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Community College Second Language Students’ Perspectives of Online Learning: A Phenomenological Case Study

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Community College Second Language Students’ Perspectives of Online Learning: A Phenomenological Case Study

by

Li-Lee Tunceren

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy College of Arts & Sciences and College of Education University of South Florida

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Keywords: Distance Education, Community of Inquiry, Online Self-Regulated Learning, Writing Across the Curriculum, Community College, Multilingual Writers

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I dedicate this dissertation to Maria Nieves Edmonds, who hired me and inspired me to join her on a life-long journey to improve the quality of life for diverse and underprivileged populations at our college and in the community.

Returning from a trip to her native Puerto Rico in 1994, Maria exclaimed, “Li-Lee! We can teach on the World Wide Web! To anyone! Anywhere! You in??!!”

Yes, I was. Yes, I still am.
Acknowledgments

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# Table of Contents

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. iv

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... v

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. vi

Chapter 1: This Researcher’s Roots, Rhythms and Ruminations ....................................... 1

Chapter 2: Introduction to the Study ................................................................................. 13
  Problem Statement ........................................................................................................... 13
  Writing Across the Curriculum ....................................................................................... 15
  Need for the Study .......................................................................................................... 17
  Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 20
  Research Design ............................................................................................................. 21
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 22
    Community of Inquiry ............................................................................................... 22
    Learning Presence ...................................................................................................... 25
  Statement of Purpose ..................................................................................................... 26
  Boundaries and Limitations of the Study ...................................................................... 27
Chapter 2 Summary ......................................................................................................... 28

Chapter 3: Literature Review .......................................................................................... 29
  Introduction .................................................................................................................... 29
  The American Community College ............................................................................. 31
    Mission and Population ............................................................................................ 32
    21st Century Issues, Challenges and Reforms .......................................................... 33
      Developmental Education ....................................................................................... 34
      The Completion Agenda ......................................................................................... 35
      Distance Education Growth and Issues ................................................................ 38
      Distance Education Professional Organizations and Research ......................... 42
      Distance Education Survey Data ........................................................................... 43
  Community of Inquiry ................................................................................................. 47
    Teaching Presence ...................................................................................................... 49
    Social Presence .......................................................................................................... 50
    Cognitive Presence .................................................................................................... 50
    Learning Presence ...................................................................................................... 52
  L2 Writing Across the Curriculum ............................................................................... 55
    Digital Literacies Research ....................................................................................... 59
    WAC Faculty Feedback ............................................................................................ 61
    Paraphrasing, Patchwriting and Plagiarism ............................................................. 63
List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Responses Collected Via Recruitment Survey ..........................86
Table 2: Timeline and Data Sources for the Study .......................................................86
Table 3: Summary of Research Questions, Data Sources and Methods of Analysis ......100
List of Figures

Figure 1: Community of Inquiry Framework .................................................................53

Figure 2: Revised COI Model with Learning Presence ......................................................59
Abstract

In this phenomenological case study, I elicited the perspectives of first-year community college second language (L2) students enrolled in an online general education course, Studies in Applied Ethics. Four L2 participants narrated their lived experiences and impressions of distance learning via Skype interviews at early, mid, and end-of-semester junctures. The Distance Education instructional model Community of Inquiry (COI) served as the theoretical framework for the inquiry. The multilingual participants suggested the COI components Teaching Presence (design and facilitation of the course) and Learning Presence (self-regulated learning behaviors) led to Cognitive Presence (the understanding of and ability to demonstrate content knowledge). Social Presence, the concept of collaborating with classmates in a virtual community, seemed less desired or effectual for the L2 participants in this general education online course. Discoveries in this phenomenological case study add qualitative data and diverse perspectives to the extant research on Community Colleges, Online Teaching and Learning, Writing Across the Curriculum, and English for Academic Purposes.
Chapter One

This Researcher’s Roots, Rhythms and Ruminations

*There is one mystery - yeah - I just can’t express*
*To give you're more, to receive you're less*
*One of my good friend said, in a reggae riddim,*
*’Don’t jump in the water if you can’t swim.’*

Bob Marley, 1978

Thirty-five years ago, my passion for living and working among diverse cultures revealed itself. Armed with a liberal arts degree and a teaching certificate, I left my New England roots to teach English as a foreign language in Niger, in *La Sahel*, just south of the Sahara Desert. How eager I was to serve! To travel, teach, and speak in foreign tongues! At 22, I was ready to spread knowledge, books, technology, and freethinking. I never questioned whether the Nigerien high schoolers would *wish* to learn English, whether the villagers would *welcome* me into their lives, or whether I really *wanted* to experience life in a land-locked nation. Off I went.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1980’s, I lived as a sojourner with open eyes, ears, mind and heart. What I gained in perspective dwarfed what I gave in pedagogy. It was a musical and mystical time. I learned about humanity and humility, power and privilege, tradition and travail. The lessons that incubated during my first teaching position as a high school English language instructor have deepened and shaped my identity as a TESOL professional ever since. In this chapter, I describe some foundational experiences that constitute the core of who I am, what I believe, and why I designed this phenomenological study to give voice to second language students in their first year of study at an American community college.
There's a natural mystic
Blowing through the air
If you listen carefully now
You will hear...

Bob Marley, 1977

It was four o’clock in the morning in mid-July when an Air France flight from Paris to Niamey met the tarmac. We - three young American women dressed in skirts to our knees - disembarked into the warm, arid night and boarded an open-air autobus to the Peace Corps stage, our training area for the next six weeks. The vibrant streets of Niamey awoke us through the widows. Dark men in multicolored kufi hats and tunic shirts were chatting at stalls and sitting on low, three-legged stools around hibachi-like grills, drinking from tin mugs and glass jars. Women gathered around campfires stirring oversized pots of unknown substances, a hint of onion and fish in the vapor escaping from the sides of aluminum lids. Boom boxes blared, children cavorted, and babies wrapped in patterned cloths bounced on mothers’ backs. I exclaimed in my intermediate level French, “It’s the middle of the night!”

Our driver informed us it was the start of the month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from sun-up to sundown. Energizing at night and sparing movement in the day made good sense when this holy period fell in the middle of the scorching summer.

Tabaski, the holiday commemorating Abraham’s obedience to God, punctuates the end of Ramadan, when sheep across the West African continent shuffle to their doom. Training was behind me, and I was living in my own banco mudbrick home in Dogondoutchi when the new crescent moon signaled the start of Tabaski. My water carrier, Rabi-mi-Ruwa, invited me to her home to witness the slaughter of the ram gifted to her family by the local prefecture and then join the women in the day-long preparation for the feast. Akwai Haussa! Akwai Haussa! Rabi assured her friends and relatives that I spoke Haussa. Hah! I smiled and pounded some spices amidst the chatter and commotion. Besides lean, grilled mutton, we ate fatty stews with
potatoes, millet with beans, and drank several rounds of *shayi*, hot sweet tea. The next day began in a lazy afterglow, “Wow! Now I get it! I’ll be much better prepared next year; I’ll buy Rabi and the other women new *pagnes* and colorful fabric for their headdresses.”

But in the next second, I felt an itch, a desire to embark on my mission. “Ok, Ramadan is over; maybe now the pace of life will kick up a notch.”

I set up my home, prepared for classes, and learn to drive a used *Mobylette* through the sand about three miles to the lycée on the other side of the village. Those who had attended school, even if just a few years, could speak French, but as I scurried about the village shopping at the open markets, trying the fare, and kindling a few friendships, I had to resort to the halting Haussa I had learned during our Peace Corps training. *Ina kwana? Ina kwana gida?* “How are you? And those in your household?”

I found that no, life did not accelerate after the fasting period was over; I had to adjust to a pervasive sense of non-urgency.

*Singing ‘Don’t worry about a thing Cause every little thing gonna be alright’
Singing ‘Don’t worry about a thing Cause every little thing gonna be alright’*  
Bob Marley, 1977

Once classes started, I dove into lesson planning and paper grading by kerosene lantern each night. I gave up giving homework because the students did not do it; some worked in distant fields after school and some had no paper on which to write. Books did not leave the school; we locked them in cabinets in the teachers’ room each afternoon before leaving. We volunteers had learned the British Council curriculum during training, and although it made sense then, it gave me pause once I started teaching. There was no relevance to Nigerien life. I had met no children named Kofi or Fante, yet this Ghanaian brother and sister pair were the
protagonists in the textbooks. One of the situated dialogues revolved around their trip to visit relatives in London; I can still hear my students’ choral repetition as they stood and mimicked my model pronunciation to the best of their ability, “There eeeez Tower Breeedge!” There is Tower Bridge??!!

When, where or why they would ever utter this expression outside of English class I could not imagine. The irrelevance of the curriculum and irreverence toward the local culture bothered me. Yet we pursued. I brought a cassette player to school. We listened and sang to the great Jamaican musicians Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, and Peter Tosh. The students loved the reggae beat and copied popular lyrics from the chalkboard to share with their friends. We sang Exodus, Equal Rights, Redemption Song, Get up Stand Up! When just a few years later I read in horror that Peter Tosh had been gunned down on a Kingston street, I was thousands of miles away from Dogondoutchi, but my heart was with those Nigerien kids who had afforded me a peek inside their reality and nurtured my nascent world view.

Life is one big road with lots of signs  
So when you riding through the ruts,  
Don't you complicate your mind;  
Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy  
Don't bury your thoughts;  
Put your vision to reality!  

Bob Marley. 1979

After two years in rural Niger, I was not ready to return to the States. I requested another two-year term with the Peace Corps and transferred to Dakar, Senegal, to serve as an animatrice pédagogique, an English teacher trainer. I welcomed the move from the desert to the coast, but I had never lived in a city and felt detached from the daily interactions with villagers and colleagues I had enjoyed in Niger. My post was at the Ministry of Education, where I shared an office with two professionals in language education: Eric, a British Council officer, and Moussa, a Senegalese professor on loan from the University of Dakar. We researched the latest teaching
methods and designed (we thought) a suitable classroom observation instrument and assessment protocol for the francophone African context based upon our encounters with Senegalese English teachers.

Eric, Moussa and I loaded the Peugeot 504 diesel wagon about once a month to venture out to the provinces – my favorite part of the job. We delivered teaching supplies and foodstuffs to fellow volunteers, observed classes from elementary through high school levels, and ran workshops on the Audiolingual and communicative foreign language learning methods in vogue at the time. I loved working with in-service teachers and their students; what a privilege to sit in classes and witness the thought and energy at work. From a Western standpoint, these less-than-optimal conditions for learning might constitute an excuse for poor performance outcomes, but here, we saw literacy development in schools with no paper. Students and teachers used the backside of posters and billboards, the inside of cloth and plastic rice and flour bags, anything with a clean surface on which to create and demonstrate literacy.

Our team would return to the city to tally our class observation sheets and document school visits for the Ministry of Education. We would write newsletters and mail them out to Senegalese English teachers and Peace Corps volunteers across the country. We would tackle revisions on our teaching assessment protocol. But it felt impossible to capture in this two-paged checklist what we had observed in classrooms. I could not articulate it at the time, but I was yearning for qualitative research. What mattered to me were the teachers and the students, the ways these English-speaking mentors built trust and formed relationships that influenced their students’ lives outside of the classroom. I wanted to observe to learn, not to evaluate. I did not have all the answers when these English language teachers asked for help, and I did not want to force my beliefs upon them. Just as working with students, I found the best approach toward
engaging instructors was to craft ways for them to facilitate their own growth. Though professional development topics were often pre-determined, the Senegalese participants brought the relevance, the context, and the meaning to each workshop and classroom observation.

The power of philosophy – yeah, yeah,
    floats through my head
Light like a feather, heavy as lead
Light like a feather, yeah, heavy as lead
Bob Marley, 1978

The Peace Corps values advancing its volunteers, and I seized multiple opportunities for my own professional growth. I assisted with trainings, created teaching materials, learned and practiced new methodologies. I taught Saturday morning adult English classes in concert with the BBC radio, my first experience with a distance education program. I also improved my own language proficiency in French and Wolof. An impactful event was a week-long teaching seminar I attended. Dr. John Fanselow came to Dakar from Columbia University to lead the workshops organized for Senegalese French and local language instructors who worked for the Peace Corps. As an animatrice pédagogique, I was able to participate as well. Fanselow began his career in the Peace Corps in Somalia; he was unassuming and comfortable, very approachable and excited to be back in Africa. He had even brought his five-year-old daughter! He taught us the art and science of second language acquisition (SLA), novel approaches to foreign language teaching, and the importance of engaging in reflective practice. He shared early drafts of his book Breaking Rules, in which he espoused teacher observation methods that were descriptive and analytical rather than prescriptive and evaluative. Yes! He asked the Peace Corps to send us some books his graduate students were reading back in New York. Evelyn Hatch, Stephen Krashen, James Alatis, Michael Long... I had never heard of these SLA
pioneers, but living as a teacher and learner of foreign languages, I brought my own experiences to the page. Theory came alive!

*I don’t know where life will lead me
But I know where I have been
I can’t say what life will show me
But I know what I have seen*
Jimmy Cliff, 1971

The Afro-Caribbean rhythms and soulful sensibilities of four years in the Peace Corps accompanied me to New York City’s Upper West Side in the fall of 1984. Dr. Fanselow had offered an assistantship, and here I was in a master’s program at Columbia! Macintosh and mice, MS-DOS, AIDS and ATM machines… I was lost in Manhattan. I felt more comfortable at the East Harlem Library working with Dominican and Haitian immigrants than I did venturing downtown. I taught night classes at Riverside Church, that grand Neo-gothic sanctuary of social justice, where a year to the day before his death, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had delivered his anti-war speech *A Time to Break Silence*. At Riverside, we used an adult education *English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL) comic-strip series with titles like *No Hot Water Tonight* and *Milk and Honey*. We recited Langston Hughes, performed jazz chants, and laughed together. I was the teacher, but I felt among friends. Just as in Africa, I could never be one of my students or begin to face the daily challenges they did. I had a ticket out. But I could listen and learn.

*And the feelings that make
All those faces always renew
So true, so true
And would you believe that I have
All those same feelings too
The same as you*
Jimmy Cliff, 1983

At Teachers College, Dr. Fanselow and other professors introduced us to the works of Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, Dewey and Foucault. Wow! The words of these authors described the human experience and my own views in ways I could not express. The educational
theories of social justice, critical pedagogy, and “wide-awakeness” captivated me. My fingers flew across the *IBM Selectric III* as I wrote essays on their works. Teacher preparation, education and supervision courses took me to inner city public schools to observe practice and cooperating teachers working with diverse and disadvantaged populations - my first experience with poverty and inequity here at home. This was not a condition unique to the West African cities and villages I had lived in and traveled through. As with most teachers, working to empower children and adults in a democratized society became the driving force in me; the educational experiences I gained on the edge of Harlem informed not only my graduate studies but lifelong personal and professional priorities.

*Get up, stand up*  
*Stand up for your rights;*  
*Get up, stand up*  
*Don’t give up the fight!*

Bob Marley, 1973

Fast-forward to 2017, and I find myself thriving in a cross-cultural, 30-year marriage with three millennial children. I serve as Department Chair of Communications at the same community college I have worked at since 1990, when I walked through the door as the institution was seeking assistance to build an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The Communications faculty and administrators had come to realize that developmental English courses did not serve the needs of a growing multilingual/multicultural population. With a Perkins grant funding our first year, we wrote curriculum, selected textbooks, hired adjunct instructors, and in the fall of 1991, opened our doors to sixteen ESL students. This multileveled class comprised both residents and visa-holders wishing improve their language skills to advance at work or enroll in college degree programs. Hundreds of non-native English speakers from diverse backgrounds have since moved through the now-called *English for Academic Purposes*
(EAP) program. At present, EAP courses run on three campuses and provide access to English courses days, nights, weekends, and online.

ESL students shape and illumine the EAP program and the community college as a whole. From seventeen to seventy, Albania to Zimbabwe, and newly arrived to seasoned immigrants, these diverse learners have spiraled through and enriched my life in both personal and professional terms. As online learning has taken hold at the college, more EAP students are opting for the virtual classroom along with their native-speaking peers. While the online mode of instruction increases access to courses and programs, it has also removed them from our campuses and our sights. This leaves EAP faculty wondering about our ESL students once they move on from preparatory English classes to “the academy.” It is only through chance encounters, emails or facebook posts that we learn of their triumphs and travails. Anecdotal feedback from students and colleagues, published studies, action research, and institutional data can all provide insight, but multilingual student perspectives in first-year online college content courses is a research area that needs probing.

Don’t underestimate my ability
Don’t define my character
Don’t belittle my authority
It’s time you recognized my quality

Peter Tosh, 1977

In 2008, I decided to become more than a reflective practitioner; I enrolled in an interdisciplinary doctoral program to gain the necessary skills and institutional support to engage in pointed research. Taking three quantitative educational measurement courses in my first year, I found the mathematics and logic less of a problem than expected; what worried me were the discussions, generalizations, and implications of findings presented in study after study. I kept thinking about the human element, or better stated, its absence. As a novice, I conducted a mixed methods study in an advanced EAP course. Based on corpus linguistics and textual
analysis, the data did cast some light on the lexico-grammatical development in second language writing that I examined, but I realized it not the written discourse but the writers themselves that absorbed my attention. The students’ voices were muted if even evident in their papers, their thought processes and forays into language and content remaining hidden except for glimpses revealed by the few who agreed to follow-up interviews.

In an editorial upon the 10th year anniversary of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, Hamp-Lyons (2011) wrote, "we care about research and researchers in English, in and for academic settings, but *we care about teaching and teachers of English in and for academic settings too.* The co-existence of teaching and research in EAP is, and needs to be, emblematic of our discipline" (p. 4., Italics mine). Hamp-Lyons’ statement spoke to me. I had sought and shared insights at countless professional development seminars and conferences for decades, but I had not considered myself a researcher. I did have questions and concerns, and as I continued my doctoral studies, I was honing in on a study design I hoped would contribute to the fields of both second language instruction and online teaching and learning. However, an opportunity led me to step out of the world of multilingual learners and into a college-wide leadership position.

In the fall of 2010, I spearheaded an effort to establish a Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the community college where I teach. During my two-year term as the founding CETL coordinator, I conducted surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with faculty across disciplines. A major area of focus was and continues to be improving distance learning and student outcomes. Conversations with colleagues shed great light on the community college online teaching experience, and some improvements in training and support have arisen as a result. However, this attention to faculty has not been replicated with our online students. The college assesses the needs and satisfaction levels of all students,
regardless of instructional modality, via course evaluations (Students Survey of Instruction - SSI) and an annual national survey (the Community College Survey of Student Engagement - CCSSE). While these quantitative measurements are of value, they lack the emic view that thick description of lived experiences that students can provide. I wanted to design a study to better understand the processes, performance, and perceptions of multilingual learners in community college content courses. I passed my qualifying exams and fulfilled my two-year term as CETL coordinator; I was eager focus again on “my” students and their lives beyond EAP as online learners.

You never miss your water
Till your well runs dry
So tell me
Whatcha gonna do
When your well runs dry...

Peter Tosh, 1976

I knew I wanted to delve into the experiences of second language college students but was not sure how. Duff (2008) noted "choice of method is determined in large part by the questions one seeks answers to, the body of knowledge that already exists on that topic, the domain of inquiry and context, and the methods the questions lend themselves to" (p. viii). This advice along with my own intuition led me to select a phenomenological case study. This method of inquiry would allow me to prompt L2 students to reflect on their online learning experiences in first-year courses. I could explore questions unasked or unanswered in the literature and in our own institutional data. My wonderings included the following: What types of socio-academic communities (Leki, 2007) and/or mesosystems (Rodby, 1999) can and do L2 students form in online environments? What language and study skills, aptitudes and attitudes seem to help them to succeed online? How do they feel about their performance (assignment and course grades) vis a vis their intentions, effort and strategies? How to they stay motivated and
engaged (or do they)? How do they seek help? In general, what can our second language students tell us that might, in turn, help us help them?

_They got so much things to say right now_  
_They got so much things to say_  
_They got so much things to say right now_  
_They got so much things to say_  
_Oh yeah_  

Bob Marley, 1977

With this phenomenological case study, I wanted to illuminate the second language student experience in a first-year online course. I knew that to seek answers to the questions posed above, to begin to understand the multilingual student experience, I needed to converse with them, to listen to their stories, to bracket out my own assumptions, and immerse myself in their points of view. It was exhilarating to put this design into reality, to recruit students and discover how much they could share. As the four participants in this case study related and reflected on their online learning experiences, their narratives converged in several areas and diverged in others. My hope is that their narrated impressions will generate awareness and push the community college research agenda toward serving and empowering language minority students in both their on-ground and online educational endeavors.

_We are all one, we are the same person_  
_I'll be you, and you'll be me_  
_We are all one, same universal world_  
_I'll be you, you'll be me._  

Jimmy Cliff, 1983
Chapter Two
Introduction to the Study

Problem Statement

Community Colleges and Distance Education Challenges

American community colleges serve diverse educational needs of urban and rural municipalities across the nation. These two-year institutions offer a combination of academic transfer preparation, remedial education, vocational-technical education, continuing education, and community service (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; O’Banion, 2012). The stated mission at the site of this phenomenological case study, for instance, is to "promote student success and enrich our communities through education, career development, and self-discovery" (Mission, n.d.). Inherent in this mission statement are goals and values that reflect a leadership role in the locale and a commitment to leveling the playing field for students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

The community college student body includes high percentages of “underprepared” or “at-risk” first generation college students, low socioeconomic status (SES) students, older students, minority students, and English as a second language (ESL), or L2 students (Provasnik & Plany, 2008; Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). Attrition and non-completion of courses and programs are systemic problems among community college populations (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Jaggars, 2014), and L2 students make up large and growing portions of these two-year schools (Anayah & Kuk, 2015). As the numbers of English Language Learners have
increased in American public schools, so have enrollments of non-native speakers at community colleges (NCES, n.d.). International students, visa-holders with wide-ranging educational goals, are also attracted to community colleges in increasing numbers (Open Doors, 2015), often due to lower costs and smaller classes than universities (Anayah & Kuk, 2015).

The wide-ranging characteristics and needs of the community college population necessitate a myriad of student support services and negate a one-size-fits-all approach. However, curricular decisions, interventions, and initiatives too often reflect political preferences and economic woes. Demographic shifts, workforce opportunities, advances in technology, legislative funding, and for-profit institutions all impact the workings of the public community college (Provasnik & Planty, 2008; McClenny (2013). Over the past decade, Distance Education (DE) classes, certificates, and programs have mushroomed at two-year institutions. The **DE option** provides busy students convenient online learning environments and serves as an enrollment- and revenue-building venture for institutions facing diminishing budgets (Lokken & Mullins, 2014).

Nationwide, adult learners with multiple employment and family obligations are increasingly seeking DE courses (Allen & Seaman, 2014). A telling statistic is that while overall numbers of students at community colleges declined by nearly 4% in the 2012-2013 academic year, enrollments were up 5.2% in online classes (Lokken & Mullins, 2014). The *Condition of Education* 2015 annual report indicated about 10% of the 7 million students at two-year colleges had enrolled *exclusively* in DE classes and programs (Kena, Musu-Gillette, Robinson, Wang, Rathbun, Zhang, Wilkinson-Flicker, Barmer, & Dunlop Velez, 2015). This trend differs from earlier studies that showed most community college students “sampled” online courses from semester to semester but still considered campus-based learning the norm.
Maintaining an “open door” policy challenges community colleges to develop the expertise and infrastructure to meet DE demands and simultaneously support first-year students as they acclimate to college and the autonomy of studying online. In a longitudinal study of over 30,000 distance learners in the Southwest, Ke and Chavez (2013) found community college students struggle to “manage cultural, familial, geographic, and economic circumstances” (p. 56). The sample in this study included mostly “place-bound” Native and Hispanic American adults working long hours at low-wage jobs and selecting DE career and technical education courses to pursue their goals toward career advancement and improved quality of life. Ke and Chavez (2013) also reported that a high percentage of these students were unable to complete the online programs in which they had enrolled, however. This finding aligns with research in on-campus settings as well; attrition and low pass rates are systemic problems among community college populations (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Jaggars, 2014). Qualitative studies such as the present phenomenological case study can add meaning to multi-institutional quantitative data. Eliciting perspectives from mature learners and multilinguals who make up large portions of community college populations can lead educators to a better understanding of not only what is happening but why. Reflecting and acting upon student narratives may generate improvement in online learning experiences and outcomes.

Writing Across the Curriculum

The multi-faceted constructs of college reading, writing, and knowledge construction are intriguing yet challenging to define and study. A common thread across WAC studies past and present is that strategic knowledge and cultural historical knowledge play crucial roles in navigating college courses (Zawacki and Cox, 2014). This does not bode well for “impoverished” linguistic and/or ethnic minority populations. Hirsch (2014) has found a “huge
leap in the complexity of material to be comprehended and the corresponding linguistic and cognitive proficiencies required” when L2 students move from preparatory programs to college courses (pp. 152-153). Hall (2014) adds that these undergraduates too often view writing tasks as a guessing game, “a process of figuring out what the idiosyncratic instructors want” (p. 8).

Recent Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) research demonstrates a need for inquiry into first (L1) and second (L2) language writing and writers in college courses situated in electronic environments of college courses (Hirvela, 2005; Boyd, 2008; Stapleton, 2010; Hirvela & Du, 2013). Many 21st century WAC studies have taken place in computer labs, in timed conditions, and in the presence of instructors at research universities (e.g., Warschauer, 1999; Bikowski & Kessler, 2002; Chapelle & Douglas, 2006; Hanson-Smith & Rilling, 2007; Blake, 2008; Hirvela & Du, 2013). However, the experiences of novice writers in first-year online writing and content courses demand inquiry as this mode of learning permeates undergraduate education (Boyd, 2008).

Extending the community college research of Ke & Chavez (2013), one might ask what their multilingual and multicultural participants could tell us about learning in the DE context? Inquiry might take place from several angles, prompted by some of the following questions: How do second language students make meaning and respond to college writing assignments in online courses? What types of self-regulatory strategies do they develop to succeed? In what ways, if any, do they interact with their virtual peers? How well do they fare when distance professors with varying expectations grade their work? Such wonderings remain unanswered – indeed, unasked – in the extent WAC literature. They center on a needed interdisciplinary research agenda that combines community college second language writing and online learning.

Need for the Study
The importance of the present phenomenological case study is multi-faceted. First, situated, holistic research with a focus on L2 academic literacy growth paints a deep picture of the learner experience (Leki, 2007). Ethnographic work complements quantitative studies in second language writing such as those analyzed through the lenses of genre theory, disciplinary discourse, and systemic functional linguistics (See Hamp-Lyons, 2011; Byrnes, 2013). Second, most longitudinal studies on L2 literacy growth have been conducted at research universities (e.g. Leki, 2007; Zamel & Spack, 2004) with international participants matriculating in their majors (Raymond & Parks, 2002; Hirvela, 2005; Stapleton, 2010; Hirvela & Du, 2013). This sample population differs markedly from L2 resident and international students enrolled in a required general education community college course. Largely freshmen, many of these students have not yet decided upon their field of study. Third, with their focus on access to education, community colleges have led the paradigm shift to online learning (Cejda, 2010). CSC has offered online courses since 1998, and students are able to complete advanced EAP and developmental education courses, a variety of certificate programs, A.A., A.S., and bachelor’s degrees all fully online. Within this institutional culture, students frequently enroll in one or more online course per semester, and these online courses continually evolve. The intention of the present study is to shed light on the experiences of online multilingual students, the self-regulatory strategies they employ, and the academic literacy demands they encounter throughout one term. These L2 focal student perspectives of learning in the digital age may inform ESL instructors, curriculum designers, and college content area faculty who are engaged in improving the experience and performance of undergraduates enrolled in distance education courses.

This phenomenological case study also responds to a need for qualitative inquiry on self-regulation, or Learning Presence, to explore the underlying processes in online learning from the
student perspective. Zimmerman (2008) and Shea et. al (2013) call for research that extends beyond the reliance on traditional survey instruments and anonymous self-report data. The complexities of student knowledge construction and co-construction in an online course can be better – perhaps only – discerned through in-depth interviews. Some COI studies on student collaboration and contribution (Social Presence) in online environments have found peer-to-peer interaction less valued than expected. Such findings create tension for adult learning theorists and higher education course designers who subscribe to constructivist and socio-cognitive learning principles such as Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer’s (2001) Community of Inquiry, and Conrad and Donaldson’s (2004) Phases of Engagement. These highly-regarded theoretical constructs place social interaction at the crux of a successful online course. However, if in practice our students are “pulling” rather than “pushing” information, engaging with content and their instructors, and demonstrating their understanding via their performance on assignments, are they not satisfying course goals, and in turn, their own needs as learners? This line of questioning pursues conceptual and empirical perspectives of Learning Presence in addition to the original COI focus on course design, instructor facilitation, and peer interaction. L2 community college student descriptions of their levels of engagement online, their study habits, linguistic and cognitive demands, and course expectations versus realities can help advance understanding of the construct Learning Presence in distance education courses.

Community college research has focused on myriad issues including college readiness, developmental education, access and persistence, degree completions, workforce initiatives, non-traditional populations, and technology-based learning (Publications CCRC, n.d.). Nationwide performance data is abundant and may prove helpful in terms of prediction models and
accountability to private and non-profit grants and public funding sources. However, the diverse, rich individual stories of the populations that comprise the data are lost in quantitative studies. For example, at the research site, the office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness monitors the performance and retention rates of over 45,000 students each semester. End-of-course surveys and program evaluations gauge student satisfaction levels. Distance education (DE) course outcomes are examined along with and in comparison to traditional and hybrid courses. The numbers are available in the public domain in the NCES annual Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) report and in findings from professional organizations such as Achieving the Dream and the Community College Research Center.

While survey results and success data may provide valuable information from large-scale educational and economic standpoints, they lack the emic view that “attempts to capture participants’ indigenous meanings” of their lived experiences (Yin, 2010, p. 11). Quantitative researchers can disaggregate data to ascertain similarities and differences across demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, and prior education, but reasons for the findings do not percolate up through numbers. But it is only through qualitative inquiry that the researcher can attempt to discover the why behind the what. A fundamental concept of qualitative research is that people live storied lives, and it is the personal experience story that enriches the understanding of the participants, the researcher, and the audience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Stake, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

When undertaking educational research, it is important to state the epistemological beliefs of the researcher. In an eloquent chapter in Matsuda and Silva’s (2005) volume Second Language Writing Research: Perspectives on Knowledge Construction, Linda Blanton described first-hand the complications and contradictions inherent in being a qualitative researcher. She
exposed her own vulnerability and wrenching realization that no buffer existed between her researcher-self and her participants as they shared lived experiences during her year in Morocco. But she valued her time with them just as they valued Blanton’s attention. The participants’ personal stories enhanced the ways she made meaning of their complex lives, but this also led to complicated data due their frankness in divulging more than she expected. Blanton (2005) states that “truth can best be formulated and transmitted through narratives, through stories” (p. 149). What novice – and indeed experienced – researchers must recognize is that “when seeking to understand phenomena through people’s stories – narratives, interviews, and autobiographies – a qualitative researcher is out there, mucking around in the lives of others” (p. 152). While cautionary, this tale is also intriguing, and it was with Blanton’s remarks in mind that I embarked on this study.

The significance of the present study therefore lies in the depth and truthfulness of the lived experiences the L2 participants have narrated and my faithful retelling and interpretation of their personal stories. I wanted to hear their personal stories and perspectives on the theoretical constructs in the Community of Inquiry model. I wanted to listen to their descriptions of the ways they cope with online reading and writing assignments with no instructor “in the room” and examine the literature to see why their narrated experiences might be the case. These wishes and wonderings resulted in the following exploratory research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the L2 participants’ expectations and impressions of the Studies in Applied Ethics online course design and facilitation at early, mid-, and end-of-term stages?

2. What self-regulatory practices do the participants utilize to negotiate and complete assignments in this online general education ethics course?
3. What are the L2 participants’ perceptions of their online learning experiences?
   a. In what ways do they describe interactions with their peers?
   b. In what ways do they describe their reading and writing assignments?

4. In what ways does each participant’s perceived learning align with his or her performance outcomes?

Research Design

To answer the questions posed above, I designed a phenomenological case study. I employed this methodology to give voice to the L2 participants’ experiential claims and concerns in a naturalistic setting (Heidegger, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 1994). With this method, I sought to understand, or “stand under” the students’ perceptions of their experiences (Schwandt, 1999, p. 452) within the context of an online general education course. Husserl, founder of phenomenological philosophy and inquiry and mentor to Heidegger, who advanced the field with practical method, viewed “the human individual as an inclusive part of reality – as an entity that is essentially embedded, intertwined, and which is otherwise immersed in the world that it inhabits” (as cited in Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; p.105, italics in original). A human is a unique being in a particular context, and the phenomenologist can attempt to describe and interpret the subject of study only through the participant’s involvement with it. The phenomenologist – I – cannot peer in from the outside and describe the “it.” I must reduce my cultural orientations, lived experiences, prior knowledge and theoretical conceptions to allow a full sensation of the phenomenon to emerge from the participants’ recollections and reflections.

Creswell (2007) describes “capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals” (p. 55) as both a powerful and humbling exercise. To engage in this type of inquiry, I sought three to five second language students to
elicit their perceptions of online learning via three interviews each throughout the term. These occurred at early, middle, and late stages of the online general education course. As I probed the L2 participants about their experiences, I would listen and hold my assumptions at bay, but my interpretations of the ways in which these L2 students made sense of their online learning experiences reflected my scholarship and first-hand experiences in the fields of community college distance education and multilingual learners.

