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**BLENDED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A COLOMBIAN TERTIARY CONTEXT:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF TEACHER CHANGE AND CURRICULUM
INNOVATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study, from a narrative epistemological and methodological perspective, explores curricular innovation and teacher change by examining how a blended learning program was put into action in a language teaching department of a Colombian tertiary institution. In particular, the study aimed to identify and interpret the experiences lived out by a group of eight ELT teachers, each of whom held different positions within their community, as they grappled with and managed the changes brought about by their involvement in the implementation of the program. It also sought to establish how these personal and collective experiences were influenced by broader organizational and institutional contexts of reform. Data were gathered in a natural setting for a period of sixteen weeks through regular contact with teachers, leaders, administrators and students. Data included narrative interviews, field notes from classroom observation, student questionnaires and official documents.

Data were analyzed for evidence of the impact of the adoption of blended learning on teachers' feelings, beliefs, perceptions and practices. I specifically examined how the participants interpreted and handled the challenges and opportunities motivated by blended learning and how, in doing so, they came to confront or avoid the behavioral and conceptual implications of the change. Findings revealed that switching to blended learning is a complex enterprise that goes far beyond getting the mix right as many individual and context-specific situations come to shape the implementation experience. Depending on the extent to which their aspirations, beliefs and actions were consistent with the reality of their professional context, aligned to the expectations of influential others and influenced by external factors, participants in this study found it more or less difficult to develop ownership of their practice, feel emotional congruence and perform stable professional identities. In concluding my account of the inquiry, I therefore discuss the ways in which tensions can be managed so as to help language teachers and leaders deal more effectively with the contradictions and tensions arising in their practice as a result of the change to blended learning. On the whole, I believe that the results of this inquiry contribute to a better understanding of what adopting blended learning models involves in the context of English language teaching, particularly from the perspective of those who implement them.

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¹ Pseudonyms

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are teachers who have many years of experience and who have been educated in an entirely different model, a face-to-face model, a communicative learning model where emphasis was given to face-to-face instruction. But now there are new tools that they have been required to use, and they or we do not belong to that ... culture. This is about getting into a whole new culture. (Lucinda, *Int. 1*, l: 122-125)

Education systems change in order to respond to the multiple social, political and economic challenges and needs that societies typically experience (Kelly, 2009). However, as Wedell (2009a) and other scholars have argued, one of the main reasons for initiating change today is linked to the technological and economic effects of globalization, and more specifically, “the need to develop policies that will maintain or improve [a nation’s] competitiveness in a rapidly changing global market place” (p. 15). As a consequence, as Benson (2005, p. 173) points out, educational policy has progressively moved into the classroom context by concentrating on “the integration of IT into the curriculum and on teaching methodologies designed to produce adaptable individuals who are able to respond to the demands of a globalized economy through lifelong learning”.

In the context of higher education, this interest in and need for integrating technology into the curriculum can be said to be manifested in the design and implementation of online/blended learning programs and courses. The combination of face-to-face and technology-mediated instruction has become one of the strategies adopted by many institutions, and, as is the case of this study, language teaching departments, to meet the demands of nationwide education policies and the particular needs of the higher education sector. Challenges such as lack of physical infrastructure, a period of rapid growth, and a desire for increased flexibility for faculty and students (Graham, Woodfield & Harrison, 2013) have led to a dramatic increase in blended course offerings.

Nevertheless, as the above excerpt from one of the study’s participant exemplifies, not all teachers are ready to cope with the change to blended learning. The use of technology involves change, and “change entails risk” (Nunan & Wong, 2005, p. 196). In the case of blended learning, this risk for teachers is of considerable significance. Engaging in online teaching requires teachers to modify their concepts of teaching and learning, to reprioritize values and beliefs, and to change their perceptions of their role as teachers. The switch from face-to-face to blended teaching, as stated by Shelley, White and Murphy (2013), affects teachers both cognitively and emotionally, impacting on their sense of

themselves as teachers. Whether this is acknowledged by teachers themselves and the institutions in which they work will certainly determine the outcomes of the change initiative.

Given that blended learning has increasingly been adopted in Colombian higher education, especially in the context of language instruction, I thus decided to examine through this narrative study the process of the implementation of a blended learning program in one tertiary institution and how teachers are affected in the wake of this change.

Rationale for the Study

Clandinin and Huber (2010) maintain that in narrative inquiry it is important to think about justifying the research in three different ways. Researchers should provide a personal, a practical, and a theoretical justification. This is what I set out to do in what follows.

