6. Designing online learning activities using the e-moderation and the e-tivity frameworks

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Abstract

Learning design plays a crucial role when teaching online courses because it avoids having trouble during teaching and learning. This study explores how the e-moderation and the e-tivity frameworks are reflected on the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in an online course of English. It also explores the insights of the participants in the course about the use of the frameworks. The results from this study suggest that the use of the e-moderation and the e-tivity frameworks can result in cheaper, more efficient, more attractive and more economically sustainable synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Key words: *online learning, e-moderation, e-tivities, synchronous and asynchronous learning activities*

Introduction

Online teaching is a field where design plays a crucial role since a systematic approach to planning instruction reduces the chances of having online learners to struggle with understanding what is expected from them, it avoids frustration with the online experience and dropping out levels can

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also be reduced (Kelly, 2011). Besides, instructional design models also play an important role when systematically planning online instruction. An instructional design model is a framework or a tool that plays several roles such as (1) guiding the structure of a course, (2) leading the learner to a topic, (3) removing distractions and (4) providing focus. When teaching, instructional design models offer benefits such as helping instructors to teach, guide, support learners and to promote meaningful and active learning (Mayes, Morrison, Mellar, Bullen, & Oliver, 2009). Not having a systematic approach to planning instruction can lead to instruction that does not seem to have a clear goal, deficient course content, activities and assessments, which are reflected in poor evaluations of the course and instructors (Kelly, 2011). Similarly, the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies that target L2 learners has proliferated. They provide language teachers with new tools. However, their implementation is still a concern for both teachers and researchers (Zhao, 2003, as cited by Gleason & Suvorov, 2011). CMC tools have a strong social presence and numerous communication strategies as well as a wide range of discourse patterns (Hirotani, 2009; Oztok, Zingaro, Brett, & Hewitt, 2013). The implementation of CMC tools in language teaching is based on the assumption that using the technology-enhanced language learning approach promotes interaction and communication between EFL learners, which support their efforts to produce more linguistic output and helps learners interact and negotiate with their peers and develop their communicative competence. (Abrams, 2003; AbuSeileek & Qatawneh, 2013)

The purpose of this paper is to explain how the design of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in an online course of English reflects the design principles proposed by the frameworks of e-moderation and e-tivities (Salmon, 2011, 2013). It also assesses how the participants in the online course perceive the implementation of those online learning activities. This investigation is a case study with qualitative research methods. The research data are drawn from the participation in focus groups and in-depth interviews and from the analysis of the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in an online course of English. Findings show that the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in the course have many of the characteristics of e-tivities. The results show that the e-moderation

and the e-tivity frameworks provide appropriate design principles that facilitate online language learning and teaching. The results from this investigation also show that the synchronous learning activities provide opportunities to stretch the participants' language repertoire. The results from this investigation also unveil a need to train teacher and course designers to use design frameworks that provide principles for having cost-effective online courses that meet high quality standards.

