies in Colombia and in other Latin American countries who are considering developing or adapting online English language learning programs for their citizens.

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Appendix A: Student Online Survey

The purpose of this survey is to know your perceptions on how your instructor's teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to your learning engagement in the SENA online English course you are currently taking. It is also aimed at identifying other factors that may contribute to or hinder your learning engagement in the course. The survey consists of four sections. The first section includes 17 items which ask you about your perceptions on instructor teaching presence on your current SENA's online English course. The second section includes 18 items related to your perceptions on your instructor pedagogical strategies. The third sections included four items addressing different factors that may contribute or hinder your learning engagement. The last section includes 13 items about demographic information.

Section 1. Teaching Presence
Directions: Please select the answer that most closely represents how much you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to the instructor of your current SENA's online English course.

Instructional Design and Organization

1. Overall, the instructor for this course clearly communicated important course goals (for example, provided documentation on course learning objectives).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

2. Overall, the instructor for this course clearly communicated important course topics (for example, provided a clear and accurate course overview)

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

3. Overall, the instructor for this course provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (e.g., provided clear instructions on how to complete course assignments successfully).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

4. Overall, the instructor for this course clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities that helped me keep pace with this course (for example, provided a clear and accurate course schedule, due dates, etc.).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

5. Overall, the instructor for this course helped me take advantage of the online environment to assist my learning (for example, provided clear instructions on how to participate in online discussion forums).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

6. Overall, the instructor for this course helped students understand and practice the kinds of behaviors acceptable in online learning environments (for example, provided documentation on “netiquette” i.e. polite forms of online interaction).

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Facilitating Discourse

7. Overall, the instructor for this course was helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on course topics that assisted me to learn

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

8. Overall, the instructor for this course was helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that assisted me to learn.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

9. Overall, the instructor in this course acknowledged student participation in the course (for example replied in a positive, encouraging manner to student submissions).

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

10. Overall, the instructor for this course encouraged students to explore new concepts in this course (for example, encouraged “thinking out loud” or the exploration of new ideas).

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

11. Overall, the instructor for this course helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialog.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

12. Overall, the instructor for this course helped keep the participants on task in a way that assisted them to learn.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Direct Instruction

13. Overall, the instructor for this course presented content or questions that helped me to learn.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

14. Overall, the instructor for this course helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that assisted me to learn.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

15. Overall, the instructor for this course provided explanatory feedback that assisted me to learn (for example, responded helpfully to discussion comments or course assignments).

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

16. Overall, the instructor for this course helped me to revise my thinking (for example, correct misunderstandings) in a way that helped me to learn.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

17. Overall, the instructor for this course provided useful information from a variety of sources that assisted me to learn (for example, references to articles, textbooks, personal experiences or links to relevant external websites).

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Section 2. Instructor Pedagogical Strategies

Directions: Please select the answer that most closely represents how much you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to the instructor's pedagogical strategies in your current SENA's online English course.

***Creating a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere to Build a Learning* Community**

18. The instructor of this course welcomed students before the course began via email or course announcements.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

19. The instructor of this course posted a personal introduction with an informal tone.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

20. The instructor of this course provided lots of encouragement and support, particularly in the beginning of the course (for example with positive feedback administered to students privately by email.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

21. The instructor of this course encouraged students to post a short self-introduction to the discussion forum.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Promoting Active Learning

22. The instructor of this course emphasized to students the importance of learning by playing an active role in the learning process.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

23. The instructor of this course provided opportunities for students to critique and reflect upon certain course topics.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

24. The instructor of this course encouraged students to be proactive learners by regularly logging into the course site, submitting assignments on-time, participating in discussions, and cooperating with teammates.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

25. The instructor of this course provided opportunities for active problem solving.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

26. The instructor of this course provided opportunities for team work.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

27. The instructor of this course encouraged the active participation in online discussion by designing provocative questions, encouraging students to respond to questions at a deeper level, and by pointing out any opposing perspectives.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

28. The instructor of this course used multiple discussion formats, including small group discussions, ―buzz groups (two people discuss topic for short period of time)

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

29. The instructor of this course used case studies, team debates, and role plays.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Modeling Effective Online Interaction

30. The instructor of this course responded to student comments and questions within time frames set at the beginning of the course.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

