

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

APPLYING LANGUAGE CULTURAL CONTENT IN ESL
DE COURSES: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BY

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Approval of Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis examined the field of English instruction focusing on instruction of cultural content in distance-delivered English courses to the Korean market. Currently, most English-language courses in Korea are delivered in traditional, F2F classes. The goal of the study was to investigate the challenges, guidelines and recommendations of integrating cultural content into such courses in DE format. Using a case study methodology, the researcher investigated the experiences of Korean students enrolled in a trial course focusing on topics related to Canadian culture. The study found that the learners enjoyed and found it convenient, engaging and interesting, and had few issues carrying out reading and writing activities. However, they found speaking and listening activities, especially synchronous speaking activities, more challenging in a DE environment. The thesis explores these challenges, as well as the important guidelines and recommendations for delivering successful DE language courses.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest industries in language learning is English instruction to learners of non-English mother tongues, commonly known as English as a Second Language (ESL) for non-English students learning a foreign language in an English-speaking country, such as Canada, or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for students studying English from a country where English is not the official language. This current research pays particular interest to one area of English instruction that is continuously in high demand: ESL/EFL instruction to Korean students. However, it goes one step further by investigating how effective learning English in an online, distance education (DE) environment can be. In particular, it focuses on guidelines and recommendations into ways to make online English learning effective so that learners can be immersed in the target language and culture even though they may not be in the physical presence of the English instructor.

Context of the Study

Most students in Korea perceive English as a necessity to advance in their professional or academic careers. To satisfy this demand, many private and public English schools have opened offering EFL/ESL instruction, some of which are beginning to offer distance education options. Recently, Korea spent the most money on English instruction per capita than any other country in the world; in 2007, “the country has spent \$4.6 billion on English language education abroad, and between \$2 billion and \$4 billion spent domestically” (Industry Canada, 2007). However, one problem with learning English in the Korean EFL setting is that, in many cases, the only time students are exposed to English is in the classroom. Many EFL courses do not provide sufficient cultural content

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that could potentially make the learning more engaging and interesting, which can hinder learning and retention (Duvernay, 2007). The Internet makes it possible for learners to access English material, but, in general, learners in Korea are typically exposed to Korean culture and language almost always outside of the classroom, making it difficult for them to get the practice they need outside of class to learn the language quickly and effectively.

Another problem with the English language instruction in Korea is that EFL courses there tend to focus on rote learning by having students memorize language grammatical structures and rules. Koreans are accustomed to being tested for employment or academic purposes, and English-language courses are no exception. Ultimately, the primary goal of the learners is not to achieve English proficiency, but to do well on the tests. "To this end, the focus is generally on how tests are constructed and how to achieve high scores by deducing answers based on test-taking strategies" (Industry Canada, 2007).

One solution to this may be for students to enroll in ESL courses in English-speaking countries, such as Canada, where they could have better access to English-speaking culture and relevant material. In this way, students could get the necessary cultural exposure to learn in such an ESL environment. This would provide the potential for them to get exposed to the language constantly in their daily life, as well as the culture of the target country as they interact with people in the new country. However, many have experienced trouble integrating into the new culture, possibly because they have not prepared themselves properly for the transition. Also, for many, there is also the question of whether they can physically attend the ESL classes, either because they have heavy work or study commitments or they cannot travel to the classroom location for whatever reason. There is also the risk that the material being taught in these ESL classes are not

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relevant for learners new to the culture, as some of these classes still focus on teaching grammatical structures. A possible solution for this would be for students in Korea to take online English courses from a Canadian educational institution in distance education (DE) format. Such a course would cover topics of Canadian culture and of specific relevance to students, in addition to teaching English grammatical structures.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the proposed study was to investigate the challenges, guidelines and recommendations for the integration of cultural content into distance-delivered ESL courses and, therefore, to provide meaningful content and practice for the learners. The main issues to investigate were the effectiveness of DE language courses for the Korean ESL/EFL market and how well culturally relevant language content can be embedded effectively in such courses. Learners would be physically removed from the instructor in time and place, so there was the perceived risk that they would not have any oral discussions, preventing them from practicing their spoken English skills in an effective manner. To address these issues, the researcher employed a case study methodology to investigate the common experiences of Korean students enrolled in a several online ESL course units that focus on topics related to Canadian culture. In this way, he captured these experiences and their commonalities and investigate the effectiveness of distance-delivered language courses and integrating cultural content in such courses.

The success of language learning, in particular, DE English-language learning, has been quite limited for the following two reasons:

1. Traditionally, English-language courses, particularly EFL courses in Korea, tend

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to focus on teaching grammatical rules and rote memorization of vocabulary, and using such material to discuss topics are often not relevant to the target learners.

2. Although Korea has one of the fastest Internet speeds in the world, it has been slow to adopt DE English-language courses because of the perceptions that learning English must involve attending reputable universities and *hagwons*, or private language schools and talking face-to-face with a native, English-speaker instructor.

With regards to the first reason, many Korean students work hard to graduate with good marks from the traditional English classes and find themselves able to easily remember the grammatical rules they have learned in class, with some feeling comfortable writing in the language. However, further research has indicated that many still feel uncomfortable maintaining a conversation with a native English speaker, and as a result, they decide to abstain from practicing their speaking skills and, instead, speak in their native tongue with their fellow Korean acquaintances. (Kimchiland, 2012).

As for the second reason, research has shown that the Korean English-language learning industry is a very big business, which translates to many teaching positions for native English-language instructors. In order to fill such positions quickly, Korea has made it relatively easy for potential applicants to get into this business. The minimum requirements for teaching in Korea are the following:

1. The potential instructors must be nationals of one of the following seven countries: Canada, US, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa.
2. They must possess a bachelor's degree in any discipline from a university whose main language of instruction is English, although a Master's degree or a TESOL

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certificate would be preferable, especially in the Korean public school system.

Officially sealed transcripts should be provided to schools and Korean consulates as part of the Visa application process.

3. They must provide copies of criminal and health check documents, as well as copies of passports which have at least twelve months of validity at the time of moving to Korea.
4. They must have an updated resume (Gone 2 Korea, 2014).

Readers may notice that potential applicants do not have to have prior teaching experience to teach, let alone experience in teaching or designing DE courses. Most instructors who get hired must teach according to a curriculum set out by the school administrators and course designers, without necessarily considering the needs of the learners. The bulk of the teaching material cover areas of grammar and discuss topics that are often not relevant to the target audience, and often do not consider the culture of the target language, but discuss Korean culture in English instead. In short, although there are many English teachers, there appears to be a gap in the sense that many teachers are not experienced enough to properly instruct learners English effectively, let alone in a DE environment.

Thus, an opportunity existed for a study to give a select number of participants a trial of an online English course module that discusses one area of Canadian culture that is potentially of interest to them. As a result, the researcher carried this out to determine the challenges and provide important guidelines and recommendations for integrating meaningful cultural content in an online ESL course so that students can immerse themselves in the language, even if they are not in a F2F environment.

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Study Significance

Current research makes it clear that an important part of second-language learning is the acquisition of the culture of the country where the target language is spoken. However, not many studies discuss ways of incorporating culture content effectively in DE language courses. With this study, the researcher hopes to fill this gap by describing the challenges in taking culture into consideration when designing DE language courses, as well as the recommendations in implementing such courses. Future curriculum developers and instructors may use these recommendations to help develop online language course that will deliver relevant culture-oriented language-learning content that will help students integrate themselves into the new culture, use their newly acquired language skills fluently and become productive members in the new society.

One country where English instruction is big business is in South Korea, given the amount of EFL schools in Korea and the demand of ESL classes for Koreans. Research on the current state of the English instruction industry in Korea, however, indicates that the quality and delivery of the instruction in the various courses vary significantly, especially in how courses prepare learners to learn culturally relevant content and, therefore, to interact with the new culture in an appropriate fashion. A study is, therefore, required to discuss how such EFL/ESL courses could be improved by not only delivering culturally relevant content in an effective manner, but also doing this in DE format so that learners can access it from wherever they are. This study is an attempt to fill this gap.

Definition of Key Terms

The following is a list of some important terms and their definitions.

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Culture in Language Courses: Integrating culture in language courses means putting in cultural content relevant to the target language being learned, and treating this material as the main focus of the course. In the case of ESL courses in Canada, cultural content would include Canadian cultural content or content related to Canadian current events. Although the modules may teach grammatical or other language structures, these topics are considered secondary and are embedded as required when discussing the main cultural topics. This is in line with the idea that learning a language without reference to the culture behind the language makes the learning irrelevant and pointless, at least from the point of view of many students (Leveridge, 2008, p. 15).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): This is the environment where learners study English in a country where English is not the official language. This implies an environment where English material and content is relatively scarce and where students communicate normally in their mother tongues wherever they live. In this case, Koreans studying English in a Korean university or public school is an example of learning in an EFL environment.

English as a Second Language (ESL): This is the environment where learners study English in a predominantly English-speaking environment. This implies that English material and content is quite readily available. Koreans studying English in a Canadian university is an example of learning in an ESL environment.

Distance Education (DE): Distance education has many definitions, but the definition that fits best for the purposes of this study is the one as defined by UNESCO, which defines a course delivered in distance education format as one “in which all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in

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space and time from the learner” (UNESCO, 2012). The important point in this definition is that the separation between learner and instructor is not just in space, but also in time. In other words, students do not necessarily need to attend classes to take a course; they can carry out their studies at a time when it is most convenient for them and are not restricted to a specific class schedule.

Learning Management System (LMS): This is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of education courses or training programs delivered in DE format (Ellis, 2009). Many LMS tools exist, but the most popular one is *Moodle*. This study will focus its discussion on *Moodle* as needed when it refers to the topic of LMS.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA): Second language acquisition refers to the process of language learning by non-native speakers of the target language, either via conscious study in a course designed for this purpose or through exposure in an environment where the target language is commonly spoken. This study will focus on English language learning by Korean native speakers.

Assumptions

The success or failure of online ESL courses, including those targeting the Korean market, depend on a variety of complex variables, including the English proficiency that the learners bring into the course, their existing knowledge of the target culture, as well as attributes of their own culture. It was assumed that participants in this study had at least a medium level of reading and writing proficiency of the English language, and had chosen to participate in distance education because it presented a viable educational option for them. It was also assumed that these students, given the guidance of the researcher

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instructing the course, would be able to provide reasoned responses to the course activities and interview questions, suggesting factors promoting successful completion of a DE course independent of time and space.

Limitations and Delimitations

The researcher selected five participants to take part in the study. Although having a larger pool of participants would have been preferable to get a better sense of DE language learning, time and financial constraints were such that only a small number of participants could take part.

The other limitation to consider was that not all individuals approached for the study would necessarily agree to participate in it, or, if they did agree, they might not have participated in a timely fashion or might not have responded accurately at all. A reasonable amount of time was allocated for the selection of participants and every attempt was made to validate all data gathered and to check for errors.

The participants in the study included five Korean students with a medium English proficiency level; that is, sufficient to be able to carry out basic and intermediate tasks in Canadian society and to carry out daily conversations with native English speakers, but not necessarily sufficient for them to become productive enough to work or study in Canada. Participants must also have expressed a desire to learn English to improve their career or academic opportunities. In the interest of simplicity and saving time, the selection of participants initially focused on Korean students living in the same area where the researcher resided. However, two of the participants actually ended up trying the course from outside the local metropolitan area, one of which even lived outside of Canada.

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many studies existed that provided guidelines on developing engaging, learner-centred language courses, including ESL/EFL courses that provided relevant material to learners. The idea here was that if learners found the material useful and relevant, they would be more engaged in the learning process and retain more of the material learned for longer periods. Many other studies discussed best practices in incorporating these guidelines in DE format. There were also a few studies which show that language is intricately tied to culture, meaning that teaching culturally related content with language would make the learning experience more relevant and interesting. In Canada, this means that ESL courses would focus on discussions regarding Canadian culture, whereas those in the US would focus on American culture. In an EFL setting, it becomes more important to tailor the course to the needs of the learners so that cultures of different English-speaking countries are considered in case different learners show interest in learning about these different cultures.

What is not so clear from the existing studies was how to integrate this cultural content and related language-learning techniques effectively in DE courses in ways that would allow the Korean learners to appreciate the new culture. Knowing this would help determine the best way to guide Korean learners and help them understand the new culture and integrate this with their language-learning activities, even though they may be still be integrated into their Korean culture. Many studies abounded that recommend good practices in developing authentic, engaging DE courses, but few discussed specific ways on how to apply culturally specific content in the course. There were even less studies that discussed ways courses consider the native culture of the students to help them learn and

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appreciate the target culture in ways that are relevant to Korean students. What follows next is a more detail review of the literature, organized by by the three main concepts that this study addresses: distance education language learning, ESL/EFL for the Korean market and integrating cultural content in language learning.

Distance Education Language Learning

Figure 1 in the next page provides an overview of the research related to language learning in DE format and how it relates to the current study. All of the resources presented below provide their own theories and recommendations on different techniques that could be used to deliver language courses online, some of which may be useful for the purposes of this study.

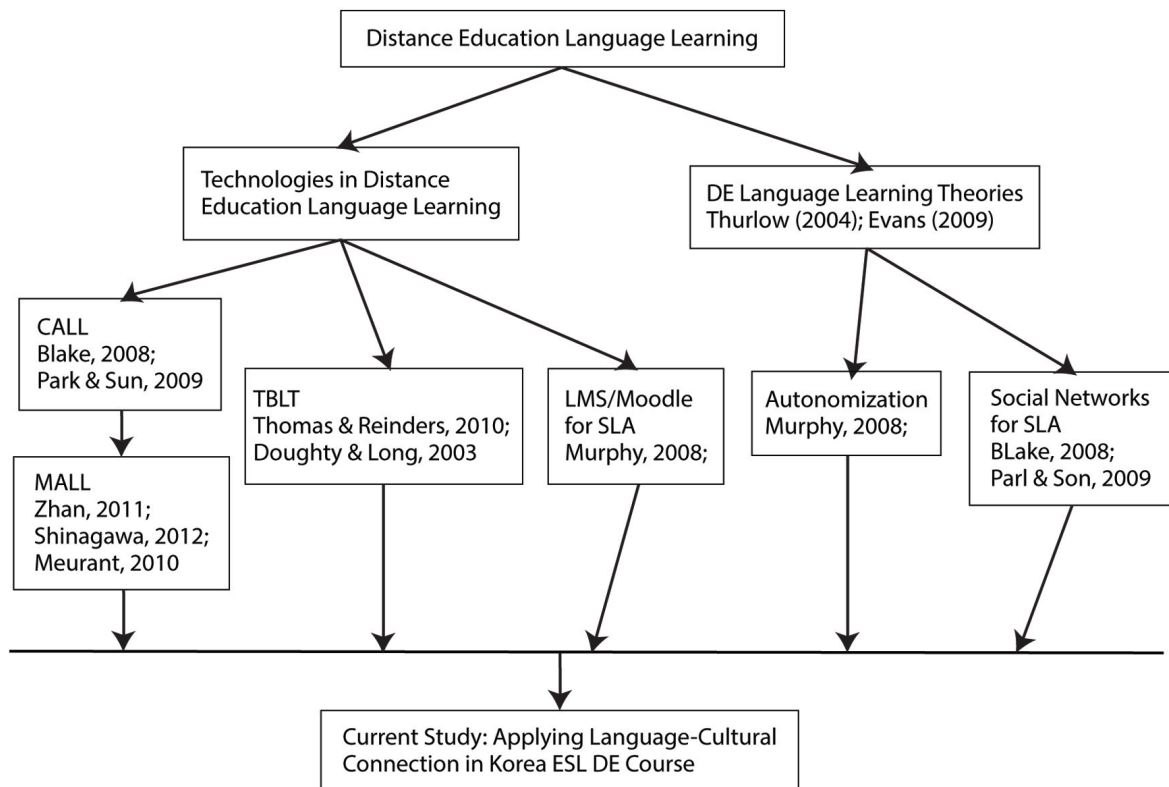


Figure 1 Research Mapping for the Online Language Learning Concept

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Table 1 below summarizes the most important research findings with regards to the topic of distance education language learning.

Table 1 Distance Education Language Learning Research Summary

Researcher	Main Study Topic	Main Findings
Doughty & Long (2003)	Task-Based Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses should use technologies to encourage learning by doing.
Thomas & Reinders (2010)	Task-Based Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of synchronous communication technologies to ensure appropriate student-student and student instructor interactivity.
Blake (2008); Zhang, F. (2011)	Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALL encourages the use of a wide range of technologies such as Internet and forums, to enhance foreign language instruction in DE. • MALL is similar, except the researcher focuses on mobile technologies, such as iPad, iPod and smart phones.
Murphy (2008)	Autonomization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing autonomous learners, or self-learners through effective design of course materials.
Thurlow (2004)	Theories behind effective second language acquisition in DE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a comprehensive description of the many theories and recommendations for integrating language learning with distance education, with a lesser description in integration cultural discussions in the mix.

Technologies in Distance Education Language Learning.

One important challenge with DE language learning is the matter of making courses more engaging and meaningful for the learners. Some studies suggest courses that use technologies that encourage learning by doing specific tasks, rather than just by using text. In other words, they encourage “learning by doing” (Doughty & Long, 2003).

Thomas & Reinders (2010) give examples of such technologies that encourage this teaching methodology known as the *Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT), although they focus on courses delivered in DE or computer-mediated format. A variety of synchronous computer-mediated communication technologies, such as web conferencing, can be used to ensure appropriate student-student and student-instructor interactivity in second-language acquisition (Thomas & Reinders, 2010). This allows learners and instructors to interact with each other in real time without being in the same location.

Doughty & Long (2003) also discussed TBLT by focusing on the ten methodological principles and their implementation in foreign language learning in DE format, something that might be useful for the purposes of the thesis. These ten methodological principles can be summarized as follows:

1. Use tasks, not texts, as the unit of analysis – Each unit should focus on a specific task that learners should carry out and all material in the unit relates to the task at hand.
2. Promote learning by doing – learners must take part in the learning by carrying out real-world tasks.
3. Elaborate input – Input should not be too simplified or genuine in such a way that is too advanced for the target learners. Input should be as real-life as possible,

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- but “elaborated” to make the meaning comprehensible for the target audience of the course.
4. Provide rich (not impoverished) input – Input should be realistic samples of speech related to the target task of the unit of analysis.
 5. Encourage inductive ("chunk") learning – Learners should learn material in comfortable chunks of material to enhance retention of what was learned.
 6. Focus on form – Learners should not just focus on the meaning of the text they are learning, but also on linguistic forms, such as grammatical structures.
 7. Provide negative feedback – Learners should be corrected if they make mistakes in their utterance in the target language, although the form in which this feedback is provided should be done in a facilitative, constructive manner.
 8. Respect "learner syllabuses"/developmental processes, so that instructors can be made aware of the learners’ readiness for materials and when to proceed to the next step of the language learning process.
 9. Promote cooperative/ collaborative learning – Learning a language should be about learners collaborating and, therefore, interacting with others as they carry out the tasks of the unit.
 10. Individualize instruction, according to communicative needs – This means that instructors should tailor the course material to training needs of the target learners (Doughty & Long, 2003).

DE language courses can take advantage of the power of computers in unique ways to assist in the second language acquisition process. Research pointed out successful pedagogical research results of projects where computers acted, in part, as foreign

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language instructors, a concept commonly known as *Computer-Assisted Language Learning* (CALL) (Blake, 2008). A wide range of technologies were examined, such as Internet web sites, asynchronous forums and blogs, to distance language learning. This proved useful as support to some of the guidelines and recommendations that the thesis presents in later sections.

Other studies take the CALL concept further with the integration of mobile devices into new language acquisition. This is the concept of a type of CALL system called the *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning* (MALL), an instructional technique that has increasingly become more popular (Zhang F. , 2011). This may be of interest because usage of mobile devices is particularly high in many Asian countries, including Korea, although not yet for educational purposes (Zhang F. , 2011). The research indicated that using mobile devices is a viable option to participating in distance education language courses, although it also mentioned some major issues, such as the reduced screen size of the mobile devices themselves, making them potentially impractical for extensive reading or writing.

Some of the most popular mobile devices used for language learning include the iPhone, iPod and the iPad, all of which are produced by Apple Corporation (Shinagawa, 2012). These devices have several built-in features that make language learning fun and engaging, such as the ability to create audio files. More importantly, however, users of such devices have access to wide range of applications that can be used to enhance language learning. Research exists that give some general guidelines on ways of using these devices effectively in a classroom environment. This proved useful to help determine how the participants could use their mobile devices to participate in online

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courses for language learning.