Theoretical Framework

Community of Inquiry

Garrison, Anderson & Archer’s (2000) Community of Inquiry (COI) framework is an appropriate theoretical lens for this study. COI provides a heuristic for creating and maintaining the socially constructed nature of traditional classroom learning in virtual environments. Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2000) introduced their COI instructional model as a nascent theory of distance education (DE) at a time when the Internet was starting to proliferate higher education. As a “pragmatic organizing framework of sustainable principles and processes for the purpose of guiding online educational practice,” (Swan, Garrison & Richardson, 2009, p. 52), COI has gained hold in instructional design and DE research that emphasizes theory to practice.

John Dewey’s (1938/1997) notion of Experiential Learning influenced the creation of the COI model. The COI framers believed, like Dewey, a worthwhile educational experience was based on a process of reflective inquiry. This accounted for a student’s past experiences, present learning situation, and future effects. The COI founders were anxious to use emerging technologies to transport Dewey’s theories to a distance learning environment that would support development of community and meaningful inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Swan
The potential of the Internet excited these adult educators; it was the superhighway vehicle students could climb aboard and engage in a co-constructed learning venture. And this road to learning had no time, space, or speed limits.

Computer-mediated communication via “live” text chats and asynchronous discussions constituted early DE practice. The COI framers used such modes of connecting and conversing to study interactive virtual learning environments (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; 2010). Internet-based instruction provided opportunities for content delivery, instructor guidance, and collaborative knowledge creation. This alleviated the traditional correspondent student’s sole responsibility “for maintaining motivation, for interacting with the presentation, for analyzing the success of application, and for diagnosing the difficulty” (Moore, 1989, pg. 2). These self-regulatory learning behaviors require a level of learner autonomy that not all students possess or can develop, however. The promise of COI is that if online course designers and instructors adhere to this model, students will collaborate from a distance; they will give and receive support via their online connections.

In early networked instruction research, Moore (1989) delineated three necessary types of interactions that sustain effective practice: learner-instructor, learner-peer, and learner-content. These same three interdependent elements underpin the online COI model in adapted forms: Teaching Presence, Social Presence, and Cognitive Presence (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). Teaching Presence in online courses comprises the design and facilitation of learning through discourse, relevant tasks, and feedback mechanisms to make learning meaningful and worthwhile (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001). Social Presence encompasses ways that learners communicate in a trusting environment, and identify with, learn from, and contribute to the learning community (Garrison, 2009). Cognitive Presence represents perceived
and actual learning outcomes and the extent to which students construct meaning through discourse and reflection. *Cognitive Presence* is interdependent on *Teaching Presence* and *Social Presence* and reflects deep learning and attainment of content knowledge (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Akyol & Garrison, 2011, 2012).

COI studies originated in laborious transcriptions and quantitative content analyses of online discussion threads and chat logs. To better operationalize *Teaching Presence*, *Social Presence*, and *Cognitive Presence* and to solicit distance students’ perceptions of online learning, researchers developed a COI survey (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010). The COI survey measures learners’ perceptions of key areas in DE classes: content presentation, instructor facilitation, peer interaction, and knowledge assessment. A series of DE studies in Canada in 2007 and 2008 established the COI survey as a valid, reliable self-report instrument and an efficient taxonomy of the three dimensions of the framework (Arbaugh, Cleveland-Innes, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, & Swan, 2008; Swan, Shea, Richardson, Ice, Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Arbaugh, 2008). Factor analysis supported the three COI presences and suggested a division of *Teaching Presence* into course design and organization as one construct, and course facilitation, or instructor behavior, as another.

The term “Community of Inquiry” implies a tightly-knit group of motivated students who collaborate across time and space to support each other’s e-learning goals. In a self-critique of the evolution of COI model, however, Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) pointed to research findings indicating that achieving this desired online learning community was not always the case. Survey data and discussion forum content analyses suggested that community building and collaborative learning via asynchronous discussion fell short of what COI theorists had envisioned. In a recent qualitative inquiry on the experiences of online community college
students, Capra (2014) also found peer interactions were mainly task-focused and instructor-led discussion forums. Her focal participants described weekly discussions as tedious, dry, repetitive, and isolating, or in Capra’s terms, “a perfunctory exercise” (pg. 112). These descriptions are contrary to the socio-cognitive learning experience the online instructors thought they had designed. *Social Presence* constitutes a crucial element of learning in the COI model. However, some distance learners who lurk or rarely participate in peer discussions may still master course content and perform well on assessments. This outcome highlights a weakness in the original COI framework because none of the three *presences* – *Teaching*, *Social*, or *Cognitive* – accounted for the role of the learner. There are unobservable thoughts, efforts and reflections that take place “offline” yet contribute to an online student’s development of content knowledge and influence his or her unique distance learning experience.

**Learning Presence**

A desire to describe the self-regulatory learning behaviors of online students led some DE researchers to suggest a fourth dimension to the COI process model: *Learning Presence* (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010; Shea et al., 2012). *Learning Presence* enhances the original COI focus on course design and facilitation, peer communication, and student performance. These three areas are crucial and interrelated elements of DE courses, but this three-pronged model had resulted in an underrepresentation of the learner. As the term implies, *Learning Presence* describes the effort, participation, motivation, and self-regulatory strategies distance students use to navigate and succeed in online courses.

COI researchers interested in *Learning Presence* have used the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire (Barnard, Lan, To, Paton, & Lai, 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010) to
broaden COI survey data to include student perceptions of their own learning behaviors. The OSLQ consists of 23 items that prompt self-reflection in six areas: goal setting, time management, task strategies, motivation, help-seeking practices, and self-evaluation (See OSLQ, Appendix B). The OSLQ operationalizes principles stemming from theories of deep learning such as self-efficacy, personal and collective agency (Bandura, 1986; 1997) and motivation, learner autonomy and persistence (Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). The belief that individuals can act as causal agents in their own lives is a central tenet of self-regulation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1987; Barnard-Brak, Lan, & Paton, 2010). Metacognition, motivation, effort and persistence has been shown to influence student success in composition and DE courses as well (Barnard, Lan, To, Paton, & Lai, 2009; Blankenship & Atkinson, 2010; Negretti, 2012).

Since I designed the present inquiry as a phenomenological case study of less than five participants, I wanted to take time with each participant rather than collect and measure their perceptions via lists of items on a Likert scale. However, the literature on Community of Inquiry and on Online Self-regulated Learning exposed key concepts relevant to my wonderings, and the COI survey and the OSLQ provided a starting point for the three sets of interview questions I prepared. I was ready to probe the L2 online participants’ lived experiences with a particular view towards their perceptions of the online ethics course and their self-regulation as online learners.

Statement of Purpose

My purpose in this phenomenological case study was to unearth answers to the research questions posed above by focusing on community college second language student experiences as online learners. My aim was to capture, recount, analyze and interpret the emic voices of the
focal participants as they described and explained ways in which they navigated an online general education course, *Studies in Applied Ethics*. Through the individual and collective cases, I wanted to shed light on linguistic, cognitive, technological, and time demands placed upon these L2 students, and in turn, discover the self-regulatory strategies they used to navigate and succeed in the course. By amassing these personal stories, I wanted to elicit multilingual voices and perspectives that, when shared, might inform and inspire English language and college content faculty to reflect on and improve the student experience in online courses.

**Boundaries and Limitations of the Study**

The data collection for this phenomenological case study took place in a naturalistic setting during a ten-week online course. The online professors agreed to send a recruitment message via the *Mycourses* email system to each of their online sections after I had obtained IRB approval. This message explained the study and requested that any second language participants reply if interested. I sent a link to a brief, online demographic survey to the six students who responded and selected four to participate. I explain the criteria for selecting participants in Chapter Four, Methodology.

The limitations of this research are many and acknowledged here. The four English as a second language participants enrolled in different sections of the same online general education course at one institution during one term. These participants comprised a purposive sample (Merriam, 1998) comprising varied linguistic and educational backgrounds, length of time living in the United States, and prior experiences with online learning. I approached this case study under the assumption that students would provide honest testimonials, knowing that I would preserve their anonymity and confidentiality and that their decision to participate would be voluntary. Their willingness to participate in the study may have stemmed from diverse factors,
however, including intellectual curiosity, confidence in their abilities to communicate in English and via Skype, cultural norms regarding higher education, and compensation for their time. The L2 participants indicated their intentions to provide honest accounts of their lived experiences as online learners, and I trust they did so. While the qualitative data that emerged may resonate with teachers and learners, I do not attempt to generalize discoveries in this context to other populations or contexts. Their narrated perspectives filtered through my own subjectivities and biases as an online community college instructor and advocate for language minority students. My interview questions steered the participants’ personal stories, and research themes in *Learning Presence*, L2 Writing across the Curriculum, and community college issues informed my interpretation of the data.

Summary

In this chapter I explained present challenges at community colleges that contribute to the rationale of the proposed study. I briefly outlined the phenomenological case study design and introduced the Community of Inquiry online instructional model as the theoretical construct underpinning the study. I explained the fourth COI component, *Learning Presence*, which provides a heuristic for viewing self-regulated learning behaviors. I highlighted distance learning studies that point to a need for learner-focused inquiry, and I demonstrated that Writing Across the Curriculum research to date has not centered on the online experiences of second language community college students. I have outlined the purpose and significance of this study, its boundaries and limitations therein. In Chapter Three, I review the literature on 21st century community college issues, online learning, the Community of Inquiry framework, and L2 Writing across the Curriculum. These areas of focus inform the interdisciplinary design of the study and the lenses through which I make meaning of the data.
Chapter Three

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter Three presents a synthesis of literature relevant to this phenomenological case study. To set the context, I first review the mission of community colleges and some of the challenges they face, with an emphasis on 21st century reforms. Then I explore online learning and its move from peripheral to prevalent status in undergraduate education. I present the literature on distance education (DE) through the lens of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and its construct that embodies online learner self-regulation, Learning Presence. The final component of this literature review comprises a summary of pertinent second language (L2) academic literacy research, grouped under the heading 21st Century Writing across the Curriculum (WAC).

Three major areas of higher education - the community college mission and reforms, the proliferation of online learning, and the ways in which second language learners manage their college assignments - establish my professional background and research interests. Combining these areas has delineated the boundaries of this phenomenological study and exposed gaps in the literature. Synthesizing substantive findings, theoretical and methodological contributions
across these discrete yet interrelated fields, I have noted areas where second language writers’ perspectives could contribute insights and questions for further studies.

The nature of research in interdisciplinary fields necessitates a strategic, integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005). Because the naturalistic setting of the present study was an online community college general education course, I researched millennial reforms that led to distance education endeavors at community colleges. I examined undergraduate studies in university contexts in addition to community colleges when the topics, student samples, and/or methods were relevant to my study. For instance, Kearney and Lincoln (2017) introduce a special topics edition of Studies in Higher Education on the international student experience “in the brave new world of 2017” at U.S. colleges and universities in the following manner:

As the twenty-first century approached and globalization gained ground, higher education policy makers and institutions alike grappled with the transition… [T]he challenges have been multiple: promoting access to higher education as a tenet of social justice; ensuring participation by means of diversified provision, including online; [and] recasting universities as modern powerhouses of expertise, managed as major business enterprises… (p. 823).

The authors’ depiction of the North American university’s transition into and through the first decade and a half of the 21st century appears no different from that of the community college. Diversifying access to education and financing of programs has proliferated the two-year school since the late 1990’s as well. While advancing a research agenda and securing grants to fund such endeavors may constitute a lower priority at community colleges than universities, data-
driven decision-making and ongoing budget constraints have become crucial factors that affect class offerings, faculty, staff, and students.

Before finalizing my own research questions, I reviewed and synthesized the literature into a “coherent conceptual structuring of the topic” (Torraco, 2005, p. 360). Besides providing background knowledge, the literature review substantiates the problem statement and suggests materials and methods to best answer the exploratory questions that emerge. In this way, the literature review lends historical relevance as well as current significance to the phenomenological case study that I designed.

The American Community College

Mission and Population

Situated in locales all across the country, two-year colleges have provided leadership and served the educational needs of their communities for the past century. Whether the institution encompasses a city, a county, or an entire state, community colleges typically offer a combination of academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service. These institutions enroll higher percentages of first generation college students, low socioeconomic status students, older students, minority, and non-native English speaking resident students than do four-year colleges (Provasnik & Planty, 2008).

With roots in the 20th century, community colleges continue to be key providers of public higher education in the United States today. A spike in enrollment in the fall of 2009, most likely due to the economic recession at the time, resulted in over 7.5 million students on community college campuses (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). These schools serve a diverse student
population. Of all U.S. undergraduates, 56% of Hispanics and 44% of Asian/Pacific Islanders choose two-year rather than four-year institutions (2015 Fact Sheet). Many are English as Second Language (ESL) students who begin college in preparatory programs such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or developmental studies and then matriculate into two-year career and technical education or “2+2” associate’s degree transfer programs.

The curricular functions of junior and community colleges have fluctuated according to local need, available resources, political climates, and economic times (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In the early years, some were vocationally oriented institutions that granted Associate of Science (A.S.) degrees in technical education and specialized certifications that would lead directly to employment. Others, usually the junior colleges, focused on academic preparation for university studies and awarded the Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree. The A.A. curriculum provided breadth across disciplines and articulated with established universities in a two-plus-two format. The depth of the educational experience started when a student delved into the major field of study in the junior and senior years at the university. William Rainey Harper, the University of Chicago's first president, is credited with coining the term “associate degree,” suggesting that students value this two-year credential when “associated” with in-depth study in a desired discipline at the university level.

*General education* (Gen Ed) is the term most used to describe the group of lower division courses that have figured prominently in the A.A. degree. Spanning the humanities, communications, mathematics, foreign languages, fine arts, social and natural sciences, the integrative nature of general education is holistic rather than specialized. Matriculation in general education courses during the first two years of post-secondary education helps learners develop a framework on which to place knowledge stemming from variety of fields. Cohen,
Brawer & Kisker (2014) describe *Gen Ed* as an educational process that emphasizes exposure and student development; Gen Ed involves "learning to think critically, develop values, understand traditions, respect diverse cultures and opinions, and most important, put that knowledge to good use" (p. 289). Whether one aspires to work in a blue collar or white collar world, the community college Gen Ed curriculum leads students to an understanding of self and society that equips each individual with the freedom and responsibility to live as an informed and contributing citizen (O'Banion, 2012).

In the 21st century, some traditional two-year schools have broadened their mission and scope to include four-year degrees. In Florida, for example, of the 28 community colleges, 24 now offer bachelor’s degrees in response to the educational needs of their communities. In fact, most of these institutions have changed status and been newly named state colleges. Chancellor Hanna stated in the 2013 Florida State Colleges Annual Report that, "access and affordability are just the beginning" (p. 3) of services designed to support diverse communities of learners who seek higher educational opportunities. Placement testing, academic advising, career counseling, developmental education, and out-of-class support figure prominently in the state college experience just as at traditional two-year institutions. At the core lies a strong teaching faculty committed to engaging, teaching, and assessing non-traditional students; drawing busy commuters, parents, and minorities into socio-academic communities fosters belonging and success that may not occur at large universities with a research focus (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Deil-amen, 2012).

**21st Century Issues, Challenges and Reforms**

State and national educational and professional organizations, non-profits, and governmental agencies have focused efforts on aiding colleges in their quest to prepare students
for the 21st century workforce. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), the National Institute of Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), the League for Innovation, and Achieving the Dream are a few such enterprises that have emerged as leaders in community college reform. The research agenda includes challenging areas such as student readiness, retention, completion, and distance education. In *Reclaiming the American Dream*, an influential account of community college data, the AACC (2012) stated that concerned educators needed to "breathe life" into reform efforts “[until] educational experiences are redesigned, institutional roles are reinvented, and the system itself has been reset to meet the needs of students, their communities, and the nation” (p. vi). The AACC report provided guidance on institutional transformation, posing a series of questions with no simple solutions such as how to engage administrators, faculty and staff in collective responsibility for student retention and emphasize education to scale over attractive "boutique programs" and (McClenney, 2013). Successful interventions that bear “promising practices” have too often been small, grant-funded pilot programs. It is another matter to grow, evaluate, and sustain such processes on a community college budget (Jenkins & Cho, 2011).

**Developmental Education**

The literature on community colleges past and present is replete with research on developmental education. Pre-college level remediation in reading, writing, and math goes hand in hand with the open door policy at these institutions. The prevalent belief is that satisfying prerequisites in these fundamental areas enables students to attain thresholds in numeric and information literacy needed to achieve their educational and occupational goals as well as spawn lifelong learning (Boylan, 2001). Welcoming and serving a diverse "underprepared" student body means equitably meeting the needs of recent high school graduates, mature learners,
resident language minority and international students, veterans, minorities, and the disabled. It requires robust orientation and college success courses, the provision of clear pathways that accommodate fulltime and part-time enrollees, convenient online and on-campus course and program offerings, and a well-trained, committed faculty and advising staff (O'Banion, 2012; Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015).

Developmental, or remedial, education requires time, thought, intentionality, and dedicated resources. Even with comprehensive interventions and support mechanisms in place, however, thousands of students who come to community colleges seeking to better their lives find themselves entrapped in basic reading, writing, and math courses semester upon semester. This includes native speakers of English as well as their multilingual peers. Many drop out before even beginning college level work or entering a degree program (Jenkins & Cho, 2011). In 2012, The Aspen Association awarded Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, national leader status in developmental education reforms. Still, Valencia reported less than 45% of "college ready" and only 20% of "remedial" students completed a two-year degree in four years (Fein, 2012).

The Completion Agenda

With enrollment, dropout rates, financial aid and student debt all on the rise, several national organizations banded together in 2010 in a multi-pronged effort to champion the "completion agenda." Its primary goal is to increase community college graduation rates by 50% over the next decade (College Completion Challenge). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation generated Completion by Design, a plan to increase completion rates of low-income students under 26 years of age. Achieving the Dream is a related extensive network of community
colleges and partners committed to “guiding evidence-based institutional change, influencing public policy, generating knowledge, and engaging the public” (Achieving the Dream, 2015). Community college leaders attempting to achieve this dream must be creative in their efforts. Friedel and Thomas (2013) indicate in an article in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice that these administrators must ponder “how to effectively compensate for unprecedented budget cuts while meeting the demands of student access and increasing levels of pressure and accountability with regards to improving student completion” (p. 147).

Aligning with 21st century national enterprises to lead change and improve completion rates has compelled community colleges to document student performance more fully and accurately. Besides examining overall trends, institutions need to disaggregate and mine data on student enrollment, retention and graduation rates, support services and modalities of instruction. Questions such as the following have risen to the fore: Which slices of the student population are most and least successful in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, and socio-economic status? Which types of programs graduate the highest and lowest percentages of enrolled students? Which advising models are most efficient and effective? Which modalities of instruction result in greater student success? How do students who begin in English as a second language or developmental English and math programs fare over the long haul?

Institutional researchers at two-year schools across the country disseminated some “discomforting” reports in response to such inquiries, with a renewed focus not only on the what - poor areas of performance – but the how regarding moving forward with greater success (Fain, 2012; Shapiro et al., 2014). For example, a propulsion of modularized accelerated learning, computer-based "lab" instruction, and online courses emerged across the country. Publishers of educational materials have worked in tandem with academic administrators and faculty on new
curriculum goals and methods of teaching. Hybrid forms of technology-based, self-paced instruction have replaced traditional “seat” time; intensified and individualized remediation to fill gaps revealed through diagnostic testing; and ongoing competency-based formative and summative assessments. Some of these preparatory programs run in a “compressed” format, providing students accelerated pathways to credit-bearing English, math, and college content courses. An ongoing area of scrutiny is how well students who have completed these various types of preparatory programs fare when they move into college courses and programs.

The non-completion, or drop-out, phenomenon has not escaped the public eye; alarmist reports target the failure of "the 13th grade" and the enormous amounts of federal dollars doled out in financial aid with little to no return on investment. In The Hidden Costs of Community Colleges (2011), the American Institutes for Research (AIR) reported that during the 2008-09 academic year, a time when enrollments at community colleges rose almost 20%, nearly $1 billion in taxpayer dollars was spent on first-time, fulltime community college students – many of whom then dropped out before their second year. States that topped the list of expenditures on first-time students who then dropped out included Florida ($25 million), New York ($45 million), Texas ($60 million), and California ($130 million). Further, AIR (2011) found that $4 billion in federal, state, and local tax dollars was spent on attempts to (re)educate those students who did not return.

Kay McClenney (2013), director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) at the University of Texas at Austin, notes the "high expectations for community colleges from the White House to the state house" with institutional decisions highly impacted both "by increased scrutiny from accreditors, and by moves toward performance-based funding" (From Anecdotes to Evidence). And yet, although guidance is available through
national consortia, private and government agencies, each school must design its own way to leverage limited financial, human and technological resources to engage students - all students - in effective and efficient educational experiences.

In *Community Colleges: Choosing Change*, McClenney (2013) cites work on the completion agenda at CSC, the site of the present study. CSC joined the *Achieving the Dream* (AtD) organization in 2010 in a renewed commitment to student success. Due to substantial efforts in using data to set policy and practice, CSC earned the AtD *Leader College* distinction in 2015 for better pass rates in a variety of two-year programs; retention rates for African American males; and increased enrollment of Latino students. Paraphrasing the president of CSC, McClenney (2013) touts the move "from a static analysis of student registration and course data to a more robust analysis of *how students access services in support of their learning*" (From Anecdotes to Evidence, emphasis mine).

CSC tracks ways in which its students access institutional services such as financial aid, placement testing, registration help, career counseling and academic support. However, the *instructional* realm also needs probing. What resources do students access "in support of their learning" once they find themselves overwhelmed in an online course, for example? How do second language students new to the institution learn about available learning resources, and when and how do they access them? Are there similar patterns exhibited across a diverse student population, or are individual preferences and practices actually the norm? These types of questions lie unanswered, or better stated, *unasked*, in much of the literature on community college reform efforts.

Distance Education Growth and Issues
As stated above, the American community college mission is to provide educational opportunities to local populations, generally those underrepresented in state and private colleges and universities. In recent years, online learning has furthered access to education by allowing those undergraduates unable to come to campus to enroll in credit-bearing courses and programs from a distance. Millions of college students "log on" for class instead of taking a seat in a classroom today (Allen & Seaman, 2014). For many, a few online courses supplement their on-campus education; for others, the entire college experience is virtual. Either way, the increase to over 7 million online students in the fall of 2013 from 1.6 million in 2002 represented an annual growth rate of over 17%. In comparison, enrollments in higher education grew at just 2.6% over the course of the same decade (Allen & Seaman, 2013). With such numbers, community colleges are certain to continue offering online options for their highly-enrolled courses and build entire degree programs via distance education platforms. This aligns with their institutional missions of access and outreach to those who may be unable to come to brick-and-mortar facilities; it enhances their reputations of adaptability and service to diverse communities. It also responds to the proliferation of for-profit competitors in the online higher education market (Lokken & Mullins, 2014).

DE varies across institutions and disciplines, but most post-secondary models run on a learning management system (LMS) that provides tools for online communication, content presentation and practice, assessment, and analytics. Kena et al. (2015) explain that DE stems from co-constructivist pedagogical design principles that encourage and support “regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, synchronously or asynchronously” (pg. 97). For a first-year online learner, the amount and type of “substantive interaction” may seem limited and obscure, however. Those new to the medium may not
comprehend all that DE courses and programs entail until they are immersed in virtual environments. This can result in lower levels of confidence and self-efficacy as online learners face perceived or real daunting tasks on their own (Hauser et al., 2012). Studies over the past decade have indicated that online undergraduates do not perform or persist at rates comparable to their on-campus counterparts, and this gap is greatest among students from disadvantaged backgrounds with lower levels of numeric and verbal skills, and socio-academic orientation to higher education (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Internet-based courses that lack frequent interactions with an instructor and/or peers may spawn feelings of isolation, dissatisfaction, inadequacy and doubt. In turn, this can decrease levels of self-efficacy and motivation to persist (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Moore, 2013). Orientation and acculturation to higher education may be even more essential in the DE environment but paradoxically, less attainable for novice online students than their on-campus counterparts. College students must develop a repertoire of study skills such as goal-setting, task analysis, time management, and self-monitoring (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008; 2011; Barnard, Lan, To, Paton, & Lai, 2009), and online learners may need to employ these self-regulated learning behaviors more than their on-campus counterparts.

Providing personalized guidance on financial aid, career paths, course selection, and modality of instruction presents a major challenge for student affairs and instructional staff working with DE students (Lokken & Mullins, 2014; Cejda, 2010). Community college populations need help in selecting programs of study, sequencing of courses, and developing metacognitive and motivational self-regulatory processes to succeed (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; McKenney, 2013). Sound college reading, writing and math skills and a facility with communication and information technologies are a start, but to be successful at a distance,
students need to cultivate and sustain self-regulated learning practices (Puzziferro, 2008; Shen, Cho, Tsai, & Marra, 2013).

Although synonyms in the literature, online learning, e-learning, and distance education play out differently across institutions and programs. This leads to disparate methods of DE teaching and learning as well as educational studies designed to assess its effectiveness. In her review of e-learning literature, Lea (2008) states that “the multi-disciplinary nature of the field continues to be both a help and a hindrance to its research” (p. 257), making it “difficult to synthesise in a meaningful way all the issues being raised” (p. 256). For clarity and consistency, the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) distance education guidelines will be used in the proposed study. The OLC, originally known as SLOAN-C and funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is a non-profit professional organization “dedicated to integrating online education into the mainstream of higher education” (Allen & Seaman, 2010, p. 23). According to the OLC definition, online courses are those in which at least 80% of the course content is delivered online. A 20% possibility of on-campus meetings, study sessions and exams allows for diversity among course delivery methods by individual instructors (Allen & Seaman, 2010). This definition aligns with that of the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which defines online education as the use of “one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously” (NCES, n.d.).

“Regular and substantive interaction” with professors and peers in virtual environments lends great potential to online learning. One of the Community of Inquiry model founders, Garrison (2011) points to the interactive nature of Internet-based teaching and learning as the differentiating factor from – and improvement over - traditional Distance Education (DE). The
focus of DE correspondence courses throughout the 20th century was on content delivery, independent study, and assessment. 21st century e-learning, on the other hand, has evolved into a distinct field of theory and practice with roots in computer-mediated communication and collaborative constructivist approaches. With today’s Internet and web-based tools, online learning “integrates independence (asynchronous online communication) with interaction (connectivity) that overcomes time and space constraints in a way that emulates the values of higher education” (Garrison, 2011, p. 19). This modality of learning offers much more than Internet access to information; it delivers an ease of connection to a community of virtual learners that in turn can create an intellectually stimulating environment to build knowledge. However, the existence of technology does not ensure that all online teaching and learning experiences are inclusive or effective. As Stewart (2017) points out in her investigation of on-ground, blended, and online freshman composition courses, “interactive learning is possible in media lean environments, and media rich environments do not necessarily facilitate interactive learning” (p. 72). Indeed, while research since the inception of online learning has revealed advances in this mode of instruction, findings have also underscored challenges as distance education has evolved and even eclipsed traditional undergraduate courses and programs at many institutions.

Distance Education Professional Organizations and Research

Since 2003, under the auspices of SLOAN-C (now OLC), Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman at the Babson Research Group have annually surveyed the Chief Academic Officers (CAO’s) of US higher institutions about their distance education offerings, successes, setbacks and predictions. The informed opinions of CAO respondents on the nature and extent of online learning lends insight to institutional values, views on, and challenges with distance education. In
Changing Course: Ten years of tracking online education in the United States, Allen & Seaman (2013) state that 70% of 2,800 college academic administrators responded that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy, whereas a decade earlier, less than half noted that statement as true. A majority of CAO's surveyed in 2013 saw lower retention rates in online courses as a barrier to growth of overall DE at their institutions. A large majority of 88% of CAO's cited the need for more discipline on the part of online students, up from 80% in 2007 (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p. 4, italics mine).

Community College academic decision makers must leverage technological and human resources to improve online student success. Faculty play a crucial role in this endeavor, but according to the 2013 SLOAN-C Changing Course survey, “only 30.2 percent of chief academic officers believe their faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education” even though DE has begun to permeate the undergraduate curriculum (p. 6). Allen & Seaman (2013) posit there is a perception by some college faculty that online learning is superficial and emphasizes information and technology over relationships, learning processes, and non-tangible qualities of a traditional educational experience. Skepticism regarding the quality of online courses and degrees appears to be widespread among employers as well (Public Agenda, 2013). Such resistance to online education represents a disconnect between the educational demands of students and the ability of institutions to respond appropriately in the e-learning age. DE courses and full programs of study gained further legitimacy –and scrutiny - in 2012, when the US Department of Education’s Institution for Post-Secondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) added online learning data to its annual survey that colleges must complete in order to qualify as financial-aid granting institutions (NCES, n.d.).

Distance Education Survey Data
The Instructional Technology Council (ITC), a professional organization similar to OLC that serves the two-year college subset of higher education, has suggested that faculty at community colleges, oriented toward student development and access to education, may show greater support for online learning than their colleagues at research universities. ITC has administered an annual distance education survey since 2004 to about 350 institutional members. While smaller than the OLC group, ITC is an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), and the ITC annual DE report has become an anticipated document produced for the AACC each spring. Similar to the OLC Allen & Seaman questionnaire, one of the ITC items asks administrators to rank the greatest faculty-related challenges their institutions face in distance learning. “Buy-in to online instruction” dropped from #3 in 2004 to #6 in 2012 (of 9 items), suggesting a growing nation-wide acceptance of online learning by community college faculty as more of them teach online (Mullins, 2013).

Workload issues topped the list of faculty challenges cited by Chief Academic Officers for eight years straight until the new item “engaging faculty in development of online pedagogy” was added in 2012 and became the number one response (2012 Distance Education Survey). While engaged in teaching online, then, it does not appear that all community college faculty are keen on keeping up with research and practice, at least not according to the perspective of administrators. These concerns are telling and point to the time and effort required to become trained to effectively exploit learning management systems and design rich online learning environments. As evolving research in online pedagogy (and andragogy) unfolds, it is clear that upfront technological and pedagogical training is insufficient. Ongoing professional development is needed to foster responsive and reflective practice (Wolf, 2006; Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam, 2011). However, Cejda (2010) points out that while community colleges have
made significant efforts and progress in providing student support, [they] "may not have as great a capacity for providing professional development for faculty or student services through distance technologies" (p. 14). The large number of adjunct (part-time) faculty teaching online courses also contributes to the challenge of providing the needed training and support to promote student success from a distance.

In addition to faculty concerns, community college administrators cited “providing adequate support services for online students” the number one overall challenge their DE programs face (2012 Distance Education Survey). Community colleges struggle to provide virtual student support services that mirror on-campus offerings such as academic and career advising, tutoring and testing centers, library services and technical help. And it is arguable that distance students are in even greater need of these institutional and instructional resources than their on-ground peers. While many are digital natives, they may lack the computer skills needed for academic purposes or misunderstand the online learning environment. As discussed above, thousands of community college students arrive un/underprepared to learn at the college level; the added layers of navigating a Learning Management System, engaging with peers and instructors from a distance, making meaning of course content in a variety of modalities, motivating oneself, and sustaining effort are formidable tasks for an online student (Blankenship & Atkinson, 2013).

Institutional data reported annually by the Instructional Technology Council and the Online Learning Consortium for over a decade demonstrate that online learning is an entity that has taken hold at all levels and disciplines of higher education. Even amidst a deep recession and budget cuts, administrators have found ways to fund online courses, certificates and degrees. Citing the steady increase in online enrollments as substantially greater than numbers of on-
campus students, Lokken (2009) contends that online programs have “become THE primary source for enrollment growth” in community colleges (p. 9, emphasis in original). On the national scene, online learning moved from marginal status to center stage – and scrutiny – in 2012, when the US Department of Education mandated that all financial-aid granting colleges collect and report data on online enrollments and success rates via the Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (NCES, n.d.).

Surge in enrollments matter, but the quality of learning that takes place in distance education courses is also of concern to community college faculty and administrators. Allen & Seaman (2010) found that over 75% of academic leaders rated online learning as good as or better than face-to-face instruction and would continue their efforts online. In the realm of distance education, Quality Matters (QM) has emerged as the premier organization with goals “to improve learning, engagement, and satisfaction in online courses through better course design” (Underlying Principles, par. 1). Quality Matters began at the University of Maryland Online Learning and in 2003 won a federal grant to develop a quality assurance rubric for course design that included a faculty peer-review process. The initial QM project has grown into a de facto online course credentialing organization that in 2014 boasted 900 institutional subscribers from 47 different US states and 6 countries (Quality Matters, 2014). QM has provided professional development for more than 25,000 faculty and distance education staff and has certified more than 4,000 online courses (QM History, par. 4).

Much sharing of experiences and expertise has taken place via professional organizations like QM, OLC, ITC, and AACC, and academic leaders use institutional and national data to make informed decisions. Interested faculty present at state and national conferences, report on action research, and share online teaching tips. Information garnered from student evaluations of
their online courses contributes to faculty impressions and improvement in online course design and facilitation. However, as of 2017, no organization has designed and funded a national survey to elicit student perceptions of e-learning or their preferences and practices as online college students. In one mixed methods case study, Bambara, Harbour, Davies, Athey (2009) examined the views of community college students enrolled in “high risk” online courses, i.e., those with the highest attrition and lowest pass rates. Survey and interview data highlighted the “delicate engagement” of these distance students who felt the need to “piece it all together” as independent online learners. Many did not have the wherewithal to do so while just beginning to acculturate to academia as well. There is more research needed in this vein because despite its complexities and challenges, online learning in higher education is here to stay, and the primary stakeholders are our students.