Personal and Practical Justification

One of the reasons that motivated this study has to do with the fact that I am a language teacher myself and have therefore experienced first-hand many of the changes driven by the IT imperative (Wong, 2013). My decision to conduct this study relates directly to my own language learning and teaching experiences: those that have perplexed me and those that have made me question the role of technology in education. I am a Colombian English language teacher who has celebrated positive advancements in the profession, but who has also felt constrained by the ways educational mandates have impacted our job in the classroom. During my professional career, I have also had the opportunity to work as a curriculum development leader, and therefore, have directly dealt with the design of many of the instructional activities and guidelines that other colleagues have put into action.

In this latter role I have come to grips with the underlying aims of larger institutional and organizational narratives, but at the same time, through my decisions as a teacher leader, I have impacted, to a certain extent, teachers' professional experience. I have faced the complexity of engaging in educational change and have felt puzzled by the things that often did not work as expected. From this experience, I developed a growing interest, as Hendy (2008), in examining how teachers deal with constant reform and what the effect of the continuous educational change is at an individual level. As a result, in my role as a researcher, both in my master's (Mendieta, 2011) and doctoral research, I decided to explore the role that teachers play in the implementation of new institutional policies and pedagogical ideas, and to do so by using oral narratives as a major tool of inquiry.

My recent interest in conducting a study on blended learning is linked, however, to more practical reasons. It developed from the needs and desires of the tertiary institution where this study was conducted, and in which I was a former staff member, to engage in technology-enhanced learning, and lately, to integrate face-to-face with online provision. Although I am one of those educators who feel enthusiastic about the use of new technologies in and out of the language classroom, I have also realized the ways in which they can both enable and constrain design and instruction. Consequently, in this study, I decided to explore the implications that the implementation of a blended language learning program has for teachers, learners and academic leaders, and to do so by looking at the temporal, social and personal dimensions of their experience.

The research site where this study took place is thus not foreign to me; it is not only my home country but my former workplace. Part of the professional experience I have gained as a language teacher and academic leader occurred there. In this study, I therefore position myself as a researcher and an educator, but most importantly, as a former member of the community that was under study. Accordingly, the rich and diverse experiences that the teachers participating in this inquiry narrated are a reflection, to some extent, of my own professional journey. Nevertheless, my interest in blended learning is not only derived from personal and practical motives. I am also interested in exploring areas that have received little attention in the literature and thus contribute to the advancement of our knowledge of teacher change and the integration of technology into the language curriculum.

Theoretical Justification

Although blended learning (BL) is rapidly emerging as a domain of practice and of research and, across discipline and context, educators and institutions are experimenting with it (Halverson, Graham, Spring, Drysdale & Henrie, 2014), there are areas that deserve greater attention. There is a gap of research about the adoption and implementation of blended learning and the issues that administrators should recognize in order to guide their institutions (Graham et al., 2013). Studies on perceptions, attitudes and expectations about BL, although much more common, have also placed more emphasis on students than on faculty (Drysdale, Graham, Spring & Halverson, 2013; Halverson et al., 2014). In their thematic analysis of the most highly cited scholarship in blended learning research, Halverson et al. found that less attention has been given to professional development, which may be indicative of a “failure to consider the support needs, shifting roles, and other concerns of a vital party in the blended learning ecosystem: the instructors” (p.29).

Similarly, although “the approach of blending Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) applications with face-to-face teaching and learning is as old as CALL itself” (Neumeier, 2005, p. 163), there is still a lot of undiscovered territory to be mapped out. Although research on blended learning has increased, there have been far fewer studies focused on the analysis of the (design) factors that shape the practice of blended learning and what makes the integration successful (Neumeier, 2005; Grgurović, 2011). Research on how teachers cope with the challenges associated with the shift from face-to-face to online/blended teaching and what is actually required to perform teaching roles in these contexts is also scarce (Shelley, White, Baumann & Murphy, 2006; Shelly, et al., 2013).

Research conducted by Colombian educators is also illustrative of how technology— in both blended and distance formats— has been used to enhance language learning and teaching in higher education contexts (e.g., Araque & Berdugo, 2009; Arismendi, Colorado & Grajales, 2011; Cantor, 2009; Carreño, 2014; González, 2011; Medina, 2009, Salinas, 2014); however, studies examining how teachers make meaning of their experiences with blended learning as they attempt to integrate conventional and online modes of instruction are still rare (Muñoz & González, 2010). More importantly, we do not know much about the way teachers manage the change to blended learning and respond to challenges and tensions, and what factors beyond their control influence the process. In brief, we do not know much about how ELT communities deal with such a change.