An LMS is an example of a technology that can be used to develop language courses that, with the right design, can provide high learner interactivity and engaging activities that can get the learners to practice (Stanford, 2009). One of the most popular examples of such tools is *Moodle*. In his 2009 study, Stanford considered that any language course has to get students using the language in an authentic manner and interacting with others in the target language, either synchronously or asynchronously. He provided guidelines on developing language modules in *Moodle* that do just that. Such guidelines included formatting the course web site in a clean, concise and clear way so that learners could know where to start and where to access the materials they need in a timely fashion and, therefore, learn effectively. Other guidelines included changing the default theme, fonts and colours to make the site more attractive for the target audience, as well as organizing the content in well-defined course sections so that users can find the content easily.

Evans (2009) provides some perspectives of teachers and students with regards to their experiences in teaching and learning English in a distance EFL environment. This resource is useful in gaining an understanding on some of the best ways to teach languages and ensure that students get the relevant practice they need with a variety of activities tailored to the learners' needs. It also discusses the best way to correct learner mistakes.

DE Language Instructional Approaches.

Thurlow (2004) provided a comprehensive description of many theories behind effective distance education and second language acquisition, specifically how the two

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fields have evolved and the most important and relevant learning theories behind them. It provided an overview of the theories behind second language acquisition, a critical assessment of distance education and some guidelines and recommendations for integrating both of these concepts.

One particular theory of interest described by Thurlow (2004) and introduced by Raimes (1983) is the communicative view of language teaching, which encourages learners to learn the language by discussing topics of relevance and interest with others; that is, learning by communicating. In other words, language is not just a subject matter that learners must learn, but a tool used for communication to help them practice the language. This is important for the current thesis because the theory describes many points which support the recommendations and guidelines for teaching ESL to foreign learners, including Korean learners, as outlined in later sections of this thesis. This theory discusses five major points, namely:

1. *Sees language as communication:* The theory is that language is a tool used for communication, so the focus of any language learning should be on learners communicating in the target language as much as possible, even outside of class.
2. *Emphasizes real language use:* Learners should communicate using dialogues that are as realistic as possible to what is used in the “real” world, and topics of discussion should be of relevance and interest to the learners.
3. *Recommends a learner-centred classroom:* Class activities should be centred on the needs of the learners, and not necessarily dictated by the instructor. In a distance-delivered environment, this becomes even more prevalent as learners study more on their own time from a location of their choice.

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4. *Encourages real language acquisition instead of just learning a set of grammatical rules:* In relation to the previous points, language learning is not about learning grammar in isolation. It is about using the language to discuss topics of relevance. Grammar can be brought up as a secondary topic to support the real-life communication of the topics of relevance.
5. *Develops humanistic, interpersonal approaches:* As mentioned before, language is about communication, but it also should encourage lively interaction between humans. This should resonate as well in language-learning courses, and distance-delivered courses are no exception (Raimes, 1983).

Another area of particular importance here is the section describing the recommendations for future research, as this provided an aid in the search for what could be researched for this current study. Although not a major part of the study, the paper does briefly discuss the importance of integrating culture in language learning and taking into account the culture of the students.

For DE language courses to be effective, learners must be able to work on their own without the feeling of being lost as they struggle through content that may be unclear. Murphy (2008) carried out a study focusing on the importance of developing autonomous learners in language teaching programmes. An important method of doing this is to create course materials in such a way that can allow learners can experience autonomy, a process referred to by Little as '*autonomization*' (Little, 2003; Murphy, 2008). Such *autonomization* is important because learners in a DE setting must be able to solve problems on their own without the physical presence of the instructor and other learners, and this can be achieved through effective design of the teaching materials. Murphy

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examined the teaching materials written in 1999 and 2005 for distance language courses in Spanish, French and German provided by the Open University in the UK. Findings showed that the material written in 2005 was an improvement in terms of increasing support for student reflection and autonomization, but "course writers have some major issues to address if they are to fully support 'autonomization'" (Murphy, 2008).

An important part of language learning is authentic use of the language when conversing with others. One common way of using language is with the use of social media. Tomé (2011) carried out a study that "investigated the use of social media in French classes at the University of Leon in Spain" (p. 1). He focused on the learners' oral and pronunciation skills, and evaluated hundreds of audio recordings of assignments from students who registered for the French classes between 2005 and 2009, some of which carried out the classes in an online, DE environment. Findings indicated that social media provided an effective venue to deliver oral and pronunciation learning activities and helped students improve their oral skills in French.

Another important part of any language course, especially DE language courses, is sufficient interaction in the learners' environment. Moore & Kearsley (2005) lists three forms of learner interaction: learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction. Their study revealed that all three forms are required in the appropriate balance for a successful distance-delivered course. This thesis adds support of this by showing how learner-content interaction can help learners with their reading and writing skills, especially in a DE environment, and learner-learner and learner-instructor interaction can help with speaking and listening practice.

EFL/ESL for the Korean Market

Figure 2 in the next page provides an overview of research related to the state of the Korean EFL/ESL industry and how it may help the researcher determine some of the recommendations in developing EFL/ESL courses for the Korean market. The thesis uses the research to help prove that DE language instruction can provide many opportunities that allow the industry to take better advantage of the ever-growing demand for English instruction and grow.

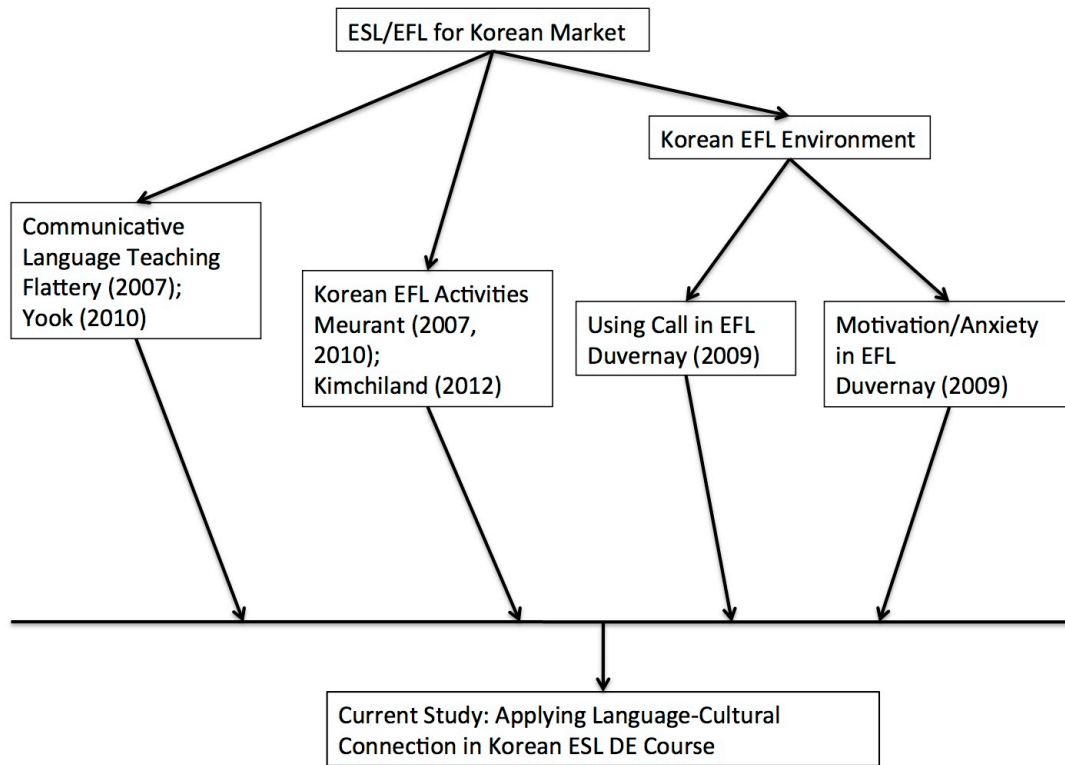


Figure 2 Research Mapping for the ESL/EFL Market Concept

The table in the next page presents a summary of the findings related to the Korean ESL/EFL industry.

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Table 2 The Korean ESL/EFL Industry Research Findings

Researcher	Main Study Topic	Main Findings
Yook (2010)	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the ESL industry in Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study participants perceived serious gaps between appropriate English instruction and the English education system in Korea.
Flattery (2007)	Examining Korean teaching practices in public school system and CLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major challenges in the Korean public school system with regards to the CLT approach to English language instruction.
Meurant (2007, 2010)	The effect of digital literacy on English language acquisition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the use of digital and computer technologies to enhance learners' English acquisition, instead of traditional EFL activities. • Explored the use of MALL, especially iPads in Korean EFL classrooms to provide engaging EFL activities.
Kimchiland (2012)	Examines the failures of the Korean EFL industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korean EFL industry not effective in increasing learning speaking proficiency, despite high educational investment from Korean government.
Duvernay (2009)	The role of motivation and anxiety in Korean EFL classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English learning success depends on motivation level of the learners and how they handle anxiety.
Park & Son (2009)	Investigates the attitudes of CALL in the Korean EFL classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have a positive outlook towards the use of computers in the classroom, but cite lack of time, insufficient computer facilities and limited computer experience as negative factors affecting CALL implementation.

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Communicative Language Teaching.

Yook (2010) discussed the relationship between Korean teachers' beliefs about English Language Education and their perceptions on the English language education reforms initiated by the Korean Ministry of Education. She used a mixed methods methodology to pursue the study. She first recruited 158 participants for the quantitative portion of the study, and then selected ten of these participants for interviews and class observations. Findings showed that participants perceive serious gaps between what they perceive to be appropriate English instruction using what the author coins as *communication-oriented approaches* (COA) and the English education system in Korea. Although the study does not make specific mention of distance education, it proved useful for the current thesis to help determine what these perceptions were among the majority of the Korean EFL instructors.

Flattery (2007) examined the English teaching practices and approaches that were currently employed in the public school system in Korea. The review of the literature on this subject revealed that a major goal of the Ministry of Education was the fostering of native-speaker proficiency or as close to this as possible, via a method known as *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT). This resource was used to gain insight into the various difficulties of English instruction in Korean classes today to help determine the possible challenges that Korean students may face when learning English in a DE setting.

The idea behind communicative language teaching is not new. Nunan (1991) also examined this concept in an earlier study and summarized three principles that are necessary for effective communicative language teaching, with specific focus on reading.

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The three principles include the following:

1. The focus of every task should be on the performance of some operation: teaching learners to read something in the target language that is communicatively useful for them.
2. Use language above the sentence level and above the learners' current English proficiency level, with real language in real situations and pay attention to both the part and the whole work in the context.
3. What happens in the classroom must involve the learners and must be judged in terms of its effects on them (Nunan, 1991).

Korean EFL Activities.

One issue with English language instruction in Korea was that learners of English were provided with little deliberate instruction in second language digital literacy. In other words, teachers did not focus their teaching efforts on the use of computers to study English (Meurant R. , 2007). The focus was on using textbooks and rote memorization techniques to get students to learn English grammatical structures in a traditional class environment. To determine how digital literacy can affect English language acquisition, some Korean college students participated in a study where were to produce English language video guides to their campus, shooting their videos on the cameras built in to their cell phones. Students then emailed their videos to their instructor, who then uploaded their videos to a blog on his English language course homepage. Students were then asked by email to view the videos and post responses in the homepage guestbook, which required them to set up their own English language account, and invited to further explore the social networking site. All of this helped students practice using computers to study a

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foreign language. It also allowed them to practice English using authentic, relevant material so they could communicate not only to native speakers, but also to non-native speakers of English.

Another example of encouraging digital literacy to learn English was included in Meurant's (2010) study, where he explored the MALL concept by focusing on iPad computing to enhance EFL learning in Korea. He discussed how educational institutions could take advantage of the country's Internet connections, reputedly one of the fastest in the world, to provide engaging EFL lessons to learners. One of the recommendations was to provide students with the computing power and networks required to take part in engaging EFL courses from wherever they were. This study discussed the possibility of supplying all students with a Wifi+3G enabled iPad to help them carry out their studies.

Probably the most important criticism of the Korean EFL industry was its most commonly used language instruction methodology. Korea is well known for its Confucian culture of education, characterized by silent classrooms, an emphasis on rote memorization, and the valuing of reading and writing over discussion and dialogue (Kimchiland, 2012). In fact, several English teachers in Korea wrote blogs explaining their experiences teaching English to students in Korea. Although Korea invests billions in its EFL industry, many Korean students still ended up having difficulties speaking English well (Kimchiland, 2012). This study showed that effective language learning requires learners to speak up and express themselves in the target language, preferably in a natural environment. The Korean government attempted to resolve this by opening a variety of cyber universities offering learners to study English remotely in their preferred, natural setting. Unfortunately, these universities had limited success, with enrolment rates

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in many schools of less than 50% in 2003 (The Observatory, 2003).

The Korean EFL Environment.

Duvernay (2009), from the Department of Linguistics at Korea University, aimed at investigating the role of motivation and anxiety in the Korean EFL classroom, and their contributing causes, and tested a hypothesis for an ideal classroom environment in which these two factors can be used to their fullest potential. He used the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, a scale for testing personality types, to determine the learners' type of motivation to learn English, as well as their level of introversion or extroversion (p. 8). Twenty-two Korean college students carried out the test, and were put in groups to determine the anxiety that students would have in case of an imbalance of introverts or extroverts in a group. He highlighted that the success of learning English, or any language for that matter, will depend on the type of motivation to learn the language and how students handled the anxiety and pitfalls encountered. He also suggested an optimal balance of introverts and one or two extroverts in a group to help mitigate the anxiety while maximizing participation for everyone. Motivation and anxiety are also issues that must be addressed when designing an EFL course in DE format, and some of these suggestions may also prove useful when considering an effective design for a DE EFL course in DE format.

Park & Son (2009) investigated factors affecting the use of CALL in EFL classrooms and the teachers' perceptions of CALL and ways to improve its use in school settings. Participants in their study included twelve Korean teachers of EFL working at secondary schools in Korea. Findings indicated that the teachers had positive and favourable attitudes toward the use of the computers. However, many external factors,

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such as lack of time, insufficient computer facilities, rigid school curricula and textbooks and lack of administrative support; as well as internal factors, such as the teachers' limited experience with computers, can negatively influence the implementation of CALL in the classroom (Park & Son, 2009).

Integrating Culture in Language Learning

This section discusses research that studies the strong relationship between language and culture and how inseparable they are (or should be) in language courses.

Figure 3 provides an overview of research discussing the importance of integrating culture into language courses. This thesis used the theories contained in these studies to provide guidance and recommendation on how such integration can occur in DE language courses.

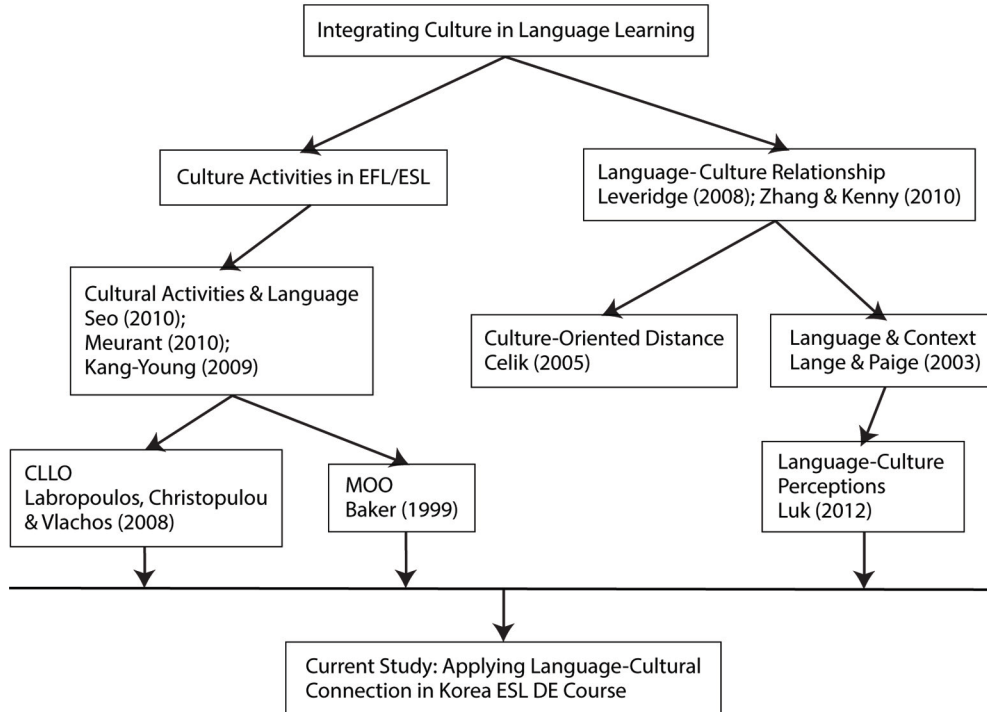


Figure 3 Research Mapping for Integrating Culture in Language Learning

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Language-Culture Relationship.

The table below presents a summary of the findings related to the topic of culture integration into language learning courses.

Table 3 Integrating Culture in Language Learning Research Findings

Researcher	Main Study Topic	Main Findings
Celik (2005)	Culture-Oriented Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determined that incorporating non-verbal communication is important in integrating culture in EFL classes.
Luk (2012)	Teachers' attitudes towards culture in EFL classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitudes generally positive but there were ambivalence or contradictory feelings about the means and end of culture in EFL.
Lange & Paige (2003)	The context of learners' own culture in learning target culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the importance of looking at learners' own culture to help understand target culture in the context in which language is used.
Kang-Young (2009)	Investigated the cultural content in Korean textbooks of English instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbooks make use of scant culturally-relevant content.
Seo (2010)	Investigated the relationship between participation in cultural activity and learners' English performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings revealed a strong relationship between the participation of cultural activities and the language learning performance.
Labropoulos, Christopoulou & Vlachos (2008)	The use of Culture-based Language Learning Objects (CLLO) in Greek classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most participants understood the need to learn the Greek culture to help learn the Greek language.

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Research indicated that language courses without any consideration for the culture of the target language provide very little value to the students, as “they appear to learn a language in vacuum” (Leveridge, 2008). This resource gave an excellent synthesis on how language and culture are deeply rooted and the implications of this for language teaching. Celik (2005) went further by describing the concept of “culture-oriented distance” (p.1), signifying the importance of non-verbal communication when communicating in a new culture. His study reveals stark differences between American and Turkish culture with regards to communication and personal space. For this qualitative study, he interviewed six Turkish nationals studying for a graduate degree at a large university in the US Midwest: four of them were males, two were females and all of them were EFL teachers who were most likely aware of the “significance of teaching culture and other nonverbal behaviours in foreign language classes along with the content knowledge” (p. 42). The study was important because it presented ways for EFL teachers in Turkey to incorporate the cultural phenomenon in their classes, something to consider when designing EFL/ESL classes for the other markets, such as the Korean market.

Of course, recognizing the importance of culture in language learning is one thing; knowing which cultural resources to use can present a challenge. This requires understanding of the learners’ culture as well as the target culture of interest to the learners. In a study collecting views about culture and language teaching from twelve secondary school teachers in Hong Kong, findings indicated that the teachers were unanimously positive in their attitudes towards the motivating power of culture in language teaching, but also revealed “ambivalence or contradictory feelings about the means and the end of culture-integrated TEFL in terms of what cultural resources to

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draw on; the connectivity between cultural components and examinations; and the role of teachers” (Luk, 2012).

Lange & Paige (2003) defined culture learning in that it is anchored in three fundamental learning processes: the learners' exploration of their own culture, the discovery of the relationship between language and culture, and the learning of the heuristics for analyzing and comparing cultures. In this sense, this study discussed the importance for learners to look at their own culture to help understand the culture of the target language they are learning. Language is not just a question of learning the language's grammar and structure; it is important to understand the context in which the language is used (Lange & Paige, 2003). This context should be as authentic and realistic to the learners' real-life usage of the language outside of the classroom.

Zhang, from the University of Windsor, and Kenny, from Athabasca University (2010), presented a case study detailing the experiences of three international students taking an online course at a large university in Western Canada. These students were not native speakers of English and were studying from China, Japan and Canada, respectively. Although the course studied was not mentioned for privacy concerns, the study revealed one important finding: their lack of familiarity with the details of North American culture and colloquial language made it difficult to follow much of the course discussions. This resulted in the students avoiding “socializing in the course, which left them at the periphery of course activities” (Zhang & Kenny, 2010). These findings could be relevant in language learning courses as well and, therefore, was also relevant in the study for the current thesis.