31. The instructor of this course provided general feedback to the entire class on specific assignments or discussions, while at the same time providing individual encouragement and comments to students.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

32. The instructor of this course provided feedback on graded assignments, recognized good work and made suggestions for improvement.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Collaboration and Interactivity

33. The instructor in this course has encouraged student collaboration (for example you are asked to work collaboratively on course assignments)

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

34. The instructor in this course has posed stimulating questions in the discussion forums that encourage you to participate.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

35. The instructor in this course has managed students' ideas in the discussion forums to facilitate students' interaction.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Section 3: Factors Contributing/Hindering Student Engagement

36. Please, rank these factors in the order you consider they contribute to your learning engagement in the current SENA online English course, 1 being the factor that most contributes to your learning engagement and 10 the least contributing factor.
    Your technological skills
    The course platform (Blackboard)
    The course format (online)
    SENA's administrative support
    Your self-discipline
    Your attitude toward the English language

Your learning preferences
Your study habits
Your personality
Your classmates

37. Please rank these factors in the order you consider they hinder your learning engagement in the current SENA online English course, 1 being the factor that most hinders your learning engagement and 10 the least limiting factor.
The class size
Your job responsibilities
Internet and computer access
Your age
Your family responsibilities
Your interest in the English language
Your computer confidence
Your English language proficiency
Your lifestyle
Your educational level

38. Please provide other three (3) factors that you consider that contribute to your learning engagement in the current SENA online English course and justify your answers.
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____

39. Please provide other three (3) factors that you consider that hinder your learning engagement in the current SENA online English course you are taking and justify your answers.
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____

Section 4: Demographic information

Directions: Please choose your answer to each item.

40. Which English course you are currently enrolled in?
English Dot Works Beginner
English Dot Works Level 1
English Dot Works Level 2
English Dot Works Level 3
English Dot Works Level 4
English Dot Works Level 5
English Dot Works Level 6

41. Which SENA's Program you are enrolled in?
Technical_____ Which one? _____
Technological_____ Which one? _____
Other. _____ Which one? _____

42. Which shift you are taking your program in?
During the day
In the afternoon
At night
On weekends
Fully online
Other _____ Which one? _____

43. Which term of your training program are you in?
First to third
Fourth to sixth
Seventh to eighth

44. Which is your highest educational level achieved?
High school
Technical education
Technological education
Undergraduate
Other. Which one?

45. What age range are you in?
Under 20
21-30
31-40
41-50
Over 50

46. What social strata do you belong to?
1
2
3
4
5

47. What is your gender?
Female
Male
Other

48. How many hours per week do you work on your current English course?
Less than 5
5 -10
11-15
16 – 20
More than 20

49. What is your current employment status?
Full time
Part time
Unemployed

50. Where do you have access to your current online English course?
Home computer
Office computer
SENA labs or library
Other___ Which one?

51. Is this your first online course?
Yes
No
If no, how many online courses have you completed so far? _____

52. Why are you taking this English course? Mark all that apply.
Because it is a graduation requirement
Because I like English
Because English is necessary for my professional life
Because it will allow me better job opportunities
Because it is online
Because I want to travel abroad
Other Which one? _____

Appendix B: Instructor Online Survey

The purpose of this survey is to know your perceptions on how your teaching presence and pedagogical strategies contribute to your students' learning engagement in the SENA online English course you are currently teaching. It is also aimed at identifying other factors that you consider that may contribute to or hinder your students' engagement in the course. The survey consists of four sections. The first section includes 17 items which ask you about your perceptions on your teaching presence on the SENA's online English course you are teaching. The second section includes 18 items related to your perceptions on your pedagogical strategies. The third sections included four items addressing different factors that may contribute or hinder your students' learning engagement. The last section includes 13 items about demographic information.

Section 1. Teaching Presence

Directions: Please select the answer that most closely represents how much you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to your teaching presence in the SENA's online English course you are currently teaching.