Community of Inquiry

The Community of Inquiry (COI) model is “a pragmatic organizing framework of sustainable principles and processes for the purpose of guiding online educational practice” (Swan, Garrison & Richardson, 2009). The COI framework and its “presences” were originally explained as a nascent theory of online learning in a landmark paper published in 2000 in The Internet in Higher Education by Randy Garrison, Terry Anderson, and Walter Archer. After years of working in conventional distance education programs in the province of Alberta, Canada, these colleagues were putting a master’s program online. The designers worked on the COI framework throughout the 1990’s when computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as chat programs, audio voice-over protocols and asynchronous discussion forums were “emerging technologies” with great promise for collaborative learning from a distance. This is a key distinction from the correspondence courses they had previously taught, where adult learners
worked independently of one another in paper-based, workbook formats. Indeed, the ability to form a community and collaborate via discussion forums excited the framers, and the CoI model reflects their belief in networked interaction as a crucial component of an effective online learning environment (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010).

In their retrospective ten years after the creation and evolution of the COI framework, Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2010) reiterate the fact that their fundamental pedagogical assumptions were informed by John Dewey’s belief in inquiry as a social activity that "went to the essence of educational experience" (p. 6). Thus, they wanted to ensure that DE students in the Internet age would enroll in well-designed virtual learning environments that were challenging yet scaffolded by both instructors and peers. Cohen & Brawer (1996) had pointed out in their description of programmed instruction and early distance education offerings that "reproducible media hold a continuing allure, a promise of low-cost information transmission but they do not contain the subtle cues to meaning that emanate from the face-to-face contact of a classroom" (p. 180). With this caveat in mind, Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2010) relate how they sought ways to design and facilitate online courses that mirrored the power of genuine classroom engagement. They were attentive to the limits and possibilities of online learning, including cognitive demands of synchronous chats, or “the load imposed on working memory by information being presented” (Mayer, 2005, p. 28) via computer-mediated communication.

There was no available heuristic for networked, Internet-based learning in the 1990’s, and this void served as the impetus for the development of the COI framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). They sought ways to assess the effectiveness of DE courses in terms of the learning experience as much as performance outcomes (grades). Their quest focused on three spheres of education: "the human issues" involved in computer-mediated communication, "the
teaching issues" associated with this mode of delivery, and the overall "cognitive goals" of each course in the master’s program (p. 5). These crucial components of the online teaching-learning paradigm are expressed as three "presences" in the COI process model in Figure 1.

Following is a brief summary of accepted definitions of each of these presences, the ways the COI framers operationalized these interrelated components, and some important research findings since the inception of the COI framework.

Teaching Presence

*Teaching Presence* is "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5). Studies have consistently confirmed the importance of strong teaching presence in e-learning. This construct has been shown to support community development (Brook & Oliver, 2007), increase participation and quality responses in discussion areas (An, Shin & Lim, 2009), promote distance students' sense of connectedness and learning (Shea, Li & Pickett, 2006), enhance acquisition of knowledge (Paechter, Maier & Macher, 2010), and elicit perceived learning and satisfaction (Akyol & Garrison, 2012).
Teaching presence constitutes the interplay of good course design and facilitation. It incorporates both direct and inductive methodologies and includes the selection and sequencing of course content as well as computer-mediate communication. While primarily the role of the instructor, Teaching Presence may be achieved via peer-to-peer inquiry and response in a successful online learning community as well; thus, this component of the CoI framework is aptly named teaching, not teacher presence (Garrison, 2011).

Social Presence

Social presence promotes positive affect, interaction, and cohesion through online discourse (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999). It supports a functional, collaborative learning environment in which learners feel a sense of belonging and develop relationships with their peers as they project their individual personalities. Social presence builds progressively as the virtual group interacts and congeals (Garrison, 2009). In the COI framework, the shared social identity described by Social Presence is linked foremost to the purpose of a course and is viewed as a mediating variable between teaching and cognitive presence (Shea & Bidjerano, 2009). COI research has shown virtual group dynamics can be conducive to e-learning in a “supportive, mutually respectful online setting” when examining student satisfaction and course performance data (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012).

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive Presence is rooted in John Dewey's practical inquiry model and is defined as "the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse” (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007, p. 161). Lee (2014) summarizes this view of learning as problem based, where cognitive presence splits into two worlds: "the private
world (where reflection mostly occurs) and the shared world (where discourse occurs)” (p. 42). A perceived problem initiates the learning cycle, and the student seeks solutions through exploration of relevant knowledge. According to the COI online learning model, it is each student’s interaction with the course content, his or her peers, and the instructor that generates a cycle of reflection and ongoing discourse. COI researchers look for four phases when coding discussion posts for *Cognitive Presence*: a triggering event (identifying an issue for inquiry); exploration (exploring the issue through discussion and critical reflection); integration (constructing meaning from the ideas developed through exploration); and resolution (applying new knowledge into a real world context). Content analysis of online discussions has revealed these phases in greater numbers in the applied disciplines, where student performance likely incorporates collaborative efforts, than in the hard sciences that are more often lecture-based (Archibald, 2010).

Within the COI framework, *Cognitive Presence* is observable; it is learning demonstrated through virtual collaboration, and it is hierarchical as it moves through the four phases. COI investigations have continued to exemplify *Cognitive Presence* via threaded discussions due to its strong premise that virtual learning is co-constructed. However, some have argued this method of analysis constrains the concept of knowledge transformation, overlooks the quality of the student experience, and underestimates the numerous tasks and reflective exercises learners complete on their own (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012; Xin, 2012). *Cognitive Presence* does not discern the developmental, critical, and reflective dimensions of online learning, much of which take place offline and are therefore non-observable (Miles & Wilson, 2004; Shea & Bidjerano, 2012). The COI definition of *Cognitive Presence* pays little attention to “motivational design” elements of instruction reinforcement and assessment in computer-mediated environments (e.g.,
Keller, 1999; Keller & Suzuki, 2004). Also, COI framers describe *Cognitive Presence* as the ability of students to create and confirm meaning in online learning contexts, but as Xin (2012) points out, “the mere *ability* of learners to do these things is not sufficient to constitute presence” (p. 3, italics mine).

The Community of Inquiry (COI) designers created a survey to capture the perspectives of online college students in the three areas comprising the model: *Teaching Presence, Social Presence*, and *Cognitive Presence*. The COI survey gained reliability and validation from distance education researchers in a variety of higher educational contexts (Swan et. al, 2008). This self-report measure of perceived online learning effectiveness is a 34-item survey constructed with a 5-point Likert scale, anchored by *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree.* Students provide their opinions of online learning in the three components comprising the COI model. Survey data has shown that perceived learning and satisfaction levels increase when sufficient amounts of all three of the COI *Presences* exist in an online course (Garrison et. Al, 2010).

**Learning Presence**

*Learning Presence* is a new, fourth dimension of the COI framework suggested by a subgroup of CoI researchers to ascertain and explain learners’ self-regulatory behaviors that are not obvious in online courses (Shea, Hayes, & Vickers, 2010). Expanding the COI model to include *Learning Presence* provides a heuristic to describe ways that students "marshal thoughts, emotions, motivations, behaviors and strategies in the service of successful online learning" (Shea, Hayes, Smith, Vickers, Bidjerano, Pickett, Gozza-Cohen, Wilde & Jian, 2012, pg. 90). This expansion of the COI model creates a more comprehensive framework that accounts for
self-regulated learning strategies students employ such as goal setting, time management, help seeking, motivation and self-efficacy. See Figure 2 for a depiction of the revised COI framework that includes Learning Presence as a co-regulator of the online learning experience along with Teaching Presence and Social Presence; together, these components of the COI model support Cognitive Presence, or the deep learning and reflection that occurs.

![Suggestion for a Revised CoI Model](image)

**Figure 2  Revised COI Model with Learning Presence**

The original three-pronged COI framework was applied to a newly-established online master’s program, complete with a cadre of mature, motivated distance learners pursuing the same graduate degree. It comes as no surprise that these educators concentrated on course design and instructional technologies; they could take it for granted that graduate students knew how to learn and the novelty of Internet-based instruction would motivate them. The undergraduate realm, however, includes students with myriad goals and expectations, many of whom are sampling higher education for the first time. No matter how well designed or facilitated in terms of COI Teaching Presence and Social Presence, an online course may not sustain a first-year student’s interest or appeal to his or her preferred learning style. College
faculty can ideally expect students to engage in a course via learner-peer, learner-instructor, and learner-content interactions, but with a lack of motivation or know-how, these students cannot make meaning or course content or contribute to the learning community. As a result, *Cognitive Presence*, or deep, socio-constructed learning, may be unattainable in ways COI theorists suggest; indeed, *Learning Presence* may well be the missing piece to the equation. 

*_Learning Presence* has been measured via the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire (OSLQ), developed and tested by Barnard, Lan, To, Paton, & Lai (2009) in blended (hybrid) courses and fully online modalities. The OSLQ items are divided into six defined constructs of self-regulated learning: environment structuring, goal setting, time management, help seeking, task strategies, and self-evaluation. Subscale and overall scores are used to rank online student profiles from “non- or minimal self-regulators” to “super self-regulators” with research results indicating correlations to higher grade point averages as the level of self-regulation rises (Barnard-Brak, Paton, & Lan, 2010). Puzziferro (2008) surveyed 815 community college students enrolled in online liberal arts courses and found that time on task, study environment, and effort regulation were significantly correlated to performance. In addition, metacognitive self-regulation, rehearsal, elaboration, study time, and study environment were significantly positively correlated with course satisfaction levels.

Capra (2014) conducted a COI-framed case study with fifteen community college online students across a variety of college content courses. Through purposive sampling, Capra (2014) elicited the perceptions of participants with different ages, backgrounds, and amounts of experience with online learning. Via data collected through email conversations and face-to-face interviews, Capra (2014) found that “experienced online learners attributed their cognitive engagement to their own ability to get the work done and the reliability of the instructor” (p.
This suggests the importance of both *Learning Presence* and *Teaching Presence* in online instruction. Although counter to the original COI theorists’ beliefs, it may be that these two spheres of the COI model influence *Cognitive Presence*, or deep learning, more than *Social Presence* does.

In her findings of novice online learners, Capra (2014) states, “confusion and frustration had obstructed the interface of COI’s learning domains” (p. 116) and thus limited the learning potential in the online course. The students did not seek assistance from their peers; they awaited responses from instructors and muddled through issues such as technology glitches and difficult material on their own. Some of the participants who were new to DE were able to adjust and manage the online workload in the latter part of the semester. For example, Capra (2014) reports that one participant who was highly dissatisfied and overwhelmed during the first half of the semester described her online learning experience as “decent” by Week 9. This is an important tenet in self-regulated learning and self-efficacy. Students who can self-assess, reflect, and reverse negative thoughts may overcome obstacles, persist, and complete courses. Even though they may not enjoy the online learning experience the entire term, they can thus achieve desired outcomes.

**Writing across the Curriculum**

As humans, we are wired to seek oral language and communication, but reading and writing must be taught (Wolf, 2007). Strategic reading and effective writing are valued skills in educational and professional contexts, and for decades, researchers across complementary fields such as applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and computer-assisted learning have strived to observe the processes involved in developing academic literacies and in turn, prescribe ways in which to facilitate such growth. *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC) scholars have
recognized the advancement from *learning to read and write* to *reading and writing to learn* as a key literacy threshold, for example (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Manchon, 2011). Both native speakers and English language learners acquire disciplinary knowledge and broaden and hone their academic literacy skills from primary school through post-secondary educational institutions.

Early WAC research on L2 academic literacy development highlighted the recursive nature of writing for academic purposes and ways in which reading skills underpin linguistic competence (e.g., Flower and Hayes, 1981; Zamel, 1982; Raimes, 1985). In fact, Anderson (2003) stated that reading “is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success [and]… progress in other areas of language learning” (p. 2). Reading plays a fundamental role in language and content acquisition and in access to information; it thus contributes to L2 writing research as well. L2 WAC studies aim at finding sound methods for non-native English speakers to improve their English in an efficient manner and foster clear, critical thinking and communication skills so that they may succeed in academic and professional settings and fully contribute to society. The result is empowered individuals who can better not only their own lives but those of others (Freire, 1970; Banks, 2004; Landorf & Nevin, 2007).

In the college setting, Byrnes (2005), states that undergraduate education leads to proficiency in “diverse public discourses” and that “L2 learners gain the additional benefit of becoming multiliterate in a multilingual and multicultural society” (p. 286). However, Byrnes (2013) also stresses that attainment of advanced levels of literacy does not naturally occur; the process requires continued intentional practice, assessment, and feedback. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) purport that once L2 learners reach a high intermediate to advanced threshold level of receptive and productive skills, "it is likely that their continued progress in that language will largely result from such natural exposure (i.e., through reading, listening, and interaction) and
not classroom instruction” (p. 214). But like Byrnes (2013), the authors emphasize that continued "instructional" reading of texts in a formal register is necessary for L2 readers and writers to become conversant in academic and professional environments. These texts may be digital or in print and can serve as exemplars for academic writing in traditional and multimodal contexts as much as input for meaning-making (Hirvela, 2015). What is most important is that L2 learners – and one could argue, their native speaking counterparts - continue to read and write in and outside of classroom settings to advance both linguistic and content knowledge (Menchon, 2011).

Content-based reading combined with academic writing assignments are essential curriculum components in preparatory English courses (Kasper, 2000; Zamel & Spack, 2004). These activities alone have proved inadequate in preparing English as a second language (ESL) students for college work, however (Allison, 2006; Carson, 2004; Hinkel, 2003). In the conclusion to her study of ESL students in history, biology, and psychology courses, Carson (2004) stated that "there is reason to approach with caution the standard pedagogical emphasis on preparing ESL students primarily for task production" (p. 81), underscoring the need for continued, intentional development of academic literacies. Most advanced reading and writing courses in ESL programs expose students to college subject matter and task types, and this redundancy serves them well in their ensuing undergraduate content courses. What Carson (2004) and others (e.g. Grabe, 2009; Delaney, 2008; Zahar, Cobb & Spada, 2001) have suggested, however, is that an overemphasis on task production can result in surface reading strategies that may be efficient and appropriate for particular assignments but ill-suited to cultivating reading fluency, knowledge transformation, writing expertise, linguistic and metalinguistic growth.
WAC research has demonstrated that reading and writing to learn in college content courses requires adequate reading speeds and levels of comprehension (Anderson, 2009). The ability to discern which academic strategies are germane to specified tasks enables students to construct meaning and respond to assignments in expected ways (Carson, 2004; Johns, 2007; Tardy, 2009). On the other hand, Tardy (2016) suggests that besides accessing a fundamental repertoire of learned conventions, L2 writers should perhaps push boundaries and create individualized, hybrid genres. With the affordances of new literacies and digital tools, multilinguals can enhance their writer voices by expressing their ideas in multiple ways to aid the comprehension and interpretation of the reader, listener, or viewer (Kasper, 2000). Learning from and contributing to multi-modal instructional settings require today’s college students to possess a battery of technology and information literacy skills. These include competence and confidence in finding meaning in both print and digital environments, where research and writing move back and forth, where “one medium is used to enhance learning in the other” (CCCC, 2004, par. 4).

Digital Literacies Research

Electronic literacy skills are more than a set of competencies to master; they require a learner orientation to information gathering and generating. Street (1997; 2004) urges educators to recognize and promote “multiple literacies, which vary with time and place and are embedded in specific cultural practices” (1997, p. 48, italics mine). Hirvela (2015) concurs, arguing that traditional writing instruction is inadequate in an Internet-based era that has altered college writing tasks – “tasks that are still in the process of being defined and understood because of (1) the relative newness of the world of electronic literacy and (b) the dynamic, ever-changing nature of that world as technology undergoes constant upgrades” (p. 4). Known for his body of
work on academic reading-writing connections, or *linked literacies*. Hirvela published one of the first WAC qualitative studies moving the research agenda to the digital age. This 2005 article in *Computers and Composition* resonated with me as a blended and online EAP instructor, and in turn, influenced my teaching practice and the design of the present phenomenological inquiry.

In a case study investigating the Internet-based reading and writing strategies of two Korean students at a university in the U.S., Hirvela (2005) posed a recurring question that pervades much WAC and L2 writing research: *what should be taught in the ESL writing classroom?* Hirvela (2005) offered a practical response:

> One way to answer that question is to learn more about the kinds of writing (and related reading) tasks students encounter in the wider disciplinary realm of the college or university at large, particularly _as these tasks pertain to activity in the increasingly electronic textual world college courses operate in_. Although a number of attempts have been made to learn about academic reading and writing tasks across the college curriculum, _relatively few studies have focused on computer-based writing and reading activities_ (p. 338, italics mine).

Hirvela (2005) investigated the types of papers undergraduates were assigned and the source-based writing strategies his two Korean focal students employed to make meaning and display knowledge in web-enhanced college courses. While their lecture classes met on campus, the students conducted much of their homework and individual research online. The two focal participants were both Korean, but they were selected for maximum variance with differences in age, gender, length of time in the U.S., and educational goals.
Mihyun was the mother of two who had lived in the US for five years and was nearing completion of her nursing degree. Junhoog had arrived just three months prior to the study, was enrolled as a freshman, and was pursuing a degree in architecture. Regardless of differences in educational backgrounds and aspirations, both participants preferred computer-based writing to composing by hand and the use of Internet databases and Google searches to brick-and-mortar library visits. The students cited source texts in their papers, but their attempts at paraphrasing often resulted in strings of “copy/paste” quotes that according to Hirvela (2005), overlooked the opportunity to use expert opinions and primary sources “in supplying valuable material for supporting or developing arguments, responses, and perspectives,” (pg. 354).

Community college students new to North America are unlikely to comprehend the high levels of English proficiency and learner autonomy needed to succeed. They may not have developed study skills and autonomous learning strategies if their formative educational experiences consisted of teacher-centered language and content classrooms (Zhang & Kenny, 2010; Al-Harthi, 2010). Even Generation 1.5 students with several years of experience in U.S. schools may find their cultural orientations toward education divergent from the pedagogical values and assumptions of Western course and curriculum designers (Ke & Chavez, 2014; Al-Harthi, 2010; McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000). They may enter college ill-prepared to negotiate assignments and learn from content faculty with varying experiences and expectations of second language writers. Nearly thirty years ago, Spack (1988) claimed that "perhaps the most important skill English teachers can engage students in is the complex ability to write from texts, [which constitutes] a major part of their academic writing experience" (1988, p. 41). The fact that source-based writing is still crucial to academic success cannot be denied, yet mastery of this skill continues to elude innumerable college students, both ESL students and their native-English
speaking peers. A contributory factor to this difficulty lies in sound reading skills. As Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) point out, reading skills inform writing and vice versa because at the core, “reading and writing are inextricably connected” (p. 188).

Given the Internet-based lives of college students, Stapleton (2010) argues that L2 writing pedagogy needs to give more recognition to the impact emerging from technological tools and online resources. Stapleton (2010) conducted a case study of a graduate level second language writer in Hong Kong. Through in-depth interviews, writing logs and textual analysis, Stapleton elicited “Andrea’s” strategies, intentions, processes, successes and failures. Based upon Andrea’s narrated experiences, Stapleton (2010) proposes that graduate level research writing can be more complex and time-consuming than most L2 students anticipate. It does not require much of a leap to extrapolate such findings to first-year writers as well. Stapleton (2010) also suggests that the cognitive resources used in the electronic environment can be quite different from those accessed in traditional pen-and-paper assessments. While such a conclusion may seem intuitively true, this line of research needs augmentation with additional studies. Stapleton (2010) cites the need for more qualitative and temporal analyses of L2 composing processes in naturalistic settings, a gap that the current study begins to fill.

WAC Faculty Feedback

Lea & Street (1998) looked at undergraduate writing and instructor feedback at two universities in the U.K. to probe how “students understand the different literacy practices which they experience in their studies and in what ways academic staff understand the literacy requirements of their own subject area” (p. 161). The researchers did not separate L1 from L2 writing for this study. Through focus groups and in-depth interviews with students and tutors,
Lea & Street (1998) reported that students were unclear about the reading to write construct and the varying conventions of disciplinary-specific college writing. The students also expressed uncertainty in interpreting feedback their professors provided; Lea & Street (1998) found “conflicting advice received from academic teaching staff in different courses added to the confusion” (p. 164).

Qualitative studies on content faculty experiences with disciplinary writing reveal varied approaches to guiding students into expected college level discourse. Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam (2011) interviewed ten “award-winning” professors, one from each of the ten faculties at the University of Hong Kong, with an aim toward describing “sustainable” feedback practices on a range of tasks. With assignments spanning individual papers, portfolio assessments, oral presentations, and group projects, the faculty informants described formative and summative feedback methods employed in nursing, engineering, journalism, business, and so on. Among the variety of traditional and technology-enhanced feedback methods explained, Carless et al. (2011) highlighted “the overarching notion of student self-evaluation, a theme underpinning all the reported practices” (p. 399, italics mine). These college content faculty members guided students through reflection, revision and self-assessment that led to better organization and articulation of ideas, much akin to theory and practice of process writing that has dominated the field of composition studies since the 1980’s.

Zawacki and Habib (2014) investigated faculty perceptions of and reactions to L2 undergraduate writing in a large U.S. research university setting. Their study focused on the ways in which faculty described second language writing and why the professors seemed “disturbed” by certain errors. Varying faculty dispositions toward “written accents” presented tensions and uncertainties. Some faculty who expressed a willingness to help multilingual
students improve their disciplinary discourse were unsure what feedback would be of most benefit. Other content area faculty revealed a struggle to apply expected standards to papers submitted by second language students and questioned levels of reading comprehension and subject matter knowledge demonstrated in their written work. Cox (2014) suggests a collaborative approach between content faculty and L2 writing professionals may aid professors working with second language writers. This method can also empower non-native English speaking students otherwise viewed as deficient in linguistic proficiency, cultural capital or content knowledge.

Paraphrasing, Patchwriting, and Plagiarism

The ease of access to and manipulation of digital texts is indeed a double-edged sword. Howard (1995) coined the term “patchwriting” to describe a stage of academic writing that includes “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes” (p. 788). Developmental and L2 reading and writing instructors may view such mechanical (rather than meaningful) adoption of source material in a positive light, or as Howard (1995) notes, as a “pedagogical opportunity, not a juridical problem” (p. 788). However, college content faculty may consider a novice writer’s unsuccessful attempt at summary or synthesis a blatant form plagiarism.

Many institutions and professors employ digital originality checking and plagiarism detection tools that highlight "textual transgressions" (Purdy, 2009) and then level punishment according to a course or institutional academic (dis)honesty policy. In their study of effective college teaching practices in the U.K., Carless, Salter, Yang, and Lam (2011) found the faculty role imperative in guiding students through the uptake of feedback in formative and summative
assessments of written work and oral presentations. Students need help build strategies toward greater autonomy and self-evaluation of the artifacts they produce as evidence of their learning, which most often requires citing source material. Hirvela’s (2005) WAC research regarding what and how best to teach undergraduate second language writing in the digital age demonstrated the need for more work with electronic source texts in EAP courses. Implying the need for content faculty involvement, Hirvela (2005) then asked, “But is the ESL writing course the only place where such instruction should take place?” And to follow up, “What knowledge related to computer-based writing is better provided in other courses across the curriculum?” (p. 352).

A number of studies have demonstrated the challenges of disciplinary writing that requires integration and citation of texts. For example, Shi (2004) studied summary and opinion writing, and reported that undergraduate Chinese ESL students used nearly copied strings of original texts without citation more frequently than native English speakers did on both tasks. Hirvela & Du (2013) conducted a case study of Chinese undergraduates at a North American university and found these L2 writers possessed little understanding of the rationale or skill of paraphrasing. One of the participants explained a portion of her essay that had been copied verbatim from the source provided in the study in this way: “I cannot accept my own language, what I wrote,” and then continued, “I can think and plan, but how to select the right words?” (p. 347). L2 writing instructors at all levels would attest to similar pleas for help from students struggling with source-based academic writing. When and how students develop skills with paraphrasing, summarizing and synthesizing texts is a question that remains unanswered, but Hirvela & Du (2013) maintain that “the transition from knowledge telling to knowledge transforming is a complex one that students cannot be expected to grasp on their own” (p. 92).
Viewed from the Community of Inquiry model, this shift to knowledge transformation constitutes deep learning, or *Cognitive Presence*, and occurs via socio-constructed experiences with peers and the guidance of the distance instructor.

**WAC in Distance Education Environments**

Zhang and Kenny (2010) conducted an exploratory case study of three international students in an online master’s level Canadian educational technology program. The Asian focal participants cited non-Western educational experiences, relatively low English language proficiency, and difficulty socializing in the online learning environment as barriers to learning. The nature of asynchronous computer-mediated-communication inherent in the distance education course also posed problems, as a quote from “Ping,” a pseudonym of one the focal participants, illustrates:

> The difficulties I faced to were my slow reading and writing speed and had difficulties in understanding the slang and idioms in other's posts as well as the meaning behind their posts. These difficulties made me busied in reading materials and my peers' posts so that I seldom responded to other's posts even if I had read them and had some ideas in my mind. (p. 34)

Listening to the international students’ perceptions and observing the progression of the discussion forums throughout the term, Zhang and Kenny (2010) concluded that even though this was a distance education course, the instructional design was oriented toward local students. The authors observed that those with “strong English language proficiencies and Western cultural backgrounds” were the students who “tended to dominate the discussion forums” (p. 37).
Like “Andrea” in Stapleton’s (2010) ethnography, these international students began their master’s degree studies after meeting eligibility requirements such as attainment of a required score on the Graduate Record Examination and/or an English language proficiency test. However, their struggles to succeed in digital environments imply that they may have needed higher levels of English language proficiency and better orientation to Western educational norms. Some DE faculty might interpret this challenge as an opportunity to engage with second language reading and writing scholars. Such collaborative efforts can lead to positive gains such as globally-informed curricula, culturally responsive teaching methods, and disciplinary literacy instruction (Banks, 2004). In turn, these kinds of inclusive pedagogical practices may raise the levels of “readiness” for international students new to studying in a second language, computer-mediated instruction, and accessing resources such as online library databases and learning management systems.

Undergraduate composition studies tend to center on writing processes and products rather than the ways novice writers display content knowledge across various genres and disciplines (i.e., the focus of most WAC studies). Still, writing research conducted in the DE environment brings to light student preferences and perceptions of online learning, thereby bearing relevance to this aspect of the WAC literature review. For instance, Boyd (2008) called for composition research that elicits students’ views of Internet-based learning. While effective L1 and L2 writing scholars suggest interventions, conduct assessments, and interpret outcomes, Boyd (2008) contends these researchers “must also seriously consider the students’ perspectives” of the overall learning experience which takes place increasingly via electronic platforms (p. 225). Boyd (2008) conducted surveys and follow-up email conversations to gauge first-year composition students’ levels of interaction and satisfaction in blended (hybrid) and online
courses. Harking back to Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, Boyd (2008) explored ways in which agreed-upon effective teaching practices in traditional classrooms twenty years ago might or might not parallel the DE environment today.

Boyd’s (2008) online freshman writers reported satisfactory levels of engagement with course material and support from their online professors. They appreciated timely, digital feedback from instructors but found little use for peer interaction. The participants viewed the scaffolding of assignments and feedback on their work as most important and motivational. *How* these online teaching and learning methods affected the development of the students’ college composition skills was not the focus of the study, but participant data suggested the students valued clear instructions and quick, pointed feedback on their writing as they worked through assignments largely on their own. Thus, *Teaching Presence* was a strong contributing factor to the positive virtual learning environment.

Rendahl and Breuch (2013) also conducted research in online freshman writing courses at the University of Minnesota. The authors looked at motivation and self-monitoring practices of the distance students and their likes and dislikes in the online course. Rendahl and Breuch (2013) asked participants in two sections of online first-year writing courses to describe and evaluate their study habits and explain what helped them to complete assignments. The authors found the distance students who described sound organizational and study skills were those who succeeded in the course. The majority of students rated high levels of satisfaction with instructor interactions and well-structured, challenging assignments. However, as in Boyd’s 2008 study, they expressed low expectations and little value for peer interactions as a means to learning. Rendahl and Breuch (2013) posit that the online writing student informants may have viewed
discussion forums and peer review exercises as items on a checklist, fulfilling what was required “without making critical connections” (p. 312) to course content or to each other.

Rendahl and Breuch (2013) may have uncovered a disconnect between online writing pedagogy and practice. The authors write, “Constructivist theories state that interaction—and valuing of such interaction—is necessary, even critical for learning to write online. Yet, students in this study were not experiencing nor expecting that type of valuable peer interaction” (p. 312). As with Boyd’s 2008 study, the first-year students seem to have negated or downplayed the need for Social Presence to foster a successful online learning environment. Instead, distance students indicated that engagement with the content and the instructor is adequate for a satisfactory learning experience. They seemed to view interacting with classmates as a time-consuming task with little return on investment when it came to studying material and completing assignments. This perspective is tough for distance faculty to hear as most build their online courses to incorporate socio-constructivist methodologies.

In another study of first-year online composition, Gillam & Wooden (2013) state that “the embodied and ecological collaborative experiences we fear will be lost in the conversion to online composition classes are precisely what distance education theorists also insist are essential to any online student learning” (p. 35). It seems, however, that online community building does not play out as theorists would like. Gillam & Wooden (2013) add that in a traditional class, “we are able to simultaneously teach writing and build community by illustrating that writing and learning are inherently interconnected and social activities,” but achieving these objectives is less likely to occur online.
Whether working online or on campus, the current electronic world of source-based college writing necessitates multiple ways of navigating and evaluating websites, selecting and storing information, and formatting final drafts. It takes practice and skill to identify credible and relevant sources among myriad online choices and correctly quote and paraphrase relevant material (Stapleton, 2005; Stapleton, Helms-Park, & Radia, 2007; Purdy, 2010; Qu & Hirvela, 2013). As community colleges begin to offer more distance education courses, this places an additional layer of autonomy, effort, and uncertainty upon learners’ shoulders. Working online requires not only a sound grasp of academic reading and writing but also high doses of self-confidence and self-efficacy. Distance students need a facility with technology, the ability to persist largely on their own, and a recognition of and willingness to seek help when needed. Studies to date indicate these varied traits and skill sets may be hard for second language community college students to attain; those who are new to distance learning and the North American education system stand to face greater challenges.

Summary

The literature review informs the content and design of the current study. Research on community colleges reveals challenges in meeting the demands of a diverse and largely underprepared study body due to a variety of socio-economic factors. Distance education courses and programs have broadened access to education but added associated challenges such as lower pass and retention rates. While design and facilitation of DE courses have been the foci of much Community of Inquiry research, the online learner has escaped the spotlight. L2 Writing across the Curriculum studies in the online environment are few and focus on writers and writing largely at research universities and in first-year writing courses rather than general education disciplines at the community college level. The phenomenological case study reported
here thus brings a new dimension to current research since it centered on English as second language students’ perspectives of a first-year online general education course in a community college setting.
Chapter Four
Methodology

Chapter Four begins with a restatement of the problem leading to this inquiry and the context of the present study. I introduce the research site and the Studies in Applied Ethics online course from which I recruited participants via purposive sampling. I reiterate the research questions and explain the ways in which I collected, coded, and analyzed data to inform my responses to these exploratory questions. I highlight the role of trustworthiness and explain how I adhered to the research design procedures within the boundaries and limitations in the phenomenological case study.

Restatement of the Problem

In the decade from 2005 to 2015, “distance education (DE) courses accounted for nearly all student enrollment growth” at American community colleges (Lokken, 2016, p. 5). Both college students and faculty members value the convenience of virtual learning and the affordances communication and instructional technologies offer. Community colleges also face numerous challenges in such fast-paced, ever-evolving digital learning environments as the online modality has become an accepted - and expected – 21st century option (Henderson, 2015; Jaggars & Xu, 2013). Ramping up distance education options taxes institutional resources in ways that diverge from those needed for traditional learning environments. What is more, DE courses and programs are difficult to plan, grow, sustain and assess (Jaggars & Xu, 2013).
The Columbia University Community College Research Center has reported college educators and administrators “are faced with a wide and confusing array of online quality indicators” in part because DE findings have “not established a clear link between online course standards and student-level outcomes” (Jaggars & Xu, 2013, p. 1). Inconsistent results point to the crucial role context plays in educational research. Institution types, course levels, disciplines, population samples, and faculty and student experience with online teaching and learning are just some of the environmental factors that have affected findings. Internet-based teaching and learning is still in its novice stage; to garner greater breadth and depth of understanding this growing higher education phenomenon, DE merits examination from a variety of angles and methods.