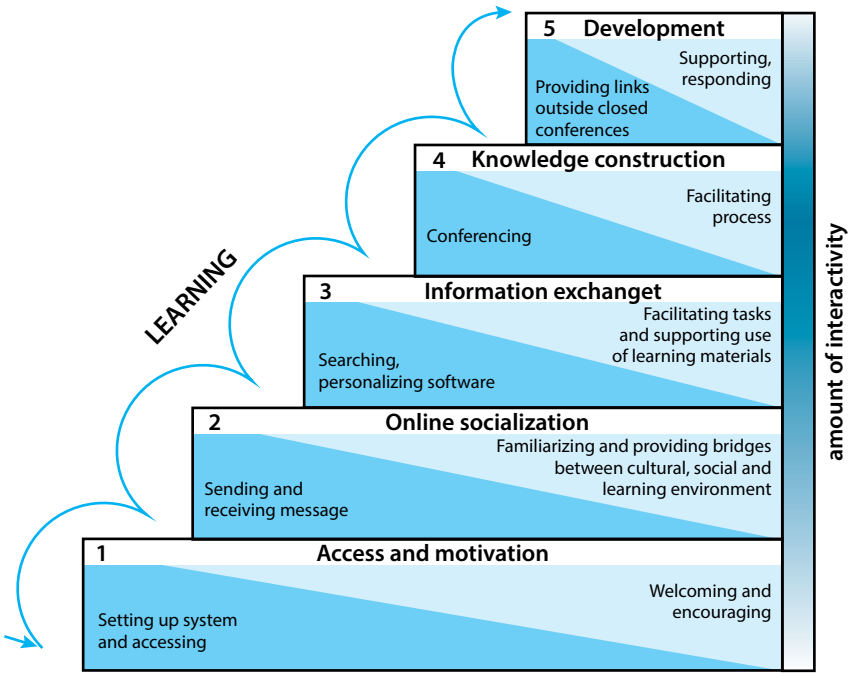
Theoretical framework

E-moderation

According to Salmon (2011) as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano (2016) e-moderation refers to the processes of managing the communication among teachers and students in online environments and the skills online teachers or e-moderators employ to establish a teacher's presence in an online environment. Salmon developed a model for appropriately moderating an online course. Figure 1 shows the model for teaching online developed by Salmon (2011) as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano (2016, p. 99). The model is divided into five stages. At stage 1 individual access and the ability of participants to use online learning are essential to develop group learning. According to Cigognini (2009) at this stage, the new online learner can experience considerable frustration in logging on. Stage 2 involves individual participants establishing their online identities and finding others with whom to interact. Cigognini (2009) states that at this stage, online participants can be excited to share and exchange their thoughts and collaborate with others. At stage 3, participants give each other information relevant to the course. This stage is characterized by cooperation and support for each person's goals. At this stage, online learners must explore the necessary information at their own pace by respecting different and diverse points of view (Cigognini, 2009). At stage 4, group discussions start and the interaction becomes more collaborative and online learners must take control of their own knowledge construction. At stage 5 participants use the system to achieve their goals, seek to integrate online

into other forms of learning and reflect on their learning process. At this stage, online learners become critical and self-reflective (Cigognini, 2009). Each stage requires the participants to master certain technical skills, in the bottom left of each step, as well as e-moderating skills, on the right top of each step. The levels of interactivity, shown in the "interactivity bar" that runs along the flight of the steps, also increase and the kind of information and messages that the participants exchange also change through the steps and the stages of the model (Salmon , 2011 as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano, 2016, p. 99).

Figure 6.1. *Salmon's Five-Stage Model (Salmon, 2011) as cited in Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano (2016)*



This model underlies several assumptions: (1) online learning goes beyond undertaking activity on a computer; online learning includes interaction between neural, cognitive, motivational, affective and social processes. (2) Learning is a process where transformation takes place in leaps and

bounds, and (3) participants in an online setting learn about working online along with learning about the topic with, and through other people. Success of online learning depends on the appropriate integration of learning about technologies and learning through or with technologies. The model seeks to promote the interaction between groups of peers and the e-moderator who plays the role of mediator and supporter and promotes the interaction with content and between the e-moderator and the students. The implementation of the model to design courses has benefits for designers, e-moderators and participants. Designers know how participants are likely to exploit the system at each stage, e-moderators enjoy working online and find that their processes run smoothly and participants feel they can control their own learning by focusing on tasks and processes (Salmon, 2011 as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano, 2016).

E-tivities

The term e-tivity refers to the frameworks for enabling active and participative online learning by individuals and groups. E-tivities have several characteristics: they make the work of the teachers more productive and focused, they are focused on the learners; they transfer the knowledge to the resources and the learners' skills to access information because they are based on the idea that knowledge is socially constructed; e-tivities are cheap and they are easily combined with face-to-face environments (Salmon, 2013 as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano, 2016, p.100). Rumble (2010) as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano (2016), reflecting on the costs of producing learning materials as an aspect that may hinder innovation in higher education and advocating for the implementation of e-tivities, says that

> *Preparing online learning materials is a very expensive business. Few academics or teachers have all the necessary skills, the time and the desire to spend months creating texts and video. There is usually a need to frame the production of material on a project with one or more subject experts, instructional designers and web developers. And sometimes mobile application developers,*

> *information specialists and more people are required to produce a single piece of material. E-tivities help saving costs because they use existing resources, are reusable, are adaptable and are based on the participants' exchange of knowledge (p.100).*