Instructional Design and Organization

1. Overall, you clearly communicated important course goals (for example, provided documentation on course learning objectives).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

2. Overall, you clearly communicated important course topics (for example, provided a clear and accurate course overview)

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

3. Overall, you provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (e.g., provided clear instructions on how to complete course assignments successfully).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

4. Overall, you clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities that helped students keep pace with this course (for example, provided a clear and accurate course schedule, due dates, etc.).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

5. Overall, you have helped your students take advantage of the online environment to assist their learning (for example, provided clear instructions on how to participate in online discussion forums).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

6. Overall, you have helped students understand and practice the kinds of behaviors acceptable in online learning environments (for example, provided documentation on "netiquette" i.e. polite forms of online interaction).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Facilitating Discourse

7. Overall, you have been helpful in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement on course topics that assisted me to learn

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

8. Overall, you have been helpful in guiding the class towards understanding course topics in a way that assisted me to learn.

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

9. Overall, you have acknowledged student participation in the course (for example replied in a positive, encouraging manner to student submissions).

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

10. Overall, you have encouraged students to explore new concepts in this course (for example, encouraged "thinking out loud" or the exploration of new ideas).

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

11. Overall, you have helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialog.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

12. Overall, you have helped keep the participants on task in a way that assisted them to learn.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Direct Instruction

13. Overall, you have presented content or questions that have helped students to learn.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

14. Overall, you have helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that have assisted students to learn.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

15. Overall, you have provided explanatory feedback that has assisted students to learn (for example, responded helpfully to discussion comments or course assignments).

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

16. Overall, you have helped students to revise their thinking (for example, correct misunderstandings) in a way that has helped them to learn.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

17. Overall, you have provided useful information from a variety of sources that have assisted students to learn (for example, references to articles, textbooks, personal experiences or links to relevant external websites).

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Section 2. Instructor Pedagogical Strategies

Directions: Please select the answer that most closely represents how much you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to your pedagogical strategies in the current SENA's online English course you are teaching.

***Creating a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere to Build a Learning* Community**

18. You welcomed students before the course began via email or course announcements.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

19. You posted a personal introduction with an informal tone.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

20. You provided lots of encouragement and support, particularly in the beginning of the course (for example with positive feedback administered to students privately by email.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

21. You encouraged your students to post a short self-introduction to the discussion forum.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Promoting Active Learning

22. You have emphasized to students the importance of learning by playing an active role in the learning process.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

23. You have provided opportunities for students to critique and reflect upon certain course topics.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

24. You have encouraged students to be proactive learners by regularly logging into the course site, submitting assignments on-time, participating in discussions, and cooperating with teammates.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

25. You have provided opportunities for active problem solving.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

26. You have provided opportunities for team work.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

27. You have encouraged the active participation in online discussion by designing provocative questions, encouraging students to respond to questions at a deeper level, and by pointing out any opposing perspectives.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

28. You have used multiple discussion formats, including small group discussions, ―buzz groups‖ (two people discuss topic for short period of time)

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

29. You used case studies, team debates, and role plays.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Modeling Effective Online Interaction

30. You have responded to student comments and questions within time frames set at the beginning of the course.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

31. You have provided general feedback to the entire class on specific assignments or discussions, while at the same time providing individual encouragement and comments to students.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

32. You have provided feedback on graded assignments, recognized good work and made suggestions for improvement.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Collaboration and Interactivity

33. You have encouraged student collaboration (for example you are asked to work collaboratively on course assignments)

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

34. You have posed stimulating questions in the discussion forums that encourage students to participate.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

35. You have managed students' ideas in the discussion forums to facilitate their interaction.

    1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5= Strongly agree

Section 3: Factors Contributing/Hindering Student Engagement

36. Please, rank these factors in the order that you consider that they contribute to your student learning engagement in the SENA's online English course you are currently teaching, 1 being the factor that you think that most contributes to your students' learning engagement and 10 the least contributing factor.
    Your students' technological skills
    The course platform (Blackboard)
    The course format (online)
    SENA's administrative support
    Your students' self-discipline

Your students' attitude toward the English language
Your students' learning preferences
Your students' study habits
Your students' personality
Your students' classmates

37. Please rank these factors in the order you consider they hinder your students' learning engagement in the SENA online English course you are currently teaching, 1 being the factor that most hinders your learning engagement and 10 the least limiting factor.
    Your class size
    Your students' job responsibilities
    Your students' internet and computer access
    Your students' age
    Your students' family responsibilities
    Your students' interest in the English language
    Your students' computer confidence
    Your students' English language proficiency
    Your students' lifestyle
    Your students' educational level