A related sociological theory of knowledge is social constructivism, introduced by

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Lev Vygotsky. This theory applies the general philosophical constructivism into social settings, wherein groups construct knowledge for one another and create a small culture of shared artifacts with shared meanings (Vygotsky, 1978). This allows learners to immerse themselves in the culture and learn about the target culture in many levels. Nystrand (1996) applied this concept of social constructivism in the subject of English language learning in his study encouraging the use of “discussion and interactive discourse” to elicit sustained responses and encourage “meaning making through negotiating with the ideas of others, thus “promoting retention and in-depth processing associated with the cognitive manipulation of information”. This research added support to the importance of including cultural content in language courses.

Cultural Activities in EFL/ESL.

Lee (2009) carried out an analysis of eleven high-school EFL conversation textbooks in Korea to determine their effectiveness in teaching culturally relevant material for English language learning. Findings indicated that all textbooks made scant use of authentic material “along with interactive technologies like the Internet for teaching culture” (p. 76). Essentially, the books neglected to teach the cultural aspects of the language and, if any culture is taught, they focused mainly on American culture. This resource may be useful to support the argument that culturally relevant content does not form a major part in the curriculum of Korea’s EFL courses.

Seo (2010) examined the relationship between the learners' participation in cultural activities, or cultural capital, as the author calls it, and the learners' English performance. This study used a mixed method of data analysis where the quantitative research used a nationally-representative panel study of 2000 ninth graders and 2000 twelfth graders

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to help determine the relationship between culture capital consumption and language learning amongst Korean high school students (p. 51). Findings revealed that there was a strong relationship, although this relationship weakened with higher-aged secondary students. For the qualitative research, the author interviewed six high school students to determine their perceptions of English in their environment and careers, and what motivated them to learn the language in the first place (p. 55). These findings appeared to corroborate the importance of integrating culture in language courses. Although there was very little discussion on distance education, an important reference was made on the benefits of using computers in language learning.

Some other studies dealing with culture in language learning discussed specific methodologies in integrating culture in the language learning process. An example is the paper by Labropoulos, Christopoulou and Vlachos (2008) discussing *Culture-based Language Learning Objects* (CLLO). The purpose of the study was to determine the viability of designing a CLLO to incorporate culture in Greek-language courses in London, UK, usually taken by English-speaking students of Greek and Cyprian descent. The authors conducted a questionnaire survey and gathered data from 53 students of grades five and six living in two different London districts. Findings indicated that the majority of the participants understood the need of learning the Greek culture to help understand the context in which the language is used. They also felt that learning Greek using computers and learning culture made the course more interesting and useful. This resource can be used to explore the possibility of CLLO as a viable methodology to incorporate culture in EFL courses for Korean students, especially Canadian culture for those Korean students who wish to explore or live in Canadian society.

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Another methodology for incorporating culture in language learning courses includes the use of a collaborative virtual reality system, known as *Multi-User Domain Object Oriented (MOO)*, as explained in Backer's thesis on the subject (1999). In this article, he explored the use of MOO in ESL language learning for a class of high school students in the US. These students experienced twelve academic hours at a MOO website designed for foreign students learning English and American culture. Findings indicated that the participants gave significantly higher scores for relevance and expected success in regard to general EFL instruction. However, it gave MOO significantly lower scores in relevance satisfaction as an EFL procedure when compared to the overall averages of other EFL procedures.

Summary

The review of the current literature revealed studies that addressed one of the following concepts in detail:

- Distance Education Language Learning
- The Korean ESL/EFL Industry
- Integrating Culture in Language Learning

A few studies did touch on two of these concepts, but none of them addressed all three, and this is where the current study comes in. In other words, the researcher identified a gap in that no study addressed incorporating cultural content and important DE language-learning guidelines effectively in ways that help Korean learners appreciate the target culture and, therefore, engage themselves in more relevant course material. *Figure 4* outlines the three main concepts in the study of cultural integration of DE language learning that the current study addresses.

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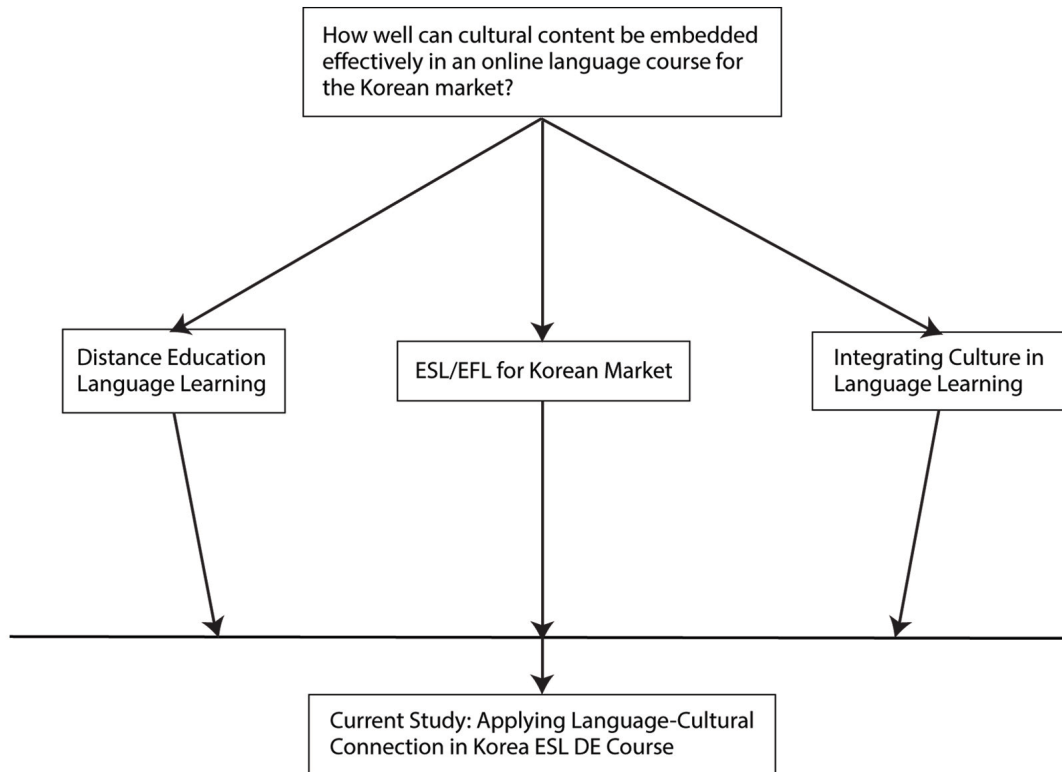


Figure 4 Research Mapping Overview

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Strategy and Participants

The qualitative approach chosen for this study was the case study methodology. This methodology "involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Yin (2012) adds that case studies are pertinent when the research addresses either a question describing what is happening or what has happened, or attempts to conduct evaluations. In this case, the bounded system involved a trial DE course teaching English to a Korean target audience with the idea of describing the language learning processes of this audience in the course, as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of such learning. More specifically, the trial course focused on teaching the different aspects of the culture where the English is spoken; in particular, Canadian culture. For the purposes of saving time and money, the researcher selected five participants taking a specific course unit, instead of an entire program. In short, the purpose of this unit was to determine if it could provide an effective means for students to learn the material taught and, hopefully, determine whether online ESL courses could be viable option to teaching students not only the English language, but the cultural aspect as well.

Another argument in favour of selecting the case study methodology was that it favoured the "study of a phenomenon within a real-world context" and the "collection of data in natural settings" (Yin, 2012). The researcher studied the progress of the student participants carrying out the course unit activities in their real-world context and collected data from different sources. First, the researcher collected select assignments in *Microsoft Word* format and audio files that the participants submitted as requirements

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in the trial course, as well as postings that they submitted in the course's asynchronous and synchronous forums. These data were analyzed to assess the participants' learning progress in the course and to determine the questions they may ask in the forums to help clarify areas of improvement in the course. The idea here was to get the participants' experience in the course to determine if they enjoyed it and learned from it. Last but not least, the researcher interviewed the participants to get their impressions of the course, what they liked and disliked about it and if they would do this again.

Table 4 below provides a description of the five participants selected for the study.

Table 4 Study Participant List

Name	Participant Description
Participant A	Participant A was a middle-aged ceramic artist and graphic designer living in western Canada who also owned a local art studio. Although her interest in job searching was casual, she was considering looking for a full-time graphic design position within the following year in case her business did not work out. Although her business was based in Canada, most of her customers were Korean nationals who lived in the area, and so used mainly Korean to interact with them. Although she could speak English, she felt that her command of the English language could be better, and was considering taking some more English language courses, but said she never found the time. She wanted to participate in the study to see if an online ESL course was right for her.
Participant B	Participant B was a Korean woman in her late 30s living in eastern

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	<p>Ontario, Canada. She worked full-time as a marketer for a local culinary institute. She dealt with customers in different languages, as many of the students of the institute were international students themselves who spoke several languages, including Korean.</p> <p>However, she felt that learning English more could help advance her career, so she wanted to try out the online trial course to get a taste of the different study experience.</p>
Participant C	<p>Participant C was a middle-aged Korean man living in western Canada. He moved to Canada a few years before and has not worked since. In Korea, he had worked as an engineer for an important electronics firm in Seoul, and expressed interest in working as an engineer for a local company in Canada. As a result, his interest in Canadian job searching was high. He felt comfortable reading and writing in English, but felt very uncomfortable speaking in the language. As a result, his interest in the trial course was two-fold: not only did he want to improve his spoken English skills, but he also wanted to start learning about job searching in Canada.</p>
Participant D	<p>Participant D was a university student in his early 20s residing in South Korea. He was considering moving to Canada in the near future to continue his studies or to find work. Although he has taken EFL courses in Korea to help advance his career, he did not</p>

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	<p>feel comfortable conversing with native English speakers. Just like Participant C, his interest in the trial course was two-fold. He wanted to improve his English proficiency and start learning about the job searching process in Canada.</p>
Participant E	<p>Participant E was almost finished her university in Korea at the time of participating in the study, and was in western Canada on a student visa to supplement her education in Canada so she could learn English. She had taken EFL courses in the past in Korea, but found her practice in the language limited outside of EFL classes. She would like to expand her practice of the English language by studying in an environment where she would interact mostly with native English speakers. Although she was not planning on looking for work in Canada soon, she was interested in the possibility of doing so in the future and would like to learn more about looking for a job in Canada. She was also interested in the DE aspect of the course, and was looking like to consider this form of language course delivery as an option when she decides to take language courses, either English or some other language, in the future.</p>

Instrumentation

The material for the trial course was taken from various sources. The basic grammatical material was taken from various ESL pages that addressed the verb tenses in

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question. The researcher provided more relevant description and examples that were relevant to the job searching topic at hand. The material on job searching is a basic summary of recommendations provided by well-known job searching and recruiting sites, such as Monster, Randstand and others. The questions for the interview were taken from the theme areas identified in the literature review. The idea behind the questions was to either further confirm the themes identified in the literature or to see if other themes emerged from the participant responses.

Procedures

The researcher contacted potential participants in a major metropolitan area in Western Canada, which has a large Korean population. Initial contact was made using the telephone or in meetings to determine if students were interested in participating in the study. If the potential participants demonstrated some interest, the researcher sent a participant recruitment letter by email to them (*Appendix A*). In this letter, the purpose of the study was introduced, followed by an explanation of the researcher's role. An overview of the methodology, course and interview structure was provided. The researcher strongly reiterated the confidential nature of the course and interview results and reassured participants that complete participant confidentiality would be observed. Potential participants were provided with timeframes regarding the length of the trial course and interview, and the expected outcomes and results.

If participants agreed to participate, the researcher provided instructions for the process of obtaining completed consent forms (*Appendix B*). In all cases, the researcher received completed consent forms by e-mail. As soon as he received them, he sent complete instructions of the course, including course access, login information and basic

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information about the course. The email also reiterated the expected length of time to complete the course and that any course assessments would be kept confidential. Once the participants were about to complete the course activities, the researcher arranged interview times with the participants, either by e-mail or telephone interviews. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview questions, outlined later in *Chapter 4* in the *Interview Results* section.

The Trial Course

Once participants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher added an account to a trial course developed and designed using Moodle, a popular LMS. Once done, he would send an email to the participants with the appropriate login information and basic instructions on how to access the course. Participants then started the trial course on their own time, with the researcher as the instructor. They generally followed the instructions in the course and interacted with the instructor or other participants as required in the course and asked specific questions about the course or course material. Specific participant experiences in the course can be found in fourth chapter of this thesis. The trial course was made up of five sections, as shown in *Figure 5* shown in the next page. *Appendix C* provides some screenshots of the course website in *Moodle*.

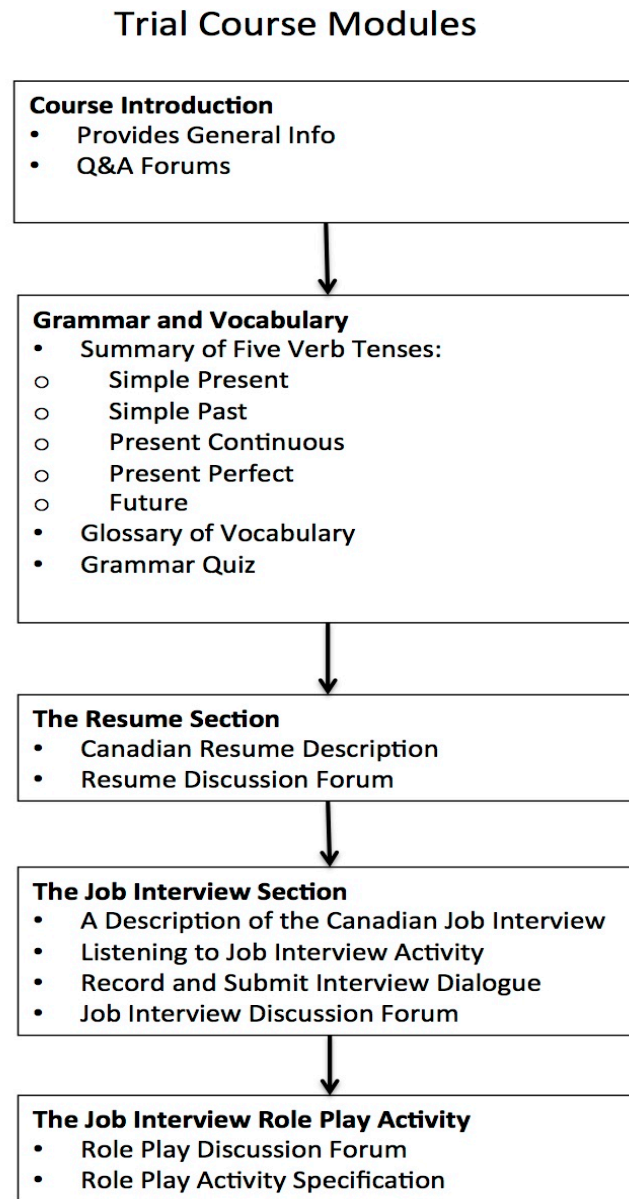


Figure 5 Trial Course Modules

Course Introduction.

The course introduction served mainly as a gentle introduction to the trial course unit for the participants. It provided general information about the course, its purpose and what participants could expect in the unit. This section reiterated the purpose of the trial

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course was for them to experiment with the online, DE characteristics of the course. There was no new course material in this section, and participants did not have any activities to carry out in the section. Two separate forums were provided for this purpose: one for them to report questions on the course material itself, and the other in case they had questions regarding the course logistics, such questions about assignment submissions, the technologies used in the course, and other similar questions.

Grammar and Vocabulary.

This section looked at the grammar concepts that participants needed to learn about to be able to converse and discuss about the topic of looking for a job in Canada. In this case, the grammatical topics covered include the five common verb tenses used in such a topic: simple present, simple past, present continuous, present perfect and future tenses. One course page was dedicated to each verb tense, and first addressed the general usage of the tense, as well as more specific usage in relation to the topic of job searching. The section also contained a glossary of specific vocabulary commonly used in job searching, and any specific reference to these terms throughout the course were linked so that learners could access their definitions without explicitly going to the glossary page.

The Resume Section.

This section introduced participants to the resume style used in Canada. A page was dedicated to explaining what a resume was, the typical format, what information it could contain and other information that it should not contain. Participants were to find samples of Canadian resumes on the Internet and post in a forum the differences

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between a resume in Korea and that used in Canada. Participants were also expected to interact with other participants within the forum and to discuss their thoughts on the material that they learned in this section.

The Job Interview Section.

Here, participants learned about the job interview and its role in the job search process in Canada. This section contained three activities. The first activity asked participants to listen to a sample job interview dialogue and fill out a form containing the textual version of the interview, filling in the blanks with the missing the words from the dialogue. The second activity asked them to listen to two interview dialogues and record the dialogues out loud into separate audio files, submitting them electronically to the instructor once done. The third activity then asked them to provide their thoughts on the differences between a job interview in Korea and those in Canada, based on the information presented in the course.

The Job Interview Role-playing.

This section provided one activity only: a job interview role-playing exercise between the participant and the instructor. In this activity, participants were asked to find any job advertisement and assume the role of job candidate applying for the position, and were to participate in a mock-up job interview for the position. In the interests of time, the entire interview was limited to five to ten minutes in length. The interview was conducted using video-conferencing software technology, such as *Skype* or *Google Hangouts*.

Data Collection Procedures

In the study, the researcher acted as a facilitator or instructor for the course in

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question, essentially teaching the participants the course module and participating in dialogues discussing Canadian culture and way of life. The researcher researched available online material and course module material discussing ESL topics related to Canadian culture and current events, and organized them into a cohesive course module using a popular learning management system (LMS), *Moodle*. Although the participants did study ESL in the past, studying in an online DE environment was a relatively new concept for them.

The topic of interest in the course unit was *Looking for a Job in Canada*, so chosen because this was of interest and of particular relevance to many Koreans living in Canada. The focus of the Moodle course unit was on conversational English discussing this topic, all discussed within the DE environment. The researcher observed student activities and progress and took field notes of the student experiences. In addition, participants engaged in asynchronous forums and synchronous conferences, all of which were recorded with the permission of the participants. The forum texts and the conference recordings were part of the data collected for the study. In addition, participants had carried out specific assignments for the course. The output of the assignments helped judge the participants' progress in the course and the usefulness of the module to the participants. Participants took approximately five to seven hours to complete the course unit.

In the study, the researcher collected three different kinds of data. Two types of data were collected at the time participants were studying the course; the third type was collected upon completion of the course during the interview stage. These are summarized in the table below and described in more detail later.

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Table 5 Summary of Data Collected in the Study

Data Collected During Course Study	Data Collected Upon Completion of Course
<i>Field Notes:</i> Collected via observations of the participants as they studied the course modules.	<i>Interview Transcripts:</i> To get an idea on what the participants' thoughts of the online ESL experience.
<i>Assignment Submissions:</i> Included text and audio assignment submissions to assess the participants' progress in the course modules.	

Field Notes.

Field notes were collected during the time participants proceeded through the course. These notes were a result of the researcher's observations on the participant progress in the course, and focused on things such as course user-friendliness, participant progress in the course activities and the general instructor-student discussions that took place during the course. *Appendix C* provides the course unit that was used for the participants during the study. For the purposes of this study, the course module was changed to include content of more relevant Canadian culture; in this case, the topic focus was looking for a job in Canada.

Participant assignment submissions.

In the course, participants carried out certain language-learning activities and submitted some sample assignments to help measure their progress and improvement of proficiency level as they progressed through the course unit. The *Moodle* course unit provided the instructions for these activities and allowed participants to submit their assignments electronically and quickly. The submissions included one or two-page

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written assignments or forum postings to check their proficiency in English writing as they wrote about the topic of looking for a job in Canada, and how it compared to looking for a job in Korea. They also included audio files to check their oral fluency as they talked about the same topic. Every effort was made to ensure that the activities provided were appropriate based on the English proficiency level the participants possessed at the time. To ensure a more interactive experience with other students and the researcher, a native English speaker, participants were also asked to participate in a short job interview role-playing exercise, which would last no more than five to ten minutes. The researcher took notes on the presentation, which became part of the study field notes used for further analysis.

Interview Questions.

After completing the unit, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants. The purpose of the interview was to get the participant input and opinions about the course: what they liked, how the course could be improved, how they felt about studying English in a DE environment and if they would repeat the experience. The interviews were held in person at a disclosed location that was convenient for them or via videoconference at a predetermined time. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to a maximum of one hour. The data collected from these interviews consisted of a set of interview transcripts, which were analyzed for common themes and patterns.