Herrintong, Reeves, Oliver (2010) as cited by Pineda Hoyos & Tamayo Cano (2016) suggest that e-tivities promote engagement because they build up robust and usable knowledge through authentic tasks and situations. Salmon (2013) characterizes e-tivities as a way of accessing and digitally applying teachers' creativity, vision and inspiration. She proposes the following framework for designing e-tivities. She states that e-tivities should have a number to easily identify them. They should also have a title that should be a very brief descriptor. They should state the purpose, which should be linked to the outcomes of the unit, module or course. E-tivities should also include a brief summary of the overall task that should state the clear, brief instructions on how to take part and what to do. E-tvities should also include a spark that should be directly linked to the topic of the week. They should give clear instructions to the individual participant about what he or she should do in response to the spark. E-tivities should also request responses from individual to others. In the e-tivities, the e-moderator interventions should clearly indicate what the e-moderator should do and when. The time allowed for the e-tivitiy should be clearly stated and the link to the next e-tivity should be included. Table 6.1 summarizes the framework to design e-tivities.

Table 6.1. *Salmon's (2013) framework to design e-tivities*

Numbering, pacing and sequencing	Number the e-tivity to be easily identified
Title	Very brief descriptor
Purpose	Linked to the objectives of course
Brief summary of the overall task	Clear instructions on how to participate
Spark	Directly linked to the topic for the week
Individual contribution	Clear instruction for the participants
Dialogue begins	Request responses from the individuals
E-moderator intervention	Clearly indicate what the teacher should do
Schedule and time	State the time allowed to finish the e-tivity
Next	Link the e-tivity to the next e-tivity

Asynchronous and synchronous communication

Asynchronous communication is communication that occurs in delayed time and does not rely on simultaneous access for educational outcomes and synchronous communication is communication that involves real time communication between teachers and students (Oztok et al., 2013). Abu-Seileek & Qatawneh (2013) argue that asynchronous communication may give users more chances to think and answer while synchronous communication requires immediate responses, which limit the use of outside resources. They point out that synchronous and asynchronous communication can pursue different purposes in language teaching. For example, asynchronous communication tools can serve to learn a specific grammatical structure while synchronous communication tools can serve to enhance linguistic interaction and foster contact between different groups of learners. Both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools can produce a large amount of output because they enable extensive learner-to-learner negotiation, more talking time per learner and more amount of lexicon than face-to-face communication. Gleason & Suvorov (2011) and Lee (2011) identify several advantages of synchronous and asynchronous communication in promoting communication, interaction and socialization, which table 6.2 summarizes.

Table 6.2. *Advantages of synchronous asynchronous communication in promoting communication, interaction and socialization (Gleason & Suvorov, 2011; Lee, 2011)*

Synchronous and asynchronous communication have been found to	Provide frequent opportunities to express ideas and opinions
	Produce large amount of target language output
	Allow more time to develop comments
	Lead to greater precision of expression or greater accuracy rates
	Promote a collaborative spirit
	Enhance motivation of language practice
	Promote a student-centered atmosphere
	Reduce students' anxiety
	Develop students' linguistic performance

The study

This study is a case study with qualitative research methods. The present study uses a quasi-experimental, or nonequivalent, group design as the research procedure because it observes a single group (Creswell, 2013). This study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) how do the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in an online English course reflect the e-moderation and the e-tivity design principles proposed by (Salmon, 2011, 2013)? And (2) how do the participants in the online course of English perceive the implementation of the e-tivities in the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?

Participants

The participants in this study are six students (four females and two males) who are between 30 and 40 years old. They have been studying English for 4.5 years on average. According to a self-assessment rubric administered at the beginning of the course based on the self-assessment grid from the common reference levels on the CEFR, five of the participants have an A2 level in spoken interaction and one has a B1 level. In oral production, four participants have an A2 level and two have a B1 level.