38. Please provide other three (3) factors that you consider that contribute to your students' learning engagement in the SENA online English course you are currently teaching and justify your answers.
    _____ Why? _____
    _____ Why? _____
    _____ Why? _____
39. Please provide other three (3) factors that you consider that hinder your students' learning engagement in the SENA online English course you are currently teaching and justify your answers.
    _____ Why? _____
    _____ Why? _____
    _____ Why? _____

Section 4: Demographic information
Directions: Please choose your answer to each item

40. What is your highest educational level?
    Undergraduate
    Masters
    PhD
    Other. Which?
    Field/ area / specialization _____

41. What is your level of English proficiency based on the CEFR?
    B2
    C1
    C2

42. What age range are you in?
    22-30
    31-40
    41-50
    50-60
    Over 61

43. What is your gender?
    Female
    Male
    Other

44. How long have you taught in face-to-face environments?
    0 - 2
    3- 5
    6-10
    11-15
    More than 16

45. How long have you taught in online environments?
    0 - 2
    3- 5
    6-10
    11-15
    More than 16

46. Have you had training on online teaching?
    Yes
    No
    Which one?
    How long ?

47. Do you prefer teaching face-to-face or teaching online?
    _____

    Why?
    _____

48. Which English course you are currently teaching?
    English Dot Works Beginner
    English Dot Works Level 1

English Dot Works Level 2
English Dot Works Level 3
English Dot Works Level 4
English Dot Works Level 5
English Dot Works Level 6

49. How many times have you taught this course?
    Once
    2 to 4 times
    More than 5 times

50. How many English Dot Works courses are you currently teaching?
    1
    2
    3
    4

51. How many students are enrolled in this course? _____
52. How many students are actively participating in this course? _____

Appendix C: Student One-to-One Interview Protocol

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Zulay Diaz Caceres
Interviewee:

*Notes to interviewer in brackets. [*Setup: Recording device, laptop for taking field notes, clearance letter from Research Ethics Board*)

Preamble:

1. Turn on digital recorder
2. Introduce myself as the study researcher
3. Show ethics clearance letter to participant
4. Describe that the interview is intended to expand on the interviewee's answers to the online survey in relation to how instructor pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in the SENA's online English course the interview referred to in the survey, and other factors that the interviewee identifies which facilitate or hinder students' engagement in that course.
5. Describe that the interview will not last more than 15 minutes
6. Describe that recording for review purposes only - you will remain anonymous, and to the best or our ability any information the researcher reports in future knowledge translation activities (presentations, publications) will be non-identifiable; although she may quote your responses, this recording will not be disseminated in any way beyond the researcher.
7. State that "you can decline to answer any question at any time, change or revoke an answer, terminate interview, withdraw from participation at any time today, or any point in the 7 days following this interview"
8. Ask "do I have your permission to follow up, by phone or email, should I have a question or two following this interview?"
9. Ask "Do you have any questions before we start?"
10. Confirm participant name (out loud for recording), participant role (out loud for recording)

Script prior to interview:

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As indicated in the online survey, my study seeks to understand how online English language courses in vocational education promote student engagement. In particular, both the survey and this interview seek to examine first, how the instructor pedagogical strategies contribute to your learning engagement in the online English course you referred to in the online survey, and second, what other factors facilitate or hinder your learning engagement in that course.

Our interview today will last approximately 15 minutes during which I will be asking to expand, explain, or clarify some of your survey answers.

[review aspects of consent form]

In the survey, you completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Questions:

1a. On the online survey you indicated that your instructor helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialogue. How did he/she do it?
1b. On the online survey you indicated that your instructor did not help to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialogue. What could he/she have done differently to achieve that purpose?
1c. On the online survey you marked "neutral" to this statement: "Overall your instructor helped to keep students engaged and participating in a productive dialogue". What is the reason for that answer?

2a. You also indicated in the online survey that your instructor provided explanatory feedback that assisted you to learn. How did he/she do it? How did it contribute to your engagement in learning? Why did you find it helpful?
2b. You also indicated in the online survey that your instructor did not provide explanatory feedback to assist your learning. What type of feedback did your instructor provide? What type of feedback could have contributed to your learning engagement?
2c. You also marked "neutral" to this survey statement: "Overall your instructor provided explanatory feedback that assisted you to learn". What type of feedback did your instructor provide? Wasn't it explanatory enough? Didn't it support your learning? What type of feedback could have contributed to your learning engagement?