The researcher interviewed each of the course participants to get an overall idea of their experience with the course. The sample interview questions included the following:

1. What are the main strengths of the course?

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2. How could the course be improved? What elements in the course did you dislike the most?
3. Did you find the technology used in the course easy to use? Can you tell me which technologies, such as navigating the web site, assignment drop boxes, videoconferencing applications, did you find most useful while learning in this way?
4. How easy have you found the course material to understand? Describe areas in the course where you found the course easy to understand, and other areas more difficult.
5. Do you feel that you received enough practice of the material learned to be able to use the material on your own? If not, what other activities would you prefer to see in a language course?
6. Do you feel that the online course environment was effective in helping you retain the material learned? Please describe why you think it was or was not effective.
7. Have you taken ESL/EFL courses in a traditional class environment before? Was there something in this environment missing in the online course that would help you learn English more effectively (more face-to-face interaction, etc).
8. Would you consider taking an online course in the future to learn English or any other language?

Data Analysis Procedures.

Creswell defines the data analysis process of a qualitative study as the means of “making sense out of text or image data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). It involves preparing the data, getting a general understanding of the data, coming up with different themes or codes from the data and interpreting the results from the themes generated. Generally, qualitative analysis follows a specific set of steps from the moment data is collected to

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the time findings are reported. *Figure 6* outlines the data analysis procedure that this case study used.

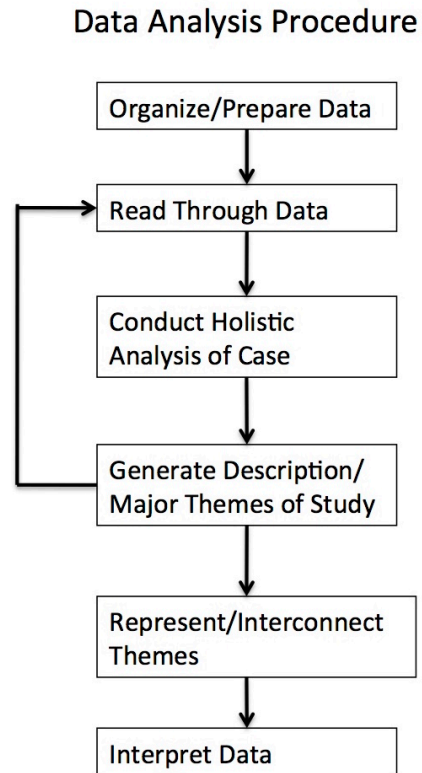


Figure 6 Data Analysis Procedure in the Study

Chapter 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At this point, the researcher has gathered data to help formulate a case study analysis of the general experiences and opinions of the Korean participants with regards to the effectiveness of integrating cultural content in distance-delivered language courses. This section highlights these experiences from the various forms of data collected, as well as the common themes that were extracted from this raw data in an attempt to summarize the the challenges, guidelines and recommendations for the integration of cultural content into DE ESL courses.

Participant Course Results

The researcher made a variety of observations and field notes during the time participants took part in the course units. These data included participant experiences with the technologies used in the course delivery, participant interactions with other learners and the instructor, course assignment results and forum discussions made within the course forums and other activities carried out in the modules.

It is important to reiterate that the focus here was not on complete grammatical accuracy of the written text or audio recordings, but mainly on the language proficiency the participants demonstrated as they discussed topics related to Canadian culture and current events. In essence, the idea here was to determine if the participants were able to apply what they have learned in the course to successfully carry out the assignments and conversations with relative ease. The following are some of the findings from the participants' activities in the course unit, organized by course unit section.

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Course Introduction.

The course introduction provided general information about the course, its purpose and what participants could expect in the unit. Participants had no tangible assignments to carry out for the course. However, as the participants were new to the concept of DE, they were told that they should read all of the introductory information provided in the section. Some made use of the two forums dedicated to questions about the course or its logistics. Participants were encouraged to participate in the forums, but the researcher always strived to get their questions answered as quickly as possible.

Moodle forums were not the only venue that the students could use to ask their questions. Many preferred more private approaches to asking questions, the most common of which were sending a simple email to the instructor or text messaging. The technology used for text messaging was not the popular text-messaging software used in common platforms; such as *Skype*, *FaceTime* and other text messaging software found in common computer and mobile phone platforms. A common text-messaging platform used by Koreans is called *KakaoTalk*, a Korean text messaging platform found in most mobile platforms that allows users to not only write text messages, but also make free telephone calls via Wi-Fi or cellular networks.

The most common questions about the course did not deal with the course material, but with the technical aspects of using Moodle. One participant, Participant B, was not sure how to post items in a forum, and asked whether she should add a discussion topic. A few students were confused about how the course was structured, until they read through the orientation readings in the introductory section. Another participant, Participant C, commented on how this was the first time he took an online

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course, especially, an online language-learning course. All in all, the instructor strived to answer all of the questions in a timely fashion to ensure that participants could get up to speed as quickly as possible so that they could proceed with the course in an efficient manner.

Grammar and Vocabulary.

All participants were comfortable studying the grammar concepts in the trial course, and understood the material, mainly because it acted as a refresher to past grammar courses they had taken in Korea. Because the section dealt mainly with reading the material and answering a quiz and less with practicing speaking skills, they felt relatively comfortable carrying out the section on their own in a DE environment. The grammatical topic was the usage of five verb tenses in English. One thing that they appreciated was that the material also gave specific examples on how the verb tenses were used in a job search context, and introduced specific vocabulary commonly used in job searching, such as *resume*, *job interviewing*, *candidate*, *interviewer*, *interviewee* and many more, so they were able to connect the material learned with the topic under discussion in preparation for the activities that were to come later in the trial course.

At the end of this section, participants carried out an online, multiple-choice quiz on selecting the appropriate verb tense for specific sentences. This was important so that participants could differentiate between the verb tense usage, something which some participants confessed they found somewhat challenging. Participants answered thirty questions online using their web browsers on their computers or portable devices.

Appendix D provides a list of some of the questions in the quiz. *Table 6* below provides the quiz grade per participant out of a total of 30 points.

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Table 6 Quiz Grades Per Participant

Participant	Quiz Grade (/30)
Participant A	26
Participant B	24
Participant C	25
Participant D	27
Participant E	27
Average	25.8

In general, students did well on the quiz. Participants were used to reading, studying and memorizing the material presented to them because this was expected of them in their traditional classes in Korea. They were able to apply the same techniques in the online course environment.

All participants mentioned they had studied this material before in Korean high schools, but they learned it mainly by memorization of grammatical rules and had trouble using this in more authentic contexts. Although this module was like a refresher for them, it did something more for them. According to Participant A, it presented the material in a realistic context: when to use these tenses when discussing looking for a job in Canada. The quiz helped them assess their knowledge of the material, and they liked receiving immediate feedback. They were able to see right away which answers they got right or wrong, and the system provided them with a link to the *Moodle* page where they could find more information about the topic related to the question at hand. Participants could navigate directly to the relevant course material to quickly figure out the reasoning behind the answer to the question. All of this helped them understand why

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the answer they chose was incorrect and provided them with extra practice with the verb tense usage.

One thing they liked was that any new terminology important to the course topic was defined in the module glossary and were linked to all instances of the terms found throughout the course. This saved them time from having to look up the words in the English-Korean dictionary; they would simply click on the link to get a definition. Of course, some mentioned that they came across some new words that were not in the glossary. For that, they would ask the instructor for a clarification of the word. However, they were encouraged to add the terms in the glossary themselves; they could either research the meaning themselves or others could pitch in and provide what they thought was the word's definition. The instructor would review the students' entries, and correct as needed. A few participants took advantage of this feature and thought this was a nice feature, especially since that once in the glossary, any instances of this new word would also be automatically linked to all instances of the word in the course.

The Resume Section.

For some participants, this section was their first exposure to the resume style used in Canada, as evidenced by the comments left in the relevant forums. One participant, Participant C, mentioned that he was surprised to learn about what he read in the course material regarding the typical format in a Canadian resume. He said, *"I am surprised that having personal information in a resume can disqualify you for the position in Canada. In Korea, you would be disqualified if you did not include this information."* Another participant, Participant B, posted in the relevant forum her Korean resume and a sample Canadian resume to explain the differences between a Canadian and Korean

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resume. Most participants interacted with others within the forum and discussed their thoughts on the material that they learned in this section.

As a result, many found that they were practicing their English writing skills by discussing the topic and interacting with others to express their agreement or disagreement on this topic. Many discussed in the forums their agreement that the Korean resume format included more personal information, such as marital status, gender, race and even a photograph, and discussed their surprise that these elements were not to be included in a Canadian resume. Discussions also revolved around the best format of a resume that would help land the job interview, length of the resume, and other resume topics, and provided their job-hunting experiences in Korea. Participant B even discussed the job-hunting and resume experiences of his Korean friend who was living in Canada for several years, and this provided some interest from other participants in the course. In all, the participants generally appreciated that they were not only learning English, but also getting some ideas about how a resume should be written in the Canadian job-search scene. Not only were they learning from the course material, but also learning from the interactions that they were having with other students.

Some participants, such as Participant A and Participant B, commented on how different interacting with other students in an online forum environment was from interacting in a traditional, face-to-face classroom environment. In a classroom environment, they were used to interacting with their classmates or instructors by verbally talking with them. In the online forums, they felt they had to think about what they wanted to say before expressing themselves in the forum. As a result, they felt that it took longer to express their opinions in this format than by verbally expressing them in

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real time.

On the other hand, some felt that having to think about how to express their opinions was an advantage when interacting in English, not being their native language. Participant C mentioned that he felt uncomfortable talking with native English speakers in real time, as he was afraid of making grammatical mistakes or talking with his accent that, according to him, might make understanding his speech difficult for others. As a result, he felt more comfortable writing English in the forums. He not only thought about what to say but how to say it in English, correcting any grammatical mistakes on the way, while not worrying about his accent. Other participants had similar opinions, although it appeared that Participant C was the most self-conscious about this. All participants agreed that there was a downside to this: it took much longer to post in a forum, when compared to talking to someone else or even posting in a forum using their native tongue.

The Job Interview Section.

This section provided three activities for participants to complete. The first one dealt with listening to a sample job interview dialogue, and then carrying out a fill-in-the-blanks quiz to fill in the blanks with the missing the words from the dialogue. The second asked participants to listen to two interview dialogues and read and record the dialogues out loud into separate audio files, and submit the files electronically to the instructor. The third activity asked the participants to provide their thoughts or opinions on the differences between a job interview in Korea and those in Canada, based on the information presented in the course.

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All of the participants did quite well in the fill-in-the-blank question. They were able to fill in all of the blanks correctly, with the exception of a few. Out of a total of sixteen blanks, all participants were able to identify most of the words correctly for the audio interview dialogue; most did achieve a perfect mark in this exercise. They mentioned that they had to listen to the dialogue at least two or three times to understand the dialogue properly. They essentially followed the recommended instructions of listening to the dialogue in its entirety, and then they listened to it again as they filled in the blanks. Two participants mentioned that they were not familiar with some of the words in the dialogue, which accounted for a less than perfect score in the exercise. Three of the participants initially thought that the dialogue went too fast for them, but they appreciated that they could listen to the dialogue as many times as they wanted.

The second activity dealing with recording some interview dialogues was the one activity that required a bit of adjustment for the participants. All of the participants were used to the traditional reading exercises found in many Korean EFL classes. However, the concept of recording the audio and submitting the audio files electronically was something new they had not experienced before. Despite the instructions on recording audio files in the different operating systems, many participants asked questions about this. One of the reasons for this confusion was that the instructions were given in English, and the participants configured their operating systems in their computers in the Korean language, so they found it somewhat difficult to follow along initially. Participant D, being based in Korea, was used to having all instructions and computer systems configured completely in Korean, and

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had trouble following along in English. The instructor helped him by providing specific instructions that would temporarily configure his computer in English, and was able to follow along after this. He then reconfigured his computer back to the Korean language when he was done.

Another participant, Participant C, was also not clear on how to submit files electronically in *Moodle*, since this was the first time he was using this feature in the course. The researcher mentioned that it was not much different than uploading a file to remote web site; the only caveat was that they had to confirm the file to be sent in the end; otherwise, the attached file would not be sent to the instructor. He had forgotten to do this and was surprised that the instructor had not received the file on time. After further clarification, he was able to send the file out to the instructor. Eventually, all participants were able to carry out the exercise successfully, although some had an easier time to pronounce all of the words correctly than others. All of them did several practice reads of the dialogue before submitting their final audio file to the instruction, something which they would not have been able to do in a traditional F2F environment. Participant B remembered that, in the F2F EFL courses she had taken in Korea, she would only get two chances to listen to the audio before she could carry out the required exercises related to the audio source in question.

The third exercise was a similar exercise that they carried out in the resume section, in that they needed to write about their experiences about job interviews and the differences between Canadian and Korean job interviews. As a result, they found it easier to start out this exercise than the other two activities of this section. In fact, some started doing this exercise before the other two. This suggested that they were

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able to get used to interacting with others in an asynchronous forum environment relatively quickly. Just like in the resume section, the participants spent some time drafting their responses and wrote in simple sentences to ensure that they made as few grammatical mistakes as possible. They did get more comfortable with the written interaction; Participant B compared this with texting their friends using their mobile devices, an activity she said that has grown exponentially in popularity in Korean society.

The Job Interview Role-playing.

This section dealt with the only synchronous activity in the trial course: a job interview role-playing exercise between the participant and the instructor. All participants were able to follow the instructions and post their job advertisement choices in the appropriate forum, and participants and instructor were able to set up a date and time for the interview. Participant D mentioned that he enjoyed looking for job advertisements, an activity that he said would help him look for a job later after he emigrates to Canada.

The role-playing activity has probably given the participants the most trouble in the course, mainly because of the educational system that they experienced in prior EFL courses in Korea. Prior research into the topic of the Korean educational system, such as the study by Park & Son (2009) described earlier in the section The Korean EFL Environment, has determined that Korean courses had traditionally used the rote learning system to teach students, and English classes were no exception. This learning was based on memorizing facts, not so much about learning how to use what they were learning. The participants mentioned that they were not exposed to many activities where they would express their opinions or they would enact in a role-playing scenario. As a result, some of

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the participants were not clear on what was expected of them. As participants asked their questions regarding this activity, the instructor answered the questions, and later updated the activity specifications to ensure that what was expected of them was made clear.

Another challenge for the participants was the ability to carry out a real time job interview in a foreign language. When the instructor asked a question in the mock-up interview, the participants did not have time to draft a response at the time, but the activity required them to answer almost immediately, as if they were in a real F2F conversation. They had time to prepare the answers of some of the questions before the interview, but they still had to carry out some level of improvisation to answer some of the questions specific to the job role they had selected for the interview. One participant, Participant C, found it particularly hard to come up with the appropriate answers at the moment of the interview, as he had trouble using some of the key terminology in English used in his engineering field, as well as his past work experience in Korea. The researcher had to rephrase the question a few times; one time, he had to move on to the next question to get the interview going.

The common issue for the participants was not the difficulty level of the questions asked, as many mentioned that they would have been able to answer the questions easily enough in Korean. Their issue was their ability to answer the questions correctly in English. Again, their concern for grammatical correctness was their main concern, even though they were told not to focus so much on perfect grammatical accuracy, but on enhancing their speaking fluency. They were encouraged to speak freely during the interview as if it were a regular, casual conversation with an acquaintance or friend. They were not penalized for all grammatical mistakes, unless the mistakes hindered the

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understanding of what they were trying to say or touched on the grammatical material already covered in the trial course; in this case, the five verb tenses described earlier.

In the end, some participants did get used to the role-playing activity, speaking more freely as the interviews progressed. In summary, the common problems found from their performance included their difficulty in improvising an answer to some of the questions posed to them, sometimes because they did not understand the questions properly or they had trouble expressing their ideas in English. However, as some of the participants have proven, learners can still get used to this with practice and hard work.

Interview Results

This section reports on the highlights taken from the interviews with the participants after they have completed the course. It is organized according to the major questions asked in the interview and highlights the responses from the participants. Important citations will be highlighted as required.

The following questions were asked.

1. What are the main strengths of the course?

All of the students mentioned the ability to study at the most convenient time from any location they wished. This was the most important consideration of taking an online course because the online course allowed them to work around their busy schedule. All of them were hesitant to participate in the course because of their busy schedules, but once they figured out the basics of taking a course online, they actually appreciated that there was no set schedule to the course and that they did not have to travel anywhere to participate in the course. Participant D mentioned the following:

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Wow. I do not have to change my schedule to attend a class at a specific time; I can study anytime when I have free time. And I do not have to travel to go to class. The time I save to travel I can spend studying.

Other participants reiterated one of the main advantages of the course; that is, they could study from any location they chose, even while waiting for a bus or train using their smartphones.

Two of the participants specifically mentioned that they liked the structure of the online course module. They liked having each section starting with a clear objective and all of the material and activities can be easily found. Of particular interest was a *YouTube* video of a sample job interview, which provided a welcoming break from having to read the course material; instead, they could watch a job interview in action. They also liked that there were a variety of activities, although some activities were more favoured than others, such as the activities more heavily focused on enhancing written skills. Many enjoyed interacting with others in the forum because it felt like texting friends using mobile devices, something with which they were familiar.

2. How could the course be improved? What elements in the course did you dislike the most?

Although the participants found the actual material of the course in general quite clear, some commented that the layout and look-and-feel of the site itself was somewhat dull and simple, especially when compared with traditional Korean websites, which, according to the participants, tend to have a busier, more cluttered look with many images and other multimedia elements. As such, they suggested more images to spice up the course material, while potentially assisting the students to understand the material on

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hand. This points to the need of considering the target audience when designing a course web site.

Moreover, some participants found the instructions on using the *Moodle* system could have been somewhat clearer. Most of them were unclear on how to submit assignments electronically and one was not sure how to post a message in a forum. Although instructions for all this was given, they thought the instructions could have been clearer. Part of the reason for this was that they sometimes did not understand the instructions in English and felt somewhat uncomfortable posting questions about this in the forums. Even if they could ask their questions with a private email to the instructor, they were not used to the asynchronous nature of the interaction and to not getting their answers right away, something that they were used when they were taking traditional, F2F ESL classes.

All participants agreed that one of the things that they had trouble with in this experience was the lack of physical presence of the instructor and, to a lesser degree, other classmates. In the beginning, they found themselves alone. Participant D commented that he was not sure how he could learn a language in a study environment with no one else present, unless he was just learning reading and writing. He added, *“I was not exactly sure how I could interact with the instructor if I was physically 10000 kilometres away from all of the other participants of the course”*. In addition, he was used to following the instructions of prior instructors, and was not used to not having to take verbal instructions directly from the instructor; he later found the instructions he needed in the Moodle pages. More clearer direction could have been provided in the introductory section of the trial course. Fortunately, after further communication with the instructor

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and other classmates using the forums provided, he was able to get direction, but just in the form of forum posts and email replies, with an occasional call via Skype.

3. Did you find the technology used in the course easy to use? Can you tell me which technologies, such as navigating the web site, assignment drop boxes, videoconferencing applications, did you find most useful while learning in this way?

Some participants, especially those who were not used to using computers, found it somewhat difficult at first to get used to using the technology in the course. However, once they got all of their questions answered and continued to use the course more as they progressed through the course, they ended up using it and liking it.

Everyone understood the concept of posting to forums and interacting with others, as many likened this to texting their friends on their mobile devices. All also carried out the online quizzes with few problems. They found the instant feedback that Moodle gave on these quizzes very useful, compared to getting the marked tests a few days later in a traditional classroom. For them, this meant that they could get the feedback immediately while the material was fresh in their minds. They could learn from their mistakes, referring back to the material so that they could understand why their answers were incorrect.

The fill-in-the-blanks quiz was also carried out with few problems, as evidenced by the grade results listed in *Table 7* in the next page.

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Table 7 Fill-in-the-Blank Quiz Grades

Participant	Fill-in-the-Blanks Quiz Grade (/16)
Participant A	16
Participant B	15
Participant C	15
Participant D	13
Participant E	15
Average	15

All listened to the audio dialogue first, and then they replayed the recording while filling in the blanks. Everyone did well in this quiz, but any errors that did occur were a result of spelling mistakes in their answers or not understanding the word that they were supposed to fill in. Again, participants appreciated the instant feedback that was provided after they completed the quiz. When they saw the correct answers for the blanks they answered incorrectly, they then looked it up and learned about the new vocabulary, thus helping them enhance their vocabulary skills and learning how to use the words that they picked up in the process.