Methods

Data sources and analysis

Data for this study emerged from focus groups with students and in-depth interviews with the students or the teacher. They were semi-structured, and utilized protocols for their administration. After carrying out the in-depth interviews or the focus groups, I transcribed verbatim the recordings. The participation in the in-depth interviews and the focus groups was anonymous, voluntary and it did not have any effects on the final assessment in the course. I analyzed the transcripts from the in-depth interviews and the

Table 6.3. *Matrix employed to analyze the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities (Cigognini, 2009; Salmon, 2011, 2013).*

Stage	*Characteristics of e-tivities*
Stage 1 (access and motivation)	**Access** E-tivities should guarantee good, regular access to the online environment. E-tivities need to provide sufficient information to help participants find the most important parts of the online environment on screen or the mobile device. E-tivities need to show participants how to take part in the online experience actively. E-tivities should provide a gentle introduction to using the new online learning environment. **Motivation** E-tivities should enable participants to become involved, contribute and develop skills. E-tivities should increase the participants' comfort with the use of the technology. E-tivities should clearly state the purpose of the program, the objectives, the time required to finish each part of the course. **Arriving** E-tivities should last at least one week to be completed
Stage 2 (online socialization)	E-tivities should enable participants to relate to others. E-tivities should provide ways of knowing who else is in the online environment. E-tivities should promote webs of trust. E-tivities should enable participants to convey feelings and build relationships. E-tivities should help participants understand the value of learning together online.
Stage 3 (information exchange)	E-tivities should allow interaction with the course materials, the e-moderator and other participants. E-tivities should have a strong task and action focus. E-tivities should enable participants to impart, to explain, explore and clarify information. E-tivities should focus on exploring coordination and communication between the participants. E-tivities should experiment with structure of groups and the techniques of group working. E-tivities should provide structure, pacing and clear expectations. E-tivities should help to sustain motivation and establish presence. E-tivities should concentrate on discovering or exploring aspects of information known to participants. E-tivities should stimulate productive information sharing.
Stage 4 (knowledge construction)	E-tivities should promote the processes of thinking and interacting with others online. E-tivities should enable participants to become online authors. E-tivities should be based on questions that have no obvious right or wrong answers. E-tivities should offer knowledge building rather than exchange of information. E-tivities should contain strategic, problem or practice-based topics. E-tivities should encourage exploration and interpretation of issues across disciplines and professions. E-tivities should introduce the idea that there are multiple perspectives and solutions. E-tivities should have a wide variety of interpretation and perspectives. E-tivities should include choosing from alternatives, choosing thoughtfully, affirming a choice and giving proposals. E-tivities should build and construct appropriate knowledge created from the previous e-tivities. E-tivities should have online discussion or knowledge development aspects.
Stage 5 (development)	E-tivities should enable participants to be critical and self-reflective. E-tivities should center on developing participants' self-insights, reflecting and making judgements about their experience and knowledge. E-tivities should enable evaluation and critiquing. E-tivities should enable participants to critically reflect on their learning and apply it to their own personal construction.

focus group using open codes and then with axial codes to categorize and synthesize emerging themes (Creswell, 2007). Another source of data for this study was the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in the

course. For their analysis, I employed a matrix that contained the characteristics of the e-tivities in each in the five stages in the model proposed by Salmon (2011, 2013) and Cigognini (2009). Table 6.3 shows the matrix that I employed to analyze the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Results and discussion

RQ # 1: How do the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in an online English course reflect the e-moderation and the e-tivity design principles proposed by Salmon (2011, 2013)?

At stage 1 (access and motivation), the e-tivities in the course aim at making sure that the participants have easy access to the platforms, systems and processes in use. Salmon (2013) points out that although the development of technical skill is important at this stage, what is really important is to acquire the emotional and social capacity to learn online with others. To guarantee access, the e-tivities at this stage in the course are designed to provide learners with regular access to the online course and to allow navigation by showing how to use the tools that have been chosen for the course. To keep high levels of motivation, the e-tivities that the course has at this stage enable participants to become involved, contribute and develop not only technical skills, but also skills to work in groups. The key, at this stage, is to mobilize participants' understanding about why they are learning, why in this way, as well as what they have to do to take part (Salmon, 2013). The e-tivities that the course has that aim at this stage are simple and easy. One of the e-tivities that the course has at this stage is exploring the contents of the course. This e-tivity initiates in a forum discussion and the participants have one week to carry it out because as Salmon (2013) puts it participants simply will not all log in on the day and the time that you plan. Besides, allowing this time to complete the e-tivitiy assures that all the participants land safely to the course (content, tools, important dates, objectives, methodology). From the characteristics of e-tivities that Salmon (2013) explains, the teacher, in her first message, makes a connection between this e-tivity and the previous one, she clearly states the purpose of the e-tivity, which is to explore the basic information of the course and at the same time she

briefly summarizes the task in the activity, she directly links the e-tivity with the topic for the week, she outlines what the participants have to do and she explains the purpose of the e-tivity. Figure 6.2 shows the e-tivity at stage one from the course.