3a. In addition you indicated that your instructor provided lots of encouragement and support. What did he do? Why did you find it encouraging? How often did he do it? How did he do it?
3b. In addition you indicated that your instructor did not provide encouragement and support. What did you expect him/her to do? How could your instructor have encouraged and supported you in a better way?
3c. You also marked "neutral" to this survey statement: "Overall your instructor provided lots of encouragement and support". Why was your answer "neutral"? What does it mean? Did you expect more encouragement and support? How could have your instructor provide it?

4a. You agreed with most of the survey statements related to your instructor's use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. How do you think active learning contributes to your learning engagement in the course?
4b. You disagree with most of the survey statements related to your instructor's use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. What type of strategies did your instructor use in the course? Were they engaging? Why? Why not?
4c. You chose "neutral" as response to the survey statements related to your instructor's use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. Why? Are active learning strategies engaging for you? What other instructor's pedagogical strategies did your instructor use?

5a. You strongly agreed in the online survey that your instructor encouraged student collaboration in the online English language course. How did he do it? What team tasks did you take part in? Was it engaging? Why?
5b. You strongly disagreed in the online survey that your instructor encouraged student collaboration in the online English language course. Why? What type of tasks were you involved in? What type of collaborative tasks would you have liked to find? Are collaborative activities engaging for you? Why? Why not?
5c. You marked ¨neutral" in the online survey to the statement about your instructor's encouragement on student collaboration in the online English language course. Why? Did the course include team work? If yes, which tasks? If not, what type of tasks would you have liked to have? Would they have been more encouraging than the actual tasks? Why? Why not?

6a. You found your instructor's questions in the discussion forums stimulating and encouraging students to participate in the course. What kind of questions did he/she use? Why were those questions interesting?
6b. You did not find your instructor's questions in the discussion forums stimulating and encouraging students to participate in the course. Why? What type of questions did he use? What type of questions will encourage you to actively participate in the discussion forums?
6c. You marked "neutral" to this statement: "Your instructor has posed stimulating questions in the discussion forums that encourage students to participate". Why? What were the forum question like? What type of questions would you like to find on a discussion forum for you to engage in those discussions?

7a. In terms of factors contributing to student engagement in your online English course, you found _____, and _____ as the factors that contributed the most to your learning engagement. Why?
7b. In terms of factors contributing to student engagement in your online English course, you found _____and _____ as the least contributing factors to your learning engagement. Why? How do they contribute to your learning engagement?

8 In terms of factors that hinder student engagement in your online English course, you found _____ and _____as the factors that hindered the most your learning engagement. Why? How do they hinder your engagement? How can you manage them to benefit your learning engagement?

Thanks for your time and participation in the study. I will get back to you with the interview transcripts so that you can review and modify what you consider necessary. Please, let me know if you have any additional questions.

Appendix D: Instructor One-to-One Interview Protocol

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Zulay Diaz Caceres
Interviewee:

*Notes to interviewer in brackets. [*Setup: Recording device, laptop for taking field notes, clearance letter from Research Ethics Board*)

Preamble:

1. Turn on digital recorder
2. Introduce myself as the study researcher
3. Show ethics clearance letter to participant
4. Describe that the interview is intended to expand on the interviewee's answers to the online survey in relation to how instructor pedagogical strategies contribute to student engagement in the SENA's online English course the interview referred to in the survey, and other factors that the interviewee identifies which facilitate or hinder students' engagement in that course.
5. Describe that the interview will not last more than 15 minutes
6. Describe that recording for review purposes only - you will remain anonymous, and to the best or our ability any information the researcher reports in future knowledge translation activities (presentations, publications) will be non-identifiable; although she may quote your responses, this recording will not be disseminated in any way beyond the researcher.
7. State that "you can decline to answer any question at any time, change or revoke an answer, terminate interview, withdraw from participation at any time today, or any point in the 7 days following this interview"
8. Ask "do I have your permission to follow up, by phone or email, should I have a question or two following this interview?"
9. Ask "Do you have any questions before we start?"
10. Confirm participant name (out loud for recording), participant role (out loud for recording)

Script prior to interview:

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As indicated in the online survey, my study seeks to understand how online English language courses in vocational education promote student engagement. In particular, both the survey and this interview seek to examine first, how the instructor pedagogical strategies contribute to your learning engagement in the online English course you referred to in the online survey, and second, what other factors facilitate or hinder your learning engagement in that course.