The technical areas where participants had most trouble were in two specific areas. The first area was in recording an interview dialogue, where they were to read an interview dialogue into an audio file and submit the audio file electronically. Many had technical issues recording audio into a file using their computers. Although instructions were provided about how to do this in Windows and Mac OS X systems and many participants said that they generally understood the instructions, many participants encountered two problems in this area:

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- Some participants did not understand the instructions in their entirety and felt more comfortable reading the instructions in Korean than some found elsewhere online. However, as they read the instructions in Korean, some read the instructions in English at the same time to help them get a better understanding of the technical terminology used in the English instructions.
- Some of the participants used a different version of the Windows operating system than was assumed in the instructions provided. This meant that the exact procedure for recording audio in the different operating systems were not quite the same as outlined in the instructions and caused some confusion, which was later cleared up after the instructor answered their questions in the relevant forums.

The second area was in the job interview role-playing exercise. Although most participants did understand the notion of videoconferencing, some were somewhat confused using the technology, as they had not used it before in an educational setting. However, once they were told to treat this videoconference as a regular conversation with friends, they felt more comfortable with the experience once they got into it. The participants were given a choice of videoconferencing platforms to use for the exercise, such as Skype or Google Hangouts. All of them were most familiar with Skype, so they used Skype for their role-playing activity.

4. How easy have you found the course material to understand? Describe areas in the course where you found the course easy to understand, and other areas more difficult.

In general, all participants found the material clear. The glossary feature that linked the vocabulary to the course material was very helpful to participants, as it helped them understand the vocabulary in the current context without having them waste time

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searching for the meaning in a dictionary. Not only did they learn the language in the context of job searching in Canada, they also learned something useful about looking for a job. Some commented that they were surprised to learn about the differences between resumes and job interviews in Canada and Korea. This is an example of students using their prior knowledge (in this case, resume and job interviewing in Korea) to learn not only the language used in the context of job searching, but also the cultural implications of using correct resume writing and job interviewing techniques in Canada.

The area where they found the material somewhat unclear was in the specifications of the job interview role-playing activity. All participants were used to preparing for similar activities in a traditional F2F environment, where they could readily ask questions to instructors or other classmates in real time. However, in the DE setting, they felt somewhat alone, at least, physically, even though they were welcome to ask questions using the forums or by phone. When asked why they did not ask their questions in the forums, some commented that they felt shy to do so, while others mentioned that they felt unsure how to ask the right questions without the support of other classmates being there physically. Fortunately, their shyness decreased as they progressed through the course and got used to the activities and the course environment, and some began to enjoy the process.

5. Do you feel that you received enough practice of the material learned to be able to use the material on your own? If not, what other activities would you prefer to see in a language course?

All participants appreciated the wide variety of activities that the course provided, even though the course was designed as a trial course to give them a flavour of a DE

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course environment. Although the course did not provide them with enough practice to make them feel comfortable to discuss job searching in English on their own, they felt it provided a good introduction to the topic and provided further reading material about the topic at hand. This gave them the opportunity to move forward and learn more about the topic and to practice the language of job searching at the same time. Two of the participants became interested in the topic and used these additional resources to learn more and practice the language at the same time. In addition, the forums allowed them to touch on areas of the topic of their choosing and interact with other participants on the topic. Participant A said:

I had fun discussing the topic and I learned a lot about looking for a job in the process, which will hopefully make me feel more confident when I need to look for a job. In addition, I felt I could discuss the topic on my own terms. Basically, if I wanted to learn, I had to work at it, and the instructor would not push me either way. In short, I felt more in control of my learning; the instructor was there as a guide.

In other words, some of the participants mentioned that the course was more focused on the student, as opposed to some of their previous classes, where they had to follow the instructions of the teacher.

Despite this, participants would have liked to have seen more activities which would have allowed them to practice using their speaking and listening skills to discuss the topic not only with the instructor but with other students as well, such as in a group video conferencing environment. Apart from the video conference role-playing activity, almost all of the activities provided focused on the practice of the reading and writing

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skills. Instead of discussing the topic with others in a F2F class, participants voiced their opinions and answered questions in written Moodle forums. Participant B commented on one activity where participants were to read and record a sample interview and submit the recording using Moodle's electronic assignment submission process. Her comment was:

“Although it helped me practice the pronunciation of the words I was reading, it was not an interactive exercise where I could get a response from someone else. I would have liked to have seen more interactivity.”

6. Do you feel that the online course environment was effective in helping you retain the material learned? Please describe why you think it was or was not effective.

All participants believed the online experience was effective in helping them learn the language as well as the material in Canadian job searching. They felt the platform was most effective in helping them with their reading and writing skills. The only difference for them was that in an online environment, they were reading mainly from the screen, instead of from printed material, which was the norm in a traditional F2F class environment. Likewise, in an online environment, they wrote mainly on the computer screen and submitting assignments electronically, whereas in an F2F class, they were used to writing on paper, although sometimes they would also write on a computer as well. The point was that it did not matter for them where they were writing; just that they were practicing reading and writing.

Most participants felt that the course was not quite as effective in helping them practice their speaking and listening skills, but also felt that this was not a reflection of the quality of the online trial course itself; it was mainly a reflection of the nature of distance-delivered courses. Participant A mentioned the following:

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I wish I could have interacted more verbally with the instructor and with other classmates. I do, however, understand that the nature of an online DE course means that I can study on my own without having to have a physical conversation with others in the course, but I still think old-fashioned, conversation with native speakers of the language is important for language learning.

Although participants enjoyed the activities provided to help them enhance their speaking skills, they felt what was missing, in general, was the physical interaction with other classmates and the instructor to help them carry out authentic real-time conversations with others. They felt that the role-playing activity did a good job mimicking this environment and it does provide an authentic environment to practice the language in a telephone or conference environment. However, their general feeling was that it was not yet a perfect replacement of a real-time, F2F conversation.

All participants agreed that there were different features of the trial course that helped them learn the language and the material included the following:

- The instant feedback provided after completing the quizzes and exercises.
- The glossary linking feature that links the words of the glossary to the same words found in all of the course material
- The forums with which participants could think about what and how to write in the posts before actually posting them.

7. Have you taken ESL/EFL courses in a traditional class environment before? Was there something in this environment missing in the online course that would help you learn English more effectively (more face-to-face interaction, etc)?

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All of the participants have taken ESL courses in Canada or EFL courses in Korea because they felt that they needed to learn English to further their career. All of these courses were provided in the traditional F2F environment. One of the things they disliked about the traditional courses they attended, apart from having to be in class at a specific time and place, was that the courses mainly taught grammatical rules and vocabulary and expected them to learn by rote memorization, which meant that the material was often not very relevant for them. One of the things they appreciated about this online course was that the material taught dealt with a more cultural topic that many thought was relevant to them: looking for a job in Canada. As a result, they felt that this added relevancy helped them retain what they learned. In addition, the course did not focus on memorization, but using the language in more authentic scenarios.

Despite this, the real-time physical instructor-student interaction was the one thing that they thought was lacking, as all participants agreed that such interaction would have helped them practice their conversational skills with native English speakers, even if the parties involved conversed from different locations using some form of videoconferencing technology. They felt that this would help them feel more comfortable using their speaking and listening skills in English. Participant D mentioned:

It is nice to have the opportunity to participate in a virtual role-playing activity where people interact with others in a video conferencing environment [referring to the job interview role-playing activity offered in the trial course]. However, I do not think there is anything quite like to talking to people together in the same room.

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He went on to mention that sometimes he found that technology could get in the way with actually having a meaningful and relevant conversation with other parties. Some participants have experienced technical difficulties using video conferencing technologies, such as choppy video, broken sound or even connection issues.

Although video conferencing communication technology has improved over the years, problems did occur in the trial course. Participant C had some issues using the Google Hangouts videoconferencing platform while carrying out the job interview role-playing activity with the course, as he experienced a loss of video and choppy audio during part of the conference, which interfered with proper communication. The student mentioned, *“At times, it felt like were trying to diagnose the technical issues than actually carrying out the actual conversation”*. As it turned out, the issue with the connection was attributed to an issue with his Internet connection at the time. Fortunately, the instructor and the student made the best of the situation and managed to carry out the rest of the activity. This experience was an argument that some participants made that if an online course were going to offer virtual conferencing activities such as this, it would be better to offer several smaller activities instead of one big one at the end of the course. In this way, students would get more practice using the technologies and carrying out such activities, without having to worry so much if such technical issues occurred during one of these many sessions.

8. Would you consider taking an online course in the future to learn English or any other language?

All the participants except for one would consider taking an online ESL course again. They enjoyed what they considered the following advantages of an

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online course:

1. They can study on their schedule from any location they choose.
2. They can study on their own without the pressure of making a mistake in front of other classmates.
3. When they post to forums, they can think about what they want to say before they post it, as opposed to speaking their thoughts in a traditional classroom in real time.
4. The Moodle system provided immediate feedback and results of the completed quizzes and exercises.

Despite the advantages, they also noted a few disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage for them was there were not enough activities where they could practice having a real-time conversation with native English speakers. This was somewhat mitigated by the inclusion of a real time video conferencing student-instructor interaction, but all considered the real time interaction an important aspect of language learning to help them feel more comfortable speaking about topics that were relevant to them.

Most participants felt that they would consider taking an online ESL course if it could provide an environment where they could get not just written input in the form of forums, but also more verbal input as well as more realistic scenarios where they could practice their speaking and listening skills to discuss topics of interest to them.

Currently, the participants felt that they did not benefit from as much oral input from other classmates as they have received in a F2F class in the past, but this was expected given the short time frame of the trial course. In other words, they would consider the

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course if it were to offer a variety of activities that would cover as much of the four main language skills as well as mimic as closely as possible the oral interactions between the students found in an F2F course.

One important point about language learning classes was that language learning should not occur just in class, but outside of class, and an online class is no different. This was what some participants found out when they ended up forgetting what they learned if they did not study regularly. They had expected that they could read and study the material on their own and that technology would help them learn more quickly. One mentioned the following: *“I thought I would learn more easily using all this technology in the course, but it does not seem that much different than any other course in the sense that I still have to practice what I have learned. I can never get over how hard it is to learn a language”*. This could attest to the fact that students can attend a language class online or in a traditional class. Either way, if they do not take the time to practice the material again with repetition, they will most likely forget the material.

Important Themes in a Successful DE ESL Course

Several themes emerged from the results of the study, and appeared to be essential if a DE ESL course is to be successful. The five main themes that were found included: convenience, the need for self-discipline, the focus on the learner, the need for interaction and technology. *Table 8* provides a brief summary of the major study findings for each of these themes. What follows afterwards is a more detailed account of these conclusions, organized by theme.

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Table 8 Major Study Findings by Theme

Theme	Major Findings From Study
Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants did not have to attend a physical class to study. • They could study anytime without following a set schedule. • Participants did not have to waste time travelling to another location. • Some concern about not having an instructor physically present with regards to assessing spoken English proficiency.
Need For Self-Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants used to teacher-imposed discipline in prior EFL classes in Korea. • They took some time to get used to imposing their own discipline and making the course material “their own”. • Instructor considered more as a facilitator than a teacher in the Korean sense of the word.
Focus on the Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants used to studying topics of little relevance in previous Korean EFL courses. • Instructor acted more as a guide providing sample activities and content. • Participants felt more responsible for their own learning. • Participants easily able to tailor course activities to something of special interest or relevance to them. • Participants able to take control of their learning.
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants appreciated the variety of activities, which allowed them to interact with content, instructor and other participants in the form of Moodle content and forums. • Found higher levels of written interaction in the course compared to traditional Korean EFL courses. • Found lower levels of physical/spoken interaction in the course. • Participants comfortable interacting with content in website.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants less comfortable dealing with spoken and listening interaction.
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of technology more prevalent in a DE environment compared to traditional Korean EFL classes.• Participants took some time to get used to the technologies in the beginning.• Participants found using the technologies similar to technologies they used before, especially posting text messages in forums.• Participants enjoyed using the technologies used in the course.• DE courses more sensitive to technology outages than traditional F2F courses.• Instructions on using technologies crucial in a DE course.

Convenience.

All of the participants of the study had very busy schedules with work and family commitments. Although they demonstrated interest in the concept of online ESL learning, some progressed through the course activities very slowly because of their other commitments. On the one hand, the participants liked the convenience of not having to attend a class to study; they liked the convenience of studying from the comforts of their own homes and working around their schedules to study. There were two reasons for the convenience that all participants liked to reiterate.

First, they could study anytime without following a schedule set by someone else. One participant was able to carry out some of the activities while waiting for a bus or sitting in a coffee shop or restaurant. He said that this saved him time because they could use the wait time as productive time that can help get work done more quickly and save time to do other things later. For some, however, studying in public

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places, especially studying languages, had its limitations. One student mentioned that, although it was convenient to study in public places, she found it difficult to practice speaking without disturbing others around her, so she focused on reading or writing activities until she could practice the speaking activities in a more private setting.

The second reason for the convenience was that the participants did not have to waste time travelling to another location to attend the class; they could access the class from anywhere they had access to the Internet. One of the participants, Participant B, was actually living in eastern Ontario at the time of the study, and was interested in trying out a course from thousands of kilometres away. For her, this meant that she did not have to necessarily look locally for good ESL programs; she could conceivably look for online courses anywhere in the country or in the world, for that matter. Of course, she also appreciated not having to take a five-hour flight just to attend the class.

However, for some participants, this convenience was somewhat of a double-edged sword. The idea of not having an instructor physically present to assess their improvement in English proficiency left them wondering, at first, about the validity of learning English on their own in the beginning. They were used to instant feedback from instructors who were physically present in a traditional classroom environment, as well as from fellow classmates. Some felt that this lack of physical presence would hinder their ability to practice conversational English with a native speaker in a real life setting, and that having such a presence was a necessity in effective language learning. Fortunately, the role-playing activity allowed them to eventually realize that they could also have this authentic practice in a videoconference environment as well, so this

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helped mitigate their concerns in the end.

Just like participants had felt that the lack of physical presence of the instructor and other classmates did not provide them with the English practice, they had also felt that studying alone from home would not provide them with the exposure necessary to learn and understand the cultural aspects of the target language. Eventually, they were able to learn about the cultural differences between Canada and Korea with respect to job searching by reading the material on the *Moodle* trial course and interacting with others in the course using the forums provided. In addition, the role-playing activity provided some cultural exposure in a videoconference environment that, according to the participants, adequately mimicked a F2F role-playing activity.

The Need For Self-discipline.

All participants were familiar with the discipline in the language learning activities of traditional ESL/EFL classroom imposed by the instructor and, to some degree, fellow classmates. One of the comments mentioned was that in a Korean EFL class, it was usually the instructor who would unanimously decide the activities students would carry out and the material to be learned without input from the students. For Korean students, instructors, including English instructors, are generally quite highly regarded, and students are used to following their instructions without questioning their decisions or the decisions of the institution. This ties in with the findings of existing research showing the current state of the Korean EFL industry, especially from Yook and Kimchiland, as described earlier in the section EFL/ESL for the Korean Market.

This type of discipline was not apparent to them in the online language trial course. Participant B mentioned that in Korean tradition, the *“instructor is the leader*

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who determines the flow of the class, what activities to do and not to do and what material to learn. I did not find this type of authority in this course without the physical presence of the instructor.” Participant D said, *“In an online course environment, you seem to be on your own.”* Although the instructor does give some high-level direction as to material and activities in the course, it was the student participants who took the material and provided their own insight and direction into the discussions and activities, just like they would have to do if they were to discuss the topics in the real world. Participant A worded it like this: *“The instructor opened the door by providing the material; it was up to the student to go through the door and make the material his or her own.”* For all participants, having the self-discipline to carry this out, especially in an environment without anybody else with them physically, took some getting used to, but all agreed that such self-discipline was necessary to be successful in DE courses.

Although the instructor was not physically present in the course, it also became clear to the participants that there was a different teaching methodology in the DE course: the instructor taught not by speaking directly in an F2F environment, but via asynchronous forums, *Moodle* feedback mechanisms, instructor feedback and other forms of electronic communication, including email and videoconferencing. However, it was up to the students to carry out the work; if they wanted to learn, they would need to work on it themselves. No one else was going to do the work for them or force them to do it; hence, the need for self-discipline. Participant D mentioned that the hardest part in doing the course was not the material but *“just getting into it when there was no instructor or other classmates physically with you to ‘impose’ some form of discipline to get you to stay focused on the studies.”* In other words, because he was physically alone

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while doing the studies, he felt it difficult to focus because of other distractions at his home (Apparently, he lived in a small apartment with TV and video games in the same room, and felt that he lost focus too easily). When asked if there was some way to improve the course to ensure that he did not lose this focus, he answered that he could easily get distracted, unless the topic of discussion was of high interest to him. Although he found the course material interesting and did learn something about looking for a job in Canada, it was not his primary focus of interest at the time. So, for him, one way to improve the course was to ensure that the course always consider the interests of the students to keep them motivated to study and learn.

Other participants did find the material more engaging and were interested to learn the differences between resume and job interview formats in both Canada and Korea. As such, once they got accustomed to the online format of the trial course, they eventually found the self-discipline to continue to study and learned the language and material used in job interviews in the process. All in all, participants did get to learn the differences in Korean and Canadian cultural values in two fronts: first, how job searching differs in the two cultures and, second, how Canadian teaching methodologies compare with those in Korea.

The Focus on the Learner.

An interesting finding was that they found the course more focused on the learner than what they were used to in some previous ESL/EFL courses. All participants mentioned that most of the previous English courses simply taught English and grammar dealing with phrases and topics that were not really relevant to them. This finding agrees with the findings from existing research described in the

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section EFL/ESL for the Korean Market, especially from Meurant. In other words, the instruction was more centred on the instructor who taught the material simply because it was in the curriculum without taking into consideration the learning needs of the students. As the material was not tailored to the needs of the student, they found the courses monotonous and the material difficult to retain.

In this trial course, participants were learning English and used the language to discuss a cultural topic that had special relevance to them, as some of them were in the process of looking for a job, or were considering doing so in the near future.

Participant B said:

I needed to update my resume soon and appreciated the information regarding the typical format of a Canadian resume and learned how the job interview process works in Canada. I learned the language of job searching, which helped me feel more confident in the role-playing activity of the course. I am hoping this will help me feel more confident in a real job interview.

Participant D mentioned the following:

I was so used to following the instructor's instructions in previous courses that it took me some time to get used the format of this course. Essentially, I felt responsible for my own learning.

In short, they felt that the instructor was there more as a guide providing some sample activities and language-learning recommendations. As they progressed through the course, they felt somewhat more empowered in that they could take control of their learning by following the studies at their own pace and carrying out the activities in a way they thought necessary to help them learn the material. The activities were designed

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in such a way that allowed them to explore their own Korean culture regarding job search and compare this with the Canadian culture. The course's ability to tailor the activities to their own preferences also contributed to this theme.

Participant A was working as a graphic designer and tailored the job interview role-playing activity into a job interview designed specifically for graphic design positions. She even brought a portfolio with her previous work samples for the interview. During the activity, she mentioned that she used a similar portfolio in a previous interview she had in Korea, and even used specialized industry terminology that she had learned in preparation for this activity. In short, her interest in graphic design allowed her to tailor the activity to something that discusses a topic of special interest and relevance to her, which helped her learn not only the material of the course but also the specialized terminology of her field in English.

This theme is also related to the theme of convenience, described earlier. The participants' ability to study anytime and anywhere without concern of attending scheduled classes contributed to their taking control of their own learning. All of the participants mentioned this as a big advantage for taking such a course. Such experiences gave special meaning to the learner-focused theme of the course and, as a result, made this theme a prevalent finding in this study.

Interaction.

With the convenience of studying anywhere and anytime comes another theme in the discussions with the participants and in their participation in the course: interaction. The section DE Language Instructional Approaches of this thesis briefly described the three important forms of interaction, as outlined by *Moore & Kearsley*

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(2005): the interaction between learner and the course content, learner and instructor and learner and other learners. Participants interacted with the content delivered to them mainly through the *Moodle* and the additional resources that were provided to them. They interacted with the instructor via the *Moodle* forums and by asking questions by email or by telephone, as well as through the assessment of the various activities, including the job interview role-playing activity. Finally, they also interacted with other students through their participation in the various forums and their communicating their job search experiences with other participants. It was only during the role-playing activity when the participants interacted with the instructor verbally and in real time.

In general, participants appreciated the variety of activities that the course provided to help them practice their listening skills, such as the exercises where participants would listen to sample job interviews and even watch a *YouTube* video showing an authentic job interview with the typical questions that could be asked. They also found the exercise where they were reading and recording a job interview dialogue and submitting the audio file electronically helped them with their pronunciation, which would help them prepare for a real job interview.