Whether on-ground or online, college tasks can present obstacles for non-traditional students such as mature learners and non-native English speakers (Ke & Chavez, 2013; Ferris, 2009). Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) research has emphasized the need for academic and information literacy instruction in college content courses, yet L2 writers (as well as their native-speaking peers) may not receive or accept the assistance they need to advance in these areas (Shi, 2008; Crosby, 2009; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Hirsch, 2014). Scaffolding the acquisition of content knowledge and disciplinary discourse constitutes a central yet complex role for online instructors (Cho & Cho, 2014). Online students often choose the DE option because of busy work-life schedules, and this in turn prevents them from accessing campus services such as libraries, tutoring, study groups and face time with faculty. These same students, particularly those in their first year, may not possess the technological or self-regulatory skills to monitor their learning and persist in online classes (DeTure, 2004; Blankenship & Atkinson, 2010; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Also of note is Generation 1.5 learners do not always identify as ESL students,
thereby circumventing testing and potential placement into college EAP programs designed to help them succeed. Masking their L2 status can obscure perceived (or real) weaknesses in linguistic and/or cognitive abilities that may have labeled them in high school (Pena, 2013; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013). It seems probable that on-campus content area professors would recognize an opportunity to offer guidance to their Gen 1.5 and other non-native English-speaking students at point of need. Whether and/or how well online faculty can use computer-mediated communication to support such students remains in question.

The literature on recent community college DE and WAC studies reveals a variety of methodologies, participant samples, results, interpretations and implications. This interdisciplinary examination of the extent literature begged the following questions: In what ways do first-year multilingual community college students negotiate and self-regulate their learning in online college content courses? How might educators learn about and begin to understand the views and behaviors of these students in the DE environment? A phenomenological case study seemed the best methodological choice to explore answers to such inquiries.

The Phenomenological Case Study Design

This inquiry was a phenomenological case study. I explored ways in which community college second language students made sense of their learning experiences in an online first-year general education course, Studies in Applied Ethics. The sample was purposive and selected for maximum variation: I sought three to five non-native English speaking community college students in their first year of college who exhibited a range of differing characteristics such as age, first language, educational backgrounds, length of time in the U.S., and future goals. My intention was to isolate cases in an effort to understand the person-in-context (Heidegger, 1985),
and then, to interlace the participant narratives into an assemblage of diverse perceptions of a similar circumstance. My aim was thus to view the phenomenon of distance education through the articulations of the second language students in response to interview prompts designed to help answer the research questions I posed (Talmy, 2010). Throughout the phenomenological case study, I bracketed out my own assumptions and acceptances of online teaching and learning and remained curious and attentive to the participants’ descriptions.

Heidegger’s (1985) philosophy explains the subject at hand emerges only through discussion with participants about their relatedness to and involvement in the phenomenon. The abstract notion of the online learning experience, for example, materializes only “when we encounter it and, hence, when it is brought meaningfully into the context of human life” (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 105). Heidegger (1985) accepted the existence of reality as “an entity in itself” which lies independent from human life, but he maintained that illuminating the meaning and nature of reality necessitates human interaction with it. In Heidegger’s (1985) words,

The entity as an entity is ‘in itself’ and independent of any apprehension of it; yet, the being of the entity is found only in encounter and can be explained, made understandable, only from the phenomenal exhibition and interpretation of the structure of encounter (p. 217, italics mine).

In practice, the phenomenologist asks relevant questions and listens with sensitivity to responses that reveal the nature of the subject at hand. Combining the L2 students’ intellectual and emotional construction of their lived experiences as online learners resulted in a quintain (Stake, 2006; 2010), a volume of narratives that shed light on the phenomenon. The art and
science of my researcher role in the present inquiry was to move back and forth between the broad *quintain* and the specific cases, to value each narrated perspective as a single case and the composite view as a whole. As such, I used within- and comparative analyses to “generate descriptions and situational interpretations of phenomena” that might provide colleagues, students, and other interested parties a basis “for modifying their own understandings of phenomena” (p. 57). While not generalizable, the student views portrayed in this phenomenological case study have generated themes that should resonate with EAP instructors and college content faculty familiar with online teaching and learning. My hope is that their narratives, as I present and discuss them in the next chapter, promote reaction, reflection, conversation, and further research.

**Research Site**

The site of the present research is a large, urban multi-campus community college of over 40,000 students in the Southeastern United States. In 2003, baccalaureate programs augmented the traditional two-year Associate in Arts, career and technical education options. This trend has grown over the past decade and many community colleges in the Southeast have extended their vertical reach to achieve “state college” status. As such, the anonymous descriptive title Community State College (CSC) serves as the pseudonym for the research site of the study reported here. While not a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (which requires 25% of its enrollees to be Hispanic), CSC does serve a diverse student body through its on-ground and online courses. In its 2015 Fact Book, CSC reports nearly 45,000 students in degree-seeking status, 30% fulltime and 70% part-time. Ethnicities listed are 66% White, 12% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 10% Other or Not Reported. The fall semester of 2015 saw a 4.2% jump in Hispanic students, the only ethnic group with an increase in enrollments, while the overall
student enrollment remained flat. (Institutional Data). The most popular degrees at both the bachelor’s and associate levels are in the areas of nursing and business. In Spring, 2014, the number of degrees and certificates awarded were as follows (rounded numbers): 1,250 Baccalaureate; 3,200 Associate in Arts; 1,010 Associate in Science; and 550 Technical and Vocational Certificates (CSC, 2015).

Significance of the Research Site

Probing and improving the online teaching and learning phenomenon has become a primary focus at CSC. In November of 2013, the college president disseminated a white paper in which he outlined the state of distance learning ventures at the institution. While the document highlighted CSC’s growth and leadership in the field, it also pointed to multiple discrepancies in online courses and programs. For example, while Internet-based tools abound to offer a host of ways to communicate and motivate, the president’s research team found not all faculty at CSC utilized available resources to provide effective virtual learning environments. For example, while bachelor’s level faculty used a web-conferencing platform for “live” interaction, online general education instructors did not have access to this tool. Institutional data also demonstrated the failure of online courses to reach the same levels of student success as their on-ground counterparts. Pass and retention rates in distance education courses lagged up to 20% behind face-to-face sections. With nearly half the student body enrolled in online courses from remedial through baccalaureate levels, the president called for a deep investigation and commitment to improved DE practices and policies (CSC Institutional Data, 2014).

The dissemination of the CSC president's white paper led to the formation of several committees consisting of online faculty, academic leaders, instructional technologists, and student affairs staff. Within a data-driven culture of evidence, inquiry and accountability, each
group researched and reported on an area of e-learning such as course design, outcomes assessment, faculty training, and student readiness (I was a member of the latter). Committee members recommended ways to orient students to online learning, train faculty to teach well in this medium, and create sound DE institutional infrastructure. The final *Online Revitalization* report released to the Board of Trustees in spring 2014 has since served as CSC’s blueprint to restructure and improve DE practices and substantiate budget requests for new administrative positions, technological enhancements, faculty development and student advising.

The online revitalization work at CSC has led to the formation of an Online Learning Services (OLS) department, the selection of a new learning management system (LMS), and the establishment of new rules governing online teaching. Since the 2015-16 academic year, CSC faculty members who wish to teach DE courses, regardless of previous online teaching experience, must take a professional development course run by the OLS department. To qualify to redesign a traditional course for online instruction, faculty must undergo *Quality Matters* (QM) training, a virtual 20-hour seminar built on sound online course design. QM design standards center on alignment of course outcomes, content delivery, practice with knowledge and skills, and authentic assessment. These instructional design principles now permeate CSC’s online classes.

Recent improvements in CSC’s online teaching and learning practices stemmed from the assumptions, experiences, research, and recommendations of fulltime faculty, instructional technologists, and administrative personnel. CSC students did not participate in the online revitalization efforts. College data, faculty viewpoints, and administrative concerns are genuine and germane to the task, but these perspectives cannot yield an informative account of the online student experience. The participant voices elicited in this phenomenological case study begin to
fill a void that can add meaning to extant and future research as this qualitative method
emphasizes individual narratives over institutional numbers. Revealing the lived experiences of
multilingual students should be of value since this group constitutes a growing demographic at
community colleges (Anayah & Kuk, 2015), and thereby contributes to the increasing numbers
of undergraduates choosing online rather than on-ground classes.

The Online General Education Course: Studies in Applied Ethics

At the site of the proposed study, Studies in Applied Ethics is a required course for all
Associates in Arts (A.A.) college transfer degrees and all Associates in Science (A.S.) work
force degrees. There are no prerequisites, and most students enroll in the course during their first
year of study. This phenomenological case study took place during a summer term in four online
sections of Studies in Applied Ethics. Two of the participating instructors were fulltime faculty
members who had collaborated on the redesign of the online ethics course, and the third was an
adjunct instructor (I drew participants from two sections taught by one of the professors). All of
the instructors taught ethics classes online and on campus and had been at the college for over
ten years.

Like most college courses in the North American system, the ethics course represents
three equated credit hours (ECH) of instruction. In traditional settings on campus, students sit in
class three times a week in fifty-minute blocks or twice a week for an hour and fifteen minutes.
To increase access to more community college students, however, scheduling has become varied
and convenient with the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) and other instructional
technologies. This three-ECH general education ethics course runs in many modalities at CSC:
fully face-to-face with three contact hours a week; blended, with one meeting a week on campus
and additional work online; and fully online, requiring no class meetings on campus or scheduled
“live” virtual learning sessions. This latter group, fully online, constituted the courses from which I recruited participants for the current study.

Institutional data demonstrates that success rates - defined as course completion with a letter grade of A, B, or C - in online sections are lower than in their on-campus counterparts. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the pass rate for *Applied Ethics* was 82.9% in face-to-face courses, 75.2% in blended/hybrid sections, and 67.3% online. These numbers mirror success rates by modality across many disciplines at the college, with online consistently ranked behind face-to-face and blended sections (D. Monroe, Ethics Chair, personal communication, June 10, 2015). A team of ethics faculty members redesigned the online course in 2015 to meet *Quality Matters* and revised CMC institutional standards in an effort to curb student attrition and increase pass rates. The second language participants in this study thus enrolled in the newly revised version of the online course.

*Studies in Applied Ethics* embodies the “gist and goals of general education” (D. Monroe, Ethics Chair, personal communication, June 10, 2015). The course is a graduation requirement for all students at CSC, regardless of degree level or discipline. Two of the major learning concepts align with institutional and general education goals: *Global and Social Responsibility*, and *Critical Thinking*. The prerequisites for *Applied Ethics* are minimal; students can take the course along with first-year composition and computer literacy courses, for example. A group of ethics faculty members authored the *Applied Ethics* textbook and tailored it to “the uninitiated” first-year student (D. Monroe, Ethics Chair, personal communication, June 10, 2015). Therefore, while some of the material can be philosophical and “heady,” the readings are contextualized and accessible for students who are new to the college or have recently completed developmental reading and writing coursework or an EAP program.
*Applied Ethics* is an intentional selection as I situated this phenomenological inquiry in an online community college general education (Gen Ed) course. The goal of Gen Ed has been stated as the interplay of intellectual and literacy growth, measured by increased knowledge, critical thinking and successful oral and written expression within and across disciplines (Cohen & Brawer, 2005). Students can self-design their general education studies to some extent by selecting courses from among a battery of electives across specified disciplines. However, at CSC, all students must fulfill the *Applied Ethics* requirement whether they are in A.A., A.S., or baccalaureate programs. This mandate is due to the course’s focus on critical thinking, social/civic responsibility, and development of logical and ethical thought. *Applied Ethics* is a “gateway” course in that it is among the ten most highly enrolled first-year courses at the College. Students who enroll in the online version of the class log into the LMS known as *Mycourses* and begin the class by reading a detailed syllabus and completing a quiz over its content. The *Applied Ethics* online course is QM-approved, and thus meets the *Quality Matters* standards including ease of course navigation, alignment of course objectives to assessments, various ways to learn and practice course content, and multiple opportunities for peer-to-peer and student-instructor interaction. Because *Studies in Applied Ethics* is a requirement for all degrees conferred by the institution, dozens of English as a second language students are enrolled in the course each semester. This presented good odds for a purposive sample among these L2 learners during the summer term, and I was able to recruit four students to take part in the study. I interviewed each participant three times to elicit their perceptions of course demands and the self-regulatory strategies they employed as online learners: I was interested in how their perspectives might change over time.
While there is academic freedom in terms of choice and depth of coverage of course content, all ethics instructors assign two common tasks: the Critical Thinking Application Paper (CTAP) and the Codes of Ethics (COE) research assignment. The CTAP involves reading a case study and deciding on a moral choice of action by following the guidelines to ethical thinking that are practiced in the course. The CTAP is not an essay in the traditional sense, but rather a series of responses to prompts that elicit specific information (See Appendix A for sample CTAP). The students must identify the main ethical issue, generate a list of stakeholders, and explain the best course of action, tying this into at least one of the moral theories learned in the course. In former versions of the course, students wrote the CTAP paper over the course of two or three weeks. They conducted research to inform their final decision on the best course of moral action. Now, however, the CTAP is a proctored and timed midterm exam that results in a different type of college reading and writing task. There is no longer a research element, paraphrasing or citing sources. During the exam, the students cannot access outside sources, but they create strings of key words that they would research given time to do so.

The Code of Ethics (COE) assignment is an informative and reflective report on the code of ethics of a profession of choice. Like the CTAP, this paper also follows a series of prompts. Students number each paragraph response and complete the assignment at their own pace. They must incorporate research as well as their own critical thinking skills and use APA format (See Appendix B for a sample COE task.). The COE paper is the last writing assignment in the Applied Ethics course, usually due the week before the final exam. The ethics final is a timed multiple choice test over material covered throughout the course; some faculty members require a proctored exam like the midterm while others allow students to complete the test from home.
The CSC online ethics instructors indicated that the ways in which they assign and assess the two required papers can vary. For example, some instructors “chunk” the COE assignment to help students focus, complete and submit a certain number of questions per week. This allows the faculty member to check whether each student is on the right track and send timely feedback. Others assign the COE paper as a whole and only grade the final draft. Some online faculty might encourage students to make a trip to a campus writing studio or enlist the help of a virtual tutor, offering extra credit points for those who choose to do so. Others may remind students of learner support but not emphasize it or award credit. These practices highlight the flexible nature of community college general education online courses. The design and facilitation of one instructor can differ markedly from that of another, and the resultant learning experience varies for the distance students as well.

In addition to the two major writing assignments, the online ethics course requires reading and writing for a variety of purposes across multiple genres. For instance, the students respond to instructor prompts in discussion forums to extend and exemplify topics in the textbook, and then read and reply to their peers’ posts as well. They submit multiple choice and short-answer quizzes that cover content in assigned readings and departmentally created online lectures. They choose articles from library databases and submit summaries and explanations of moral and ethical issues, major stakeholders, potential risks and solutions. The midterm exam includes substantial reading and open-ended, short essay responses requiring application of theories and processes. On the other hand, the final exam is information recall, a test of 75 multiple-choice questions that covers the chapters in the textbook. The wide-ranging types of activities and assessments in *Applied Ethics* require a repertoire of academic skills. An element
of the present study was discovering how well the L2 online learners understood and responded to the expectations of the various assignments in the online course.

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment and Selection

I recruited first-year L2 community college students to participate in the present study via an email message in MyCourses. Once I received approval from the university Institutional Review Board to begin the study, I sent an email message to the five online ethics instructors who had agreed to help me recruit L2 students. They forwarded to their classes my “call for participation” message that explained the study in brief, the type of participants I was seeking, and the compensation: $15 per hour to grant three interviews. The message included a link to an online survey to determine their eligibility for the study (See Recruitment Survey, Appendix C).

I sought a minimum of three multilingual students who had exited a college English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program, Developmental Reading and/or Developmental Writing Program, or exempted such preparatory study by presenting satisfactory test scores upon applying to CSC. Stake (2006) suggests the benefits of a phenomenological case study are limited with participant numbers larger than ten or fewer than four, but a minimum of three focal participants may suit "a single multicase researcher" (p. 21). Thus, I designed the study for three to five participants. The five ethics professors who had agreed to work with me taught eleven online sections of *Applied Ethics*, totaling approximately 400 students during the summer term. From this pool of online classes, I received six completed recruitment surveys from interested second language students.

I conducted a purposive sampling of maximum variation according to the demographics ascertained via the recruitment survey responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994; Duff,
Second language community college students exhibit a range of demographic traits, personal attributes and cultural sensibilities. However, there are national and institutional tendencies to view these diverse learners as a homogenous group. Rodby (1999) points out, “They call themselves Hmong, Mien, Cambodian, Lao, Vietnamese, Chicano, Latino, and Hispanic, although their professors may describe them simply as ‘ESL students’” (p. 45, Italics mine). To avoid this categorical marginalization, Matsuda and Matsuda (2009) remind researchers to “describe explicitly and multi-dimensionally each and every time” one assembles a non-native English speaking participant sample because the “multilingual student population is far more complex and diverse than a single, imprecise term can capture” (pg. 61).

In this phenomenological case study, I wanted to highlight such individual differences, preferences, and perceptions of a few of these multilinguals who share a similar circumstance: their first year of college study in an online general education course. I considered each interested student’s first language, educational background, resident or international student status, age, gender, length of time living in the United States, prior experience with online learning, work responsibilities, and future goals. Research has shown that age and gender differences may influence self-regulatory behaviors, confidence, and/or competence in virtual environments (Ke, 2013). Time constraints due to work and family obligations might impede full participation and completion of assignments in online courses. Academic background in the L1 and proficiency in the L2, level of computer literacy, and educational orientation can all influence understanding of course content and expectations on assignments. Thus, selecting participants with wide-ranging backgrounds and current situations suited my purpose in the phenomenological case study.
After reading the six survey responses, I first selected a 21-year-old Bulgarian male because he was the only Eastern European respondent and a genuine “distance” student. He was taking all his classes online from Bulgaria and had completed six classes prior to this summer session. He might share different perceptions of online learning from students who study both on campus and online, or who are in their first semester of college work. My next selection was a woman from the Philippines, a 38-year-old whom I thought could add richness to the study with her perceptions as a mature learner; she earned a bachelor’s degree before moving to the U.S. and is now retraining in a different field. Working fulltime, she had completed her preparatory EAP requirement the prior semester via an online course and started “real” college courses this term. The remaining four respondents were Spanish speakers, and I decided to select two. Three were female: one from Mexico, aged 19; one from Ecuador, aged 23, and one from Colombia aged 25. The Spanish-speaking male was also from Colombia, aged 24. He had lived the longest in the United States (twelve years) and had already completed 33 credit hours (11 courses) toward his associate’s degree prior to the summer semester. As such, although he was taking an online ethics course, he did not fit the participant profile that I was seeking. I invited the 19-year-old from Mexico to participate since she was the youngest respondent and brought the Generation 1.5 perspective, having started school in the U.S. in seventh grade. Reviewing the survey responses of the young women from Colombia and Ecuador, I decided to invite the Colombian, the older of the two, because she had taken several EAP courses at CSC. I wondered how she might reflect on ways in which she was (or was not) applying academic literacy skills she had learned in the EAP program to her current studies. She also indicated this was her first time taking an online class. The young woman from Ecuador was enrolled in a blended section of Applied Ethics class in which the students completed much of the work online.
in *MyCourses*, but they also met with the professor once a week. Thus, this class did not fit the parameters of my study. (The professor had sent the recruitment message to all of his classes). I emailed the IRB-approved Consent to Participate form (See Appendix D) to each of the four students and proceeded with the study once they had all returned the signed copies to me.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of the individual characteristics of the four L2 participants that I selected for my sample and the pseudonyms I assigned to each. I provide a full profile of each of the participants before presenting the narrative data in Chapter Five.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Inez</th>
<th>Krum</th>
<th>Liseth</th>
<th>Nora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, Gender</td>
<td>19, Female</td>
<td>21, Male</td>
<td>26, Female</td>
<td>38, Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home country</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length in US</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Education</td>
<td>HS-US (public, 4 yr)</td>
<td>HS-US (private, 1 yr)</td>
<td>HS-Col.</td>
<td>HS / BA – Phil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Music Industry</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken EAP/ESL?</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Priv. high school</td>
<td>Yes, this college</td>
<td>Yes, this college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken Fr. Comp?</td>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>1st attempt now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior online learning</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 classes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 class [EAP]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for online</td>
<td>Work, baby</td>
<td>Distance/abroad</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timeline and Data Sources for the Study

In Table 2, I present a timeline and brief explanation of how I interacted with the focal students during the summer term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Term</th>
<th>Data Collection Type</th>
<th>Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to start</td>
<td>Consent forms – faculty</td>
<td>College Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment in online courses</td>
<td><em>MyCourses</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86
| Weeks 1-2 | Participant recruitment | MyCourses Email  
| | Demographic/eligibility survey | Online submission  
| | Participant selection | Online survey response data  
| | Consent forms – students | MyCourses Email attachment  
| Weeks 2-3 | Communication/clarification | MyCourses Email  
| | Interview #1 | Skype: 20-30 min.  
| | Transcription and Member-checking, Int. #1 | Microsoft Word  
| | Second round coding, Int. #1 | MyCourses Email attachment  
| Weeks 4-5 | First-round coding, Int. #1 | Microsoft Word and Excel  
| Weeks 5-6 | Conduct Interview #2 | Face-to-face or Skype: 45-60 min.  
| Week 6 | Transcription and Member-checking, Int. #2 | Microsoft Word  
| | Second round coding, Int. #1 | MyCourses Email attachment  
| Weeks 7-8 | First-round coding, Int. #2 | Microsoft Word  
| | Second round coding, Int. #2 | Microsoft Word  
| Weeks 9-10 | Conduct Int. #3 | Skype: 30-45 min.  
| | Transcription and Member-checking, Int. #3 | Microsoft Word  
| | Transcription and Member-checking, Int. #3 | MyCourses Email attachment  
| Weeks 10-11 | Final communication | MyCourses Email  
| | First-round coding, Int. #3 | Microsoft Word  
| | Second round coding, Int. #3 | Microsoft Word  
| Weeks 1-11 | Researcher reflexive journal | Microsoft Word  
| | Communication / Scheduling | MyCourses Email  

Interview Procedures and Protocols
Rubin & Rubin (2005) propose a responsive interviewing model to aid researchers in their quest for fidelity. I designed the topics and timing of the semi-structured interviews with the following characteristics of the Rubin & Rubin (2005) model in mind: relationship, protection, flexibility and adaptability between the researcher and participants. As the researcher, I had to accommodate the participants' needs and preferences yet adhere to the study design (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The area in which I had to be most flexible was in scheduling and rescheduling interviews. For instance, Inez had indicated she would like to participate in the study but did not have a Skype account. She asked if I could call her instead. When I phoned from my office at the appointed time for our first interview, I was disappointed that she did not answer. I left a message, and she called back ten minutes later, saying she was running late and waiting in line to pick up a pizza. Her evening plans had changed; I could hear a child with her. While talking, I was worried that Inez might be too busy to participate in the study. I wanted to know her story! I was being selfish; she was my only Generation 1.5 participant. But we completed the first interview less than a week later, and she followed through with the next two phone conversations as planned.

I experienced scheduling challenge with Liseth as well. After completing the first round of interviews, I emailed the participants to schedule the second. I had proposed several times in a Doodle poll within a specified two-week period that included the designated distance education midterm testing schedule. Liseth responded she would be away during most of that time and very busy upon her return, just two days before the midterm. However, if I wanted to talk before she left on her trip, we could meet on campus before her speech class. I knew this would require altering my plan, as the original design was to speak just after the test, but I was excited to meet her in person and agreed. “I’ll have to change a few protocol questions if I do the interview
before the midterm, but I really want to meet Liseth. I think a f2f [face-to-face] will help me gain further rapport and lead to richer data” (Researcher Reflexive Journal, May 20, 2016). We met on campus two weeks later, and I did feel this strengthened our relationship by sharing physical space over coffee. This led to my asking others if they would like to meet on campus. Inez met me in a classroom immediately after her midterm exam, and Nora and I met at a campus Learning Support Center for her final interview. In the end, Krum was the only student who participated via Skype for all three of our conversations.

Interview #1

The purpose of the first semi-structured interview was to establish rapport with the students, confirm and embellish the demographic information collected on the participant recruitment survey, and allow them time to ask questions about the purpose and method of this phenomenological case study as well as my role as researcher, and theirs as participants. (See Interview Protocol #1 in Appendix E). I asked the students if they had any further questions about the consent forms they had returned and assured them again that I would protect their confidentiality and the integrity of their stories. I would also work to intrude as little as possible in their busy lives. Besides learning more about their educational and cultural backgrounds, I asked the participants about their early experiences and impressions of the Studies in Applied Ethics online course, their study plans such as time and location working on the course, and how they had sought help if needed during this early part of the term.

Interview #2

The purpose of the second interview was to learn how the focal students prepared for the midterm exam, if or how well their expectations matched the actual testing experience, and how they felt they performed on the test. I asked if they had read carefully the preparatory material in
the midterm module in *MyCourses* and completed all of the reading assignments listed in the syllabus. I asked them to recount one of the ethical dilemma case studies presented on the test and describe how they approached the reading and open-ended critical thinking questions. (See Interview Protocol #2 in Appendix F). Because the exam pulls from a pool of scenarios, some passages require more "cultural capital" than others do. For example, in a sample CTAP exercise provided by the CSC ethics department, the verb "lettered" refers to achievement in high school athletics. American football terminology appears in the case study as well. For students who are newly arrived to the US, who did not attend high school here, or are not involved or interested in sports, the meaning of this passage might prove difficult to unpack. Thus, through stimulated-recall, I prompted the students to describe their perceived level of comprehension, their thought processes and test-taking strategies as best they could remember when taking the exam.

An additional purpose of the second interview was to delve into each student’s metacognitive awareness of their online (and offline) learning strategies. Much of the subject matter of the semi-structured interview protocol originated in the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire (Barnard et al., 2009), a 23-item survey that Shea et al. (2012) have used to examine *Learning Presence*. The OSLQ contains five activity areas that research has shown increase success in online environments: *goal setting, environment structuring, task strategies, time management, and help seeking*. For example, in the following items, “a” falls under the category of *time management* while "b" is in the *help-seeking* section.

a. I distribute my studying time across the week even though I don't need to attend classes on campus.

b. I find someone who is knowledgeable in course content to consult when I need help.
Rather than amassing Likert-scale survey data that might serve the researcher’s purpose in a mixed methods or quantitative study, I selected statements from the OSLQ categories related to the present inquiry and formed open-ended questions to probe the students’ perceptions. For example, I changed item “a” above to the following interview question: Can you tell me when and how you usually study for your online ethics class? Item “b” above informs the next question: Can you describe what you do when you need help understanding something in the ethics book or other course materials?

I did not want to “push” metacognition upon the students early in the semester or introduce an intervention that might alter their routines, so I waited until the second interview to ask these questions. My plan was to capture a slice of their study habits and self-regulatory behaviors in a naturalist environment. On the other hand, withholding such a discussion until a post-course interview seemed disadvantageous and perhaps even unethical. Since the conversation could prompt students to reflect upon and improve their online learning strategies, it would be too late once they had completed the course. Thus, the timing of the second interview was strategic, and the content produced data that informed responses to all four of my exploratory research questions for this inquiry.

Interview #3

The third interview centered on the second language participants’ perceptions of their learning experiences during the second half of the term. (See Appendix G for Interview #3 Protocol). The two main assignments were the Code of Ethics (COE) paper and the final exam. The COE assignment presented an opportunity to discuss each student's composing processes both "qualitatively and temporally" (Stapleton, 2010) since the students had to pace themselves
in order to submit their work by the due date. They needed to employ academic and information literacy skills to search for the code of ethics of a profession and include supporting documentation for their paper. As with the CTAP, the COE belies the traditional genre of the college research paper since students respond to a set of questions in a series of paragraphs (See COE Assignment, Appendix F). According to the instructions, after identifying and studying the code of ethics in a chosen field, the students must rate the code level of the ethical standards for this profession. They then support their rating by referencing pertinent areas of the textbook chapter on professional ethical codes. In subsequent paragraphs, they summarize a recent article they have located that contains a moral issue in the chosen field. They must identify, explain, and solve the dilemma using the code of ethics of the profession, and then reflect on the resolution as well as changes that may be needed to make the code of ethics more just.

I asked the participants to describe working on the COE paper, the final products they submitted, and their thoughts about the grades they received. For example, I asked when they studied the assignment guidelines, when they began working on the paper, the steps they followed, which tasks took the longest, and why. I asked whether they encountered any challenges finding an appropriate article in their field to analyze, whether or not they reached out for help, and if so, to whom, when and why. I also asked whether they felt their grades on the COE paper reflected their amounts of effort and learning.

In the third interview, the L2 participants also described their final exam experiences. The Applied Ethics course syllabus stated the final exam was proctored and timed (two hours), the same as the midterm. This exam did not require any writing, however. It was an objective test of 75 multiple choice questions covering content from the entire semester and every chapter
in the textbook. I asked the participants how they studied for this cumulative test, what their impressions were during the test, and how they fared in terms of the final grade.

Recording of Interviews

Whether we talked in person, online, or over the phone, I recorded each interview that I conducted. I used my iPhone to record our Skype conversations. I could listen repeatedly on the phone and convert the audio files to MP3 format to import to Audacity, a free software program I installed on my laptop. I recorded directly to Audacity during the two face-to-face interviews I conducted. Besides its recording feature, Audacity allows for ease of editing audio files. For example, I would sometimes add a second track or a break in a student recording with my own thoughts and/or voice comments as I listened to an interview. Seeking the emic view of the L2 students’ narrated experiences, I valued and tried to preserve their expressions, their own voices. I found repeated listening added further depth and breadth of understanding to reviewing interview transcripts. Once I completed data analysis, I moved all audio files along with Word and Excel documents to a password-protected storage device that I keep in a locked cabinet.

Online Course Artifacts

A learning management system (LMS) creates a digital infrastructure in an online course. It allows instructors to upload a course syllabus and other procedural guidelines, course content to supplement the textbook, discussion forums, email, assessment tools, and a gradebook. Repeated use of the LMS tools and navigational structure breeds familiarity and efficiency of use. The Applied Ethics online course artifacts I examined contributed to my understanding of the online course and the learning experiences the focal students related. These artifacts included the course syllabus, content modules, calendar, guidelines on the two major writing assignments (CTAP and COE), discussion forum questions, and midterm and final exams. These
features of the course are viewable from the start of the semester (although not the questions on exams). I did not have access to student submissions on quizzes or assignments, and I could not see grades or instructor feedback, but I could view the Class Progress report in Mycourses, a graph showing the low, high, and average grade on course assignments.

Course Grades

The gradebook for Studies in Applied Ethics standard course divides a potential 1,000 points and into five categories as follows:

- Chapter quizzes (multiple choice, auto-feedback): 250 points
- Written assignments (one- to three-pages each): 270 points
- Discussion forums (minimum 150-word posts + replies): 180 points
- Midterm Exam (CTAP, proctored): 200 points
- Final Exam (online, proctored): 100 points

According to the course syllabus, all assignments contribute to mastery of the learning objectives and serve as performance indicators. The midterm is the Critical Thinking Application Paper (CTAP) and constitutes 20% of the grade; the Code of Ethics (COE) paper is also 20% (180 of the 270 points included in written assignments); and the final exam, 10%. I asked the students to share their perspectives on the “one-shot” proctored exams as well as lower-stakes chapter quizzes, writing assignments, and their overall course grades at the end of the term.

Researcher Reflexive Journal

Creswell (2007) makes the point that qualitative research starts with “broad assumptions central to qualitative inquiry, a worldview consistent with it, and… a theoretical lens that shapes the study” (p. 42). Creswell (2007) also states that “how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to the research” (p. 179). These concepts are central to the role of the researcher reflexive journal
that I kept throughout the phenomenological case study. Considering the complexities of online learning and second language academic literacy development from the point of view of the focal students, I chronicled ways in which their perspectives corroborated or clashed with my own assumptions. I documented how my understanding of the COI theoretical framework and the construct of *Learning Presence* evolved. Thus, as a data source, the researcher reflexive journal contributes to the trustworthiness and verisimilitude of my study. It explains the ways in which I interpreted the meaning of the individual cases, and the collection of cases, the *quintain* (Stake, 2006; 2009). It traces the recursive pathways from the conceptual origins of the research to the design and implementation of the study and the interpretive analysis of the data. I believe the journal also conveys the rigorous demands of a phenomenological case study, the insights and further inquiries derived from the findings, and decisions about the most salient points to include in the final draft of the dissertation.

**Data Analysis**

To recap, the personal experience stories in this study derived from three interviews with each participant at early, mid- and end-of-course junctures. To insure fidelity of the experiences the L2 students related, I worked to comprehend, code, analyze and interpret their vocalized perceptions in both initial and iterative manners (Saldaña, 2009; Janesick, 2011). I first employed *in vivo* coding to retain the particular voice of each student, capturing some the exact words and phrases they used (Saldaña, 2009). I then added “analytic memos” in *Word* documents and on physical *post-it* notes as I began to explore ideas and hunches about the students’ descriptions. Dörnyei (2007) describes this early, intuitive work as that which is “likely to contain the embryos of some of the main conclusions to be drawn from the study” (p. 254), and indeed, I returned to these memos when trying to make meaning of within- and across-
case analyses. I continued to chronicle questions and comments in a researcher reflexive journal throughout the study. I recorded these reflections both in writing and as audio notes, at times seated at a computer with data spread before me, and at others, walking or driving, using my phone to re-listen to interviews and dictate thoughts and questions for further inquiry as I pondered what I was hearing and learning.