Figure 6.2. *E-tivity at stage 1 (access and motivation)*

At stage 2 (online socialization), the e-tivites in the course focus on enabling participants to relate to others and to provide ways to know who else is participating. At this stage, e-tivities provide a great amount of practice not in the technology, but in working together (Salmon, 2013). The e-tivities that the course has that aim at this stage help participants to get to know each other and to approach each other's hopes, aspiration goals and expectation about the online experience. One of the e-tivities that aims at online socialization in the course is the introductory online lesson, which is a synchronous meeting between the teacher and the students using a video conference tool. Table 6.4 shows that this e-tivity is divided into six sections. First, a welcome message that outlines the content of the session. Second, an introduction from the teacher that includes information about her hobbies, her favorite color, food, book, movie. This information is used as example because the participants have to introduce themselves using the same information. This section includes a recent picture of the teacher which generates a sense of reality and helps creates the teacher's online

persona. Third, teacher's expectations. This section explores what is expected from the participants about issues such as an active participation in the activities, punctuality to submit assignments, avoiding asking for help to complete assignments and availability of time and commitment to do the activities in the course. Fourth, an explanation of the structure of the course that includes the topics, the technological tools, the objectives and the methodology. Fifth, introduction of the participants providing the same information that that the teacher used in the first section. In this section, the participants can ask questions or reply to the introductions. And sixth, link this e-tivity with the next e-tivity that is an online discussion in which the participants have to carry on with their introductions.

Table 6.4. *Structure of the e-tivity in the introductory online lesson*

Section	Content
Welcome message	Outlines the content of the session
Teacher's introduction	Includes name, information on hobbies, preferences, a recent picture
Teacher's expectations	Participation, punctuality, avoiding help from others, commitment
Course structure	Topics, tools, units
Participants' introductions	Using the same information as the teacher's introduction
Link to the next e-tivity	Information about the next e-tivity

Another e-tivitiy at this stage in the course is an online forum named the Talking Corner where the participants have to post an introduction of themselves and they have to react to at least one of their classmate's posts by agreeing or by asking follow up questions. The participants have to provide information about their hobbies, preferences in food, books, movies and other information that they think can be useful. The participants are allowed to ask questions or to react to their classmates' posts. Figure 6.3 shows a discussion thread from the Talking Corner forum. When carrying out this e-tivity, some participants produced elaborated posts by providing extra information. For example, one of the participant explains that the place where she lives is a good place to live, she also provides extra information about her favorite TV show by stating what it is about, her favorite colors by saying that black and white go well with everything she wears and she also talks about her expectation with course. However, some participants stuck to the model presented by the teacher in a previous e-tivity as the fi-

gure shows. The e-tivities that the course has which aim at this stage seek to "create a micro-community through active and interactive tasks" (Salmon, 2013).