Participants, however, focused their interview discussions regarding this theme on the little real-time interaction between the participants of the course and the instructor. This presented challenges for participants when practicing their English speaking and listening skills. Many felt that what the course required was more activities where students could interact with other students and native speakers of English in real time and gain more exposure to the Canadian culture, just like in an

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authentic conversation, either face-to-face or in a virtual environment. Participant D asked the question, “*How can I practice speaking English if I have no one to speak with at home where I usually attend the virtual class?*” The only activity that offered some form of synchronous interaction was the job interview role-playing activity. In addition, participants interacted only with the instructor in this activity, not with other participants, as the activity mocked an interview with one interviewer interviewing the interviewee. All participants would have preferred that, in preparation for this role-playing activity, the course offered a greater amount of smaller role-playing activities where students would interact with both instructors and other students. Time did not permit to have such a greater number of such activities, as the course was developed as a small trial to give participants a taste of DE studying, but this was something to consider if the course were to be designed as a more involved DE language course.

All of the participants were comfortable interacting with the content; that is, carrying out the reading and writing activities in an online environment. For them, they could read just as well in the classroom or at home; in fact, most people felt more comfortable reading the material from the comforts of their home as opposed to a traditional classroom, where, as one participant put it, “*students can get easily distracted from the presence of many other students in the same room*”. The same could be said about writing. Most of the participants said they felt more comfortable writing in an environment where they felt more at home, where they could think about what they wanted to say without the distraction or pressure of dealing with other students in the same room. One student put it this way:

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In a traditional ESL classroom, if I have to give my opinions or say something, I would have to say it there and then without any chance of thinking what I wanted to say. At least, in the course forums, I am able to think about what I wanted to say before writing it down.

Thus, the participants felt more comfortable with the reading and writing interaction in the online course than with the speaking and listening interaction.

Technology.

Like any online distance education, the trial course depended on different technologies to deliver the course materials to the learners and to ensure that students could participate effectively in the activities. These technologies included word processors, audio recording and video conferencing technologies, such as *Skype* or *Google Hangouts*, and the various forums, all of which allowed participants to interact as needed and to complete the different assignments. The main platform used to deliver the course material was *Moodle*, with all of its asynchronous forums, various assessment systems and other features that helped them to study the material provided. Many participants mentioned that using technology for educational purposes was something that took some getting used to in the beginning, but saw the attraction of it as they progressed through the course. One student mentioned the following:

Using the forums was similar to texting friends using a smartphone, except that I felt that I needed to think about what I wanted to say before writing because I was afraid to make grammatical mistakes to people I did not know. I did not

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care much about making such mistakes when texting to friends. But, once I got used to the process, I kind of enjoyed it.

Another participant said:

I always enjoy using technology in my every day life, and I am happy to find another use of technology for educational purposes, including in ESL. I browse English websites often to help practice my English reading skills, but I never considered online quizzes for educational purposes, or videoconferencing technologies to carry out my presentation to an instructor. It is amazing what technology can do.

Moreover, as the participants progressed through the course, it became more apparent to them how central technology played in the success of such courses, even more so than in a traditional classroom. Participant D mentioned that the format of the course was good and worked well while the technology was working. However, he added that he had concerns about a piece of the technology failing. He asked the question, “*What happens if my Internet goes down? Or if the Moodle system goes down?*” The concern here was that if a piece of the technology were to stop working, he would not have been able to access the course material or participate in certain or all of the course activities. In addition, he might not be able to contact other classmates or the instructor through Moodle or Internet channels, especially when his Internet went down, which, according to him, did happen to him from time to time. In fact, he actually experienced an issue with his Internet connection when he attempted to carry out the job interview role-playing activity. The participant mentioned:

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If some technology were to go down in the middle of a presentation in a traditional F2F class, such as an overhead project, the student or students could continue with the presentation by speaking in front of the class. If the Internet goes down in an online course, they would not be able to carry out the presentation at all.

This example highlights the higher reliance that online courses place on the proper functioning of the underlying technologies when compared to traditional courses.

Some participants mentioned that they did not understand how to use some of the technologies needed to carry out some of the activities in the course. Two areas that caused the most concern was recording audio in their computers to carry certain reading exercises and participating in videoconference applications Skype or Google Hangouts for the role-playing activity. Participant E said:

I got so used to using KakaoTalk [a Korean text messaging and voice chatting application] to communicate with friends that I never used anything else. I am glad that I learned how to use Google Hangouts to participate in the role-playing activity, so that I can use what I have learned to communicate with others in the real world.

In summary, the participants mentioned that the course did an adequate job in explaining the usage of the different technologies in the course and providing a venue for them to ask questions if something was not clear. Despite this, they thought that a primer on the use of Skype or Google Hangouts would have been useful to help them prepare for the role-playing activity.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific Recommendations by Language Skill

The following describes specific guidelines and recommendations for ESL DE courses to help improve each of the four important language skills. These include some of the challenges that students may experience when practicing each of these skills in an online environment, and how a DE course could overcome such challenges with specific technologies and activities.

Reading.

A conventional type of reading activity or test in traditional ESL classes consists of a text passage, typically a literary text, followed by comprehension questions, which is considered the instructional approach to language activity. In this activity, students would read a text passage and answer questions about the text, either in a classroom or as a homework assignment. To maximize reading learning success, the questions should not "echo vocabulary from the text but paraphrase to assess whether learners can answer correctly from the context of what is said" (Ur, 2005).

In an online environment, the course should provide the text passage in electronic format. In such an environment, learners can read the text online as if they were reading the text passage as homework. They would answer questions either through assessment instruments provided by the LMS system, such as Moodle, or in a word processing document to be submitted electronically to the instructor for marking. As learners do not typically need others to read for them, they can read text on an LMS as easily as in a conventional homework assignment sheet. The section Technologies in Distance Education Language Learning provides a few brief guidelines about including engaging

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content in *Moodle*.

When designing online ESL courses online, however, the course designers have to consider the limited English vocabulary of the target audience; that is, the learners who are learning English. Thus, it is important to consider that the reading difficulty of the course materials not be excessive for the English reading proficiency of the target learners. Otherwise, learners could potentially feel frustrated and discouraged if they find the text too difficult to read, which could lead to students dropping out. The problem is potentially worse in a DE environment where learners are on their own physically and may feel less motivated to continue studying. Thus, the course should be designed for students who meet specific minimum language proficiency requirements and the content be specifically targeted for such learners.

In addition, any questions and instructions asked should be written in a very clear, concise manner and in a language difficulty level that matches the English proficiency levels of the target learners. In a traditional class environment, if the instructions are not clear, the instructor can always explain the instructions verbally in class. However, in a DE environment, learners do not have access to such physical contact with the instructor; they need to depend on the clarity of the printed instructions in the corresponding LMS. This was made clear when the trial course offered instructions on recording audio in computers using *Microsoft Windows* or *Mac OS X*, but did not consider the difficulty that some might have following the instructions on a computer mainly configured in Korean. One possible way to get around this would be to provide instructions on setting up the computer to display commands and text in English. In this way, course designers would consider the needs of the potential learners. This ties in with

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the recommendation from Little and Murphy to create course materials in a way that learners can experience autonomy, a process described in the literature review section as *autonomization*.

All of this points to a different approach to language teaching: the communicative approach. In this approach, the focus is on communicative competence. This means that, in addition to literary materials, everyday materials such as airline schedules, newspaper articles, and travel brochures become appropriate classroom materials, because such materials often discuss topics of relevance to the learners which can increase their understanding of the culture of the target language, and, consequently, increase their interest in learning and improve their communicative competency. In the trial course, all of the reading exercises presented discussed the topic of looking for a job, such as providing guidelines in writing a resume or participating in a job interview in Canada, all of which helped them to understand the Canadian job culture better.

In considering this approach, course designers should look at Nunan's three principles of communicative language teaching in their online DE ESL courses; these three principles are described earlier in Communicative Language Teaching literature review section of the thesis. For the first principle, which involves teaching learners to read something useful for them, the online course could present sample materials that are communicatively useful to the target learners, or could assign learners to find their own materials of interest, which they can then share electronically with others in the appropriate LMS. Learners can then interact electronically with others and the instructor to discuss the topics discussed in these reading materials. It is important to note that such reading material can include literary materials, such as Shakespeare or other great works

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of English literature, if the subject matter is appropriate for the course at hand or for the target learner audience. However, it could additionally include a wealth of other materials, including authentic literature used in everyday life, such as newspaper articles, weather forecasts and more. Thus, the material describing resume formats and job interview in Canada is appropriate for the trial course that focuses the discussion on such a topic for foreign students who may find such information useful when they are about to embark on finding a job in Canada in the near future.

The second principle involves using language above the sentence level and above the learners' current English proficiency level. For this, online ESL course providers would need to assess the potential learners' English proficiency to determine their suitability for the course. The *Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks* provides a set of twelve language proficiency benchmarks, divided among three stages of language proficiency. The purpose of these benchmarks is to "describe accurately where the learner's ability to use English places him or her within the national descriptive framework of communicative language" (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2005). The benchmarks range from Benchmark 1 at Stage I, which denotes very basic language proficiency, to Benchmark 12 at Stage III, which denotes very fluent, advanced proficiency. Course designers can use these benchmarks to properly assess potential learners and help design courses that are of the appropriate difficulty level for these learners.

The third principle means that learners are involved in their learning process. In a traditional class environment, this involves learners frequently interacting with others in the classroom and generally participating in all activities of the class that not only adds to the understanding of the language, but of the culture behind the language. Learners

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in an online DE class would do the same, but in different ways, such as participating in all of the course forums and participating actively in activities provided by the LMS.

In the area of reading, this means that learners are not only provided with meaningful, reading material mentioned earlier, but they can add their own material relevant to the topic at hand.

An ESL DE course can offer a wide variety of other reading activities to ensure that such a communicative approach to language teaching occurs. The following table lists some sample activities, a brief description of each and how they can be delivered in an online DE ESL course:

Table 9 Sample Reading Activities

Activity	Description	Online Delivery Recommendations
Provide a Title	Learners are given a text passage to read and suggest a title for the passage.	The course LMS can provide the text passages electronically, which learners can read on their own time. They can then suggest a title and submit in a forum. This is a good venue to elicit interaction between the learners and encourage discussion on the different title suggestions.
Summarize	Learners are given a text passage to read and summarize the passage in their own words.	The LMS provides the text passage electronically and the learners read it on their own time. They then summarize what they read in a separate word processing file, which they can submit to the

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		instructor electronically by email or by using the LMS's assignment submission feature.
Continue the Story	Learners are given a partial text story or scenario and they are to get creative and continue the story with their own ending.	The LMS provides the partial text passage or story electronically and learners read it on their own time. They continue writing the story with their own version of the ending in a separate word processing document, which they submit using the LMS assignment submission feature.
Gapped text	Learners are given a text passage with paragraph gaps along with a list of possible paragraphs they can choose to fill in the gaps. At times, the number of paragraphs in the list may be greater than the gaps, so there could be paragraphs not used. This assesses their understanding of coherence, cohesion, text structure and global meaning.	The LMS could provide the text passage, but marking each gap with an identifying number. Then the LMS matching question type could be used to match the appropriate gap number with a specific paragraph from the list of possible paragraphs.
Mistakes in the text	Learners are given a text passage, which contains mistakes. This can be useful to test the learners' knowledge and learning of	The easiest way to deliver this activity in an online environment is to provide the text passage in a word processing document, and instruct the learners to edit the file

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	English grammar and assess their proofreading skills.	and correct the mistakes, but turning on the word processor tracking change feature to keep track of the changes made. Instructors can then see at glance what changes have been made and easily assess the learners' understanding of the mistakes.
Responding	This is one of the most used reading activities, where learners read a text passage and answer comprehension questions about the passage.	Learners read the text passage, and answer questions about the passage in a number of ways, such as in LMS forums, using the LMS quiz containing questions in essay or multiple-choice formats or in a word processing document which they submit electronically using the LMS assignment submission feature.

Writing.

Of the four language skills, writing is probably the most complex to master in a foreign language, since “writing is much slower than speaking and normally uses a generally acceptable standard variety of language, whereas speech may sometimes be in a regional or other limited-context dialect” (Ur, 2005). Learners must take extra care that the writing is clear and unambiguous for the target readers, especially considering that the readers may read the information at a later date and may not be able to contact the writer directly for clarification. As a result, writing tends to very time-consuming and tedious, even when writing in the native language. Writers could often write several drafts of the

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material until producing a final copy that is ready to be shared with the target audience. For ESL learners who have limited proficiency in the English language, writing in English presents very special challenges. They not only have to worry about what they want or need to say regarding their topic, but also about grammatical correctness and using the generally acceptable English standards to convey the information as clearly as possible.

Conventional writing activities in traditional ESL classes could include something as simple as writing some sample sentences to practice some grammatical rules already learned or writing some form of essay about a specific topic. The *Reading* section discussed a conventional reading activity where learners would read a text passage and answer comprehension questions. If they answer the questions by writing their answers, they are also practicing writing, which complements their reading skills. Some of these writing activities could be carried out quickly during traditional F2F class time. A popular example of such a writing exercise is dictation, where the instructor would read out a text passage out loud and learners would write out the passage they hear on paper. Learners not only practice their listening skills, but also their writing and spelling skills. In general, however, writing can be a time-consuming activity, especially for language students writing in a foreign language in which they have more limited proficiency. As a result, the limited time constraints of a traditional F2F class dictate that learners often carry out these writing activities outside of class in their own time. This means that they practice their writing in a distance environment of sorts: they can carry out their assignments any time they want wherever they want. However, they typically have to complete the assignments by a specific class time and submit them in class to the instructor.

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It would stand to reason then that incorporating writing assignments in an online ESL environment would be the most straightforward. The difference would be in the delivery of the assignment specifications and in the assignment submission; both of which would be done electronically instead of in a physical classroom. In the trial course, for example, participants received all of the writing assignments specifications electronically via *Moodle*, and they submitted their assignments using *Moodle's* electronic assignment submission feature. However, the same caveats with preparing reading activities in an online environment apply also to writing activities. In other words, it is important to consider the language difficulty of any reading required for the writing activity, or learners could potentially feel frustrated and discouraged to continue on if they find the reading required too difficult. This reiterates the importance that the course should be designed for students who meet specific minimum language proficiency requirements and the content be specifically targeted for such learners. This also reiterates one important concept in designing language training courses: any questions and instructions asked should be written in a very clear, concise manner and in a language difficulty level that matches the English proficiency levels of the target learners.

If the online ESL course is to focus on the communicative approach to language teaching, course designers will need to expand the writing activities to what has been conventionally used in the past. In other words, instead of just writing about something that may appear abstract, such as writing an essay on an obscure literary piece or answering questions about a random text passage, learners could also write about anything that is relevant to them and, therefore, more likely to get them engaged in the practice of writing. The trial course provided an example of this by asking participants to

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write about the topic of looking for a job in Canada, including writing about their experiences with job searching and how job searching differs in their native Korea and Canada, based on what they were reading in the course. If the trial course were actually a longer course, learners would actually draft and write a real resume, which they could potentially use in their search for a job in the near future.

An interesting point that was brought up during the interviews with the participants was that they felt they were practicing writing more in an online environment than they have done in prior traditional ESL/EFL courses. This stands to reason given that instead of interacting verbally in real time with instructors and other classmates in a standard classroom, learners interacted mostly via electronic asynchronous forums. However, when they post, participants found that they were thinking more about what to say and how to say it. Moreover, they were also focused on getting their message across without grammatical mistakes. Thus, the general consensus was that they were able to hone their English writing skills more successfully in the online course compared to previous ESL courses they had taken in the traditional classroom. Moreover, the researcher demonstrated that providing various forums to help the students interact with each other is very important to enhance the communicative approach to language teaching.

This ties in with Blake's research on CALL, described earlier in the literature review section Technologies in Distance Education Language Learning, where asynchronous forums were also used to enhance language learning. Review of the existing literature regarding Korean digital literacy also demonstrated how the use of computers and Korea's advanced Internet technologies can help learners practice their linguistic

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skills. The current trial course demonstrated an example of participants using their digital literacy to practice their language skills. In this case, their skills in text messaging made them comfortable in communicating via *Moodle* forums and provided an appropriate way to enhance their communicative skills, especially their writing and reading skills.

Course designers can use the list of reading activities in the previous section and the recommendations for their use in an online ESL course to help learners practice other language skills, most notably writing. The reason for this is that it is impossible for the instructor to assess the learners' comprehension of the reading material just by using the reading skill. Learners must be able to communicate their understanding of the reading material by either expressing it verbally to the instructor (speaking skill) or by writing it down for the instructor to read (writing skill). The *Speaking* subsection of this section will discuss ways of using the speaking skill effectively in an online ESL course. The writing techniques presented in the *Reading* subsection would apply in this section as well to help enhance the learners' writing ability in English. However, to enhance the learners' writing skills even further, the following additional activities could be provided.

Table 10 Sample Writing Activities

Activity	Description	Online Delivery Recommendations
Essay Writing	Learners write an essay on a topic of interest. This topic could be related to the topic discussed in the course module.	The instructor presents the assignment specifications for the essay to be written using the assignment activity of the LMS in use. Learners would prepare the essay, doing their research as needed, and submit the final draft

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		using the LMS assignment submission feature. Instructors may opt to get the learners submit several electronic drafts to monitor their progress level as needed.
Business Correspondence	Learners are asked to write a sample letter or email requesting some information or requesting the recipient to carry out some task. This could be something like requesting information about a service, such as telephone, cable, travel, or issuing a complaint about bad service, requesting that a certain service be canceled or anything else that could be written on a daily or regular basis.	The instructor presents the assignment specifications in the LMS. Learners would prepare the writing assignment and, depending on length, could submit the writing in a forum posting or write it in a word processing document to be submitted using the LMS assignment submission feature.

Listening.

Unlike reading and writing skills, which are used most often in situations where the writer and reader are not communicating in real time, most people talk and listen in real time, meaning that they are typically communicating at the same time. For distance ESL learners, this presents special challenges, as there could potentially be more limited listening opportunities in a DE course where they may be studying alone as opposed to in a traditional classroom with other learners and instructors physically present.

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Nonetheless, this does not mean that there are no listening opportunities in a DE course. The trial course presented some examples of listening activities for the participants. One page presented sample written interview dialogues with audio recordings embedded in the web page. This allowed learners to read the text and listen to the audio recordings at the same time. Participants found this feature useful to practice their reading and listening skills at the same time, because it helped them learn the word pronunciation and increased their understanding of spoken English. Presenting dialogue material like this is useful for learning about examples of interview dialogues while learning the language of the topic at hand. A good way to extend this activity is to get the learners to listen to the dialogue without the aid of the written text, but after they have read the text several times (Ur, 2005). In any case, it would be a good idea to provide a forum venue to allow learners to ask questions about the topic or simply discuss the topic at hand with others, thus interacting with each other and practicing their other language skills at the same time.

Another sample listening activity that the course presented was the *YouTube* video of a sample job interview. In this case, the participants listened to the interview and watched the subjects talking in the video, which allowed for a more realistic and authentic experience. This meant that learners could actually see the interview in action without actually being there. A forum would be a good venue for learners to open up any discussions or questions about the video in question, allowing learners to not only practice their listening skills, but also their writing skills as well. To add to this activity, learners could also be asked to find other sample interview videos, post a link to these videos for other learners to access and discuss these interviews with others.

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The listening activities discussed so far focus on listening in an asynchronous environment; that is, where listeners are not in contact with the speaker at the same time. The most important part of listening comes when in direct contact with others, such as in a real two-way conversation with others. This could be a F2F conversation of two people talking to each other in the same place or time, but it could also be two people talking to each other at the same time, but in different places, using such technologies as a telephone or an audio or video conferencing solution. Either way, if one person is listening to another person speaking at a given point of time, then it is very likely that the roles would be reversed and that the person listening could end up speaking. In other words, any activity that involves learners listening to others in some form of synchronous conversation would also help them practice speaking skills as well, which makes for the most authentic language-learning experience of all.

The challenge, however, is to incorporate such activities in a distance-delivered ESL course. A traditional ESL course makes this somewhat easier, as learners are in direct contact with others and the instructor and can speak with, and listen to, them directly. Incorporating such verbal interaction successfully in an online ESL course has two prerequisites:

1. Some form of technology that will allow learners to communicate with others, including the instructor, without the need of being in the same place as them.
2. An agreement between all parties in which all involved can meet each other at a specific time.

For the first prerequisite, there are many technologies that allow for people to communicate with each other in real time from different locations. Probably the oldest

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and well-known of these is the telephone. In addition to providing forums as venues for asking questions, learners may have a preference to talk with the instructor over the telephone. Many participants in the trial course felt it was easier and quicker to ask questions verbally over the telephone than having to draft a question in a written forum post and waiting for a response. As such, it is a good idea for instructors to provide more than one way for learners to contact them in case they have questions. Moreover, it provides another venue for learners to practice listening and speaking skills, even informally outside of regular class activities. The instructor provided this facility for participants in the trial course, although he made clear that he was only available for only specific hours, namely weekday evenings and weekends during the day.