As Fullan observes, we have become so used to the presence of change that “we rarely stop to think what change really means as we are experiencing it at the personal level...and what it means for others around us who might be in change situations” (2007a, p.20). We underestimate what it is and what factors and processes account for it. Sometimes institutions “pay lip service to teacher knowledge” by negotiating reform initiatives through the political system (Murray, 2008, p. 5). And when this is the case, the effect that change is having on individual teachers goes unnoticed (Hendy, 2008), and teachers’ voices may become neglected (Hargreaves, 1994; Murray, 2008). However, because change is a constant state in education, it is all the more important to capture the voices of those who have to make sense of it and implement it (Hendy, 2008, p.42).

This study therefore engages with the stories teachers tell about their work and lives and the impact of the changes they have undergone in their practice. As Shelly et al. (2013, p.561) emphasize, a narrative inquiry approach offers an accessible means of researching the experience of teachers who have been required to make significant changes in the way they teach. Thus, extending their contribution in the area of blended language learning, I too decided to offer participants the opportunity to reflect on their lives as teachers, and more

specifically, on the ways they dealt with the challenges motivated by the adoption and implementation of blended learning models. In this study, however, I did not only look at teachers' cognition, but also explored their practice as well as the sociocultural, physical and temporal contexts in which their experience developed and took on meaning.

In brief, considering the current gaps in research and the personal and practical reasons described above, this study intends to contribute to current debates about the implementation of new educational initiatives in general, and the factors facilitating and hindering the change to blended learning in particular. Accordingly, although this inquiry focuses on the teachers in one language teaching department, the findings might offer practical insights and be of significance for the higher education institutions, language teachers, change facilitators and administrators who are dealing with (technology-related) curriculum reform and who are interested in gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of adopting such a change. The narrative inquiry methodology followed might also respond to the call of those researchers who believe, like Bliuc, Goodyear and Ellis (2007), that more holistic research into blended learning is necessary. Hence, like Anderson (2012), I hope that readers can connect with and learn from the narratives told in this thesis.

Purpose of the Study

In light of the various aspects discussed so far, this study intended to gain an understanding of curriculum change and reform by examining how an EFL blended learning program was put into action by a group of teachers in a Colombian tertiary institution. Theoretically, the study was guided by concepts relating to teacher change and curriculum innovation, and methodologically and epistemologically, by narrative research. This investigation, hence, sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What stories of change do teachers live by when participating in the implementation of a blended language learning program?
2. In what ways are these experiences of change shaped by available institutional and organizational stories on language teaching/learning and ICT² use?

These two related research questions, addressed through a narrative inquiry lens, revolve around an interest in innovation and change, and particularly, in knowing what change (which is not always voluntary) looks like from the point of view of the teacher, how it unfolds in actual practice and what factors beyond the teacher's control influence the process. Through the first question, I specifically examined how the participating teachers,

² Information Communication Technologies

who held different positions within their professional community, interpreted and handled the challenges and opportunities motivated by blended learning and how they developed their practice in this new professional knowledge landscape (Connelly & Clandinin, 1996). This first question thus delved into teachers' *personal stories of change*; their feelings, beliefs and perceptions regarding their practice as well as the ways in which they came to "confront or avoid [the] behavioral and conceptual implications of change" (Fullan, 2007a, p. 34).

According to Fullan (1991), one of the most important reasons why teachers make superficial or no use of pedagogical innovations is the difficulty for them to change both their behaviors and beliefs: "The key issue from an implementation perspective is how the process of change unfolds, vis-à-vis what people do (*behaviors*) and think (*beliefs*) in relation to a particular innovation [emphasis in original]" (p.22). Nonetheless, behavioral change is not only linked with attitudinal change, but also to cultural, social and political factors. As stressed by Shelly et al. (2013), "social, institutional, instructional and physical settings may constrain the way in which teachers work, possibly conflicting with espoused beliefs and experience" (p.562). Change is therefore an individual and organizational process, and different aspects are mutually informing and guiding each other (Fullan, 2007a).

Accordingly, through the second research question, I sought to establish how participants' personal experiences of change were influenced by broader sociocultural contexts. The aim of this second question was twofold. I attempted to gain an understanding of the processes of reform that have had an impact on Colombian higher education, particularly in relation to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and second language education. But most importantly, I tried to uncover the ways in which such change agendas have unfolded at the local level and in turn given way to the adoption of particular program modes and pedagogical discourses. In other words, I examined both the *institutional* and *organizational stories of change* influencing and giving way to teachers' and students' experiences with blended learning.