Figure 6.3. *Participants' production in an e-tivity at stage 2*

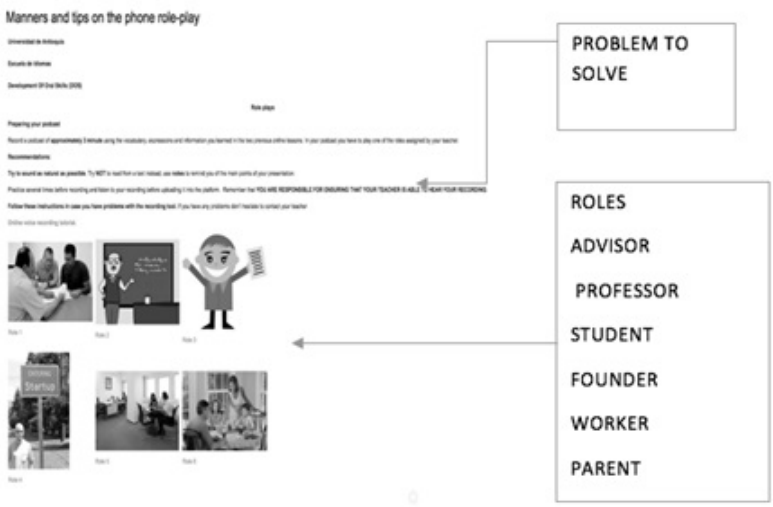
At stage 3 or information exchange, the e-tivities foster interaction with the course materials and interaction with other participants. They also enable participants to share, explore and clarify information (Salmon, 2013). The e-tivities that the course has at this stage aim to develop a strong notion of scaffolding and to help participants to deepen their understanding and their ability to work constructively with each other. The e-tivities at this stage introduce group work and the techniques for group working (Salmon, 2013). The course has several e-tivities that aim at exchanging information at this stage. For example, in the video forum in unit two of the course, the participants have to record and post their opinions about tips to use the phone politely. The way to introduce group work in this e-tivity is by asking participants to answer a question or a series of questions. From the characteristics of e-tivities that Salmon (2013) states, this e-tivity explains the purpose and summarizes its content, it provides a spark, which is to help a friend to make a phone call to the US. It provides some recommendation that make sure that contributions are appropriate. The recommendations are to sound as natural as possible, to try not to read from a text, but to try

to use notes instead. Other recommendations are to practice several times before uploading the recording and to make sure that the teacher is able to hear the recording. This e-tivity includes a tutorial on how to use the video recording tool, which helps anticipate problems. To introduce group work and to introduce the techniques of group working, participants have to comment orally to at least two of the other participants' posts and they have to upload their comments to the platform. Video forums allow participants to "explore information at their own pace and react to it before hearing the views of others" (Salmon, 2013, p. 27). Figure 6.4 shows the features of one of the e-tivities at stage 3.

Figure 6.4. *E-tivity at stage 3*

At stage 4 (knowledge construction), participants recognize the potential of online interaction and taking control of knowledge construction begins to emerge (Salmon, 2013). The e-tivities in the course that aim at stage four seek to promote the process of thinking and interacting with others online. The skills that should be developed at this stage are critical, analytical, practical and creative thinking. At this stage, participants start to become online authors, rather than receivers or transmitters of information (Salmon, 2013). The e-tivities that the DOS course has at this stage are based on questions that have no obvious right or wrong answers, they offer knowl-

Figure 6.5. *E-tivity at stage 4*



edge building rather than exchange of information. At this stage, the e-tivities in the DOS course include structured and focused activities that include a wide variety of interpretations and perspectives in order to encourage building up knowledge and use of information. Salmon (2013) states that the best e-tivities at this stage aim at building and constructing appropriate knowledge created from the previous e-tivites. The podcasts are an example of the e-tivities that the course has that aims at stage four. The e-tivity inserted in the podcast in unit 2 is a role play. As figure 6.5 shows the participants have to play a role as an advisor from a communication company, a professor in a very prestigious university, an advanced student of English, the founder of a very important startup company, a worker for a very prestigious company or a parent of two kids. The participants have to record a 1 minute podcasts using the vocabulary, expressions and information from the other activities in the course. The problem that the participants have to solve is that all the roles have issues with bad manners using the phones and they have to come up with a solution for the problems. Another e-tivitiy that the DOS course has that aims at stage 4 is the podcast in unit four where the participants have to provide a description of a series of images of people performing several jobs or occupations and they have to state why

the image represents a good or bad job. The participants have to record a 1 minute podcasts using the vocabulary, expressions and information explored along the unit. The images that the participants have to describe are a woman working with a computer on the beach, a rock singer, a person with half the body inside an elephant and some people smelling armpits of other people.