I focused on the narrated lived experience of each participant before cross-referencing the multiple personal stories to sketch a picture of the broader online learning phenomenon, the *quintain* (Stake, 2006; 2010; Creswell, 2007). Repeated reading of transcripts and listening to recordings for different coding purposes afforded opportunities to immerse myself in the language of each participant. This helped me make meaning of the narratives and maintain the emic voice in each case. Re-reading and re-listening, reviewing codes and revising notes all contributed to the analysis and interpretation of each case and the target collection (Stake, 2006; 2010). Cognitive Anthropologist Naomi Quinn (2005) points out that good listeners and interpreters ask interviewees on the spot or in later sessions to "expand on their points, explain what they meant, spell out the implications of examples they gave, and give examples of generalizations they made" (p. 41). These strategies help the researcher return to interview data with keen interest, fresh eyes and ears. I found truth in this as I reread interview transcripts from earlier in the semester in preparation for subsequent conversations and added follow-up questions to the next semi-structured interview protocols.

I looked for salient themes and verbal representations of self that emanated from each participant's phraseology (Saldaña, 2009). I wanted to represent the speaker’s intent by placing emphasis on repeated phrases and vivid descriptions that contained emotion in each interview. I re-listened to sections of recordings for stress and tone of voice, and then highlighted text or
inserted comments on transcriptions in Microsoft Word. I expected no particular type or number of *in vivo* codes or key words per participant. In this first cycle of coding, I chose at times one word, at others a phrase, and still others, complete sentences. After I had finished the *in vivo* coding, I moved on to Saldaña’s (2009) description of second cycle, or *focused* coding (See Appendix H for Sample Focused Coding). The purpose of this conceptual coding was to generate descriptive labels of broader themes than the small units of meaning that emerged in the *in vivo* coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2009). I noted in my researcher journal, “I keep hearing Inez while I’m reading Nora’s words” and “so many similarities but they describe it in different ways, their individuality comes through” (RJ, June 2016). These were times when emergent themes materialized in the participant responses to my questions. I sometimes put on headphones and re-listened to interviews while re-reading the transcriptions. I felt immersed in the worlds of these students when listening to their voices, a sensation that was duller when reading from transcripts.

Conveying the depth of each case while simultaneously building the *quintain*, an attempt at an understanding of the bigger picture, was inherent in the iterative design of this research. I could not "finish" with one participant before meeting the next for a similar conversation. Neither did one interview suffice for any individual case. Early on, I found it nearly impossible – and perhaps undesirable – to obliterate projections from one case to another. As the researcher, I remained cognizant of these thoughts, documented them, and assessed whether they warranted any changes in the original protocols. For example, I adapted some interview questions to probe participants’ thoughts and extend the depth of my understanding of them. Janesick (2011) describes such documentation of thinking and doing as an audit trail that records the processes and products of every transaction and reflection while seeking, compiling, coding, and
interpreting the data. Making note of one’s metacognitive thinking throughout the process of qualitative inquiry contributes to data collection, analysis and interpretation. I dedicated areas of my researcher reflexive journal to this purpose and highlight some of these notations and self-memos in Chapter Six.

I triangulated the data and augmented my understanding of the student narratives with artifacts from the online ethics course. I examined the syllabus, assignment guidelines, and class progress reports made available in the online class. The combination of data sources bound the cases and gave rise to patterns of similarity as well as individual differences. I also returned to the ethics faculty interview data from my pilot study to crystallize the context and content of the findings. Their descriptions of the revised online Applied Ethics course helped me understand reading and writing assignments, faculty expectations, and intended student learning experiences and outcomes.

Hermeneutics and Trustworthiness

The term hermeneutics is derived from Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods; the Greek verb hermeneuein means, "to make something clear, to announce or unveil a message" (Thompson, 1996, p. 361). However, in interpretive practice, no message is unidirectional or disassociated from social context. In an article on hermeneutics and the dialectic model in social psychology research, Sandage, Cook, Hill, Strawn, & Reimer (2008) state, "humans engage in hermeneutical processes of interpretation that involve making meaning out of life experience" (p. 344). In the hermeneutical phenomenological method, the “interpretive language and sensitive linguistic devices make the phenomenological analysis, explication, and description of lived meaning possible” (van Manen, 2014, p. 610). In this manner, I strove to express the
participants' narratives in a clear, genuine manner, but the selections I chose and interpretations I shared represent my researcher judgement (Tappan, 1997; van Manen, 2014).

I remained aware of the ways in which I was interacting with the participants and how my understanding of their lived experiences included my own relationship to the phenomenon (Janesick, 2011). The Community of Inquiry framework constitutes the stance from which I observed and analyzed online learning; my belief in the expansion of this process-oriented educational model to include Learning Presence spotlighted what I took from the lived experiences narrated by the focal participants. Again, this leaves open numerous and varied ways of interpreting their stories and observable behaviors.

Trustworthiness is an important element of qualitative inquiry that lends credibility to the study. It demonstrates authenticity and faithfulness to the design of the study and a retelling and interpretation of the narratives in a clear and believable manner (Creswell, 2007). Patton (2002) states that assuring trustworthiness is an ongoing process rather than a fixed measurement of accuracy at a particular time. It includes the use of multiple sources or data points, rich and thick descriptions of the focal participants and their narrated experiences, and member checking for the emic voice after transcribing interviews. I bracketed out my prior experiences and assumptions and was faithful to these “validation strategies” (Patton, 2002, p. 557) throughout the data collection, interpretation, and recounting of the personal stories of the multilingual participants.

Summary of Methodology and Data Collection

The phenomenological case study method and theoretical concepts in Community of Inquiry, Online Self-Regulated Learning, and Writing across the Curriculum informed the design of this study. The participant interviews provided slices in time of the overall phenomenon -
online learning from the community college ESL student perspective. The natural inquiry I undertook was a recursive process. I ensured participant comprehension of interview questions and asked them to review their responses via member checking. This procedure sometimes generated further questions, and I returned to the literature review as I started to make meaning of the participant narratives. The varying perspectives voiced in the twelve interviews generated a volume, a *quintain* of the L2 participants’ lived experiences and impressions. This collection of narratives represents the views of the L2 community college participants in this study only; it does not indicate the feelings of “most” or any other multilingual online learners. Besides the rich description in the participant narratives, I used online course artifacts and my researcher reflexive journal to triangulate and crystalize the interview transcripts. Table 3 summarizes the sources of data points and analysis methods I used to answer the exploratory research questions I posed to guide this study.

Table 3  Summary of Research Questions, Data Sources and Methods of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>DATA ANALYSES</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Q1: What are the L2 participants’ expectations and impressions of the *Studies in Applied Ethics* online course design and facilitation at early, mid, and end-of-term stages? | Participant interviews 1, 2, 3   | Coding interview transcripts: a) *in vivo*  
   b) focused / conceptual  
   Member checking  
Content analysis  
Academic/ information literacy and technology needs  
COI Framework |
| Q2: What self-regulatory practices do the participants utilize to negotiate and complete assignments in the online ethics course? | Participant interviews 1, 2, 3   | Coding interview transcripts: a) *in vivo*  
   b) focused  
Member checking  
Comparison of participants’ narratives to course analytics |
Summary

In this chapter, I restated the problem driving the research questions and explained the methodological choice of the phenomenological case study. I provided a description of the online general education course *Applied Ethics* and the types of reading and writing assignments therein. I discussed collecting and analyzing interview data and acknowledged the epistemological stance I share with narrative inquiry researchers who view this method as social practice. I described the components of the Community of Inquiry Survey and the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire that I accessed for ideas to generate interview questions and interpret the L2 participant narratives. I outlined the study timeline and the tools I used to collect, code, and analyze data. I highlighted my role as researcher and that of hermeneutics in the interpretive, qualitative research process.

In Chapter Five, I share the narrated perspectives of the four L2 participants to answer the exploratory research questions.
Chapter Five

Discoveries

In this chapter, I present the findings of the phenomenological case study. I begin with an introduction of the four focal second language participants: Inez, Krum, Liseth, and Nora (pseudonyms). I follow the L2 student profiles with an interpretative analysis of the data viewed through the lens of the Community of Inquiry online teaching and learning theory.

Participant Profiles

Inez

Inez is nineteen years old. She was born about 300 miles outside Mexico City and moved to the United States when she was eleven. She took mandated ESOL classes for two years in middle school and was mainstreamed in eighth grade. Inez is an animal lover, and she enrolled in a magnet program for veterinary science at a remote county high school. This entailed an hour-long bus ride to school with a 6:15 a.m. pick-up each morning. She worked with her older brother at her father’s market evenings and weekends, and she did well in school. The summer between her junior and senior year, however, she made the decision to leave the magnet program and enroll in her “zoned” high school. In the transition from the veterinary program to the high school near her home, she was short two required classes and could not graduate. In the
fall, she enrolled in a GED program, passed the test, and started college a semester later than expected, in January of 2016. Inez works fulltime in the office of a car dealership and often overtime on weekends; she lives with her parents, who help care for her eight-month-old daughter.

Inez had not decided on a major field of study at the time of this inquiry, but she was working toward an A.A. in the four-year college transfer track. She cited her older brother and sister as role models and the individuals who are most supportive of her educational efforts. Her brother is a junior at a nearby university and her sister has graduated and is working “a professional job” (Inez, May 2016). Having succeeded in navigating the undergraduate experience themselves, her older siblings now serve as her mentors.

Inez placed into a remedial reading class at CSC, but her scores on writing and math tests deemed her college ready. Thus, she said in her first semester at CSC (the semester prior to the time of this study), she had enrolled in four courses on two campuses: Composition 1 (first-year writing), Developmental Reading, East-West Synthesis, a general education humanities course, and Marriage and the Family, a social science elective. She had selected a “blended” Composition 1 section because the class required only one 75-minute face-to-face meeting per week (rather than the traditional two). Inez thought this would work well with her busy schedule while acclimating to her first semester of college. However, Inez said she had found the amount and type of online homework in the blended freshman writing class disengaging and overwhelming. As she described it, she “posted the discussion forums, but like nonchalant, I don’t know, like who cares” (Inez, May 2016). She went to say she had missed a lot of “busy work like quizzes and discussions… [and] then not logging into the, the my writing lab grammar and paper reviews… I lost points; I got behind” (Inez, May 2016). She did not seem to
recognize the relevance or importance of virtual learning spaces designed to promote writing skills and peer response.

In addition to the obstacles Inez related about the blended learning design of *Composition 1*, she also recalled times when she could not muster the motivation to attend classes, focus on lectures, or retain course material. As an example, she related some challenges in her *East-West Synthesis* course that she had taken her first semester as well:

I did not so good in humanities because it was early in the morning, and then after, I would go straight to work. So I would wake up at six, go to class at eight in the morning, leave, and then to work. So it was just like nothing was really in there. And then when it was time to take a test, I didn’t do so well. (Inez 1, June 2016)

At the end of our discussion about her prior learning and literacy experiences, she added, “…but this semester I’m ready for more responsibility, and I think that a biggest part in my life, and I think that’s what, it is what’s driving me right now” (Inez, May 2016). At the outset of the summer term, then, Inez seemed to have put her first semester struggles behind her and was prepared for the online experience. She learned some lessons about transitioning from high school to college and acknowledged her own physical and mental limits as a working single mother. She did not pass two of four classes during the spring semester, but in her mind, this was not because college courses were at a level of difficulty she could not attain. It was rather a matter of new mothering and maintaining a fulltime job, and she said, “learning how much I can take every day, you know?” (Inez 1, June 2016). She expressed her certainty that distance classes this term would provide a new opportunity, a good fit, because “After work I don’t want to just drag myself to the class, you know, especially at night. It’s better online, it’s gonna be better for me” (Inez, May 2016).
After receiving her first semester grades, Inez had a conversation with a college advisor regarding ongoing eligibility for financial aid. Having passed just 50% of her attempted coursework her first semester, Inez was placed into a probationary period and was made aware that she had to increase her completion ratio to at least 67% as well as maintain a 2.0 (C) average to continue receiving a Pell grant and student loans in the fall. Six credit hours of college work was the minimum to be eligible for financial aid, so she had enrolled in two required general education courses and anticipated passing both in order to regain good academic standing.

Krum

Krum is twenty-one years old and from a small town in Bulgaria near the Black Sea. He has visited the United States several times since 2005, when his grandfather established residency in Detroit, Michigan. His parents are pastors affiliated with Christian fellowships, and Krum has accompanied them on several trips to the United States. In 2014, he graduated from high school in Bulgaria, and then spent the following academic year at a private, faith-based high school in Michigan “to get better at English and ready for college with high school diploma in U.S,” (Krum 1, June 2016). At the time of this study, he was living back home in Bulgaria and taking advantage of DE courses available at CSC; he planned to earn the entire A.A. degree online.

Krum said he had been following American and British music “since I was kid” and had, as a result, been exposed to English throughout his adolescence. Given his interests, travels, and the fact that he grew up in the Internet age, Krum may have had higher levels of exposure to English and North American culture than many international students who arrive as freshman at
U.S. colleges. His ease with spoken English was evident from our first Skype meeting, and he seemed knowledgeable and interested in a variety of content areas. His SAT scores indicated no need for remedial reading, writing, or math, so his first semester at CSC he was able to take college level classes. At the time of this study, Krum was entering his third semester and had successfully completed five general education requirements. He had enrolled in three online courses this summer term.

Krum described his first semester at CSC as a difficult but valuable period. Having routinely carried seven or eight subjects and worked in an Internet Café during his high school years in Bulgaria, he had felt confident about his time management and academic skills. His additional year at a U.S. high school boosted his academic skills as well. However, when he enrolled as a fulltime student and took five online classes his first semester. Krum said he did not realize “what that was I got into” (Krum, May 2016). He could not keep up with all his courses the first semester. Krum placed some blame on the college for his failure; he felt that the institutional advising was poor in this regard and he should have been warned of the rigor and self-reliance involved. In his words,

The first, when I went to the college, when I graduated from high school, I went down there to the campus. The adviser said I could easily start with five classes. And I wasn’t used to it, working so much in, in with my own learning at all, so I had some trouble like finishing all those courses in the same time. It was too much for first time student”

(Krum 1, June 2016).

It seemed that Krum had passed the classes that required the least reading and writing that first semester: microcomputer applications, statistics, and oceanography. He dropped Composition 1 during the second month and finished but failed the general education online
course *Introduction to Psychology*. Like Inez, however, he did not attribute his subpar inaugural semester to a deficiency in his English language skills. Instead, he expressed a lack of awareness and commitment to the time needed to complete assignments. From this experience, he learned to “space the degree over longer time” and take fewer courses per semester:

But now, I like found my own pace. I was good in spring semester, and I decided that by taking no more than three courses was the best for me. I took comp again, and I passed the second time. And I decided to compensate for lesser classes by taking three classes every summer semester. I mean I wasn’t, I don’t plan to study summers, but I will always take three classes from now on, now till I have my A.A.” (Krum 1, June 2016).

Krum said he brought his average up to “about a B” his second semester and he was happy with the twelve-week, “express” courses he had selected. “The sixteen weeks is so long, and I think, I like do better in shorter time” (Krum 1, June 2016). This option requires more intense study but also allows him breaks of six to eight weeks between sessions. During these periods he can travel, work on his music and recording without the worry of studying and checking in online. During the summer term, courses are further compressed to ten weeks, and Krum had registered for three: *Studies in Applied Ethics, American National Government,* and *Microeconomics*. Judging from the syllabus and browsing each course the first week, ethics seemed to require less reading and “less details to remember” than his government or economics classes, so he anticipated Applied Ethics would be “no problem” (Krum 1, June 2016).

Krum said he intended to further his education after earning his associate’s degree. He believed that a four-year degree from a U.S. college or university would open doors in ways that pursuing an education at home would not. He discussed his intentions in US institutions of higher education in this way:
It’s definitely good, because Bulgaria, yah, the Bulgarian education system, it’s still pretty good, but I don’t think it will like give me as many opportunities in life as when I graduate form a university in the States… After I, uh, ended my university, my bachelor’s in business, I would like to major in something like sound engineering or music, and then like, try and open a recording studio or radio program or something like that (Krum 1, June 2016).

Krum also mentioned that if his parents moved to the U.S., he might consider college on a traditional campus rather than online, either to finish his bachelor’s degree or enroll in a graduate program, most likely an MBA. For the next few semesters, however, Krum was focused on staying the course. We would take three courses per semester toward his A.A., continue living at home, and then apply for the four-year business program at CSC, which offers a fully online option as well.

Liseth

Liseth is twenty-five years old. At the age of nineteen, she moved to the U.S. from Colombia with her mother and younger brother. Her family divided at that time; her father stayed in Colombia and her older sister moved to Spain. Liseth had graduated from high school a year prior and taken a year of college toward an education degree in Columbia. Soon after her arrival in the U.S., Liseth enrolled in adult ESOL classes and studied English five days a week for nearly a year while awaiting residency status and financial aid eligibility to enroll in college. She found a job at a small business, scanning and filing documents in the afternoon and on Saturdays; she said this afforded little opportunity to learn English, but she earned some money
and improved her computer literacy skills. Liseth’s brother was a junior in high school at the time, so she also improved her English by working with him when did his homework at night.

Liseth said she had always enjoyed school, been a good student, and was eager to begin her higher education in the U.S. When she applied to CSC, she took the Level of English Proficiency (LOEP) exam and placed into Intermediate ESL II. This required completing three semesters of fulltime study in the EAP program before she could start working toward a degree. She said her life “start to change that new year” because in January, 2016, she started classes at found fulltime work at a call center. She added that she still works this job because it pays well for bilingual speakers. She finished the EAP program in three semesters as planned, and at the time of this inquiry, Liseth had also finished her first semester of college study. The previous term, she had taken and passed Composition 1, Intermediate Algebra, World Religions and Microcomputer Applications. Reflecting on her experiences, she remarked, “it was tough but I did it, and it’s a good start for me” (Liseth, May 2016). She reported that she had earned two A’s and two B’s in her first semester with a “hard B in composition only because I got A’s on all the grammar quizzes, but my essays not so good” (Liseth 1, June 2016).

Liseth said she realized that shortened summer classes would impose a daily workload that would be more rigorous than that of a sixteen-week semester, so she cut her work hours to thirty per week and registered for three classes. This semester was also her first attempt in the online environment. She enrolled in two DE courses, Studies in Applied Ethics and College Algebra. She also selected a section of Composition II that met on campus two evenings a week.

Liseth described how changes in circumstances at work and at home influenced her present schedule. Although she had performed quite well the previous term, it had been
stressful. She made a plan to study two afternoons a week in the library before her second-semester composition course and complete the work for her online classes at home. As she described her situation,

I used to live closer to campus and I would just go home after classes, but now we move and I wanna drive early with so much, I mean the less traffic. And at home, it’s like a little bit difficult because now I have my dog, I have my brother and my dog is, he wants to play (laughter), and my brother, he wants to talk. And I feel sleepy (laughter), but I will do it’” (Liseth, May 2016).

Liseth had scrutinized the syllabus and assignment due dates in each of her summer classes because she was going to be out of the country for her sister’s wedding the week before midterm exams. She said she had scheduled her vacation over two weekends, so she would only miss one week of her on-campus writing class, and had spoken to the instructor about working remotely on her assignments. For her online classes, she planned to take only the chapters she needed from her loose-leaf ethics text and travel with a light-weight tablet to take quizzes and post to discussions. The courseware for her math class was all available online, so she anticipated no problems with that course. Liseth appeared organized, confident, and enthusiastic about her summer ahead.

Like many of her community college peers, Liseth said she planned to work toward an A.A., and then pursue her bachelor’s degree. She wants a good education and also wants to graduate from a reputable school. While CSC would be a simple transition to a four-year program and offers over thirty different bachelor’s degrees, Liseth said she plans to transfer to a university to earn her credentials:
I’m, my major is in business. I want to do international business four year, and they have at CSC, international, but I don’t know if it is the same level of education, you know it’s different when you go with a degree from anywhere in US or to Harvard (laughter), it’s not like degree from community, from the college like CSC (Liseth 1, June 2016).

Liseth did like CSC, and often used the term “very nice” to describe her ESL and college content instructors who had been most helpful and understanding. She had discovered the website Rate My Professor during the spring semester and registered for summer classes early in order to take professors with high reviews. She said, “this is my first time with online, is very important to have a good professor,” and appeared to consider this website a credible reference. Liseth communicated a sense of urgency to finish school. She said she had used all her financial aid in fall and spring, but she had paid her own tuition to take summer classes because she could not lose time waiting until the next academic year. “I can’t wait two more years before I even can start the international business,” she exclaimed. “I’m gonna be twenty-six!” (Liseth, May 2016).

Nora

Nora is originally from the Philippines and has lived in the U.S. for three years. At age thirty-eight, she is a mature learner with many interests and experiences. She earned a bachelor’s degree in forestry in her native country and roamed the mountains and coastal areas of the Philippines as a forest ranger for twelve years. She said she studied forestry because besides her love and “respect” for trees, her father advised her to earn a degree in the field and work in a family-owned land preservation company. Nora’s innate passion, however, lies in journey and discovery. She left the forest and took to the skies. Landing a job with an airline, she took
advantage of free travel and visited countries throughout Asia and the Middle East. Her next venture took her to Cambodia, where she worked for a mission for three years. Nora speaks Tagalog and English, along with smatterings of Khmer, Lao, Vietnamese and Thai. She said she met and married an American expatriate in the Philippines about six years ago. Her husband is affiliated with a community church, and Nora also spends most of the day each Sunday and some evenings during the week in worship, fellowship, and service there.

Nora works fulltime as a teacher’s aide at a preschool near her home. She enjoys her work and has enrolled in a two-year degree program in early childhood education to advance her responsibilities and income. The summer of this study marked Nora’s first semester as a “real” college student, and she had enrolled in two DE classes: Composition 1 and Studies in Applied Ethics. Although her placement test scores deemed her “college ready” in language and math skills, Nora had elected to take an advanced level, online EAP course her first semester, just prior to the time of this study. She said she had felt some trepidation about returning to school as a multilingual learner new to the U.S. educational system, and she expressed her satisfaction at having taken the online EAP course. The instructor worked in the campus tutoring center, and Nora established a habit of visiting her each week for writing assistance and conversation; Nora said she was also happy to meet fellow online EAP classmates there as well. She said she liked the design of the course; she liked to check and recheck the schedule, click on modules, and predict how much time she would need to work each week. She felt the assignments were clear and the workload appropriate. She explained, “it was not easy, but the teacher, she is so nice, and she helps everyone to understand” and that “it’s email allot, always the computer, but meeting at the campus was so helpful too” (Nora 1, June 2016). Nora’s expectations for her
online summer classes were thus at least somewhat informed by her experiences with and impressions of the EAP course.

During the summer term, Nora enrolled in online sections of Composition 1 and *Applied Ethics*. As mentioned above, she planned to work toward a two-year degree in Early Childhood Education, a program at where CSC students can opt for on-campus or online courses. Nora said she was “more nervous than the last semester” because she was starting college level course work, but she would continue to take all her classes online as long as she felt she was learning with guidance and continued to perform as well as she had in the EAP academic reading and writing class.

**Summary of Participant Profiles**

After reviewing responses on the Participant Recruitment survey and speaking with each student, I was pleased with this criterion-based sample of maximum variation. Their backgrounds, current living situations, and future aspirations differed, but all of the participants seemed focused on the short-term goal of doing well in their summer classes and the long-term objective of earning a degree (or multiple degrees) that would lead to a fruitful career. The three women indicated they planned to live and work in the United States, while Krum was as yet unsure where his path might lead. Each of the students was proficient in conversational English, able to respond to interview questions, and ask for clarification when needed. To answer my research questions and exemplify the ways in which they expressed their lived experiences, I selected stories from the organic, narrative data that emerged from each L2 participant. In the next section, I will use their articulated lived experiences to answer the research questions I posed. I reiterate them here to frame the discussion.
Research Questions

1. What are the L2 participants’ expectations and impressions of the Applied Ethics online course design and facilitation at early, mid, and end-of-term stages?

2. What self-regulatory practices do the participants utilize to negotiate and complete assignments in this online general education ethics course?

3. What are the L2 participants’ perceptions of their online learning experiences?
   a. In what ways do they describe interactions with their peers?
   b. In what ways do they describe their reading and writing assignments?

4. In what ways does each participant’s perceived learning align with his or her performance outcomes?

Research Question Responses

Research Question 1: What are the L2 participants’ expectations and impressions of the Studies in Applied Ethics online course design at early, mid, and end-of-term stages?

Research Question 1 centered on Teaching Presence, one of the three original components of Garrison, Anderson & Archer’s (2001) Community of Inquiry model. Teaching Presence involves the structuring and facilitation of an online course to maximize student learning (Anderson et al., 2001; Akyol & Garrison, 2012). I wanted to elicit participant perspectives at three junctures during the term to see whether and in what ways their expectations and impressions of the online ethics course design and facilitation might fluctuate over time.

Early Expectations and Impressions

The Course Syllabus and Faculty Policies
During the second week of the term, the participants shared their initial “feel” for the *Applied Ethics* online class. At this anticipatory start, they related having read the policies and procedures posted by their instructors, perused the course modules, worked through assigned tasks, familiarized themselves with the *Mycourses* platform, and explored the navigation of the ethics class. The online ethics standard course designers had sequenced the learning topics so that the *Begin Here* module was the only content item visible to students when they opened the course site. This module sits at the top of the course content list and contains the *Studies in Applied Ethics* standard course syllabus, an eight-paged PDF file. The prominence of the syllabus in the course suggests its importance, and indeed, students must pass a syllabus quiz in order for the remainder of the course topics to open. The syllabus contains instructor and department chair contact information, the grading scheme, links to student support services, and institutional policies such as the use of proctored testing and plagiarism detection software. All of the L2 participants reported having read this document, taken and passed the brief, five-question multiple-choice syllabus quiz on the first attempt.

Regarding the role of the syllabus, Liseth remarked, “I did not read completely in all my classes, but just I jump through them because most of them have like the same basis of attend, and like cheating, this is very similar” (Liseth, May 2016). But Krum said whether or not a required syllabus quiz is present, he studies this document first in all his classes as it represents “the directions from the instructor” (Krum, June 2016). He said he paid close attention to the grading categories and major assignments in the ethics class; he seemed to regard the syllabus as a teaching tool put in place for students to read and follow.

A written message under the syllabus file advises students to print the document for future reference, and all of the participants reported doing so. However, they indicated they did
not intend to print most files the instructor uploads because they can read them via a computer or mobile device. Inez, for example, noted, “I don’t bulk, but if it’s something I really need, I will print and I’ll lay down and read it. And like the assignment chart, I have that printed out and I have taped on my desk so it tells me what’s gonna be due and what I need to look forward to” (Inez 1, June 2016). This quote captured similarities in practices the other focal participants described as well. As the course materials are online 24/7, the students know they can view content items, instructions, grades, and feedback whenever they like as long as they have Internet access. However, physical reminders to work on assigned tasks and submit work by the deadlines may also be necessary. Krum used the calendar application on his phone to alert him a couple days before major assignments were due, for example. Nora said she printed the instructions and assignment checklists for each module, explaining, “I like to see it, check off when I finish it” (Nora 1, June 2016). While these types of student behaviors point to their own study skills and strategies, they interrelate with Teaching Presence since it is the instructor has sequenced and placed importance on various items in the course.

One policy Krum did not agree with on the Studies in Applied Ethics syllabus was the mandatory proctored midterm and final exams. He expressed discern, for he did not understand the reason the instructor required a proctored test. Krum brought up the fact that in another content-rich, online general education course, American National Government, the exam was in Mycourses and students could take it from home:

When I was reading my syllabus for government, it didn’t say anything about, like uh, a proctored exams, and I was like good. But it will be timed, yah it says the time will be limited, so we should be ready. Really, I don’t think anyone need a proctor for that. But
for ethics, I mean, it should be same for ethics; it’s two hours. Who is, has the time for checking or anything? It’s not a quiz (Krum1, June 2016).

Krum appeared to view the required proctored exam as a preventative measure against cheating; his online instructor assigned a proctor in lieu of striding up and down the aisles as she would in a traditional classroom herself. He respected her decision and saw the role of the professor as an authoritarian whom he should and would obey. But given the numerous questions to be answered within an imposed two-hour time limit, Krum thought it would be nearly impossible to cheat and asserted, “How can I look up the answers in my book or google even? I must just finish it” (Krum 1, June 2016). Perhaps he contested the rationale for the proctored testing because he had not encountered such exams in the previous online classes he had completed. Nevertheless, Krum said he made arrangements to sit for the midterm and final exams at a university library in a neighboring city in Bulgaria.

Online Faculty Connections and Course Content

The L2 students in this study pointed to faculty involvement, or Teaching Presence, as a major factor to ensuring a sound start to their online class. For instance, Krum’s professor had welcomed the class with a news bulletin and welcome video on the homepage that suggested students should open and browse all the modules during the first week of class in order to anticipate the work ahead. Krum stated, “It’s clear and looks a balance for me. I think that my professor, she is doing a good job, like, presenting the information and all of the things we are to do” (Krum, May 2016). Likewise, Liseth noted that in her online section, “the teacher is really good. He give us, he gave us the everything what to study. I already printed the guide. I marked down on my calendar all the assignments” (Liseth, May 2016). These multilingual
participants liked the structure of the course, the ability to look ahead at assignments, and the presence of the instructor, albeit at a distance. They appeared to think the online course standards, content modules, assignment instructions and grading criteria demonstrated a knowledgeable, organized professional was there to lead and guide them throughout the semester. And this seemed to create confidence in the online learning environment and contribute to their self-regulated pacing and performance.

While their instructors differed, the participant descriptions of their early experiences were similar in terms of weekly workload: reading one or more chapters from the textbook, taking a quiz over assigned material, posting and replying to discussion forums, and submitting brief writing tasks such as summaries and reading responses. As noted above, the professors had opened all of the course content to their classes, but none of the participants had as yet accessed the modules with the guidelines for the major assignments, the Critical Thinking Application Paper (CTAP), which is also the midterm exam, or the Code of Ethics (COE) paper, due later in the term.

The students described the various interactions with their online professors as ways to help them engage with the content and motivate them to learn. Their impressions of being connected to a faculty member began with the introductory discussion forum the first few days of the term. In the Studies in Applied Ethics standard online course, each instructor posts his or her faculty page in the top thread of the forum. The link takes students to the CSC website template that includes a photo of the instructor, a list of courses he or she teaches and a syllabus for each, office hours, and a brief personal and professional biographical sketch. Each of the L2 participants in this study said they had clicked on the faculty member’s webpage and scrolled through the information before posting a self-introduction on the discussion forum. From the
very first assignment, then, the students viewed their DE professors as human beings with wide ranges of interests and backgrounds. Nora remarked, “I saw he had visited the Philippines! I was like hey, that’s cool, he knows my country” (Nora 1, June 2016). Krum, likewise, seemed to find significance in the fact that his professor had traveled widely “and it says she took some students to Paris and even Greece, so I feel like she kind of, she should understand better you know, we are internationals” (Krum 1, June 2016).

In the COI literature, *Teaching Presence* does not focus on the textbook. This construct manifests itself through the content, practice, assessment, feedback and communication the instructor provides. In the present study, however, the ethics text took on significance. Both Liseth and Nora noticed that their instructors were among the faculty members who had collaborated on the customized textbook. Nora said seeing the professors name on the cover had prompted her to read all of the front matter in addition to the required chapter the first week of class. Lizeth seemed happy she had selected her professor; she viewed him as both a subject matter expert and an educator who knew best how she should approach learning in the online class. Thus, this link between the textbook author and course professor provided an additional facet to the teaching element of the online course experience for two of the participants.

Liseth also recounted telling a coworker who was skeptical about online learning how well her first attempt at studying online was going. As she explained it,

I know there’s homework, but you’re learning. You’re learning through there because you don’t have, you cannot talk to your, like, personally talk to your professor. You do what they say. Homework is your learning part. Reading, it’s your self-teaching. It’s a
self-help, self-understanding, yah self-studying. But I mean they will help you if you need” (Liseth 1, June 2016).

According to the L2 participants, online learning in this general education course seemed to consist of “self-teaching,” adhering to guidelines and policies, trusting in the professor, spending adequate amounts of time on assignments, and most importantly, submitting them on time. At the outset, the students expressed appreciation for clear instructions and standards by which they would earn grades. Even stern statements such as “no late work accepted” and “no excuses” reportedly helped them to focus and complete work by due dates. Such written policies contributed to Teaching Presence by allowing students to read and reread parameters within which they should work and gauge the time and effort they would need to spend on various tasks. They mentioned no problems with computer-mediated learning or communication; they gave a satisfactory impression of the distance education course and their instructors’ online presence. I wondered if these L2 students’ perspectives might change as the workload increased. “It will be interesting to see what their mood is like by midterm, what they think of their profs when they have more grades,” I wrote after completing the first round of interviews (Researcher Journal, June 11, 2016).

Mid-semester Expectations and Impressions

Online Faculty Guidance and Clarification

The participants revealed that Teaching Presence continued to play a prominent role in their learning experiences as they entered the second half of the term. The students described how good grades motivated them to move through course modules from one week to the next. In terms of feedback, they did not seem to expect more than a number of points or a percentage
correct on their assignments. As Liseth said, “Well if I got an A, a 100, I don’t need to know” (Liseth 2, June 2016). Indeed, they reported scoring 100% more often than not on discussion forum posts and chapter quizzes. For the online faculty, these tasks may represent weekly participation in the course, much the same as seat time for on-campus students. Online instructors may grade discussion forums on Monday morning with an “all or nothing” approach, for example, awarding full credit to students who have posted on time and within the general parameters of the expected posts. Chapter quizzes may be more of a learning tool than an assessment in the strict sense of the word since online students can use their books and other sources to answer the quiz items. It is thus likely that if a student puts in some effort, a perfect score will be his or her reward. The L2 participants in this study appeared to respond to this somewhat behaviorist learning mechanism. Being successful (earning good grades) early in the semester had motivated them and propelled them forward in a positive trajectory.