Our interview today will last approximately 15 minutes during which I will be asking to expand, explain, or clarify some of your survey answers.

[review aspects of consent form]

In the survey, you completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Questions:

1a. On the online survey you indicated that you have helped keep students engaged and participating in productive dialogue. How did you do it?
1b. On the online survey you indicated that you have not helped keep students engaged and participating in productive dialogue. What could you have done it differently to achieve that purpose?
1c. On the online survey you marked "neutral" to this statement: "You have helped to keep students engaged and participating in a productive dialogue". Why?

2a. You also indicated in the online survey that you provided explanatory feedback that assisted your students to learn. How did you do it? Can you provide an example? How do you think it contributes to your students' engagement in learning?
2b. You also indicated in the online survey that you did not provide explanatory feedback to assist your students' learning. What type of feedback did you provide to your students? What type of feedback do you think that could have contributed to your students' learning engagement?
2c. You also marked "neutral" to this survey statement: "Overall you provided explanatory feedback that assisted your students to learn". What type of feedback did you provide to your students' assignments? Wasn't it explanatory enough? Do you think it did not support your students' learning? What type of feedback could have contributed to your students' learning engagement?

3a. In addition you indicated that you provided lots of encouragement and support. What did you do? Why do you think your students find it encouraging? How often did you do it? How did you do it?
3b. In addition you indicated that you disagreed with this survey statemen: "Overall you have provided lots of encouragement and support". Why? How could it have been different in your course? How could you have encouraged and supported your students in a better way?
3c. You also marked "neutral" to this survey statement: "Overall you have provided lots of encouragement and support". Why was your answer "neutral"? What does it mean? Have you liked to provide more encouragement and support? How could you have provided it?

4a. You agreed with most of the survey statements related to your use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. How do you think active learning contributes to your students' learning engagement in the course?
4b. You disagree with most of the survey statements related to your use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. What type of strategies do you use in the course? Are they engaging? Why? Why not?
4c. You chose "neutral" as response to the survey statements related to your use of active learning (problem solving, team work, case studies) in your course. Why? Are active learning strategies engaging for your students? What other instructor's pedagogical strategies do you use

that promote your students' engagement in learning? Do your students find them engaging? How do you know that?

5a. You strongly agreed in the online survey that you encouraged student collaboration in the online English language course. How did you do it? What collaborative tasks did you use in your course? Did your students find them engaging? Why?
5b. You strongly disagreed in the online survey that you encouraged student collaboration in the online English language course. Why? What type of tasks did you get your students involved in? Are collaborative activities engaging for your students? Do you find them engaging? Why? Why not?
5c. You marked ¨neutral" in the online survey to the statement about your encouragement on student collaboration in the online English language course. Why? Did your course include team work? If yes, which tasks? If not, why? Would they have been more encouraging than the actual tasks you used? Why? Why not?

6a. You found your questions in the discussion forums stimulating and encouraging students to participate in the course. What kind of questions did you use? Why were those questions interesting?
6b. You did not find your questions in the discussion forums stimulating and encouraging students to participate in the course. Why? What type of questions did you use? What type of questions will encourage your students to actively participate in the discussion forums?
6c. You marked "neutral" to this statement: "You have posed stimulating questions in the discussion forums that encourage students to participate". Why? What were your forum question like? What type of questions do you think will engage your students in those discussions?

7a. In terms of factors contributing to student engagement in your online English course, you found _____, and _____ as the factors that contributed the most to your students' learning engagement. Why?
7b. In terms of factors contributing to student engagement in your online English course, you found _____and _____ as the least contributing factors to your students' learning engagement. Why? How do they contribute to their learning engagement?

8 In terms of factors that hinder student engagement in your online English course, you found _____ and _____as the factors that hindered the most your students' learning engagement. Why? How do they hinder their engagement? How can you help your student manage them to benefit their learning engagement?

Thanks for your time and participation in the study. I will get back to you with the interview transcripts so that you can review and modify what you consider necessary. Please, let me know if you have any additional questions