Despite its convenience, the telephone does have some limitations in terms of how it can facilitate speaking and listening practice for online ESL learners. It is not a convenient venue for conferencing with a group of students. In addition, the traditional telephone does not allow for parties to see each other during a conversation, which makes it impractical to mimic a traditional, F2F conversation.

Newer technologies currently exist that can help mimic many of the activities that require a F2F conversation, and this thesis already discussed some of them used in the trial course. The literature review section of the thesis, *Technologies in Distance Education Language Learning*, also references some studies, such as Thomas and Reinders, that recommend the use of these technologies to enhance student-student and student-instructor interactivity. One example of such technologies is web conferencing, and the job interview role-playing activity in the trial course made use of *Skype* or *Google Hangouts* as video conferencing platforms to host the various synchronous role-playing

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sessions between the instructor and each of the participants. Such technologies allow for group conferencing and instructors can also record the conference if desired to more easily assess the language proficiency demonstrated in the conference. Other platforms exist that include more advanced features that can make virtual classroom almost feel like traditional classrooms, such as *Adobe Connect*. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher used the technologies that were most likely to be known by the participants, all of whom were familiar with either *Skype*, *Hangouts* or both. No matter what technology is used, the basic goal for the instructor should be the same: to facilitate and provide additional venues for learners to interact verbally with others in real time and, therefore, enhance their listening skills. This finding agrees with the findings from studies described earlier in the literature review, such as Thomas & Reinders (2010) and Doughty & Long (2003).

With regards to the second prerequisite of scheduling a time for the different parties to meet, F2F courses typically have scheduled classes where students are to regularly meet and carry out the various activities and interact with each other in the target language. In an online ESL course, such a schedule is not necessarily set. However, instructors may set approximate schedules for certain activities that require synchronous interaction between learners. The trial course provided a page with a forum where participants and instructor could set up a time in advance for the job interview role-playing activity. The instructor posted the times for these sessions so that other participants could also observe the sessions in a similar way other classmates would observe a presentation physically in class. This has the added benefit that they further enhance their listening practice. However, given the time constraints of the trial course

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and those of the participants, it is reasonable to expect that some of the students may not be able to view other student virtual presentations at the time chosen by the other students. Thus, it is good practice to post recordings of such presentations so that others can listen to them at a convenient time for them. Instructors could extend this activity by asking students to discuss or critique the presentations of their virtual classmates. In this way, they could potentially practice all four language skills. To critique the presentation, they would first need to listen to the presentation and potentially read any notes about the presentation. Then, they would either write their opinions in the forums or they could verbally voice their opinions if they are watching the presentation in real time using the video conferencing platform.

Distance-delivered ESL course instructors may also have to consider another factor of scheduling: dealing with students living in different time zones. One of the participants, Participant B, was actually in a geographical area that is three hours ahead of the instructor's home base. Another student, Participant D, was in South Korea, which is in a time zone 16 hours ahead. Scheduling the role-playing activity while taking into account these time differences proved to be somewhat of a challenge, especially for time zones that are half a world away from the home location of the DE course in question. It is conceivable that foreign students still living in a foreign country may want to try out an ESL course based in Canada. Instead of waiting to attend the ESL class in Canada, they could try out the course first from their home country to get a sense of the language and help them prepare to improve their language proficiency before their move to Canada.

The following table is a list of some possible listening activities for ESL learners and how instructors can accommodate these in an online ESL course.

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Table 11 Sample Listening Activities

Activity	Description	Online Delivery Recommendations
Dictation	Learners listen to a text passage and write them down verbatim, either on a piece of paper or in a computer file.	Instructors would post an audio recording of the text passage and learners would listen to the recording and transcribe what is said into a written word-processing document. Instructors could extend or replace this activity by getting learners to summarize or paraphrase the audio text in their own words.
Listening Comprehension	Learners listen to a passage of text from an audio source and answer comprehension questions about the text.	Instructors can post the audio source on the LMS or a link to the source, and can post questions using the LMS question bank or quiz feature of the LMS. Students can listen to the audio source at their own convenience.

Speaking.

Speaking can also be a challenging language skill to master in a foreign language. Speaking fluently requires one to speak in the target language without thinking too much about how to express what needs to be said. The reason for this is that most people speak with each other in real time, meaning that they typically have to be communicating at the same time in a way that recipients will be able to understand the message. This means that ESL learners have to be able to speak in the target language without having to occupy their minds with the low-level details of expressing themselves correctly. In language

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learning terms, this means that learners will have *automaticity* in the target language (Little, 2003).

It was quite clear from the asynchronous nature of the trial course that speaking was the language skill that was the most challenging for learners to master in a distance-delivered environment. The challenges for speaking is similar to the challenges mentioned already for listening, but the challenge is greater because there are typically more opportunities to practice listening in an asynchronous environment than speaking to others without direct, real-time contact with the listener. Many listening activities abound where the listener does not have to listen to the speaker in real time, such as watching TV, listening to the radio, podcasts and much more. In contrast, although it is possible for people to record their message in an audio file or broadcast their message for later delivery, when one considers the time people spend speaking in their everyday lives, most people would do it with other people in real time. This was also an important finding in Flattery's study of language learning practices in Korea, described earlier in section Communicative Language Teaching, and how insufficient conversational practice in the target language can be detrimental to effective language learning. In addition, speaking without the direct interaction with others reduces the effectiveness of getting more exposure to the culture of the target language because they would not have direct access to native speakers' cultural point of view that they would most likely get in a real time two-way conversation, something which was also revealed in the various studies outlined in the literature review section *Language-Culture Relationship*. Learners practicing the language with direct human interaction, either in F2F or in distance-delivered format, can construct their knowledge of the target culture and, therefore,

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get the necessary cultural exposure, all of which ties in to the theory of social constructivism described by Vygotsky and Nystrand, also outlined in this section of the thesis literature review.

In a traditional F2F ESL class environment, many activities designed to enhance speaking skills deal with learners speaking with other learners or the instructor who are physically present in the class. This could be in the form of a role-playing activity, group discussion, presentations or answering questions asked by the instructor. All of this involves students interacting in real time interaction with others, which means communication between the relevant parties must be done at the same time. In an online ESL class, special consideration must be taken into account when scheduling such speaking activities with other parties in the class, and these have been described in the previous *Listening* section. In other words, all parties involved in the activity must be available at the same time to ensure that two-way speaking interaction can take place in an effective manner. This thesis already discussed the many communication technologies that exist to ensure that these interactions can take place with different parties in different locations, some of which have been described in the section Technologies in Distance Education Language Learning.

This study revealed that some participants preferred to enhance their English speaking skill by conversing with others in the same physical location; that is, without using communications technology. They felt that such technologies were not a perfect substitute to interacting with someone in the same room. When considering such potential learners, course designers may want to consider taking a blended approach, where the course would be predominantly in distance-delivered format, but offer several F2F

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sessions where learners can further enhance their speaking skills over what they can practice in a DE environment. This also ensures that learners are exposed to some real-time, physical interaction with people before they carry out such interaction out in the “real” world. Instructors can still provide remote access via videoconference to the class for those learners who study far away from the course location. Such classes can also be recorded and posted electronically for those learners who cannot attend the classes in real time. In addition, some institutions can also allow learners living far away to attend similar sessions in an educational institutions closer to their place of residence, with the invigilators of these sessions providing their assessments to the original course instructor, as appropriate. As an example, the CERTESL program of the University of Saskatchewan, a program that provides distance-delivered ESL/EFL certification and English instruction to students worldwide, allow learners to take exams and presentations in any accredited post-secondary institution or Canadian embassy worldwide, provided the learners hire an invigilator to invigilate such exam or presentation and submit the results to the original instructor (University of Saskatchewan, 2014).

In general, activities that can enhance the learners’ listening skills can also enhance their speaking skills as well if such activities encourage live learner-learner or learner-instructor interaction. The role-playing activity provided in the trial course was one example of this, where learners became part of a job interview scenario, listening to interview questions (listening skill) and orally answered the questions (speaking skill). The activities listed in the *Listening* section could also be used to help enhance the learners’ speaking skill as well, with some modifications. The following is a list of some possible speaking activities for ESL learners and how instructors can accommodate these

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in a distance-delivered ESL course.

Table 12 Sample Speaking Activities

Activity	Description	Online Delivery Recommendations
Spoken Dictation	Learners listen to a text passage and repeat the text orally verbatim.	<p>Instructors would post an audio recording of the text passage and learners would listen to the recording and repeat what they hear orally, recording everything in an audio file for subsequent electronic submission to the instructor.</p> <p>Instructors could extend or replace this activity by getting learners to orally summarize or paraphrase the text in their own words. All of this speaking could be recorded in an audio file or presented to the class in real time via virtual conference. Of course, students could write down their summary in preparation for the oral recording or presentation, thus they practice their writing skill at the same time.</p>
Presentation	Learners select a topic and speak about it in front of the class.	<p>In a DE environment, learners could present and record the topic on their own and submit the audio record electronically to the class using the LMS system. Other learners can listen to the presentation and provide feedback</p>

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		or ask questions using forums. A better way would be to present it via a video conferencing platform, and learners can ask their questions accordingly and interact with the presenters when appropriate.
Role-playing	Learners are in a group to enact a scenario or situation, such as a job interview, as used in the trial course. They usually have some time to prepare for the activity, and they present this scenario in front of a class.	Learners prepare for the activity on their own from their own preferred location. Instructor schedules a virtual meeting using some form of video conferencing platform, such as Skype, Google Hangouts or similar. If all parties of the class are local, the instructor could potential set up a venue where learners would physically meet in the same location and carry out the activity, but an option should be set for students to remote in via a video conferencing platform in case they cannot attend.

General Guidelines and Recommendations

One finding was prevalent in the study: it is impossible for ESL learners, whether they learn in an F2F or DE environment, to enhance one language skill without making use of at least one other language skill. When learners prepare to write an essay, they often have to research their topic in preparation, thus they are practicing their reading and writing skills together, assuming they research in the target language. When they give a

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presentation to a class, not only are they speaking about their topic, but often also have to listen to the questions of their audience and answer them. This thesis addressed ways to do this in a DE environment using a variety of technologies. It also presented ways how Koreans use technology to communicate with others using text messaging, cell phones and conferencing technologies, as well as how to extend these technologies to help deliver a successful ESL program. Irrespective of the form of communication, course designers need to consider providing material relevant to the learner audience to ensure that learners are constantly engaged and interested, especially if they are studying alone in a remote area. In addition, the communicative experience should be as realistic and authentic as possible that matches the cultural expectations of the target culture. This means that learners do not just want to learn about English grammar; they also want to learn about the target culture. Thus, the focus of the course should be to help learners practice their language skills by discussing topics relevant to the target culture of interest and, preferably, relevant to the learners who may need to discuss these topics in real-life situations in the near future.

The Communicative View of Language Teaching and Impact on DE.

Course designers may want to consider the communicative view of teaching language, as described by Thurlow (2004) and introduced by Raimes (1983). The section DE Language Instructional Approaches introduced this paradigm and the five major points behind. What follows next is a review of these same points with related guidelines and their application to the current study.

1. *Sees language as communication:* When participants were asked the reason for learning language, some mentioned that it was to further their career, some

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- mentioned that they wanted to learn it to be able to live in Canada or another English-speaking country or to help them study in an English-speaking university. All of these reasons can be boiled down to one principle reason: to learn how to communicate in the language. That is the main purpose of language, and that should be the main purpose of a language course, including DE language courses. This means that such a course should focus on getting learners to communicate in the target language as much as possible, even outside of class. Communication can take on different forms in a DE environment than in a traditional F2F class, perhaps in more written form in forums than in physical class interaction, but it should happen nonetheless.
2. *Emphasizes real language use:* Participants mentioned the fact that they enjoyed practicing their English skills on a topic that is of relevance to them and, therefore, have real-world application after taking the course. They mentioned that they feel more comfortable participating in discussions regarding job searching. This reiterates the fact that class activities should revolve around authentic language use as much as possible, and should touch on aspects of the target culture as well. This helps learners engage themselves in the topics of discussion that are of interest or relevance to them, thus giving them more exposure to real language use that they will be needed when they get out in the ‘real’ world.
 3. *Recommends a learner-centred classroom:* This means that class learning and activities are centered on the needs of the learners, instead of being dictated by the instructor. In a distance-delivered environment, this becomes even more prevalent as learners study more on their own time from a location of their choice.

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Instructors become more of an ESL guide to help facilitate language learning for the learners. For some learners, including the participants in the trial course, the instructor could be the first native English speaker they may come in contact with, so it becomes even more important for the course to encourage student-instructor interaction as much as possible so that they not only get exposure to real language practice, but also authentic exposure to the target culture as well.

4. *Encourages real language acquisition instead of just learning a set of grammatical rules:* ESL learners are not interested in learning strict grammar rules, and this is something that participants brought up during the interview process of the study. Many of the them mentioned that they found strict grammar lessons in ESL classes they had taken previously to be somewhat monotonous because they felt that such lessons were out of touch with the real purpose of learning a language: to use it to communicate effectively with others. The section of this thesis entitled EFL/ESL for the Korean Market provided examples of studies that showed that EFL courses in Korea that focused mainly on teaching grammar rules did not help in improving language proficiency of the learners. They may have been able to memorize grammatical rules, but they did not feel comfortable using the language to communicate with native English speakers. This does not necessarily mean that grammar lessons should be avoided completely; they should be provided only inasmuch as it helps learners gain exposure to relevant, authentic communication of the English language and culture of the target country. The trial course, for example, provided a refresher of common verb tenses used in the context of job searching, and provided examples

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that were specific to this context.

5. *Develops humanistic, interpersonal approaches:* Language is about communication and interaction between humans. Such interaction could be in spoken or written form, and could take place in real time or asynchronously. Just because DE learners may be studying ESL from a remote location does not mean they should be receiving less interaction with instructors and other learners than those learning English in a traditional F2F class. Distance-delivered ESL classes need to ensure that activities focus on the humanistic approaches to communication, and course designers may need to consider the blended approach to course delivery, where learners may attend some F2F classes to enhance physical, real time human interaction. They may also need to make more use of communicative technologies than in a traditional F2F course to ensure continued exposure to this interaction. The Internet encourages communication and offers possibilities that would never be feasible in a traditional classroom setting. As participants in the study experienced, using computers and a variety of technologies to communicate with peers often motivates students and encourages them to learn more. However, technology cannot do this alone. For DE language courses to be successful they must successfully integrate the application of these technologies with the course curriculum (Thurlow, 2004).

General Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance-Delivered ESL Courses.

This study demonstrated that DE ESL classes that integrate the relevant cultural content like the trial course can work, but special considerations need to be taken into account to ensure that students can get the sufficient practice in the four language skills:

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speaking, listening, reading and writing. In general, the participants enjoyed the trial course. The most important reason for them was, as mentioned earlier, their ability to access the resources they needed for the course in one coherent location and at any time they wished from any location they desired. However, there were areas that they found challenging to carry out online as opposed to in a traditional classroom, or that required improvement.

The following is a summary of the advantages of taking an online ESL course compared to the traditional F2F classroom, as discovered in this study:

- The online ESL course is convenient. Many participants made special mention of not having to take special trips to take the course. They were able to study according to their schedule and from any location they chose.
- They can potentially improve their reading and writing skills more quickly in an online course than in traditional F2F course. As the participants commented, most discussions in a traditional ESL class tend to be done orally: teachers would ask questions orally and students would raise their hands and answer orally. In an online environment, reading and writing posts in forums do most or all of this interaction, depending on the nature of the course.
- Related to the previous point, all online class discussions in the course were carried out in written forum posts. This meant that participants had time to think about their responses before finalizing their posts. This contrasts the real-time nature of traditional class discussions, where students would answer the teachers' questions immediately without much time to think about what to say. This helped alleviate the participants' concerns about making English grammatical mistakes;

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- they could prepare their responses and correct their grammar before finalizing their posts.
- The online course can provide immediate feedback of many learner assessments and quizzes after students complete them online. Participants appreciated that, after completing the grammar quiz of the course, *Moodle* immediately corrected the quiz and provided the grade. In addition, the system also provided descriptive feedback explaining the rationale behind the answer, as well as links to the relevant course material. This contrasts the waiting that often came when instructors corrected quizzes or tests in a traditional classroom.
 - Studying can potentially be done more effectively in an environment where learners feel more comfortable, such as at home. Some participants mentioned that they enjoyed studying in their home environment as opposed to studying in a traditional classroom, where they could easily get distracted by other classmates.

Despite these advantages, there are several disadvantages to consider when designing distance-delivered ESL courses:

- Although online ESL courses can enhance reading and writing skills, improving speaking and listening can present greater challenges in a distance-delivered environment. Participants mentioned that there were not enough activities that would help them speak or listen in English. The class discussions that normally would take place in a traditional classroom have essentially been replaced with written forums. Although there were some listening and speaking activities, there were not many activities that allowed them to speak English with someone in real time. The very nature of distance-delivered courses, where participants were

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studying from locations where they could be alone or with no one who spoke English fluently, makes this disadvantage more significant.

- It takes longer to interact with others in written forums compared to orally in a traditional classroom. As mentioned before, participants liked the fact that they could prepare their written posts before finalizing them. However, it is this preparation that consumed their time. As a result, some did find that interacting with others in this venue was considerably more time-consuming than orally in a classroom.
- Studying on one's own without the physical interaction of other classmates or the instructor can sometimes make for a monotonous and isolating studying experience for some. Participants did mention that they did miss the real-time, physical interaction with other students that they had when they had taken traditional F2F ESL classes in the past.
- One finding from the study was that some participants preferred to interact with others in an F2F environment compared to a virtual environment, even when taking into account the video conferencing options provided. They felt that technology could get in a way of authentic language learning. In other words, they felt that such learning was something an ESL course offered strictly in DE format could not fully provide.

Based on these advantages and disadvantages, one can extrapolate the following recommendations to maximize the success of an online ESL course. *Table 13* lists a summary of these recommendations.

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Table 13 Summary of Recommendations for Designing ESL Courses

Recommendation Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include activities that keep students engaged and practicing all four language skills, wherever possible.• Ensure language-learning material in the course is authentic and relevant to the learners.• Ensure that learners are exposed to all three forms of interaction in the appropriate balance: learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction.• Consider a blended approach where most of the course is in DE format, but aspects may be F2F in cases where it makes sense to maximize the learners' speaking and listening practice.• A blended approach may also be appropriate to accommodate learners who may prefer to learn in a F2F environment.• Consider the shift towards learner-centred learning, and design the course material and activity instructions in a clear and concise fashion for the benefit of learners who are studying remotely.• Do not forget the cultural aspect of language learning. Consider the culture of the learners when designing the course material, and tailor the material accordingly.

What follows below is a more detailed description of each of these recommendations.