Assistance at time of need and prompt feedback on their assignments helped the L2 participants stay on track. Inez exemplified this in describing her progress in the ethics course. “I’m working from my book, but I’m aware I can ask the teacher like, any questions. He will email back. I mean he’s accessible” (Inez 2, June 2016). She described a helpful email conversation with her professor where Inez reached out for clarification on finding the main moral issue of a case study assigned in the critical thinking application module. She understood the steps to take in the process as outlined in the text and the instructor’s handout, but she found multiple issues in the moral dilemma scenario. She needed help pinpointing which constituted the root of the problem and recapped the case study this way:

A woman caught stealing some drugs. She was uh, like no money, and she couldn’t afford them, the pills. The store clerk called the police and she was under arrest, and
alright, I can put the moral issue only that… But then what about the problem of the woman who isn’t, who can’t afford her medicine? Do I need to like, just disregard that or we need to put that? I mean, it’s too many problems like health care, insurance, and like that (Inez 2, June 2016).

Inez was highly engaged in the content, but she had identified more than one ethical issue and was not sure what to do. When she emailed her question to the professor, she said he did not get an “exact answer” from him, but he had sent a quick reply. He assured her that whatever ethical problem she selected as the main moral issue, her defense of that choice and the way(s) she accounted for the perspectives from various stakeholders would be what counted. This brief email message sufficed. The information may not have been new, but it was personal and perhaps worded in a less formal way than the assignment instructions and sample responses. Inez continued writing her analysis and reported not only submitting the assignment on time and doing well on it, but also thinking about her professor’s advice on the next case study and during the midterm test. Still, this prompted me to wonder, “What if she had not written that email? For all our sound design, QM standards, practice and self-assessment, if students don’t communicate with us, don’t ask for help, how do we ever really know how they are faring?” (Researcher Journal, June 28, 2016).

The participants perceived a strong sense of Teaching Presence in the lead-up to their midterm. Their instructors had posted supplemental handouts and sample scenarios with responses to the Critical Thinking Application Paper questions, the same questions that would be on the test. Having worked through all of the assignments, Nora said she felt her instructor had prepared them well for the exam. She went on to read every case study in the back of the textbook because the professor had encouraged them to do so. In this way, they would
familiarize themselves with the types of readings and questions that would be on the exam, and their responses would become more automatic. However, Nora seemed to interpret this suggestion to mean the instructor might select one or more of the case studies from the book to use on the test. After the exam, she complained a bit, “but there was not one of those stories there. Not even one! It was all new, so so much reading” (Nora 2, July 2016). This may be a case of *Teaching Presence* gone awry, as Nora appeared to feel somewhat misled by her online instructor’s advice.

End of Term Expectations and Impressions

Online Faculty Communication via Videos

The professors who collaborated on the *Applied Ethics* textbook and standard online course created a *YouTube* channel and began uploading video lectures during the summer term. The videos were from ten to thirty minutes long and covered course content such as moral theories and the critical thinking process that students should apply in their case study assignments. Two of the participants in this inquiry recognized their professors in the videos and seemed to appreciate the extra effort these instructors had taken to ensure their distance students would comprehend the material. Nora commented that this helped her with pronunciation of terms she saw in the textbook; she also turned on the closed captions to reinforce her reading and spelling. In effect, this computer-mediated means of instruction brought another dimension of *Teaching Presence* to the course, and for Nora, it clarified and solidified content that she had not fully mastered when she read the textbook:

If I read it slow, or really read it two or three times, yah it makes sense to me, but it’s not a, a aspect that I know, so it’s hard to understand. Even the examples, like I can relate
some ideas but eh it’s hard. But actually I have to read. I want to, I want to know. I have to understand this, I have to go through this. And after, then I can go to the video and I like, I let myself see, and I feel like oh, oh, ok now I know” (Nora 2, June 2016).

Not every college student will struggle to read chapters with the same fervor Nora described. This may speak to her preferred learning style, her acquired academic literacy skills as a college graduate, her current and increasing proficiency in English, and/or her curiosity and love of learning. It seemed that Nora put forth great individual effort, but she also attributed at least some of her motivation and diligence to the “usually good job” of her online professor. She paid close attention to assignment guidelines, instructional videos, email messages, news bulletins, and feedback on her assignments; any form of communication from her professor she regarded as integral to her online learning experience.

Krum viewed the ethics department YouTube videos in a different light, categorizing them as “some extra work that’s not necessary” because it takes more time to watch, and “anyway, the professor, she is doing a good job like presenting the information and all of the things in Mycourses” (Krum 3, July 2016). For Krum, Teaching Presence transpired online through the ways in which the professor structured assignments, provided feedback, and responded to email. Perhaps because he had taken other general education classes in which this was the norm, he expected nothing more. Krum did watch the brief video messages that the professor sent via Mycourses email; he described them as more procedural and motivational than instructional. “Not every week, some of the week she will send the video with how are you, um, ah this is our topic this week, this is what I expect, and then, ah there’s what we gonna do” (Krum 2, June 2016). They were quick and timely, and the content reflected the instructor’s assessment of how students were performing as a class and what they would need to focus on to improve. His
online instructor tailored her feedback to the group of learners in his section, and Krum seemed to appreciate this personalized communication over a scripted lecture delivered by an instructor he did not know.

**Online Course Structure and Faculty Facilitation**

Liseth’s professor had also placed the *YouTube* links in a course resources module, but he also sent them the links via email with a message urging the students to watch the videos. Liseth said while she had “opened” more than half of them, she did not usually watch to the end. Liseth said the professor must have seen the number of views was low and suspected students were not reading their email with the directives to watch the videos. He added a news bulletin that Liseth summarized in this way:

What he said, that some people don’t open their email and that’s the communication. You should open your email because ah I you know I communicate with students who are in my class through the, through our course email, so you have to open it because there is a, there’s like uh instruction there. And I don’t know how many classes of ethics he has but he wrote like one-fourth only are watching the videos. And where’s the ¾ people? Because he can tell how many is watching the video there (Liseth 3, July 2016).

The structure of the applied ethics online course is a theme that emerged throughout the term; the consistency in workload and instructor policies appealed to the multilingual participants in this inquiry. The intentional course design and facilitation appeared overall to keep the students on track and disorder and misinterpretation at bay. When confusion did occur, studying online could become overwhelming. For instance, Inez was usually confident in her decisions and abilities, but she described some frustrating times when she could not locate online
materials or when she received multiple messages about the same topic that seemed to contradict each other. For example, she said her online professor supplemented guidelines to the CTAP assignment via three mediums: an email message, a discussion post, and a video note. She described this occurrence along with a suggestion for improvement as follows:

And I hope that, I just hope that just one thing. His instruction in the discussion board, is his instruction? There’s pages. I hope he will put ah one page of instruction, then it’s all there. Like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. He has, there’s email instruction, there’s a discussion instruction, it’s not ah, it’s not in same, like there’s a different statement here, his expectation. There’s a video. I know like he really wants us to know, this is what you need to do. But if it’s just one, one point like you know here’s all the directions right here, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 even 10, but then we can focus, ok here are the instructions” (Inez 3, July 2016).

In a well-intentioned attempt to clarify a task, the instructor may have unwittingly sent mixed messages by using different language and examples in each explanation. Several renditions of the guidelines in varied modalities may seem helpful, but second language learners like Inez may respond better to one, clear set of directions.

Summary of Responses to Research Question 1

Expectations and impressions of the instructor role and learning methods fluctuated some as the L2 students progressed through the summer online ethics course. *Teaching Presence* may be most important at times of the semester when major papers are due and high stakes exams occur. The L2 students did not seem to expect hand-holding, special accommodation for expressing themselves in a second language, or extensions on assignments.
They described their instructors as professionals who were organized, helpful, and fair. The only area of dissonance that emerged regarding the design and facilitation of the online ethics course was the proctored exams. According to the participants, these tests did not mirror the other types of assignments they completed in the course.

Research Question 2

1. What self-regulatory practices do the second language participants utilize to negotiate their assignments and complete this online general education course?

Question 2 focused on *Learning Presence*, the fourth and most recently added component of the Community of Inquiry framework. *Learning Presence* filled a gap in the original COI model by highlighting the importance of the student role in the online teaching and learning paradigm (Shea et al., 2012). This construct represents the self-regulatory practices that distance students must undertake. As such, *Learning Presence* accounts for the “iterative processes of forethought and planning, monitoring and adapting strategies for learning, and reflecting on results” (Shea et al., 2013, p. 427). The students responded to interview questions stemming from the extant literature on *Learning Presence* and the Online Self-regulated Learning Questionnaire (Barnard et al., 2009) that prompts students to reflect on and report on their self-regulation in DE courses (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010; Shea et al., 2012)

The multilingual participants in this inquiry demonstrated *Learning Presence* in the variety of self-regulatory strategies they reported using to meet the demands of the online *Applied Ethics* course. The varying personalities, responsibilities, and lifestyles may have influenced the L2 students’ preferred study environments and methods, but the narratives of all four L2 participants in this inquiry revealed time management and self-efficacy as the most crucial elements for a positive online learning experience. It seemed that overall as distance students, they had developed and honed course navigation and study skills that conveyed a very
practical, methodological approach to learning. Their motivation, learner autonomy, and self-regulatory strategies in the online course may have compensated for linguistic burdens in some instances, similar to second language research has shown in traditional (e.g. Kormos & Csizer, 2014; Riazantseva, 2012).

Time Management

Time management is paramount to studying content and demonstrating learning of college content in all classes, regardless of modality. In online classes, however, students shoulder greater amounts of unstructured time to chunk in their own ways, and the participants noted the different places, times, and ways in which they were managing their coursework. Inez was the only participant who had downloaded the PDF version of the book, explaining that she could read on her phone at work when it was slow or she was on break. This was “less obvious” than if she carried a full-sized notebook, she said. Nora also reported taking her iPad to work with her to check for any news updates or email messages, grades and/or feedback from her instructors. But Nora had permission at her job to study and work on assignments whenever she had a break:

I bring my laptop, I bring all my books everywhere. Because if there is, I can open it, I can read. Time is like even if just 30 minutes or one hour, sometimes during naptime at school, the children are sleeping, yah, I read. I try to read even I know I will read again (laughter). Yah, I’ll need to, to read it again but I can put to my brain some ideas when I am at work (laughter). (Nora 1, June 2016).

These online students appeared to be balancing work, school and life’s responsibilities. Krum was the only participant not working during the summer term, but he said he was putting many hours into setting up a recording studio with a friend and taking three online classes during
the summer. Having taken distance courses before, Krum seemed comfortable with the amount of required work:

It really depends on your discipline and I am prepared to sacrifice some of the time that you know, I can like go out with friends or whatever. It won’t always happen cause with online courses sometimes a lot of material comes in for one or two weeks and so like I have to work like five days a week on it for five or six hours a day. But then for another one or two weeks you get it easier, an easier schedule (Krum 2, June 2016)

Krum’s views suggested that the ebb and flow of a semester’s workload may be more pronounced in an online course since there is no set time for class. In other words, while in a face-to-face course there are “slower” weeks in which lectures may prevail and little is due, the students still attend class at specified times. Online, this time-specific obligation is nonexistent. Through their responses to the first interview questions, the L2 students conveyed their confidence and commitment to succeeding in such an autonomous, virtual learning environment.

Rather than viewing the ability to manage time as a particular competency to master, the participants described this multifaceted skill as a dynamic trait that seemed to evolve and fluctuate across situations. While their own self-initiative and organizational skills aided them in completing course assignments, the students implied through their narratives that managing time is often a co-regulated effort that involves the behavior of the online instructor, and at times, one’s peers. Again, one of Krum’s comments illustrates the views of the participants. The most experienced distance learner among them, he stated the following:

Actually, I think the most important thing in online courses, at least for me, where the professor always respond as soon as possible to students because sometimes when
you’re stuck on a subject you write to a professor, you don’t want him to write to you like a day before the deadline or whatever, so then your timeline, your study time, it’s off the track (Krum 2, June 2016).

This remark suggests that an unanswered question can impede a student’s ability to adhere to a self-planned study schedule. Hitting a stumbling block that is not clarified can stall a student’s efforts; it may lead to loss of time, confidence, and motivation. “Waiting too long for replies” is how Inez described the reason she did not email her online instructors whenever she had questions. She said she needed to get her work done when she had the time. Her ethics professor added a class discussion forum for students to ask and answer each other about course content and procedures because they might receive quicker responses when he is busy teaching classes on campus or tending to professional or personal matters. He emailed the class and encouraged the students to check this discussion forum before sending him a message since they were likely to find other students working on assignments and posting at similar times. Citing time constraints, however, Inez stated, “I have to try on my own; I believe my way is ok and I just do, like, what I think he wants. I can’t look to every discussion to find, to scroll there like, the material, the guideline I need” (Inez 2, June 2016).

Liseth said time management was crucial in her life; she conveyed an urgency to do all her work and to do it well. She could not allow herself to falter in one class or this would create a domino effect across others. She seemed able to manage working and going to school; indeed, she said she enjoyed both. She expressed some angst at times regarding the relentless homework taking three courses during a compressed summer term, but she was pragmatic and confident in getting it done:
I know I probably should be, should study more before, but like for the quizzes, I keep till the end, after I do all the other homework. But I have to do the ethics quiz that night. I can’t leave that for the next day, you know. I just open the book and do it. I have math, it’s too much due every Friday. So I really, I have to get the ethics forum or quiz done on Wednesday and I leave my composition homework to the weekends (Liseth 2, June 2016).

It seems overall, these L2 participants created and followed study schedules that would allow for sufficient amounts of time on task to learn the course material and submit assignments. They understood that self-reliance was necessary in an online course since they did not have direct access to an instructor; they appeared to think that moving forward was the best option even when they were not one hundred percent sure that they had understood the purpose or parameters of an assignment. They filled in the “free” time they would have spent sitting in class and driving to and from campus with online assignments. They described setting study hours each week to read textbook chapters and other course materials, post to required discussions, conduct research, and compose assignments. They all said they preferred laptops for “real study like writing essays or the summaries” (Inez 2, June 2016) but would often check for updated grades and email messages on their mobile devices. Krum mentioned taking down notes from readings, outlining ideas, and crafting discussion posts on his cell phone but transferring such pre-writing and content learning tasks to documents on his home computer to flesh out. He would meet some friends in town at an Internet café, read a chapter and jot down answers to study questions, and then work in the evening on formal writing assignments.
In her final interview, Nora said she had managed to submit every assignment on time for both online classes the entire semester. She explained her dedication and drive, her “stick-to-it-ness” and ability to stay on task in the following way:

If I if I didn’t make it, if I miss this one, then I behind. Then I’ll be behind with the other, because my other subjects, when I check sometimes there’s the module like the English, the composition, there’s topic that had 10 topics in there! I say oh my Lord! I notice there’s a lot. And I usually save it, I save it to the computer… I had to get it finished, like ethics, I finish on Thursday to leave the the composition on the weekend and with the writing tutor on Saturday, that helps a lot. Sundays we are always busy. Oh I am glad I am done! I am glad! (Nora 3, July 2016).

Indeed, Nora described a whirlwind summer session of online learning as her first semester in college level courses. Inez was taking the same two classes as Nora, freshman composition and ethics, also online but with different instructors. Inez described learning to manage the workload in more calm, practical manner:

It’s like I said, I have all this time to do em. Like, when I was signing up for this ethics class my brother said it would be kind of hard class, a lot of writing for summer. It’s true but I know at the end of the day, I have to do it. It’s gonna be turn in, and I have no professor to, you know, tell them I can’t, like there’s really no excuse not to do it. They give you the whole week of, you know, for a couple of assignments (Inez 2, June 2016).

Inez seems to be demonstrating an awareness and ownership of her learning as a second-semester college student after a challenging first term. She found the online environment more conducive to her needs than going to campus. She conveyed confidence in her academic abilities
and a determination to do well. Indeed, by mid-semester she said she preferred online courses because they allowed her to be “in control of my own time” (Inez 2, June 2016), and reflecting on her progress at the end, Inez shared the following:

Sometimes I need a little push or a snap of reality that will make me focus more. This semester since I didn't pass everything the last, I took it as a chance to like recover myself and learn from it. If it weren't for my baby and the person I love, I would've of maybe gave up. But I don’t know. My family behind me too. I used to procrastinate, well I still do, but less than I used to. I get busy, but I will do it (Inez 3, July 2016).

Inez has begun to develop strategies to meet responsibilities at home, work, and school. Like the other L2 participants, she seems to enjoy managing her own time and developing online learning strategies that work for her. If her study plans fall through and she cannot finish an assignment, she accepts the consequences and moves on. This behavior describes another important aspect of Learning Presence, or self-regulated learning: self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

Although the L2 participants did not use the term, the similar ways in which they described their self-regulatory thoughts and behaviors converged on the notion of self-efficacy. Such determination can spawn from an educational experience that is less than positive; this is when learners recognize, accept and assess failure. They then begin to redirect efforts to overcome deficits in content mastery and/or poor choices in learning strategies. A good example is Liseth’s post-midterm reflection and resolve evident in an email she sent me. She reported that she had failed the midterm, but she had shed the despondency she felt during and just after the test. Reading her message, I felt she had returned to her earlier self-confident, strategic self:
I have a 55 in+ my midterm, yah, but I checked the class average and not too many passed. There is assignments that is for extra credit, and I think that can cover for three quizzes I missed. So I can compensate those points. I don’t know about forums I missed, but there is just one zero there. We only have four more weeks to finish. I think I can pass with a B. I got a 78 on the math too. It’s ok, I’m happy (Liseth, email communication, June 22, 2016).

The resilience portrayed in Liseth’s email message constitutes an important facet of self-regulated learning that sits at the core of self-monitoring, self-reflection, and self-efficacy. This socio-cognitive and emotional activity extends beyond time management, content knowledge or study skills. There is a pragmatic component at play as well. Liseth considered several “what if” scenarios, calculating and recalculating her chances of earning certain grades according to her various action plans. She did not seem to feel defeated for long; she created a path for the second half of the semester and remained in control.

Self-efficacy also played an essential role in the learning experiences of Inez. She related in her final interview that she had missed some Sunday night due date on quizzes and discussions, and she did not finish writing the Code of Ethics paper. Inez was still certain she would continue taking online classes due to their affording her “all the time I need, all the time I need for homeworks and assignments” (Inez 3, July 2016). Paradoxically, there were times when she said she still “just couldn’t get it done.” Whether it was working extra hours, coping with mothering responsibilities, or assisting her parents, life’s events would encroach on the time she had set aside to study. Inez persisted. Like Liseth, she calculated her options and knew exactly what she needed to do to pass each class.
Help-seeking is another behavior trait that figures in the realm of self-efficacy. Among the second language participants, Nora was the one student whose narrative revealed a variety of help-seeking behaviors associated with self-regulated learning. She contacted her instructor and some of her peers, and she availed herself of tutoring services on campus. Nora failed the midterm exam, but unlike Liseth, who accepted the grade in silence and began calculating how to recover, Nora sent an email to her professor. She wrote that she had studied hard and felt ready for the test; she understood the readings and the questions but was unable to finish in the allotted time. She told him that English was her third language, and perhaps a deficit in her fluency was the cause of slow, methodical reading. Nora said she was encouraged when her professor responded that same day and told her she could “finish strong.” And of course, Nora did. Of the four participants, Nora was also the only one who sought tutoring on campus. She had begun this practice when taking an advanced online EAP course. She noted, “the tutors there, they help with the composition, but not the ethics work. I think we have to figure that out for ourselves” (Nora 2, June 2016). From their narrative experiences, it appeared that “figuring it out for themselves” was the modus operandi for all the multilingual participants in the online ethics course. They relied on their own reading comprehension and understanding of assignment guidelines, and planned when and how to approach tasks largely on their own.

Summary of Responses to Research Question Two

The community college second language participants in this study related a variety of ways that self-regulated learning strategies aided them in the online ethics course. Their narrative experiences revealed the importance of Learning Presence and two of the constructs within this COI component: time management and self-efficacy. According to the L2 students, their online self-regulation was mediated by the Teaching Presence provided in the online class.
The participants responded to the directions of their online instructors and met the demands of the course.

**Research question 3:**

What are the L2 participants’ perceptions of their online learning experiences?

a. In what ways do they describe interactions with their peers?

b. In what ways do they describe their reading and writing assignments?

3a. *Social Presence*

Community of Inquiry theorists accentuate the role of *Social Presence* in their online education model because this component represents the crux of the socio-constructivist principles that underpin the framework. It constitutes the way in which the designers envisioned an Internet-based community of learners that could best replicate what naturally occurs in and extends beyond dynamic on-ground classrooms. The perceptions the participants shared in this study left little impression that *Social Presence* mattered in their online ethics class, however. These L2 students stated they had enrolled in online courses due to the access to education this modality offers; traditional day and evening courses do not suit their lifestyles and they felt confident they could study on their own. None of them reported selecting courses with friends, knowing others in their classes, or feeling inclined to reach out to their classmates. From their perspectives, socializing with classmates and even forming study groups to reinforce their learning would yield little return on investment.

Liseth made this point in her second interview, and it seemed to encapsulate what the other L2 participants conveyed as well:
Well if somebody talks to me, I talk to them but I’m not like too friendly like I have to go with somebody to class. I will answer their email if someone sends me online. It’s just, I don’t know, I look my interests. It wastes the time, I mean I don’t have time for friends. I just want to study, do my things. That’s why I like online classes. You know, it’s like you’re an adult. You have to know what you have to do. If you’re spending money to come to college, you do it, you do it for yourself (Liseth 2, June 2016).

“You do it for yourself” might also read “you do it by yourself,” from the descriptions the participants provided of their virtual learning experiences.

Discussion Forums

In a virtual learning environment, specific and timely communication plays a crucial role in the learning cycle. Discussion forums are not “discussions” without peer responses. Krum described his involvement in discussions as varied, depending on the topic of the forums and the time he has to engage in them in any given week. His summative comments reflected his experiences in all his distance education classes, not only ethics:

It’s depending on the discussion cause like some week you know it will be an interesting thing for you, so you really get into it and try to study some information and do like some research, and you do your best. And sometimes if it’s a thing that I can’t really, I don’t get into it, just like, uh, write the first thing that like comes to my mind, and I think it’s good. It will work with the, how many words. (Krum 3, July 2016).

In the online Studies in Applied Ethics course, the first assignment after taking the syllabus quiz is to post a self-introduction with a minimum of 150 words to an asynchronous discussion forum. This presumes that students do not want to work in isolation and sets the tone
for learners present in the course to form a collaborative community. The students post throughout the first week as each logs on and begins the course. The forum also requires a reply post of at least fifty words to at least one peer. All of the L2 students said they read some of their classmates’ posts before writing their own introductions to get some ideas about what to write and how to construct the brief paragraph, but none read through the entire forum. Inez remarked, “When will I ever meet all these people? (Inez 1, June 2016). Clearly “meeting” them via an online discussion forum did not seem important or measure up to talking with someone in person.

Inez also said that she noted from the syllabus and gradebook that discussion forums carried as much weight as quizzes in both her online ethics and her Composition 1 classes. Thus, she learned that posting thoughtful discussions and responding to classmates would represent a good portion of her grade. She believed peer response was “mostly busy work” and “not convenient” or supportive of her own learning. However, she had decided to do as instructed. “I mean I can write my post and get just “C” or I can respond to two others and get an “A” so why not do it? I should like comply with the teachers’ directions,” she explained (Inez 1, June 2016).

In a similar manner, Krum spoke about his experiences with required discussion forums not only for ethics this semester but in his previous online classes as a routine task:

Well it’s kinda like the rule, always participate, and on the discussion boards you have to eh participate in the opinions of two other, other students. It’s the way to meet the like, the professors’ criteria. You have to comment on two, two classmates’ opinions or whatever they wrote. I do it, like I respect your opinion or whatever (Krum 1, June 2016).
The notion of compliance may connote a negative or subservient tone, but these participants seemed to value clear expectations and devised ways to adhere to them. “Complying” with stated criteria may be a way of demonstrating respect for the professor, the expert who has set those standards. Compliance leads to good grades, and grades mattered to the participants in this study. Also, learning to meet their instructors’ demands may demonstrate growth in understanding of the higher educational system and how to work within it. What appeared less evident from their narratives was an understanding of the role Social Presence and peer collaboration might play in advancing their individual and collective learning.

Nora noted, “I found one lady, she reply to me two times there, first couple weeks, so I looked for her next, and I’m always replying her now” (Nora 3, July 2016). Nora said posting a peer response to the same person in different forums saved time rather than scrolling through paragraphs posted by over thirty classmates to a threaded discussion area. Scanning for a particular name served as an efficient tactic for her to meet the assignment guidelines without having to read much when she was pressed for time “to get my own work, the other work done” (Nora 3, July 2016). While Nora had thus taken a practical approach to peer discussions, she said she did feel “a connection” to the student whose name she searched for each week.

Learning “Solo”

Related to the convenience of online learning is a further dimension: its efficiency. For instance, Liseth commented that in classes on campus, instructors make small talk and stray off topic or students ask (what seem to her) irrelevant questions. In her view, “In class you lost too much time. Because sometimes the teachers are talking about whatever they like, their life, and the students, they interrupt all the time the classes” (Liseth, June 2016). Liseth had indicated in
her first interview that she studies best when alone in a quiet environment, and her perceptions about “socializing” in class may reflect this learning preference. But students with different personalities and preferences echoed this perspective as well.

Inez, who “cannot study in silent places” (Inez 1, June 2016), nevertheless concurred with Liseth’s view that college equates to learning the material and completing assignments to demonstrate that learning. The purpose of taking classes is not to chat with professors or make friends; it is to move ahead in life - and this requires sacrifice. Her preference for online classes and focus on content learning over Social Presence may reflect her various responsibilities rather than a particular learning style, as she commented, “I’m just tired, and I eat and I’m with my baby. I don’t want to drag myself to class when I get home, for sure not at night, and I like, just get the work done better myself” (Inez 2, June 2016). It appeared that course modality was not the issue; Inez did not value chatting with peers online or on campus. Her perspective on learning seems to embody an “I can, and I will” attitude rather than a collaborative effort that requires more time and may or may not lead to better results.

Help Seeking from Peers

Nora said that in her online section of Applied Ethics, the professor instructed them to try posting questions to the “help forum” for peer-assistance before emailing their questions to him. She did not feel comfortable posing a question to the whole class in an open forum, but she noticed one student’s name appear often and decided to send a personal email message to him. As she explained, however, “he didn’t email me right away because he, he didn’t, he’s not reading his email” (Nora, June 2016). She needed to finish her first summary and response assignment that evening, so she completed it by trusting her own understanding of the instructions. Nora continued, “he reply after I’m done already so I said ok, ok, I’m well I’m
good now, I submitted the assignment. But I didn’t, I didn’t er feel it was very, it was correct” (Nora 2, July 2016). Nora is a mature student and serious about her study plans; she does not leave assignments until the last minute and in fact, often works ahead. In her case, taking the time to reach out for help did not yield the desired response. It had actually set her behind schedule.

Nora did not seem to care to meet or work with any students in her online classes, but she mentioned a friend who had taken the ethics course online with the same professor the prior semester. She had sent him a text with some questions about the Code of Ethics paper. She described how they later chatted on Facebook Messenger for about fifteen minutes one evening until she felt confident she was on the right track. Most online educators would encourage this type of computer-mediated, co-constructed peer learning, but the interaction Nora describes does not reflect the dynamic virtual community of learners that supports and strengthens Social Presence as outlined in the COI model. In reality, the student has turned outside of her learning community, a group of thirty-five students working to achieve course goals across times and places that may never intersect.

3b. Cognitive Presence: Reading and Writing Assignments

Impressions of Reading Assignments

Reading for Applied Ethics varied somewhat across course sections, but the main reading assignment each week was one or more chapters from the textbook supplemented by peer discussion posts, assignment guidelines, instructor emails and news bulletins. The L2 students reported no difficulty accessing or understanding instructor emails or peer discussion posts. Liseth found the CSC faculty authored Applied Ethics text “pretty easy, like a workbook”
because it came in a loose-leaf version for students to drop into a three-ring binder and fill in exercises on lined pages. The participants expressed general confidence in their comprehension of concepts such as moral theories, ethical issues and critical thinking. According to Inez, for example, the content of the course and the reading assignments were engaging and understandable:

You get it. You get like the idea, cause it’ll tell you the material and then it’ll give you like an example in there, so you’re reading it, and it’s really about life situations… Cause they were talking about Terry Schiavo case in there and we read about that high school actually. You know, like the ethical dilemma, the stakeholders and stuff. If the test is gonna be like that, I think I can do well. (Inez 2, June 2016).

Krum also described the ethics text as comprehensible with plenty of engaging, real-life applications. He noted that the online class activities designed to reinforce and extend the assigned readings increased his potential to learn and remember the material:

I enjoy it and uh, when you read, you taking the new information, and when you study it, you can work with it, and you have different discussions and quizzes and tests, so it’s not just like learning something and doing a quiz and that’s all. I think that you, if you don’t really get to use information you’ve learned, if it’s not mean anything to you, so then like you can’t stay in your mind (Krum 2, June 2016).

Describing the multiple-choice quizzes over the assigned chapters, however, Krum remarked, “they’re tricky ones, like they are very close, the same answer almost. And we only get one attempt” (Krum 1, May 2016). These weekly assessments required no writing; there were no fill-in-the-blank, summary, or short answer essay questions. Nora was relieved the quizzes were
not timed because “my reading is slow, it’s so slow,” but she reported earning 100% on all the quizzes. The other participants scored this high on most as well.

Liseth discussed her academic reading skills in a broader sense, comparing ways she was reading to learn in across disciplines. For instance, she sensed a difference in her abilities and approaches to reading for information versus reading for literary analysis. She compared her ethics reading assignments to those for her Composition 2 course in this way:

The other is tough than the ethics, and the ethics I like because it is like you think something is right but you don’t know that it is really right. It is like you have to make a decision through some points and I don’t know, it’s just, and the cases that he have at the end of the book. It makes me check, change my mind when I’m reading it. They are from the life. I like it. Umm, comp 2 is poems, a lot of vocabulary; actually I read some things about it in Spanish (laughter). Ethics use more about soul, integrity, and all of this. Well everything is different. The poems are hard. But I like reading, I like study. I prefer study than work (laughter) (Liseth 2, June 2016).

Liseth’s comments highlight the role the reader brings to the page as well as the academic literacy instruction and practice needed in reading a variety of genres and for different purposes.

Nora’s description of the Applied Ethics textbook differed from the positive comments of the other focal participants. She found the reading challenging:

It’s really hard for me, but I, it’s hard to make sense. I mean like if I read it slow you know or like really read it two or three times, yah like it makes sense to me, but it’s not a, a aspect that I know, so it’s hard to understand. But actually I have to read also, if I’m,
I’m gonna learn… I can’t just say well I don’t understand this. I have to go through this.
(Nora 3, July 2016).

Nora continued to describe ways she reinforced her reading by completing the weekly tasks in a similar way that Krum had described his approach to content learning. She described a strategy she developed to earn high marks on the chapter quizzes. She would not attempt the quiz until the end of the week, the Sunday night that it was due. By then, she had read the assigned chapters and any supplementary materials, posted and replied to discussions, and completed all other research and/or writing tasks included in the module. Returning to the book after several days of working with the material, she said she noticed her comprehension increased as she scanned to find answers to the quizzes. Research in the fields of Second Language Acquisition and L2 reading has shown that this “high touch” practice with vocabulary and concepts can aid reading comprehension and recall (e.g., Folse, 2006; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Indeed, Nora reported that the assigned activities in the online modules strengthened her ability to make meaning of the content better than she could through repeated reading on her own. The scaffolding provided via the online instructor worked. Nora also surmised that she scored well on the chapter quizzes because there were no imposed time limits and the questions prompted her to go back and reread for specific information. She said she had learned and practiced skimming and scanning in her Advanced EAP class, and she used these academic reading skills on the open-book quizzes. Academic reading in a second language appeared to place a cognitive and emotional burden on Nora only in timed, high-stakes situations like the midterm test.

Impressions of Writing Assignments
The Critical Thinking Application Paper

The CTAP is not an essay. The “paper” is a series of paragraph responses to six questions that constitute the steps to solving an ethical dilemma. The instructors select case studies from the textbook, and students read, think critically about the moral issues presented, and propose solutions. The assignment prepares students for the midterm exam, and the participants reported spending two weeks on this critical thinking application model. Besides the open-ended questions, the assignment template contains a chart for students to fill in with the stakeholders they identify in the case study and possible solutions to the dilemma presented in the scenario. They must propose and evaluate various courses of action using theories such as Act Utilitarianism and Kant’s Deontology. They then select the solution they feel is the best, and substantiate that claim by explaining potential consequences and benefits to key players. This assignment underscores the “applied” nature of the assignment and the ethics course; it is not the memorization of moral theories but appropriate use of them to inform action that matters.

All four participants reported feeling directed and able to complete the CTAP. They followed the critical thinking model examples in the textbook and in the course modules to complete the assignment. According to Inez, “If you go by that rubric there, the checklist, it helps you to fill in all the information. It’s a different subject, the story, but the model, like it gives you some words you can use in any of those case study problems” (Inez, June 2016). Krum said his instructor posted a screencast video in the news bulletin area in which she scrolled through the assignment instructions and model responses. “She was teaching and telling us this is very important assignment; we don’t see her but she’s talking through the stakeholders, the research, the theory, the result, and like that” (Krum 2, June 2016). As mentioned in response to Research Question #1, the participants also accessed ethics faculty YouTube videos to review
moral theories and the critical thinking application model; these supplements to the textbook appeared to scaffold the assignment and clarify the expectations for the paper.