Institutional stories, on the one hand, are those related to the major reform movements and policy events that have aimed to transform education in Colombia, particularly those that have motivated significant structural changes in tertiary institutions and that have therefore come to shape the English language teaching profession. *Organizational stories*, on the other, are those indicating how the community where the study was conducted has responded to as well as transformed such stories of reform. They therefore reveal the language teaching and learning beliefs that have been co-constructed over time (leading to an interest in blended learning) and the decisions (linked to teaching methods, assessment practices, technologies, etc.) that have had an impact on the roles, knowledge and

skills required of both teachers and learners. They also unveil the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions and expectations present at the institution. By looking into these institutional and organizational narratives, I was able to identify not only the rationale for the change, but also the contextual boundaries, sometimes unnoticed, within which the study participants had to do their work and which shaped the nature of the stories they told.

These three types of curriculum change stories echo the three levels of story Barkhuizen (2008) proposes to illustrate how the stories teachers narrate when reflecting on their professional experiences are interrelated with stories taking place in different contexts in which they have more or less control. *Personal stories of change* thus resemble Barkhuizen's first level of story (in small letters), for it embodies teachers' inner thoughts, emotions and theories of best practice, and often takes place in teachers' immediate contexts such as lessons and conversations with students and colleagues. *Organizational stories of change* match the second level of Story (with a capital S), as it includes consequences of decisions typically made by others in the work environment and usually occurs beyond the walls of the classroom, ultimately leaving teachers with less control. *Institutional change stories* align with the third and last level of STORY (in capital letters), as it refers to the broader sociopolitical context in which teaching and learning take place. Here teachers have even less power to make decisions about conditions which influence their practice.

All these different stories originate in different scenarios, yet they are always present in what teachers do and say about their work. They are therefore inevitably interrelated, and as Barkhuizen (2008) emphasizes, it may be difficult to distinguish them; "for any particular teacher, it would be impossible to make sense of any one level without considering the others" (p. 236). Thus, as Metzger (1986, cited in Huber and Whelan, 1995) suggests, I decided to listen in circles; I decided to identify and examine the "stories inside stories and stories between stories" (p.143). It was only by doing so that I was able to see the big picture and thus better comprehend participants' experiences with blended learning.

Research Pathway

To address the two research questions, I weaved together the dimensions of narrative inquiry, time, place and interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and thus decided to establish the following research pathway:

- Identify the major reform movements and policy events that have motivated significant structural changes in higher education and English language teaching practice in recent decades.

- Analyze how this educational reform agenda has unfolded over time in the context where the study was conducted, and what language teaching and learning practices and values have been construed as a result.
- In light of the ‘unique histories, socio-cultural characteristics and relationships, and social structural conditions’ (Anderson, 2010, p. 76) of the institution, examine how the blended program was designed and how teachers dealt with the affordances, as well as the behavioral and conceptual implications motivated by the implementation.

Having considered my research agenda, I thus now provide an overview of the different chapters around which this thesis is structured.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the context, rationale and the aims and research questions that guide the study, as well as the main theoretical and methodological ideas that inform it. Chapters 2 and 3 review the literature on the process of change, from the perspective of the institution and the individual teacher, the infusion of technology in the second language curriculum and the design and implementation of blended (language) learning environments. Chapter 4 presents the epistemological and methodological lens through which participants’ experiences were studied and interpreted. I discuss the meaning and nature of narrative, the narrative turn and the process of narrative analysis. I also reflect on the various challenges by which narrative researchers may be confronted and locate my study within Barkhuizen’s (2013) proposed narrative research framework. Chapter 5 describes the research site, the participants’ selection criteria and the methods that were used for data collection, as well as the procedures for data management, analysis and representation. This chapter lastly reviews the criteria that were considered for the evaluation of the inquiry.

From Chapter 6 onwards I start answering the research questions. I begin with an introduction to the participants of the study through individual co-constructed background stories (Chapter 6). I then provide further contextual information by exploring the curriculum development history of the institution where the study took place (Chapter 7). In doing this, I situate this community of practice within the broader social, political and contextual horizons shaping higher education and ELT in Colombia, and I present the rationale for the adoption of blended learning. Subsequently, I characterize blended learning at this institution through: a) an exploration of the blended language learning curriculum guiding teachers’ and learners’ practices (Chapter 8); and b) an analysis of the personal and