According to Salmon (2013) at stage five (development), the participants start to apply the knowledge that they have constructed along the previous stages to their individual contexts. The participants become committed and creative with their learning process online. They become critical and self-reflective. The e-tivities that the course has at this stage aim at gaining self-insight, reflecting and making judgments about their experience and knowledge. One of the e-tivities that the course has that aims at developing metacognitive skills is the self-assessment rubrics, as figure 6.6 shows the self-assessment rubrics provide the participants in the course with descriptors that help them assess their oral performances and provide them with elements to judge their knowledge. This e-tivity provides opportunities for ongoing reflective analysis of the participants' development of oral skills. The outcome of this e-tivity is to build knowledge upon all the e-tivities at previous stages because participants reflect on their learning. Figure 6 shows that the participants have to select the descriptors that best fit their performance in the unit. The descriptors help the participants place their performance in one of the levels that go from A1 (basic) to C2 (advanced). The participants have to assess their performance in aspects such as range that includes aspects such vocabulary and grammar structures. Corrections that have to do with identifying and correcting errors with grammar aspects. Fluency that has to do with the use of expressions and the use of pauses when speaking. Interaction where the participants have to assess aspects such as taking part in conversations, answering questions, and for the purpose of this course to react to another participant's post and coherence in which the participants have to assess aspects such as showing an appropriate use of linking words such as and, then, but and because.

Table 6.5 outlines the e-tivites that the course has at each stage along with their names, what the participants have to do, the technological tools

necessary to complete the e-tivity and whether it is a synchronous or an asynchronous activity.

Figure 6.6. *E-tivity at stage 5 in the DOS course*

RQ#2: How do the participants in the online course of English perceive the implementation of the e-tivities in the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities?

When asked to describe how the e-tivities in the online course affected their ability to speak English, the participants point out that there is a positive influence on the development of language accuracy when they compare their performances at the beginning and at the end of the course. However, the participants stress that the e-tivities have a negative effect on the development of fluency. They also point out that the sequencing of the e-tivties in the course provides them with numerous opportunities for language practice.

> "the e-tivites in the course helped me develop my language accuracy because they provided me with practice, I can compare my performance at the beginning and at the end of the course and they are very different." In-depth interview to students.
>
> "As for fluency, I think the e-tivities were not very useful, I think they have potential, but for the development of my fluency, I don't think they helped." In-depth interview to students.

Table 6.5. *E-tivites that the course has at each stage along with their names, tasks, tools and whether it is a synchronous or asynchronous activity*

Stage	*Activity*	*Task*	*e-tivity characteristic*	*Tool*	*Type of activity*
Stage 1 (access and motivation)	Introduction activity	Students read the basic information of the course (program, academic calendar, objective, methodology and assessment)	These e-tivities guarantee good and regular access to the online environment	Course main page in Moodle, Forum module in Moodle	Asynchronous
	Introductory online lesson recording	Students review what happened in the introductory online lesson		Adobe Connect video player	Asynchronous
Stage 2 (socialization)	Introductory online lesson	Students discuss the basic procedures of the course, they meet the teacher and the other classmates and they get familiar with the technological tools in the course	These e-tivities enable participants to relate to others and provide ways to know who is in the online environment	Adobe Connect video conference tool	Synchronous
	The talking corner forum	Students introduce themselves and get acquainted with others		Forum module in Moodle	Asynchronous
Stage 3 (information exchange)	Online lessons	Students discuss the topics for each unit (fitness, manners and tips on the phone, jobs and occupation and healthy living). They use the vocabulary and expressions related to each topic from the course, they read or watch a video about the topic and they solve a problem, provide an argument or play a role	These –tivities allow interaction with the course material, the e-moderator and the other participants. They also experiment with the structure of group work and the techniques of group working	Adobe Connect video conference tool	Synchronous
	Audio forums and video forums	Students have to record a 1-minute audio or video message answering a question or giving an opinion. Students have to react to at least 2 of their classmates' posts		Forum module in Moodle and an online audio recording tool (https://clyp.it) and video recording tool (http://www.videomessageonline.com/)	Asynchronous
	Online interviews	Students participate in a one-to-one web conferencing session where they discuss the topics explored in the course.		Adobe Connect video conference tool	Synchronous