The CTAP assignment seemed accessible to the L2 students when given time and resources to answer the questions. Liseth mentioned that when she works on reading and writing assignments, [she has] “google open always, like for vocabulary or just to get some ideas” (Liseth 2, June 2016). Whether the CTAP or any other writing task, these participants seemed accustomed to working in the electronic environment, accessing online resources as needed, and following the assignment guidelines at their own pace. If they submitted their work on time, they could expect a good grade. They reported receiving little written feedback on the components of the CTAP. According to the grading rubric, the question items added to 100 points. There was no mention of writing conventions such as source citations, organization, grammar, or mechanics, and the implication here might be that focus on content overshadows the ways in which students (L1 or L2) might articulate their thoughts. The faculty seemed to pay little attention to surface errors or “accented” second language writing, for example, as long as the students answered each question following the templates, similar to the sample responses. The only participant who mentioned his professor pointed out grammar mistakes was Krum, who said, “She told me I need to fix the articles, which I already know that” (Krum 3, July 2016). Liseth seemed happy that feedback from the instructor was minimal. As she explained it, “the ethics professor does not treat us like the comp, I mean my composition 1 teacher was not very, not very nice. I always got in 70’s on my papers, so much she marked wrong” (Liseth 3, July 2016).

The Code of Ethics Paper
The students reported that the COE assignment was similar to the CTAP in that it was a series of prompts rather than a research paper or essay per se. The students had to select an occupation and research the professional code of ethics associated with that job, summarize the code, and point out any areas that might be weak or difficult to enforce. Then they had to find an article in the CSC online library database that reported on an ethical violation in that profession. This required an APA in-text and end-of-text citation. Three of the participants – all but Inez - reported earning perfect scores on the COE paper. They described this writing assignment in ways that seemed to validate their own interests, thought processes, and expression of ideas. For instance, Nora explained why she believed she did well on her early childhood education code of ethics paper:

Well, we can choose the subject, yah, like I wrote about a case that I could pick it from the news database. I read about a few, and like I understand the situation of the, of one kindergarten teacher, so I chose that article. He violated, he made a big mistake… And the questions were about, like our opinion on the code, how he violated the code and if he was, he got caught, what could he do? I agreed with the principal there; he had to fire him. I got a 100% on that homework, I was like oh wow so good!” (Nora 3, July 2016).

Liseth reported she took “too much time” searching different types of business codes of ethics because there are many online and they varied from large corporations to small businesses. While she plans to major in international business, Liseth said she thought it would be too complicated to write about trade between countries, and “what is legal or like a crime or what is only ethical problem or moral, like it’s both” (Liseth 3, July 2016). She also mentioned she had not had classes in that field yet. In the end, she found the code of ethics for call center workers, her current job. She had checked the discussion forum that her instructor set up for students to
ask each other questions, and she found some examples from her classmates that also included current jobs rather than those they aspire to once attaining a degree.

Krum’s related experience with the COE paper underscores the academic freedom of the online instructor to design ways for students to meet course goals. Instead of a Word document, his professor encouraged the students to use a slideshow such as PowerPoint or Prezi. They answered the same six questions as the students in Liseth’s and Nora’s classes, but the medium was different. Krum appeared very happy to report, “She loved my PowerPoint!” He researched the code of ethics for photojournalism and included an article on journalists faced with how and how much to capture and share about the crisis in Syria. He emailed the PowerPoint presentation to me as well.

The Code of Ethics (COE) paper posed challenges for Inez. It was the only “big assignment” she said she was unable to complete during the summer session. The main obstacle stemmed from the topic of the paper. The guidelines instructed the students to search for the code of ethics associated with a particular occupation, one that would be a logical and desirable option in their field of study. Inez had not yet selected a degree program, however, and a future profession remained an abstract concept to her. She felt at a loss and procrastinated. She read through the peer discussion forum where others had posted their ideas and explained that she “saw a lot of business and nurse, one teacher, I mean nothing really I want to do. I don’t know” (Inez 3, July 2016).

After letting the task stew for a few days, Inez settled on advertising. It was not completely arbitrary since she helped with promotional materials at the car dealership where she worked. She Googled the advertising profession, found a code of ethics, took some notes, and began to answer the assigned questions. However, the way she recounted her experience made it
apparent why she abandoned the paper: “Sunday after lunch I wasn’t half-way finished and I still had the article to find, the scholarly, the database, and like, I knew I couldn’t finish” (Inez, July 2016). Besides the COE paper, Inez had an essay due in Composition 1 the same night, and she put her effort into that assignment instead. Inez was stressed but also strategic. She explained that she examined the gradebooks in both classes and determined she could still pass her ethics course even with a zero on the COE assignment, but the essay for composition class constituted a significant grade in the course. Inez described taking this action was “kind of stressing me out,” but she was more worried about composition than ethics since she had failed the writing class the previous semester.

Reading and Writing in an Exam Situation

The Applied Ethics midterm provides a good example of a high-stakes, proctored exam. The timed test requires sound and efficient academic reading, thinking, and writing skills. While the L2 students had all reported they understood the CTAP model and scored well on the CTAP assignment, applying these critical thinking steps in an exam situation proved difficult. The challenge seemed to stem from the length of the test more than the content. There were five separate case studies to read and comprehend, and the students had to respond to the series of critical thinking questions that followed each, just as they practiced in the CTAP assignment. The two-hour time limit was inadequate for them to complete the readings and respond thoughtfully: not one of the L2 participants was able to finish the exam. The timer that displays in Mycourses when a student clicks open a quiz serves as a visible reminder that each minute counts, and as the clock ticks, anxiety builds. In describing her midterm experience, Nora said, “It’s really long, like this process is really long for me to write. And then I see the time, I say oh my gosh I have only 39 minutes more? I am, I am crumbling.” (Nora 2, June 2016).
As mentioned earlier, Krum’s “problem” with the midterm began with having to travel to the supervised test site at a university library near his town. However, he described feeling ready for the test. He had earned A’s on all his weekly discussions and quizzes to that point, which to him indicated mastery of the content and “ability to understand it to, you know, to discuss about it” (Krum, June 2016). And he knew the questions would be the same as the CTAP. In an email message recapping his midterm experience, Krum wrote, “it was a lot to read and writing every question that took all of the whole two hours and I didn’t do all questions” but he thought he had done “probably good on it” (Krum 2, June 2016). He described the case study scenarios on the exam as “understandable” and “interesting,” but “too many for one exam” (Krum, 2016). In the end, Krum scored the highest of all the participants: 88%.

Inez related watching “a couple” videos and looking through the study guide “once or twice” to prepare for the midterm exam. Like Krum, she said she felt “pretty ready” before the test because she had kept up with her assignments and passed all the weekly quizzes but one (which she had missed submitting). However, she continued that if her schedule were not so packed, she would like to have devoted more time studying, “reading it more, reading and getting to know the material more, and definitely follow with all the videos” (Inez, June 2016). She expressed some uncertainty about working through the exam without access to her textbook, notes, or the Internet, but about a week after she had taken the exam, she emailed me to let me know she had made a 72% even though she had not finished all the questions.

Liseth was unable to prepare for the midterm due to an unfortunate experience when she traveled abroad. Someone stole her backpack at a Paris metro station, and in it were her iPad and the course materials she had taken out of her loose-leaf textbook. When I inquired whether she had informed her instructor of the situation, she said, “No! I didn’t tell him I am out of the
country. I didn’t want to seem like, like I don’t care about my class” (Liseth 2, June 2016). She reread the chapters she still had, went over the materials in the CTAP midterm practice module, and watched some of the video lectures posted there. I asked whether she had considered going to the campus library or the ethics department to see if she might be able to copy the chapters she had lost or at least read them and take some notes. She had not thought to do so, but commented, “It’s about the time really; I don’t have time for that” (Liseth 3, July 2016). Liseth had to study for her college algebra midterm as well. She had scheduled her proctored math exam on Saturday and her ethics test for the next day “to study on it one more night” (Liseth 2, June 2016).

I met Liseth in person on Sunday afternoon, just after she had finished her ethics exam. She had to wait for her instructor to grade it, but sensed she had not passed. Her eyes were red and her shoulders slumped. She described her preparation for and experience taking the test:

I knew the fallacies and I was ready for that, but then it was different. It was so long. I, yah the stories were a little bit hard. I don’t understand what was the issue, was a little more complicated than the book. But it’s the midterm; it wasn’t optional… I wouldn’t be worried if I have turn in all what I had to do, but I need a good grade (Liseth 2, June 2016).

Liseth seemed disappointed, but she also accepted the responsibility for her failure. She appeared to have developed a good rapport with her online professor by following directions, doing all her work, and earning good grades prior to the midterm. She liked meeting her instructor’s expectations and did not want to draw attention to her missteps. After the midterm she seemed worried, saying, “I hope I don’t have to take this class again” (Liseth 2, June 2016).
It seems that Nora was not the only student ‘crumbling’ under the time pressure of the exam, and like the other participants, wondered how anyone could finish all the questions in two hours.

When Nora saw her grade on the midterm, she asked, “Why he doesn’t let us see our answers? I would like that, to know that, what I did” (Nora 2, June 2016). This seemed a legitimate concern in that most professors teaching traditional courses return exams to students with individual comments and/or offer collective feedback to the class. She contrasted the ethics midterm experience with what she considered a “better test” in her Composition I online course. This assessment was not proctored or timed; the class had an entire week to choose one of three topics and compose a 600 to 700 word essay in response to a writing prompt. The students could work on the paper from home, at the library, a coffee shop, or wherever they felt most comfortable and productive. As Nora stated, the writing midterm “was more like the class work, the work we use to,” implying that the proctored ethics test environment was incongruent with the way learning and assessment had been taking place in the online course. I reacted with a note in my researcher journal, “Why not put some timed quizzes in the course so the students get the experience of working under pressure before the exam?” (RRJ, June 26, 2016).

Summary of Responses to Research Question Three

While their narratives were not identical, the participant viewpoints appeared to converge in the areas of course demands and peer interaction. Viewed from the Community of Inquiry framework, these L2 students appeared to experience and value Teaching Presence and Cognitive Presence over Social Presence in the online ethics class. As mentioned in response to Research Question 1, the students adhered to teacher-to-class directives in the syllabus, task instructions, grading rubrics, and news bulletins. They regarded their writing assignments as a
fair method of demonstrating their learning and viewed feedback, grades, and email messages as helpful to their ongoing content knowledge construction. Peer interactions, on the other hand, seemed to take place mainly via required discussion forums and occasional emails to and from individual classmates. These interactions appeared to be procedural rather than collaborative or indicative of a co-constructed virtual learning environment. The online L2 participants related relying on their own cognitive and linguistic abilities to complete assignments as the norm.

Research Question 4:
In what ways does each participant’s perceived learning align with his or her course performance?

Student reports of their grades on discussion posts, quizzes, web reports, and the higher stakes midterm and final assessments constituted the measurement of course performance in this inquiry. I asked the participants to what extent they considered their grades an indication of the effort they had put into studying and the content they had learned. In general, the participants accepted their instructors’ assessments of their work as fair. However, a few comments from the students’ narratives portrayed elements of confusion and dissonance. Some participants wondered how the types of graded tasks in the course would accurately display their level of effort and learning of content.

The weekly discussion posts, quizzes and one- or two-paged writing assignments seemed to pose little problem for the students. Liseth had scored 100% on all of them. Nora named these her “good chance grades,” achieving consistent high marks on these tasks as well. Krum said he retained information when working through assignments and felt the professors had created a good learning path through the material. Inez viewed these smaller course assignments in a more negative light, however, citing the rigid “no make ups” policy of her instructor. Inez
said there were times she had actually read and understood the chapter, but she missed a quiz or discussion deadline, and there was no opportunity for her to demonstrate her work. This occurred more than once during the term, such as when Inez was in the emergency room with her daughter or was called in to work overtime on a Sunday. “I would be able to show I understood in a classroom, or I would talk to the teacher on Monday or whatever,” (Inez, 2017) but this type of communication, and thus, opportunity to demonstrate content knowledge, seemed unavailable or inappropriate to her online.

According to the *Studies in Applied Ethics* course syllabus, the midterm and final exams assess the student’s cumulative learning of content and allow them to apply theories to real-world situations. Not all participants deemed these exams a realistic measure of their learning, however. For instance, while routinely earning 90% to 100% on assignments throughout the first part of the semester, both Liseth and Nora failed the midterm exam with grades of 45% and 58% respectively.

Liseth seemed appreciative of the content of the course, saying she “enjoyed that class” more than she expected.

I think I learned a lot because we think we think some things maybe are right, we put it is right, but it is not. Like you have to take some kind of a steps to show what is the real, um thing that you have to do… So we learn a few theories and it teaches to like think about not just yourself, like you have to think about everybody” (Liseth 3, July 2016).

However, her feelings mirrored those of Inez when it came to ways in which the course and her professor measured her content learning. Regarding the final, she remarked, “It’s a lot, so much, like I don’t know how I could be ready for that exam. Well I think somebody did
better that I do but (laughter) for me was very difficult” (Liseth 3, July 2016). Liseth continued, “I had B average, but I got a C in the class for that test. Well it’s ethics. I’m done. I’m happy” (Liseth 3, July 2016). Liseth mentioned that if she had not missed any assignments throughout the term, she could have exempted the final exam, but due to unfortunate events, she had not been able to submit all of them. Nora described this same policy in her class as a motivating factor to get her work done early every week, saying “I knew I had to escape that test, and I did! Thank God I am done” (Nora 3, July 2016). Nora was proud of her course performance, the result of her commitment and persistence; she seemed to have no desire to demonstrate on a cumulative exam what she had learned throughout the semester, and in fact, taking the test may have worked against her. Nora is the only participant in this inquiry who exempted the final and earned an overall grade of “A” in the online ethics class.

Krum’s strategy toward studying for the final had been very practical. He described how he scrutinized the ethics instructor’s gradebook explanation, had tallied up the points on all his assignments, and determined the best possible grade he could earn in the course was a B. Whether he scored a 55% or 100% on the final, his points would put him in the 80-89% grade range. Therefore, Krum put more effort into studying for his other courses, and when it came to the exam, he said he took no time to review to any questions. “I just clicked on one to the next like I thought, and I got 61. That’s enough for me now” (Krum 3, July 2016). Krum reported scoring an 86 on his American National Government exam that same day, however. He was glad he had put more time and effort into studying for that test because as he described the experience, it “was a challenge to me and I wanted to do well. That, that course on the whole summer was a lot” (Krum 3, July 2016). Krum had mentioned the cognitive demands of the
government course earlier in the summer, describing the amount of reading and lengths of writing assignments as greater than those in either his ethics or economics class.

Krum had mentioned in earlier interviews the amount of time he spent reading the government text and working on assignments even though the content was “not exactly foreign or new” since he had taken government in an American high school (Krum 2, June 2016). It was a lot of work, and he said although the “B” in ethics and the “B” in government would carry equal weight on his college transcript, they represented two very different learning experiences.

At the end of summer term, we met once more in person. Inez had her 11-month old on her hip and smiled wide when she informed me she had passed both Applied Ethics and Composition 1. She had earned a “C” in each course, and she was satisfied with her performance. She added, “I actually decided I might take all my online, all my classes online next semester, cuz I really enjoyed it” (Inez 3, July 2016). This quote serves as a reminder to instructors with the belief that each student is seeking an “A” in his or her courses when this may not be the case. Whether due to a lack of proficiency in the language, low interest level in the content, or conflicting priorities that diminish study time, a student may find an average or passing grade suffices. This could be particularly true if students do not see how a required general education course relates to their major field of study.

Being highly organized and determined are traits that seemed to aid Liseth in the online environment. She said she liked studying, learning the content, researching and “even writing” for her classes, and she was responsible in getting her work done. What appeared to pose a problem for Liseth were the proctored exams. Whether the major factor was the amount of content covered, the difficulty of the questions, the length of the tests, or some test-taking
anxiety, she was unable to pass either proctored test in the ethics class. After her final exam, Liseth described the experience in this manner:

I put more time to the class, and I thought, I thought, I was expecting something similar to the midterm, but oh my God, it was 75 questions. It was for, it was all multiple choice and it was so hard to do it. I didn’t do good. I did it all but I didn’t do good. All I can do is wait to see. I don’t know who could pass that test. Well maybe the American people (laughter). I did all the possible extra credit assignments he put, so hopefully I still will pass this class” (Liseth, July 2016).

The extra credit worked, as did her scoring a perfect 100% on the Code of Ethics paper and most of the quizzes and discussion posts. Liseth said she had a B average going into the exam, and that final test grade lowered her overall grade to a C. Even though the final was not weighted as highly as in some college courses, it did impact her final grade. Inez and Liseth both said they had reviewed all their weekly chapter quizzes (on which they had consistently scored 90% or 100%) prior to taking the final, but these “open-book” quizzes are not timed or anxiety-provoking. Krum failed the exam but said he had not studied. Nora was the only participant who exempted the final exam by turning in every assignment throughout the term on time and maintaining an “A” average. This seemed an incredible rebound after scoring less than 60% on the midterm exam.

Summary of Responses to Research Question Four

All four multilingual participants “made it” through the required general education course Studies in Applied Ethics. Their narrated perceptions revealed that at times, they believed their grades reflected the amount of effort they expended and the learning they gained. At others, the
scores they earned seemed less apropos in terms of their online learning experiences. Interesting to note is that all four L2 participants stated they would continue taking online courses, most likely only online courses, in ensuing semesters. If their grades were far from indicative of their perceived learning experiences, it seems unlikely that they would continue in the DE modality.
Chapter Six
Discussion

It has been a privilege for me to conduct this qualitative inquiry. I have learned, as the literature suggests, that a phenomenological case study is contextual, generative, and holistic. The inquiry required that I make meaning of the descriptions and views the L2 participants expressed. I believe that each of the multilingual participants in this study shared their perceptions in an open and thoughtful manner; it was uplifting to listen to them. As I connected and reconnected with them throughout the term, I realized how much I miss teaching and interacting with EAP students in my current role as a department chair. The L2 participants’ personal experiences and diverse perspectives cast light on numerous online teaching and learning issues, but at the core, these stories highlighted the intelligence, persistence, self-worth, and importance of these second language students at Community State College. Can the narrated impressions of four adult L2 online learners from one institution represent the vast contributions and needs of multilingual students across our nation’s community colleges? No, and I do not share their personal stories for that purpose. But the voices of these four students matter, and I have related with fidelity and to the best of my ability their rich, narrated experiences. I close this dissertation with attention to some themes relevant to my research questions that merit discussion. I add some of my own understandings and further wonderings, interpretations and possible implications of the lived experiences the L2 participants revealed.
A Return to the Purpose of this Inquiry

I designed this study to prompt a few multilingual students to think about and answer some burning questions of mine that had lain unearthed in the extant research on community college reforms, distance education, and L2 Writing across the Curriculum. I believed that my search to better understand the online learning experience through a phenomenological case study would spawn metacognitive reflection on the part of the L2 participants as well. To revisit some questions driving the research, I wondered if and how the online multilingual students might form socio-academic communities such as those we know support ESL students on campus (Leki, 2007; Evans, McFarland, Rios-Aguilar, & Deil-Amen, 2016). I wanted to know if certain technology skills might facilitate and/or hinder their abilities to make meaning and display knowledge of course content. I was interested in what language and study skills, aptitudes and attitudes might help them to succeed in the online environment, and in what ways they would prefer to communicate and connect with instructors and peers. I also worried about how and from whom these multilingual first-year students would seek help if they felt confused or overwhelmed as online learners. I thought these kinds of inquiries and the rich, thick description of lived experiences the participants would provide could expand the questioning and understanding of the processes, performance, and perceptions of L2 writers in the modern context of an online community college general education course.

Thoughts on the Collection and Interpretation of Interview Data

The focal students’ learning experiences and unique ways in which they described them during interviews constituted the narrative data in this phenomenological case study. The L2 student perspectives highlighted challenges and complexities inherent in advancing their
linguistic competence while simultaneously acculturating to “the academy” (Leki, 2007; Byrnes, 2013). As the participants described ways they met the demands of the online ethics course, their narrated lived experiences generated understanding on my part and evoked questions for further research as well. Stake (2006) explains in a section on the case-quintain dilemma, that whether the focus is on the individual cases or the greater phenomenon (quintain), "it all becomes more complex as it becomes better known, and it cries out for being still better known" (p. 7, italics mine). Each interview experience supported this claim, and I leave the present study only wanting to know more.

In their book *Analyzing Narrative Reality*, social psychologists Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (2009) state that "narrative practice brings what is told and the telling together to deploy a rich empirical terrain" (p. 14). The authors point out that if the researcher's sole analysis is on participant responses, she may overlook the communicative context and co-constructed nature of the interview itself. Stated differently, Gubrium & Holstein (2009) advise the researcher to be aware not only of the substantive dimensions of the account of a personal story "but also to document the accounting process in the various circumstances that shape it" (p. 17, italics mine). Gubrium & Holstein's (2009) epistemological view of knowledge and language as socially constructed and highly contextualized applies to the interviews I conducted with the four focal students in this inquiry.

Even though I had designed the inquiry protocols as semi-structured interviews that would allow for flexibility, I felt some tension straying from the “semi” structure. This surprised and irritated me. In one way, I wished I had not limited my study to one general education course, but on the other hand, I was already becoming overwhelmed with data and could not imagine how I would engage in cross-course comparisons and contrasts. Still, my participants’
worlds were jam-packed; I wanted to somehow capture their lives in full, to pay tribute to all that they manage to accomplish day in and day out. I needed to acknowledge the fact that having work due in one or two other courses affected what they could and did do in *Applied Ethics*. Descriptions of the participants’ other courses occurred with no prompting from me; it seemed a natural extension of their being online students. They compared the amount and type of work for other classes to their assignments in ethics, and they compared their professor’s policies and practices. They praised some and criticized others. I noticed the consistency in what they liked: clear communication, no sudden changes, no forced group/peer work, no surprises. I listened with interest but knew that to produce a faithful rendition of their narratives and answer my research questions, I would have to select the most relevant material to include after transcribing and coding the interview data. At the same time, I felt these participants were growing in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment. They were forming opinions and questioning online learning practices based upon not only their own knowledge and skills but also the teaching habits of the online faculty. They were starting to ask why one instructor does this while another does that. More importantly, as undergraduates with many courses ahead, they were learning to adjust to the idiosyncrasies and expectations of individual professors across disciplines.

I acknowledge the questions I asked may have influenced what these second language students recalled and how they related their lived experiences as online learners. Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) sum up this phenomenon well, stating, "the interaction of researchers and subjects can change behaviors in ways that would not have occurred in the absence of such interaction" (p. 676). I kept these caveats in mind when transcribing and analyzing interview data. Noting details in my researcher reflexive journal built an audit trail (Janesick, 2011) during the course of the phenomenological case study and added to the insights I gained from the
participants' stories. I feel this is no longer a theoretical construct or principle to follow; the role of the phenomenologist in this study has taught me the value and necessity of documenting the research process and journaling thoughts and inferences as they arise. Stretching and surmising (Janesick, 2011) have become automatic exercises while working with the volume of narrative data.

Creswell (2007) describes the essential element of multiple case studies as finding meaning in the perceptions of the focal participants, “not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature” (p. 39). Thus, as I listened and transcribed, took notes and returned to the data, I tried to subdue preconceived notions I had about online teaching and learning and make sense of the phenomenon through the stories the second language students shared. Still, my own lived experiences informed my perceptions of the phenomenon and added to the interpretations of the narrative data that I collected. While the focal students' elicited impressions of online learning and ways in which they regulated their behaviors constituted the core of the inquiry, the perspectives they expressed did not exclude my own relationship to or questioning of the phenomenon. This juxtaposition of the researcher’s positioning and the participants’ personal stories reflects the co-constructed nature of narrative inquiry; it is part of what places the researcher in the participant-observer role (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Richards, 2003; Stake, 2010) and mandates the researcher’s self-description and biases at the outset of the study. My career and scholarship informed the study design and the interpretation of the interview data; my professional background and current interests contributed to my view of the phenomenon at hand. This preparation of understanding through both first-hand experience and critical scholarship refines the researcher as a research instrument to be used in the natural setting (Janesick, 2011).
Learning Presence, or Shouldering the Responsibility of Online Learning

The focal participants articulated their gratitude for the availability of distance education courses; without this opportunity, they might not be college students at all. They appreciated the clear design of the *Studies in Applied Ethics* standard online course, frequent instructor communication, consistency in pace and grading, and a blend of digital media and traditional print-based materials. Indeed, such course features support research findings on the efficacy of distance education courses and programs (e.g., Ralston-Berg, 2014; Simunich, Robins, & Kelly, 2015). As adult learners with varied linguistic and educational backgrounds, work experiences and family responsibilities, the participants seemed ready for the challenge of online classes and the “self-teaching” involved in responding to the course demands.

Indeed, the *Learning Presence* the second language students demonstrated throughout the online course supports previous research findings that successful online students monitor and regulate their time, their study environment, the technologies they use, and their online interactions with peers and faculty members (e.g., Bradford, 2011; Shen, Cho, Tsai & Marra, 2013). WAC research has shown that similar self-regulatory learning traits have helped students advance their L2 academic literacies for college work (e.g. Spack, 1997; Leki, 2003, 2007; Byrnes, 2013). *Generation 1.5* studies have demonstrated that setting goals and seeking help when needed can benefit L2 writers who lack linguistic sophistication yet possess the confidence to succeed in college classrooms (Riazantseva, 2012). According to the first-year multilingual informants in this study, such compensatory strategies and self-efficacy may aid them in online as well as traditional college settings. The multilingual participants portrayed their distance learning experiences as largely positive; all four passed the ethics course and anticipated taking online classes in ensuing semesters, for example. They seemed to view their relative success as
co-constructed: the professor’s design and facilitation of the course mediated their own self-regulatory practices in response. However, the comments made by these participants also led me to believe that as distance education becomes more prevalent in community colleges, educators and administrators must continue to question and improve online pedagogy, policies and practice.

Isolation in Online Learning

One recurring concern of mine was the “solo” nature of online learning the participants depicted in their descriptions of their lived experiences. Learning Presence may play an even greater role than envisioned by Community of Inquiry researchers who noted this gap in the original model. Social Presence appeared to be of less value in the practice of these students than in the theory of the COI framers. Not one of the L2 participants had enrolled in an online course with a friend, nor perhaps more importantly, seemed to care to meet (even virtually) online classmates. Each discussion forum appeared to be a task to check off, not an opportunity for conversation. Perhaps the self-teaching and learning is less problematic than it seems to co-constructivist learning theorists like me, but this behavior does accentuate a curious difference between online and on-ground learning that might constitute the basis of further research. On most community college campuses, for example, ESL students form a cohort of learners, and many continue their general education studies and degree programs together once they have exited preparatory English language programs. I have witnessed these L2 students joining forces and strategizing; they choose popular college professors, conduct group study sessions, and sometimes even carpool to campus. The ESL participants in this study opted for online college classes, however, and they seemed comfortable with their perceived student roles as self-reliant, autonomous learners in the DE modality. Research suggests that peer collaboration and socio-
academic community involvement enhance the learning experience and student performance (Dunlap & Petitt, 2008; Deil-amend, 2012; Evans et al., 2016), but circumstances may differ in the DE arena. The students who populate online classes are often the busiest at the community college. The participants in this study exemplify this phenomenon. They described operating within time constraints that influenced the quantity and quality of their online interactions. But if online educators work to include relevant and engaging discussions and group work, students may see value in collaborating in virtual environments.

The four participants appeared to believe that as college students, they should be – and in many respects, were – self-sufficient, discerning, autonomous learners. Take Inez, for instance. A young, working mother, she did not email her instructor with any explanations or requests for extensions when life’s events such as her baby’s illness hindered her good intentions. She seemed to “acquiesce” in the same ways that Bambara et al. (2009) described the resignation of the community college online students in their case study when the overwhelming work-school-life balance became unmanageable. The distance learner participants “surrendered to their experience” (p. 225) and accepted the consequences when unable to perform to their capacities and meet targets. This acquiescence might also describe Liseth’s feelings and actions (or rather, inaction) when she refrained from telling her professor she had been robbed in Paris and left with no study materials for two weeks. These students did not make excuses. In fact, each of them displayed agency and determination throughout the summer term as they met and overcame obstacles in their coursework and their lives.

Self-Efficacy as Key to Online Learning
The stories the L2 students shared of their online learning experiences and self-regulatory practices also evoked decades of work by socio-cognitivist Albert Bandura (1986; 1997; 2009) on the criticality of self-efficacy in attaining short- and long-term goals. Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy covers a wide realm of human behavior as summed up well in a recent book chapter on social cognitive theory in the field of mass communications:

Among the mechanisms of self-influence, none is more focal or pervading than belief in one’s personal efficacy. Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects and forestall undesired ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 2009, p. 179).

The perspectives shared in this study suggested that belief in one’s abilities to plan, evaluate, redirect and persevere does influence strategic action. The L2 students demonstrated self-regulation as an “active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition” (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002, p. 250). Their narrative experiences illustrated at what times and in what ways self-efficacy benefited their learning experiences. Considering an example from each story underscores the importance of possessing this self-regulatory trait.

To begin with, Liseth recuperated her learning experience after having lost her Applied Ethics course materials and failing the midterm exam. It was her conviction that she could and would regain control of the learning situation that allowed her to successfully complete the second half of the term. She assessed where she stood, considered her possibilities, and adapted a plan to proceed, albeit to a less lofty end point than her initial goal of an “A” or “B” in the class. Inez missed submitting the COE paper, one of the major writing assignments in the ethics
class. She was not deflated, however. She moved forward. Like Liseth, she calculated her options, reset her path, and persevered. Krum recounted wasting little time or cognitive drain studying for his ethics final because he, too, had acted strategically. He studied the ethics course grading scheme and realized neither a high nor low score on the final would impact his overall grade. He thus threw his time and attention into his government course where the final exam and was successful in both classes. And Nora, the mature L2 learner and high achiever, was attentive to every extra point available, every resource offered, every assignment due date. She lived in Mycourses throughout the term and reaped the benefits, earning an exemption from taking the final exam and an overall grade of “A” in the ethics class. Each participant, then, in his or her own way, built upon initial successes and approached new or challenging tasks with confidence, important factors that have been shown to sustain and strengthen self-efficacy in higher education (Dinther, Dochy, Segers, 2011).

Teaching Presence: the Faculty Perspective

Teaching Presence is a central yet complex tenet of distance education theory and practice. This element of the COI model focuses on the ways in which online instructors design and facilitate their course. But what most faculty enjoy about college teaching is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate in the virtual classroom. For one thing, the online teaching and learning process seems to emphasize content learning and assessment over relationship building and the human experience. Some of the greatest rewards of teaching come from capitalizing on the “teachable moments” that present themselves, providing a “human touch” at point of need, and witnessing the excitement when our students “get it.” I sense a void in these areas of emotional high when I teach online, and I would venture that many distance instructors do as well. It may be that a loss of serendipity and collaborative spirit creeps into the online instructor’s
consciousness more than that of his or her students, however. The participants in this study seemed to expect little to no interaction with their instructors outside of procedural directives and grades on their assignments. Investigating the amounts and types of online engagement instructors offer online – and how much online – and what distance students take advantage of are fruitful areas for further research. For instance, as Internet-based synchronous communication tools and mobile devices become more powerful and affordable, faculty may increase their visibility with students and vice versa. Opportunities to converse and clarify content may lead to increased rapport that in turn, could affect retention and pass rates.

**Teaching Presence:** the Student Perspective

The L2 participants in this study conveyed satisfaction with the *Teaching Presence* their online ethics professors exhibited. They graded promptly and fairly according to assignment guidelines, upheld stated syllabus polices, and communicated often via email and news bulletins. These are the types of online teaching behaviors that the participants seemed to expect and value. The structure and standards the professors brought to the course helped the multilingual students comprehend what they had to do and schedule time to complete the required work. The ethics online course redesign adheres to *Quality Matters* standards that ensure students can navigate their virtual learning space and make clear connections between course activities and assessments. This design also prompts faculty to be visible in the course, to populate the calendar with major assignment due dates and open all of the course content for students to view at the outset. Indeed, all of the participants in the present study reported browsing the course calendar multiple times during the term, taking note of deadlines, and checking back on a weekly basis to check off their assignments be sure nothing had changed.
The participants in this study regulated their learning in ways that seemed contingent upon fluctuating factors outside of the ethics course such as the workload in other classes and various responsibilities at work and at home. Overall, though, they seemed to respond well to the Teaching Presence their instructors maintained. For example, knowing there would be no late work accepted, all of the L2 students expressed a quickening of pace as the weekly Sunday midnight submission date drew near. I noted after the second round of interviews, “What I’m hearing is deadlines are key and their time management comes from that. But really it’s the organization of the whole course. Makes me think I should not extend deadlines, reopen droboxes and such” (Researcher Journal, June 22, 2016). In an effort to “help” students by granting extra time in my online classes, I may have inadvertently been hurting them. The L2 participants in this study demonstrated a capacity to plan and execute based upon stated guidelines and due dates that did not change.