- Irrespective of how the course is delivered, course designers should ensure that the course includes a variety of activities to keep the students engaged and interested. These activities should allow students to practice all four language skills, wherever possible or appropriate. Care must be taken to ensure that the activities that help practice the different skills alternate as much as possible to keep their practice fresh in their minds. The trial course developed for the study provided, due to time constraints, only one activity where students conversed in English with the

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- instructor in real time to mimic an authentic conversation between two people. A regular distance-delivered course should provide a variety of similar activities to help them use the spoken language at regular intervals so that the practice remains fresh in the learners' minds.
- One of the challenges of language-learning courses is finding ways of mimicking real-life, authentic conversations and providing access to authentic language-learning material, thus providing access to all forms of interaction, and this challenge is greater in a distance-delivered environment for reasons discussed in the last point. Moore & Kearsley's three forms of learner interaction, discussed in the literature review section DE Language Instructional Approaches, should be present and in the appropriate balance. In this way, participants will then be able to use the learner-content interaction to practice reading and writing, and the other two forms of interaction to practice speaking and listening.
 - Language-learning courses should ensure that the material used in the online English courses is relevant and tailored to the students as much as possible. Generally, the more relevant the material, the more interest for the learners and, therefore, the more they will practice the material and retain what was learned. Although the same could be said for traditional F2F courses, this is especially important in distance-delivered courses. The distractions of the learners' home environment can make it easier for them to get distracted with other things and lose their motivation to study if they find the material neither relevant nor interesting. This ties in with the tenth methodological principle of task-based language learning, described in section entitled Technologies in Distance

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- Education Language Learning, which states that course designers should individualize instruction by tailoring the material to the training needs of the target learners.
- Course designers should always consider a blended approach for the course as an option. Although the course can be predominantly organized in a DE format, it can also contain aspects of traditional F2F classes. As an example, the course could provide some F2F classes, while offering most of the course online. In this way, the course can offer the best of both worlds: the convenience of studying from home while occasionally offering authentic, F2F conversation practice classes to supplement the virtual language-learning activities as was offered in the study course.
 - Consider also a blended approach to help accommodate those students who would prefer to learn a language by interacting with others in a real-time, F2F conversation. The course can give students a choice: either interact with others virtually using a variety of communication technologies, such as video conferencing, or attend specific class sessions where they could interact with others in an F2F environment. If students opt for the virtual route, they would be responsible for the appropriate functioning of their Internet connections and technical equipment to ensure that the virtual sessions work as expected. If they choose the F2F route, they would be responsible to attend the sessions at date and time that is mutually convenient for both instructor and learner. This does not necessarily mean that learners need to go to their educational institution where they are officially enrolled to attend their class sessions, especially if these

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- students were to reside so far away that would make travel difficult or unfeasible. Instead, they could carry out these sessions in other educational institutions or branches of the same institution located closest to where the students reside. A university, for example, offering such DE ESL courses, may have agreements with other educational institutions around the country, allowing students to attend these class sessions in one of these other institutions located closest to their current place of residence. Students would carry out the required activities in the class sessions with an invigilator who would assess them according to the common ESL standards. In addition, these sessions could be videotaped and the final result sent to the enrolling educational institution for final assessment. In short, this is about providing quality ESL programs to students in the most convenient way possible, while still providing as much interaction as needed for proper language learning as can be provided in an F2F class.
- It is vital not to underestimate the importance of the shift towards learner-centered learning, especially in distance-delivered language courses. In such a course environment, instructors are not physically present with learners, so the material presented to the learners must be clear and specific enough so that they can proceed to study and carry out the activities on their own without relying heavily on assistance from the instructor. This means clear, concise directions for all assigned work; clear course material and viewing and listening guides with focus questions so that learners have something to work on as they interact with the course material in question. This does not mean that the course has to be 100% self-directed. It is impossible to anticipate every possible question that learners

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- may have when interacting with the material. Therefore, the course should also provide sufficient support systems to ensure that these questions are answered in a timely and clear fashion. This ties in with the recommendation by Moore & Kearsley (2005) stating that designers of “distance education materials must keep in mind the desirability of encouraging and supporting self-directed learning, while at the same time giving the support needed by people at different stages of self-directedness”.
- Cultural differences should be explained to avoid any possible miscommunication. From existing research, it is clear that instructors teaching a language also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. The thesis section entitled *Integrating Culture in Language Learning* described several examples of studies that proved the importance of integrating cultural contexts in languages courses, including Celik’s study, which was quite important in proving that the success with which learners adapt a new cultural environment, especially with regards to non-verbal communication, and how this affects their language acquisition success. In the case of ESL teaching to Korean learners, it is important to understand the Korean culture to understand the Korean mentality and how they can adapt to the new Canadian cultural environment and, therefore, help the learners understand the target language constructs and cultural context. In other words, this could mean understanding what Koreans like to talk about and accommodating this within the Canadian cultural context. As an example, if course designer and researchers determine that an important topic of conversation amongst Koreans involves food, it stands to reason that focusing one

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area of the course around food and tailoring the discussion within the Canadian culture by discussing Canadian food or by comparing Korean and Canadian cuisine would strike interest among the Korean learners and make the topic discussed more relevant to them.

Questions for Further Study

In this study, the researcher investigated the general concept of the feasibility of providing ESL courses in DE format and the experiences of a specific group who took a sample course to get some general challenges, guidelines and recommendations on designing effective ESL courses in DE format. He focused on a group of Korean participants, as Korean ESL is big business but prior research has noted serious weaknesses in the instruction methodology, and it is the hope that this study will provide useful recommendations to help improve this situation. Nonetheless, carrying out a study of ESL classes trying to tailor content to different nationalities and cultures might provide interesting insights into creating effective student-centered ESL courses tailored to specific groups.

Another area of further study that might be useful and interesting might be to examine the best technologies to promote better language learning in a ESL DE course, or what attributes a technology would have to have in order to be viable as an effective medium to promote language learning. As an example, one could explore different the features of different video conferencing applications to determine if there are features that would better promote language learning than others (Celik, 2005).

Yet another area of study might be a study on the correlation between Korean cultural interests and English language instruction. The goal is to determine, in essence,

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what do Koreans like to talk about, and determine how to incorporate these topics in English language courses, including DE courses. The idea would be to tailor the courses according to topics of greater interest to the Korean culture that helps them not only learn the language, but learn the target culture as well.

Finally, one important point to note is that the results of the study were those produced from the five learners who participated in the study. As a result, these results were not intended to be generalizable nor necessarily applicable to all learners, irrespective of nationality, studying English in a distance-delivered course. A future study that encompasses a larger pool of participants would be required to produce such generalizable results. Nevertheless, it is the researcher's hope that course designers do find the recommendations and guidelines described in this thesis helpful as they design their own courses.

Summary

This paper conducted a study, entitled *Applying the Language Cultural-Connection in Korean ESL/EFL DE Courses*, which combines the fields of distance education and ESL/EFL language instruction to the Korean market. Specifically, it looked at how one area of ESL/EFL instruction to Koreans, not only in the courses offered, but also in the research found thus far: integrating culture effectively in language courses in DE format. It described the purpose of the study, the research questions, the state of the current research, the study significance, and the study procedures, including the data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and the tentative reporting format of the thesis. The hope with this study was that it would be able to contribute to the fields of distance education and language instruction by providing relevant theories behind the challenges

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and recommendations in integrating relevant cultural content effectively in English language courses, thereby allowing future students to assimilate themselves much more easily into the culture of the target language.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate student in the Master of Education in Distance Education program at Athabasca University. The purpose of my letter is to request your participation in my thesis research project entitled: "Applying Language Cultural Content in ESL DE Courses: Challenges and Recommendations." The end result of this study is a master's thesis with the university, which will then store and circulate the thesis for future reference.

I am proposing to explore the challenges in designing an effective ESL course in DE format and some of the important guidelines and recommendations to reduce these challenges. There are many studies which explore the integration of cultural material in ESL courses; that is, material that discusses important cultural facts and current events of the country where the target language is spoken to provide relevant and meaningful material for students. However, there are very few studies which discuss doing the same thing in an online distance education (DE) course, where students study at their own pace from wherever they prefer at a time that suits them. My goal is to explore the effectiveness of such DE ESL courses, and provide important guidelines and recommendations in designing these courses.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. It will give you the opportunity to get a taste of becoming a distance ESL learner and allow you to share your experiences with a sample DE course unit. Any results and experiences that you provide us are personal and confidential, and as such will be treated with respect and professionalism. The purpose of this study is not to judge or criticize your English proficiency but to provide an understanding of the distance ESL learning experience.

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Five participants will be selected for this study. If you have taken an ESL course within the last five years or are planning on taking one soon and are interested in participating, I invite you to respond by email to robperezvidal@gmail.com with a short introductory paragraph. I will then contact you for a brief interview, and get you set up for a brief course sample that you can take at your convenience. All communication with me can be in person, by telephone, or via Skype at your convenience.

Please note the following:

- Participation in the study is **completely voluntary**
- You can withdraw from the study **at any time** without prejudice or bias.
- The risks to you in participating in the study are **minimal**, and you can participate at a time when it is convenient to you.
- You may request that some or all of the data obtained in the course of your participation of the study can be withdrawn at any time. In this case, the data will be withdrawn without question and will no way jeopardize your standing in the study in any way.

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any questions I would be pleased to discuss them with you. I can be contacted by email, robperezvidal@gmail.com, or by phone, (604) 240-5929. You may also wish to contact my thesis supervisor Dr. Tom Jones by email, tom_jones_student@shaw.com, or by phone, 1-866-514-6233.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics in Canada at 1-780-675-6718 or by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title: Applying Language Cultural Content in ESL DE Courses: Challenges and Recommendations

Researcher: Robert Perez,
Masters of Education in Distance Education, Athabasca University
T: (604) 240-5929
E: robperezvidal@gmail.com

Objectives:

The purpose of the proposed study is to investigate the challenges, guidelines and recommendations into integrating cultural content into DE ESL courses and, therefore, providing meaningful content and practice for the students. The end result of this study is a master's thesis with the university, which will then store and circulate the thesis for future reference.

Procedure:

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a short mini-course online ESL course which will teach you some English concepts, but in the context of Canadian cultural content. In the course, you will participate in a few basic online course activities and forums, as well as take online quizzes and answer a few questions. This will help assess your learning of the material and, ultimately, gauge the effectiveness of the online course environment. The total time to complete the course should be about 5 – 7 hours, but you can stop and resume the course as many times and as often as you like. You will also be asked to participate in a short interview to go over your experiences with the online course environment. The total time for the interview should be about 30-45 minutes.

Please note the following:

- Participation in the study is **completely voluntary**
- You can withdraw from the study **at any time** without prejudice or bias.
- The risks to you in participating in the study are **minimal**, and you can participate at a time when it is convenient to you.
- You may request that some or all of the data obtained in the course of your participation of the study can be withdrawn at any time. In this case, the data will be withdrawn without question and will no way jeopardize your standing in the study in any way.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact the researcher by email at robperezvidal@gmail.com, or by phone, (604) 240-5929 or the thesis supervisor Dr. Tom Jones by email at tom_jones_student@shaw.com, or by phone, 1-866-514-6233.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics in Canada at 1-780-675-6718 or by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca.

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The procedure and goals of the study have been explained to me by the researcher and I understand them.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

I understand that refusal to participate will not influence any services provided to me by Athabasca University or its employees, nor will it affect my class standing.

I also understand that although the data from this study may be published, my identity will be kept confidential, as all data will be identified by number only and signed consent forms will be stored separately from the data.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

I, _____ have read the above protocol and voluntarily agree to participate.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Researcher)
(Researcher)

(Date)

Appendix C: Trial Course Structure

The following four pages contain images of a trial course module in Moodle used for the study. The structure for the course consisted of several small sections, starting from the Introduction, introducing the participant to the course topic and providing general information about the course and study as well. This particular course discussed job interviewing in Canada, something which may be relevant for participants who may be interested in pursuing a career in Canada. It included some grammatical instruction, but focused such instruction in the context of the current topic of interest, and ensured that any discussed was relevant to Canadian culture.

Figure 7 Trial Course Introduction

Introduction

Welcome to the English Mini-Course **Introduction to Job Searching in Canada!**

In this unit, you will be focusing on terminology related to job searching and learn about the rules and best practices when searching for a job in Canada. To that end, you will be learning the different verb tenses often used when talking about job searching. The verb tenses you will be learning will include the simple present, the simple past, the present perfect, the present continuous and the future tenses. Correct understanding and use of these tenses are important, both in your every day English and in finding a job. Built into this unit are activities which have you immediately apply your learning to help you improve your English speaking, writing, listening and reading skills in such topics.

There is nothing for you to do in this section. However, before you begin the unit activities, you should read the important information in the unit introduction. Then, carry out the topics in the order presented. You will be given the chance to interact with other students in several forums in this course. Please ensure that the forums are not used for personal postings; all postings must be related to the topic of the forum in question.

Check out the [News Forum](#) for any important news related to the course. If you find a word or some vocabulary that you do not understand in the course, please do post your question in the [Vocabulary FAQs](#) below. The instructor will post the meaning of the word, but feel free to respond to any posts there. If you have any other questions related to the course, please post them in the [Course FAQs](#) below.

Have fun exploring and learning!

 [Learning Objectives & Course Structure](#)

 [Student Assessment](#)

 [News forum](#)

Questions and Answers

 [Vocabulary FAQs](#)

Use this forum to post any questions you may have about vocabulary or any words you may not understand in this course. Feel free to respond if you know the answers to any questions posted here.

 [Course FAQs](#)

Use this forum if you have general questions that do not fit in the other forums, such as questions about the course itself or the assignments/activities.

NOTE: If something in the course is not clear or is causing confusion, please do not hesitate to leave a comment here as well. I will answer your concerns as quickly as possible, and, if appropriate, will make the relevant changes in the course.

Figure 8 Trial Course Grammar and Vocabulary

Grammar and Vocabulary

Grammar and Vocabulary Practice

This section describes the five most common verb tenses used when discussing your work or career history, your current job, responsibilities and future career plans. Each section describes the tense and its general usage in the English language, as well as its usage in the context of a job interview. Please go through each section thoroughly and try answering the quiz in the forum at the end of this section. **NOTE:** You will only have once chance to fill out the quiz.

Verb Tenses

 [The Simple Present Tense](#)

 [The Simple Past Tense](#)

 [The Present Perfect Tense](#)

 [The Present Continuous Tense](#)

 [The Future Simple Tense](#)

 [A Brief Description of your Job Experience](#)

 [Job Search Glossary](#)

Click here to check out some meanings of some important terms related to job searching and interviewing that are used in this course.

 [Verb Tense Quiz](#)

This quiz is to test you on what you learned about verb tenses in this course. It is made up of 30 multiple choice questions, and each question will only have one correct answer. You are to choose the **best** correct answer. You only have **one** chance to do the quiz, but there is no time limit, so **do take your time**.

Figure 9 Trial Course Resumes and Interview Sections

Job Advertisements and Résumés

The Job Advertisement and **Résumé** in Canada

In this section, you will be introduced to some brief, general guidelines of what you can expect to find in a typical job advertisement (also called *job ad*) in a Canadian newspapers or job site and in a **resume** used for application to a Canadian job ad. Please go through these guidelines and think about how they are similar or different to job ads and resumes in Korea.

 [Job Advertisements](#)

 [Writing a Good Résumé](#)

The Job Interview

The Job Interview in Canada

This section discusses some brief, general guidelines on job interviews in Canada. After candidates submit their resumes in application for a job, employers will generally select a few of the resumes they like and set up an interview meeting with the candidates. In this section, you will see a few sample dialogues of such interviews. Please read through these and practice them to get an idea of what is generally discussed in a job interview. Also, consider how interviews are similar or different to those in Korea.

 [The Job Interview](#)

 [Sample Job Interview YouTube Video \(Time: 7:32\)](#)

The video shows a sample interview of someone who applied for an internship at an animal clinic. Take note of the questions the **interviewer** (not shown in the video) asks the **candidate**.

 [Read/Record Job Interview Dialogue](#)

 [Interview Listening Exercise](#)

Figure 10 Trial Course Final Sections

Role Play Activity

Role Play Activity

This is the last section in this mini-course. Here, you will use what you have learned so far to come up with an job interview conversation and carry out a role-playing exercise with the instructor. Both the instructor and the student will carry out a role-playing exercise via videoconference using Skype or Google Plus at a time that is convenient for both parties.

 [Job Interview Role Play Activity Forum](#)

 [The Role Play Activity](#)

Additional Resources

Additional Resources

This section provides you with additional information and samples of résumés and job interviews in case you need them if you decide to look for a job in Canada. Click on the links below for more information.

 [Writing a Canadian Résumé](#)

This link gives you some tips on creating a [résumé](#) in Canada.

 [Canadian Résumé Samples](#)

Click for some sample résumés for different professions or jobs.

 [More tips on Canadian résumé writing](#)

Click here for some more tips on writing a [résumé](#) in Canada

 [Some Sample Interview Questions and Answers](#)

Click here to list some sample interview questions that interviewers often ask in Canadian job interviews.

 [General Job Interview Guide](#)

For more information on general job interview tips, including how to prepare, interview etiquette, dress code and what to do after an interview, click on this link.

Appendix D: Quiz Questions

1. She insulted me. I _____ to her again!
 - A. will never speak
 - B. will never have spoken
 - C. speak
 - D. will never spoke

2. You will not find your friend at home right now. He _____ in the library.
 - A. studies
 - B. is studying
 - C. studied
 - D. is studies

3. Once a week, I _____ to an art class at the college.
 - A. went
 - B. am going
 - C. go
 - D. have gone

4. I _____ to Toronto next Thursday. Do you want to come?
 - A. am going
 - B. go
 - C. have gone
 - D. went

5. I _____ lunch in the cafeteria every day.
 - A. am eating
 - B. eat
 - C. will eat
 - D. is eating

6. Don't give Jan any cheese. She _____ it!
 - A. hates
 - B. will hate
 - C. is hating
 - D. hated

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7. Jerry is rich — he _____ a Mercedes.
- A. drove
 - B. drives
 - C. is driving
 - D. was driving
8. Look! John _____ into the water.
- A. jumped
 - B. jumps
 - C. is jumping
 - D. will jump
9. It _____ quite hard — perhaps we shouldn't go out tonight.
- A. snows
 - B. is snowing
 - C. will snow
 - D. has snowed
10. "Did you wait for him very long?" "Yes, I _____ to bed until five in the morning."
- A. did go
 - B. did not go
 - C. had gone
 - D. went
11. Mr. Blake _____ to Korea, so he is not here.
- A. will have been
 - B. will go
 - C. has been
 - D. has gone
12. The teacher told us that Watt _____ the steam engine.
- A. will invent
 - B. has invented
 - C. was inventing
 - D. invented
13. How long have you been here? I _____ here three weeks ago.
- A. I have been

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- B. I'd be
- C. I'd have been
- D. came

14. "Did Mary come here and visit?" "She _____ twice since two years ago."

- A. was visiting here
- B. visits here
- C. visited here
- D. has visited here

15. "Do you mean George?" "Yes, he _____ a note to me yesterday."

- A. writes
- B. wrote
- C. has written
- D. had written

16. "Do you know Professor Lee?" "Yes I do. I _____ him long ago in Busan."

- A. met
- B. have met
- C. would meet
- D. had met

17. "My English is not good." "How many years ago _____ English?"

- A. do you study
- B. have you studied
- C. did you study
- D. had you studied

18. "How often has Ms. Lin come to visit you recently?" "She _____ here twice last year."

- A. be
- B. was
- C. is
- D. has

19. I _____ to the tennis club of my school.

- A. am belonged
- B. am belonging
- C. am belong
- D. belong

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20. In those days people _____ without chopsticks.
- A. were eating
 - B. had been eating
 - C. ate
 - D. eat
21. Peter _____ football yesterday.
- A. has played
 - B. have played
 - C. played
 - D. will play
22. The girls _____ their lunch yet.
- A. did not eat
 - B. ate not
 - C. has not eaten
 - D. have not eaten
23. They _____ the car. It looks new again.
- A. have cleaned
 - B. has cleaned
 - C. will clean
 - D. am cleaned
24. Last year we _____ to Seoul for a vacation.
- A. went
 - B. goed
 - C. have gone
 - D. had gone
25. John and Peggy _____ the book about writing resumes. Now they feel ready to look for a job.
- A. read
 - B. will read
 - C. has read
 - D. have read
26. I _____ my friend two days ago.

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- A. met
- B. have met
- C. will meet
- D. will have met

27. We _____ another country before.

- A. visited
- B. have never visited
- C. had never visited
- D. has never visited

28. She _____ a new car in 2011.

- A. has bought
- B. bought
- C. buyed
- D. has buyed

29. I'm sorry, but I _____ my notes for the next job interview.

- A. forgot
- B. forgetted
- C. have forgotten
- D. has forgotten

30. _____ any games of chess in the last week?

- A. Did you win
- B. Have you won
- C. Have you win
- D. Won

Appendix E: REB Ethics Approval

Memorandum

DATE: December 17, 2013

TO: Mr. Robert Perez

COPY: Dr. Tom Jones (Research Supervisor)
Alice Tieulié, Acting Secretary, Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
Dr. Vive Kumar, Chair, Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

FROM: Dr. Marguerite Koole, Chair, CDE Research Ethics Review Committee

SUBJECT: **Ethics Proposal #CDE-13-11: “Applying Language Cultural Content in ESL DE Courses: Challenges and Recommendations”**

Thank you for providing the revised application requested by the Centre for Distance Education (CDE) Research Ethics Review Committee.

I am pleased to advise that this project has now been awarded **APPROVAL TO PROCEED**.

You may begin your research immediately.

This approval of your application will be reported to the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) at their next monthly meeting. The REB retains the right to request further information, or to revoke the interim approval, at any time.

The approval for the study “as presented” is valid for a period of one year from the date of this memo. If required, an extension must be sought in writing prior to the expiry of the existing approval. **A Final Report is to be submitted when the research project is completed.** The reporting form can be found online at <http://www.athabascau.ca/research/ethics/> .

As implementation of the proposal progresses, if you need to make any significant changes or modifications, please forward this information immediately to the CDE Research Ethics Review Committee via rebsec@athabascau.ca for further review.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee Chair (above), or the Research Ethics Administrator at rebsec@athabascau.ca .

Sincerely,

Marguerite Koole, PhD.