Stage	*Activity*	*Task*	*e-tivity characteristic*	*Tool*	*Type of activity*
Stage 4 (knowledge construction)	Podcasts	Students record a 1 minute audio message. They play a role, select from a list of options or defend an argument using all the information from the other e-tivities in the course	These e-tivities are based on questions that have not obvious right or wrong answers. They offer knowledge building rather than exchange of information. They contain strategic, problem or practice-based topics. They introduce the idea that there are multiple perspectives and solutions. They have a wide variety of interpretation and perspectives. They include choosing from alternatives, choosing thoughtfully, affirming a choice and giving proposals. They build and construct appropriate knowledge created from the previous e-tivities and they have knowledge development aspects	Assignment module in Moodle with a recording tool	Asynchronous
Stage 5 (development)	Self-assessment rubrics	Students have to self-assess their oral performance at the beginning and the end of the course and at the end of each unit from the course	These e-tivities enable participants to be critical and self-reflective. They center on developing participants' self-insights, reflecting and making judgements about their experience and knowledge. They enable evaluation and critiquing. They enable participants to critically reflect on their learning and apply it to their own personal construction	Survey module and database activity module in Moodle	Asynchronous

> "the e-tivties helped me a lot, even the ones in the video forums, which were very difficult, because they helped me practice for the podcast." Focus group to students
>
> "first, I did all the e-tivities before the podcast, so when I did the podcasts I was totally relaxed and confident." Focus group to students.

When asked about their opinions about the e-tivties in the course, the participants highlight that they were time consuming. The participants describe the process that they employed when doing their e-tivities as having different stages and aiming at different objectives. The participants highlight that the e-tivities generate iterations that foster the use of the language.

> "I think one of the assets of the e-tivities in the course is that they require time for completion and the process that I carried out to do the e-tivities in the podcasts was first, writing down what I would say and then closing the paper and trying to tell the story being as natural as possible. I recorded one of the podcasts like 10 times." Focus group with students.

When asked about the benefits of e-tivites in the development of language skills, the participants pinpoint that the use of e-tivities helps them develop pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. They highlight that the use of e-tivities enlarge the teaching skills as they encourage the teacher to manipulate and curate content.

> "I think the e-tivties in the course are adequate and they help me improve my vocabulary, my pronunciation and some grammatical issues." In-depth interview to students.
>
> "I think the teacher started to change things in the e-tivities because at the beginning they seemed like very monotonous, but from the second unit of the course, she started to include other activities or different material, but she always kept the same structure." Focus group with students.

The results from the analysis of the focus group and the in-depth interviews show that the use of e-tivities in an online course of English is perceived to impact positively the development of accuracy and complexity, but

it negatively affects the development of fluency. These results also show that the use of the e-tivity framework is perceived as positively affecting the development of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. E-tivities are perceived as complex activities that require time and practice. They are claimed to develop skills such as monitoring, search for information and time management. These results suggest that the participants perceive the e-tivities that have synchronous tools as beneficial. E-tivities are also claimed to foster the development of self-corrections and language awareness. Table 6 explains the results from the analysis of the in-depth interviews and the focus group.

Table 6.6. *Analysis of the in-depth interviews and the focus group*

E-tivites	Positively impact the development of accuracy and complexity Negatively impact the development of fluency Develop monitoring skills Require time and practice for completion Foster the development of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary

Conclusions

This study has shown that the use of the e-tivity and the e-moderation frameworks to design synchronous and asynchronous learning activities is beneficial for the development of L2 in web-based environments because they provide numerous opportunities to use the target language. The results from this study show that the use of the e-moderation and the e-tivity frameworks affords new ways of doing things and they help create sustainable online courses (Salmon, 2016). These findings suggest that there is a lurking need to show online teachers and course designers that regardless of the linguistic level of students, the use of the e-tivity and the e-moderation frameworks bring beneficial effects to the development of language skills because they foster connections and the use of the target language as a means rather than an end. The evidence from this study suggests that e-tivities serve to promote the use of the target language. The current data highlight the importance of using design principles to create online courses that foster the use of the target language to provide learners with opportu-

nities to stretch their language repertoire. This results also indicate that the e-tivities in the synchronous learning activities help stretch the students' linguistic repertoire. These results suggest that the e-tivities in the synchronous learning activities foster students to take control over the existing language level. These results suggest that the use of e-tivities can result in cheaper, more efficient, more attractive and more economically sustainable synchronous and asynchronous learning activities (Salmon, 2016). The main conclusion from this study is that the use of technology in language teaching cannot be successful without appropriate, well-supported and focused human intervention, good learning design and the sensitive handling of the process by trained online tutors (Salmon, 2014; Salmon G & Phemie W, 2014).

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