Krum mentioned that Sunday night due dates were the norm in the online classes he had taken prior to as well as this term, but the submission deadline did not affect him quite like it did most students. As he explained it, “this time is 7 o’clock in the morning on Monday in Europe, and I like I can work all night after Sunday football matches” (Krum 2, June 2016). Krum’s comment illustrates both the 24/7 accessibility of an online class and the responsibility of student to adhere to deadlines. He said he would work throughout the week on all his courses, and by Sunday, have several assignments started but not completely done until he was working against the clock. He studied “a little bit” during the afternoon and evening watching soccer games, but would then log on to his courses and submit his work in the early morning hours.

Krum was the most experienced online student among the L2 participants in this study, and he seemed to have found a system that worked for him. He did have to repeat two distance
courses from his first semester of study, one that he had failed (freshman composition) and one that he had dropped (humanities), but he managed to pass those courses the second time around, also in an online format. If students can learn to develop self-regulatory practices to succeed, this is good news for community colleges because course withdrawals and failures early in a student’s academic career can too often result in dropping out of school altogether. Given Krum’s experiences, it seems that a second chance at online learning may be crucial for first-year students. Research has shown that sound online student orientation and faculty training can increase success rates; these interventions are part of the efforts to improve DE at CSC and other community colleges venturing into or revitalizing their online courses and programs.

Online Learning as Ongoing and On-the-Go

Distance education requires confidence, commitment, and control of the virtual learning environment. This holds true for online instructors as well as students. The L2 participants in this study designed study environments and created opportune times and spaces to work at home. They also described logging into their Applied Ethics course on their smart phones and tablets when at work, out shopping, and in the homes of friends. Not surprisingly, however, the types of tasks they completed using their mobile devices differed from assignments they would complete at a computer. They wrote their papers, accessed reading material to supplement the textbook, took quizzes, and posted discussions using a laptop or desktop computer. All four of the participants reported taking at least one multiple-choice chapter quiz on a mobile device during the term, but this was not the norm and reflected times when they were not at home when a quiz was due. They described using their phones and iPads mainly to view their grades and read email and news bulletins from their instructors. Their narratives captured the fluidity and flow of distance learning, the sense that class was never quite over.
The necessity for and facility with working from several digital devices is a thought-provoking aspect of 21st century teaching and learning. Nora was the only participant who said she took her laptop with her to work, for instance. This was because her boss allowed her to use it to access her courses and work on assignments while the children napped. The other participants reported using their phones to check on schoolwork while on the job, but they could not study openly like Nora. This makes me wonder about the extent that employers are tolerant of students checking their cell phones while on the clock at work. Are managers today resigned to the fact that millennials are tethered to their phones (just as some on-campus college professors complain they are)? Perhaps allowing employees to scroll or tap a small device seems less invasive or seems to take less time and attention than an open book or laptop. In fact, the ways these L2 online students reported using their devices to stay abreast of schoolwork impressed me. It seemed the work they needed to submit for all their courses was continually on their minds, and this struck me as similar to my own behavior as an online instructor. Student emails, papers, quizzes, discussions… there is always work awaiting my attention, and the sooner I can tackle it, the better. As I noted in my journal, “they’re on the go, looking for messages ten minutes here and there. It’s exactly what we do on the other end. I guess it’s a survival tactic for online teachers and students both” (Researcher Journal, June 24, 2016).

Proctored Testing

The two proctored ethics exams were major stressors for the online learners in this study. Even though the course contained modules with review guides and sample test items, the L2 participants recounted with surprise and dismay the level of difficulty the midterm and final exams presented. Their scores on the proctored tests were much lower than the grades they had been earning on weekly work throughout the term. The students’ descriptions of their poor
performance on these exams did not point to inadequate preparation, lack of content knowledge, or poor test-taking skills. The common theme was the imposed two-hour time limit and the testing environment itself: rows of test-takers in a computer lab with proctors stationed in every corner. The students described surrendering their cell phones and study materials at the door, entering only with a college ID card. This milieu was in stark contrast to studying at home, where they could read and write at their own pace, take quizzes when they felt ready, and access online resources such as Google and YouTube for better comprehension or reinforcement of course material. The number and type of test items on the proctored exams placed a burden on the second language participants. The linguistic and cognitive demands were great, and their levels of anxiety heightened as the clock ticked.

Such descriptions left me conflicted. I understand the need to maintain rigor and integrity regardless of course modality, and I know that the online revitalization and standardization efforts at CSC have led to proctored testing requirements in more online courses than in the past. Still, it seemed unfair to subject the students to a testing situation so unfamiliar and unforgiving. I wrote post-midterm, after the second round of interviews, “Why don’t they put some timed quizzes into the course at least? And open-ended questions instead of just multiple-choice all the time?” (Researcher Journal, June 26, 2016). It seemed to me that the professors assigned chapter quizzes, summary writing, and discussion posts to guide online learners through the material and ensure weekly participation. In essence, this is how the students teach themselves. The L2 participants in this study frequently earned 100% on these tasks; what appeared most important was following directions and submitting work on time.

Throughout our discussions of exams, I noted that not one of the participants mentioned the role of proctored testing as a way to ascertain whether or not it is indeed the learner who has
been doing the work in the distance class. Tests assess content mastery and application of concepts, but online faculty may also require students to “come in” for exams to verify their identity. This indeed is part of the reason that in the redesign of the online ethics course in 2015, the professors added required proctored exams. Instructors can read responses with an eye toward discrepancies in writing proficiency or style. They can compare responses on the exam with discussion posts and assignments submitted prior to the test. For instance, detecting non-nativelike syntax and vocabulary on a proctored exam from a student whose written work in the online course has been error free could raise suspicion. This may even warrant an email or call to that student to ensure he or she realizes the responsibility of avoiding cheating or plagiarism in an online class just as in a physical classroom. This seems particularly pertinent to an ethics class!

L2 Writing Across the Curriculum

One general education ethics course does not represent the wide range of theory and practice reported in WAC studies. Nevertheless, some themes have emerged in this study that are worth considering. One area to note is the relative ease with which the participants responded to the writing assignments and the high grades they earned. This was in contrast to their descriptions of first-year composition courses. While the purpose of the present study was to elicit L2 student perspectives of learning content and demonstrating knowledge in an online environment, the participants all volunteered information about their communications courses. Krum and Inez had both failed their first attempt at freshman writing; Liseth had made a “low B” only by taking advantage of extra credit assignments and scoring high on objective grammar tests. Nora was enrolled in Composition 1 at the same time as ethics and mentioned in each interview how much more she worried and time she spent on her writing class. And yet, none of
these students seemed to struggle much with the ethics assignments or question the limited feedback they received on their papers.

Listening to the students’ descriptions, my own impressions of the online ethics course and instructors would shift. On the one hand, I felt happy and proud that these L2 students were able to meet the expectations of their ethics professors. On the other, and in particular when wearing my EAP or freshman composition faculty hat, I was disappointed that the content area faculty members did not seem to comment on language use or rhetorical style(s) appropriate to the discipline. But I had to keep in mind the context of Studies in Applied Ethics, a first-year (often first-semester) community college online general education course. Many students take their first college writing course at the same time they enroll in ethics. Thinking along these lines, I understand the online ethics faculty may assume a different stance from university professors like those Zawacki & Habib (2014) describe as struggling with written accents and not knowing how to help L2 writers improve disciplinary discourse. The focus in the ethics course is to teach community college students to think critically and justly, to understand moral theories and apply them to real-world situations. The online content area faculty members, employing their technological pedagogical content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), may focus more on the presentation and assessment of course material than how well their students are able to articulate their thoughts. The L2 learner informants in this study appeared to have regarded this approach as a fair method of grading the ways in which they demonstrated their understanding of content and assignment expectations.

The multilingual participant narratives in this study have added to existing ethnographies on the L2 undergraduate experience and advanced this body of research into the distance learning environment. Eliciting and disseminating the lived experiences of our students is of
ongoing importance. Hall (2014) ponders how best to “present our findings to [content] faculty in a way that is both useful and non-threatening, and that is likely to filter through to students” (p. 9). One way to begin is to find like-minded faculty members who are interested in student development and amendable to research to improve online teaching and learning. In this study, I worked with ethics professors who have demonstrated such qualities. This group of educators includes philosophers, lawyers, and theologians who embody the interdisciplinary general education mission and learning environment. They are a “teaching faculty” who instruct our students in a variety of modalities and encourage inquiry and reflection in their classes and among themselves as educators.

Some Pedagogical Implications for Online Community College Faculty

Community college faculty who first-year general education courses initiate diverse populations to “the academy” and instill in their students an appreciation for building a body of knowledge across disciplines. It is often the professor’s love of teaching along with a passion for his or her field that excites and engages students. This emotional connection of learner to professor and learner to course material can be difficult to establish from a distance, however. The Community of Inquiry theory suggests strong Teaching Presence fosters online student satisfaction and learning, but the model does not stipulate how best to achieve Teaching Presence or even exactly what it is. Combing the narrative data of the multilingual students in this study, I have noted some ways that might enhance the teaching and learning experience for faculty and students and lead to increased satisfaction and success in distance education courses.

To start, the multilingual participants in this study enjoyed getting to know their professors the first week of the semester. They all reported having visited faculty webpages that contain brief biographies and viewed photos that the instructors choose to upload. The
commented on faculty who had traveled abroad, spoke other languages, and authored their textbook. Some of the instructors greeted their students with welcome videos, and the students found their online professors’ use of multi-media motivating and encouraging; the videos appeared to add a human element that can sometimes be missing in the virtual classroom. As the semester progressed, however, this type of computer-mediated instruction conversation seemed to wane. Only Krum reported that his instructor continued to send “video notes” via email throughout the term. He said watched these videos because they were timely and short, and he felt connected to his teacher. Whether the messages were in response to work the class had done or in preparation for upcoming tasks, his instructor’s video communication felt genuine to Krum. They were not “canned” *YouTube* videos featuring talking heads focused on content presentation (which all of the participants but Nora largely ignored). Krum’s professor seemed to recognize a need for building relationships with her students, and she used the Mycourses video tool to do so. Most learning management systems have such built-in video recording features, and online professors might try creating and posting periodic videos to create connections and motivate their distance students.

A common concern shared in the participants’ personal stories was the disconnect these multilingual students found between weekly course work and the proctored exams. Faculty who design and teach online courses may view these exams as a necessary course component to verify that distance students have been doing their own work and to assess the level of understanding and application of concepts that they should have attained. The students described how they studied at their own pace and completed assignments with the aid of resources such as their ethics textbook, the Internet, family and friends. They were highly successful in these endeavors, often scoring 100% on weekly quizzes, discussion posts, and reading responses.
However, these accounts of their “normal” online learning experiences clashed with their descriptions of the high-stakes midterm and final assessments they had to undergo. They felt they had prepared for the tests, but they were stunned when they opened the exams and the clock started ticking. To avoid this shock, content area instructors might add some simulated timed exams to their online courses to help students prepare not only for the material to be covered but the test-taking experience as well. For example, a professor can set an online quiz to require a password and auto-submit when time is up. Multiple-choice quizzes can be auto-corrected, and even short-answer essay questions can reveal sample responses once students have submitted their work. Learners can thus compare their work to an expected answer and engage in critical reflection while the instructor has had no extra grading. Faculty teaching the same subject area collaborate on quiz items and effective feedback.

Online faculty might also interaction among peers, or Social Presence, by placing greater attention to discussion forums. The multilingual participants seemed to view class discussions much the same as they did other weekly assignments, i.e., as tasks to complete by a deadline. They did not mention “discussing” with others the ethical dilemmas and moral theories they were reading and writing about throughout the course. The ways in which they described their discussion posts suggested they were engaged in public “knowledge telling” over “knowledge transformation” that socio-constructivists hope will occur in collaborative environments. One of the problems with this theory is that when online class conversations take place via asynchronous discussions, the delay can be too great to spark interest or responses that would naturally lead to further inquiry.

Inez shared an idea for improving the lag in peer replies. Rather than opening a weekly discussion forum in which all students must write a post and reply to one or two peers by Sunday
night, she suggested changing the discussion questions each day of the week so that students who worked on the course on Monday would discuss one concept, those on Tuesday another, and so on. This would result in fewer posts to scroll through since just a portion of the class would post each day, and the likelihood of a timely reply to a student’s idea would increase. Some professors might even set discussion boards to open and close for just a few hours in the morning or evening each day. As students post and reply to one another within this window of time, they would approach near-synchronous dialogue. This might be one method to involve distance students in the co-construction of meaning making that faculty envision when designing their online courses.

Krum mentioned his online speech class met online in small groups via Skype. Perhaps if general education faculty attempted such “live” meetings with their online students, this would lead to more spontaneous conversation, requests for clarification, and questioning via the Socratic method. Not all community college faculty have access to webinar hosting platforms, but there are plenty of alternative and affordable options including Skype, Facebook chat, and Google hangouts, to name a few. Students (and instructors) already use these tools to interact online with friends and family; faculty might consider employing such familiar platforms in an academic environment. While an entire class may not be able to agree upon a specific time for synchronous meetings each week, the online professor could poll the class and offer a variety of times to meet one-on-one or in small groups based upon the most popular times. Online faculty might even make a requirement that each student “meet” at least once per semester during virtual office hours. These types of online interventions may constitute promising practices that stimulate and simulate the trusting relationships that more often grow in face-to-face classrooms, perhaps resulting in better student retention and performance outcomes.
The End of the Dissertation; the Beginning of a Research Career

The experiences shared by these four multilingual community college students highlight the complex lives they live, the challenges they face, and the values they hold. It is clear that all four displayed *Learning Presence* that included level-headed self-assessment and decision-making, mindfulness, diligence, resilience and resolve. Such self-regulatory traits are essential elements in the development of self-efficacy; they influence beliefs and behaviors at critical times in the learning process and stimulate future growth (Bandura, 2009). Even the two students who were new to distance education managed to work within the parameters set by their professors and take control of their learning environment. They all passed their online ethics course, and indeed, all of their classes during the summer term in this study. Listening to these students describe their struggles and successes has been uplifting and affirming, yet this exercise has also caused me to rethink my own theory and practice.

Keeping the lived experiences of these L2 online learners in mind, I can better prepare EAP students for college courses and improve the design and facilitation of online first-year composition courses. Because I wear many hats at CSC including curriculum and course designer, Communications department chair, and online instructor, faculty trainer and supervisor, I have the opportunity to engage other community college instructors in dialogue and reflective practice. The online ethics professors who taught the participants in this study did not have the opportunity to speak with the L2 students as I did, nor hear first-hand how appreciative these first-year multilingual college students were for their instructors’ guidance and feedback, albeit via computer-mediated communication. It is unfortunate but most likely the norm that busy online community college instructors do not have the time to engage in deep dialogue with distance students. I know because I am one of them! Eliciting and retelling these multilingual
students’ stories has been the most rewarding part of my journey as a doctoral student and novice qualitative researcher, and I plan to share this research through writing and conference presentations. I would also like to conduct further qualitative studies alongside content area faculty who are committed to enhancing the online experience. With an ever-growing diverse population and demand for distance courses, community college faculty and administrators need to collaborate and push this 21st century research agenda.
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Appendix A  Sample Critical Thinking Application Paper (CTAP) Midterm Preparation

A. Study Questions: CTAP Midterm Exam

Here are the questions from the midterm. They are based on the steps of the critical thinking model from chapter 4. If you have questions or would like to study more, I would suggest that you pay specific attention to the application of the critical thinking model and its steps to the case of Mike and Kim that is included in chapter 4 of your ethics textbook. (When it comes to preparing for the questions about the moral theories from chapters 5, 6, and 7 I would suggest to use the green boxes in the text to help you with the steps. I've also included worksheets in this folder)

The midterm will have questions from each area 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, the number and type of question will be randomly assigned. Furthermore, there will be a number of cases that you have never seen before. To best prepare for the midterm, my suggestion would be to take the questions and apply them to the cases in chapter 24 of your textbook. The questions on the midterm will be the same as those listed below, but the cases will be different.

Section 1 (on the main moral issue) will have 3 questions and each question will be worth 40 points. The total points in Section 1 is 120.

Section 2 (on research) will have 3 questions and each question will be worth 20 points. The total points in Section 2 is 60.

Section 3 (on stakeholders) will have 3 questions and each question will be worth 30 points. The total points in Section 3 is 90.

Section 4 (on applying the theories) will have 3 questions and each question will be worth 100 points. The total points for Section 4 is 300 points.

Section 5 (on the wisest choice) will have 3 questions and each question will be worth 10 points. The total points for section 5 will be 30 points.
Question 1) Please read the following story and state what you believe to be is the main moral issue.
The case will have more than one moral issue but by definition there can only be one main issue. The main moral issue is not always the one you consider to be the most serious based on potential consequences, nor is the main moral issue a statement about a person's beliefs. (In other words you can't say "the main moral issue is that Mr. Smith is a bad person who does bad things.)
Your answer will be limited to 100 characters.

Question 2) Please read the following selection. Please fill in the blank with two areas / key words that you would research based on the story in an effort to make the best decision possible.
Your answer will be limited to 100 characters.

Question 3) Please read the following selection. Please list at least 2 stakeholders from the story AND state why they are stakeholders (be specific as to how they are stakeholders)
Your answer will be limited to 200 characters.

Question 4a) Please read the following selection. Assume that you are a follower of Immanuel Kant’s theory as explained in your textbook. Apply Kant’s theory using the proper steps from the text for this class develop an answer that Kant would agree with for this situation. Please make sure to “show your work” and DO NOT simply say, “Kant would _______” but present a well-developed answer.
Your answer will be limited to 400 characters.

Question 4b) Please read the following selection. Assume that you are a follower of the Act Utilitarianism theory as explained in your textbook. Apply Act Utilitarianism using the proper steps from the text for this class to develop an answer for this situation. Please make sure to “show your work” and DO NOT simply say, “An Act Utilitarian would _______” but present a well-developed answer.
Your answer will be limited to 400 characters.

Question 4c) Please read the following selection. Assume that you are a follower of John Rawls and his theory of Contractarianism as explained in your textbook. Apply Rawls’ theory using the proper steps from the text for this class to develop an answer for this situation. Please make sure to “show your work” and DO NOT simply say, “A Contractarian would _______” but present a well-developed answer.
Your answer will be limited to 400 characters.
Question 5) Please read the following selection. Choose the wisest and most ethical option based on your understanding of the situation and your moral standards. Make sure to develop and defend your answer.
Your answer will be limited to 400 characters.

B. Sample Case Study Scenario for CTAP Midterm Exam

Prior to submitting your application and resume for Director of Parks and Recreation for Littletown, you decided to stretch the truth and state you had lettered on the varsity football team for all four years of high school. The truth was, in fact, you had only lettered your junior and senior years. However, you felt that by listening yourself as a four-year letterman on the Littletown High football team, if would make you seem more like a hometown hero and help you get the job. You only “stretched” the truth, and who would know the difference? It was over 15 years ago. After submitting your resume and application, you were asked to a formal interview with Mayor Sheets.

You are now at City Hall for the interview. Mayor Sheets greets you and tells you how excited he was to see your name in the applicant pool for this position. It seems that Mayor Sheets, who has lived in Littletown all of this life, is an avid fan of Littletown’s football team. As you enter his office, Mayor Sheets asks, “Didn’t you play middle linebacker? Number sixty-five, right?” You are surprised and respond, “Yes, that was me.” The Mayor goes on, “Those were the good old days; we have some team back then.” As the Mayor takes a seat at his office desk, he holds up your resume and begins to read. He says, “This is a very impressive resume. Not only do you have the educational and professional background we are looking for, but you are a Littletown native, and that goes a long way.” Then the Mayor asks, “I thought you only lettered for two years, but on your resume it says four. Is that right?”
Appendix B  Code of Ethics (COE) Assignment

The code of ethics paper requires the student to acquire and apply the Code of Ethics for his/her chosen profession. You should start this paper as soon as you can, you will find all of the instructions below. If you have questions about it, let me know as soon as possible. Do not think of this paper as a long flowing essay. Instead, answer each section. Next to each question it tells you how long your answer needs to be. Number each section - double space your content - and move on to the next section.

Synopsis of Assignment

Select a Professional Code (such as the Code of Professional Responsibility for Lawyers or the Code of Ethics for the Education Profession) that is of particular interest to you. Write a critique of the code.

1. Introduction- Explain your knowledge of this business profession. What experiences or interests have drawn you to this arena? This section should be 250 words or more. (15 Points)

2. What moral issues are prevalent in this profession? Identify the five you think will be most prevalent and discuss them and their dimensions. If you do not remember what moral issues are - please go back to chapters 1 and 2 as well as the chapters on business ethics and ethics in the workplace. This section should be 500 - 750 words. (50 Points)

3. Since you examined the number of moral issues you will face in this profession, look through the code of ethics that you chose for this assignment and explain - in specifics how the code would advise as how to proceed if facing these issues. This section should be 500 - 1000 words. (50 Points)

4. What level does the code represent? (basic, currently attainable, etc.?) Explain. (One good paragraph). These terms come from the chapter on codes of ethics. Use examples from the code of ethics to support your theses. This section should be no lesss than 500 words. (50 Points)

5. Conclusion - what have you learned, if anything, from undertaking this assignment, which might be useful to you in whatever business or profession you ultimately select? This section should be no less than 250 words (15 points).
Online Learning Research Participant Survey

[submitted electronically via link in MyCourses email]

Please complete this survey about your personal background, experiences learning English, and academic/professional goals.

This information will be used to help select bilingual students for a study to help us improve online learning. Thank you for your interest and willingness to help with this project; your observations and opinions are important!

* 1.

Which of the following English courses have you taken at St. Petersburg College? Please check all that apply.

☐ EAP 0295, Basic I
☐ EAP 0395, Basic II
☐ EAP 0495, Intermediate
☐ EAP 1595, Advanced I
☐ EAP 1695, Advanced II
☐ I have not taken any of these EAP courses.

* 2.

How long have you lived in the United States?

☐ 1 year or less
☐ 1 - 2 years
3. What is your native language? Please type below:

[Type here]

4. Did you graduate from a high school in the United States?
   - Yes
   - No

5. What is your highest level of education (in any country)?
   - High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
   - Some college or university study
   - Technical degree
   - College or university degree (usually 4 years)
   - Master's or professional degree
   - Other

6. How old are you?
How many online courses have you taken?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6 or more
- This is my first online course.

What are you majoring in? Ex: nursing, business, computer science, music, education, etc.
(If you are not sure yet, no problem. Please type "undecided" in the blank.)

Do you work?
Yes, I work full-time (40 hours or more/week).

☐ Yes, I work part-time.

☐ No, I am not working at present.

* 10.

Which of the following are your two (2) best skills in English (click on two choices)?

☐ Reading

☐ Writing

☐ Listening

☐ Speaking

☐ Grammar

☐ Vocabulary

* 11.

Why are you taking *Applied Ethics* online instead of on campus?

12.

Which campus do you consider your "home" campus? (Or, which campus is closest to you?)
13. Please enter your name and phone number:

14. Do you have a Skype account?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

15. Thank you for answering these survey questions. If you would like to share any more information, leave comments, or ask questions about the research, please use this textbox to do so and then click submit.
Appendix D  Participant Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

eIRB# ______________

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to participate in a research study. This form tells you about the research study you are being invited to participate in as an online student this summer.

The study is called Community College Second Language Writers in Online General Education Courses.

The person in charge of this research study is Li-Lee Tunceren. She is called the Principal Investigator. She will be conducting three interviews during the course

The research will be conducted at St. Petersburg College.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to learn what bilingual students think about online learning and the strategies they use to complete reading and writing assignments when they are not on campus.

The information will be used to help English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers better prepare second language students to be successful in their college classes, especially online.
The Principal Investigator is working toward her doctorate in Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology. The design and report of this research study will be her dissertation, a major requirement to complete the doctoral degree.

Study Procedures
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

A. Be interviewed by the Principal Investigator, Li-Lee Tunceren, three times during the semester.
   1. Via Skype video, audio or a phone call, during weeks 2, 3 or 4, 20-30 minutes.
   2. On campus or via Skype video, audio or a phone call, after your midterm exam, during week 6 or 7, 35-45 minutes.
   3. Via Skype video, audio, or a phone call, during week 9 or 10, 35-45 minutes.

During interviews, you will be asked to talk about your experiences and feelings as an online learner in the Applied Ethics course and the type of work you did to complete selected reading and writing assignments. The interviews will be recorded. Li-Lee Tunceren will listen and transcribe them in order to understand your responses better. She will not share the recordings but may use some quotations from them in her dissertation. She will not use your name.

B. Complete member checks. Li-Lee Tunceren will email you the transcription of each interview. You will be asked to approve the interview transcription, make corrections or add information.

C. Respond to MyCourses email. Li-Lee Tunceren will use the Applied Ethics course email to contact you and expect a response. She will respond to any questions or comments you send to her via MyCourses email as well.

Total Number of Participants
3-5 bilingual students will be selected to participate in this research, a multiple case study.

Alternatives
You do not have to participate in this research study. All participants are volunteers. Your teacher will not know which students have agreed to be participants.
Benefits
We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study. Sometimes talking about learning experiences helps the student focus on studying and improves his or her performance.

Risks or Discomfort
There are no risks associated with this study; they are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation
You will be paid $50 if you complete all the interviews and email communication for this study. This is a little more than the cost of the *Applied Ethics* textbook and is about $15 per hour with no more than 3.5 hours expected. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before the end of the term, you will be paid $15 for each hour of participation.

Privacy and Confidentiality
All data and records of this study will be kept private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records, but by law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are Li-Lee Tuncer-en's professors who guide the study and colleagues who may help her analyze data to be sure she is doing reliable work. Some university staff may also need to look at your records. This is done to make sure the study is being done in the right way. They also need to make sure that your rights are protected.

This staff includes:

- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.
- The St. Petersburg College Research Review Committee, granting rights to conduct the study at the research site.

Li-Lee Tuncer-en may publish what she learns from this study. If she does, she will not include your name. No presentations or publications would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect you student status or grades.
Questions, Concerns, or Complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, email Li-Lee Tunceren at Tunceren.Lillien@mycourses.spcollege.edu or call her office at (727) 791-2663 or cell phone (727) 443-4155.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, please call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance at USF at (813) 974-5638.
Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study about second language writers in online classes. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study                      Date

_____________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

_______________________________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization                      Date

_______________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization
Appendix E  Protocol - Semi-Structured Interview #1

1. Can you tell me about your education before coming to the US and since you’ve been here?

2. Tell me about the courses you have taken and are taking this semester.
   a. Is this your first general education (required) course?
   b. What other courses are you taking? Online? On campus? Blended?

3. Why are you taking Applied Ethics online instead of on campus?
   a. Did you talk to anyone who has taken the course online before?
   b. Are you taking the course with a friend?

4. So far, is the course what you expected it to be like?
   a. Did you read the whole syllabus? Did you download and print it?
   a. Can you give me an example of something similar to what you expected?
   b. Can you give me an example of something that is quite different?

5. Tell me about the work for this course.
   a. What do you like about the content and why?
   b. What seems pretty easy to understand and do? What is challenging?
   c. How well do you feel you understand the chapters in the book?

6. Have you planned when you will study and work online each week?
   a. Is that working for you so far?
   b. Have you had any challenges with technology?
   c. What device(s) do you use to access the course? And to complete your assignments?
   d. Where do you find you work the best?

7. Have you asked for help with anything so far?
   a. Have you contacted the instructor? If so, about what?
   a. Have you emailed the librarian in the course or posted to her discussion area?
   b. Have you emailed other students or posted in the general discussion area?

8. What questions have you got for me about this study?

Appendix F  Protocol - Semi-Structured Interview #2
1. How do think you did on the CTAP exam?
   a. How were you feeling before/during the test? And now?
   b. Can you tell me about any strategies to stay focused and calm as you worked?
2. How did you prepare for the CTAP?
3. Did anything surprise you about the test, or was it basically what you expected?
4. Which of the questions were the easiest and the hardest for you to answer? Why?
   a. Which parts took the longest for you to complete? Why?
   b. What strategies did you use to finish within the time limit?
5. Think about your responses.
   a. Can you tell me how you identified the main moral issue?
   b. How did you decide who to list as the major stakeholders?
   c. How did you find the search terms (key words) for the library research question?
   d. How well do you think you applied the ethical theories you were asked for?
   e. What did you state was the wisest choice and support your opinion?
6. What have you learned about yourself as a test-taker?
7. How has your instructor helped you to learn during the first half of the semester?
8. Can you describe your interactions with other students in the online course?
   a. What do you think about discussion forums?
   b. Have you collaborated in other ways (such as email or social media)?
   c. Do you think your online classmates help you learn? Why or why not?
9. What about your study habits for this class? Have they changed in any ways since the beginning of the semester? Why or why not?
10. What do you do when you need help with course material, technology, or clarification on assignments?
Appendix G  Protocol - Semi-Structured Interview #3

1. How do you think you did on the Code of Ethics paper?
   a. How well did you understand the assignment instructions?
   b. What parts of the paper seemed pretty easy to complete? Why?
   c. What parts were harder/the most challenging? Why?

2. Have you done writing assignments like this in EAP or other college classes?
   a. If yes, did that experience help you work on this paper in any way? If so, how?
   b. If no, how did you start working on this assignment? What did you do?

3. How much time did you spend on the assignment? (approximately, hours or weeks)
   a. When did you start, finish, and submit?
   b. Explain your writing “plan” to complete by the due date.
   c. Do you think you spent enough time on the assignment? Too much?

4. Did you have any struggles researching, reading and writing in English? If yes, tell me, e.g. ...
   a. Finding, understanding, incorporating and citing sources, avoiding plagiarism
   b. Organizing your paper
   c. Using correct grammar / sentence structure

5. Did you use college resources such as the course librarian, writing studio or SMARTTHINKING?
   a. If yes, was this useful for you?
   b. If not, why not?

6. What did you do to stay motivated and keep working on the COE assignment?

7. How do you feel about the online course now that it is almost over?

8. Will you take more online courses? Why or why not?

9. What advice would you give another second language student who is new to online learning?

10. What advice would you give professors who teach these courses to improve the experience for students?

Appendix H  Sample Color-Scheme Focused Coding, Interview #1 [Liseth 1, June 2016]
L: So what do you think about your online class so far?
N: This is the first semester that I take online classes. It’s going good.
L: That’s what I was wondering, if this is your first ever online class
N: Yah, it is
L: Really? But you said you like it
N: Yes, I do, it is
L: Hm
N: It is, I think it is easier. Because in class you lost too much time. Because sometimes the teachers are talking about whatever they like, their life for the students and they interrupt all the time the classes
L: Mmhmm
N: Um, how however, online you can do your work, your homework you have to complete your homework or whatever on time
L: Right
N: But it’s at your own pace, and you have, you know the time that you have
L: Did you ah
N: So I like it
L: Did you, um before you took the class online, did you talk to anybody that had taken an online class?
N: yes, I have a friend who goes to [CSC] also, for nurse program, and I asked to her. I was always scared about online classes
L: Yah, yah
N: But she likes, she likes the online classes too
L: Do you know anybody in your class right now? Like, are you, did you sign up with somebody?
N: No, nobody
L: How about your other classes on campus? Do you try to go with friends?
N: No, I’m not, well if somebody talks to me, I talk to them but I’m not like too friendly like I have to go with somebody. I just, I don’t know, I look my interests

L: Yah yah, take what you have to take

N: Yah

L: So right now, tell me what you have this semester

N: I have composition 2, math, it is college algebra, and ethics

L: That’s a lot for summer

N: I know and I have not enough financial. I use that money for the year, but I saved some to pay

L: Oh really? Because you took so much in spring. And what’s online? Just ethics?

N: No, that one and math too, college algebra online

L: Oh wow. So like for ethics, did you think ok, this is an online class but I’m going to make a time when I will study for this class?

N: Yes, for every class. I did a kind of schedule for myself. So, I have to be on campus two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday. I start my classes at six o’clock but I go to school like 2:30 so between 2:30 and 5:30 I do everything that I can online at the library. Monday through Friday. And then during the weekends I do some homework also, whatever I would have to do it online

L: Are you working nights?

N: Now I work during the day. I need the money but I cut my hours now. It’s 6 AM to 12

L: Ah

N: Yah

L: Where?

N: It is in a call center.

L: I mean, do you have to drive very far? Do you have to drive far?

N: No, no it is not far. It’s close to my house, like 15 minutes away. Um normally I start my day at

L: Like 5

N: Yah or 4:30 and then I go to sleep 8, 9

L: You have to. Your day is so full

N: Yes, I know
L: I work at night. I’m more like up till 1:30 in the morning

N: I prefer

L: And I have to get up and go

N: I prefer that, I don’t like to wake up early but I have to do it

L: Did you have that job before and they let you change the times or?

N: I start on January this new job, this year in January

L: Mm hmm

N: And last semester I studied the afternoon so I did 40 hours in a week so I had fulltime, fulltime work. Now I changed my time and I’m just working part time

L: Like 30?

N: 30 hours

L: It’s still a lot of work

N: Yah

L: You don’t have any time for fun I guess

N: I don’t

L: On the weekend?

N: Well I sometimes, I don’t use go out much

L: What’s your goal? When do you want to finish?

N: I hope next year, in end of fall semester

L: Oh wow so December next year

N: Well I will finish my AA. Next year

L: Yah that’s what I mean

N: And before the Christmas hopefully

L: So you have to budget your financial aid for

N: For last until the summer, probably 9 credits again for summer, and then I can transfer

L: Oh

N: But if I have to pay myself next summer I will because, because I will try to save some money. I just want to finish