community stories of practice participants lived, told and were told while trying to bring to life such an educational enterprise (Chapters 9 and 10). In Chapter 11, I summarize the results and present the conceptual framework in which participants' experiences with blended learning are displayed. I also bring into the discussion the limitations and implications of the study and end with suggestions for future research.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study. I have introduced the context, significance and aims of this narrative inquiry. I described the multiple reasons that motivated the study and my involvement in the community where it was conducted. Lastly, I unpacked the research questions I posed in order to better understand how top-down (national reform) and bottom-up (locally planned innovation) educational processes come to shape the teaching and learning of English at the tertiary level in Colombia, particularly in light of the promises of blended/online learning. As Hong and Samimy (2010) and Whittaker claim (2013), the substantial question about whether L2 teachers and learners benefit from the intended efficacy of BL has not fully been confirmed. Despite its popularity, it still needs to be shown that it lives up to the expectations of designers, teachers and institutions, and that there is a real improvement not only in language learning but in language pedagogy (White, 2006). In the next two chapters, therefore, I review the literature on the multiple aspects that affect the adoption of change at the personal and organizational levels, and more specifically, the implementation of blended learning models.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL ROOTS OF THE INQUIRY (PART I)

In this and the next chapter, I review the theoretical concepts that underpin this study, particularly, those relating to educational change and innovation, technology and blended learning. In this chapter in particular, I give an overview of the meaning and the process of change by discussing the multiple factors that are involved in the adoption of change from both an institutional and personal perspective.

The Meaning of Change

More frequently there are those that see change as being both
negative and positive, reflecting its complexity and,
in many ways, considering it a necessary evil:
All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward.
— Ellen Glasgow, 1874–1945.

Given the importance of determining what lies behind the success or failure of the implementation of new policies and curricular initiatives, the management of innovation and change has long been an area of interest in general education and applied linguistics research (Fullan, 2007a; Hargreaves, 2005; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2010; Hyland & Wong, 2013; Lamie, 2005; Markee, 1997). Change, according to Lamie (2005), can be understood in light of some basic principles. It involves, implicitly or explicitly, the statement of an aim. There is an objective or goal for it to happen; there is a need or problem that ought to be solved. There are a number of actors who can either embrace or resist it, and whose attitudes, beliefs and emotions can certainly have an impact on how it is to take place. It is part of a complex system and is context-dependent. And, it is a process involving training, practice and time. Nevertheless, although there is an awareness of the need for change to occur, people do not necessarily always know “*how* it is being introduced, or... imposed” (p.12). In sum, change is multidimensional (Fullan, 2007a).

In the context of second language teacher education, Freeman (1989, p. 38) also highlights a number of aspects of the notion of change. Change does not necessarily mean doing something differently. It can mean a change in awareness or an affirmation of current practice. It is not necessarily immediate or complete. Some changes are directly accessible by those helping teachers during the change process and are therefore quantifiable, whereas others are not. Some types of change can come to closure and others are open-ended. What

we define as change is also framed by the perspective we take on it; by how we look at the situation and what we see in it. This means that all change is “local” (Freeman, 2013).

The term *change*, however, has been distinguished from or used synonymously with the word *innovation*. These two terms have attracted competing definitions and conceptual distinctions. Some scholars believe they are two different processes (Miles, 1964 & Nicholls, 1983, as cited in Markee 1997; Stoller, 2009), while others argue there is an inevitable relationship of interdependency (Kennedy, 1999; Markee, 1997; Lamie, 2005). For Miles and Nicholls change is an ongoing, unplanned process that involves reworking familiar elements into new relationships, while innovation is an intervention that implies consciousness and deliberation and which can result in the development of practices that are fundamentally new. In a similar vein, Stoller (2009) states that changes occur without any planning and control: “change is predictable and inevitable, always resulting in alteration in the status quo but not necessarily in improvements” (p. 74). Innovations, nevertheless, typically result from deliberate efforts to bring about improvements and thus can lead to innovative responses.

To Markee (1997, p. 41), on the contrary, this distinction is not always clear and he suggests using the words interchangeably in that change agents do not always know whether innovation adopters perceive an implementation as something fundamentally new or whether they see it as a less radical reworking of familiar elements; “the newness of any idea or practice is more a matter of adopter’s perceptions than objectively definable act”. Besides, what is considered at one point highly innovative may no longer be judged as such in the future. Kennedy, Doyle and Goh (1999) also note that in practice it is not easy to distinguish what is planned from unplanned and what is natural from deliberate. They therefore use change as a superordinate term which includes definitions of innovation within it.

To Lamie (2005), change and innovation are not synonymous concepts, but they are not incongruous terms either. Like Kennedy et al., she defines change as a broader concept— something that can be both planned and unplanned and, in turn, of which innovation is a part. Hyland and Wong (2013), similarly, affirm that innovation is an essential element of the process of change, as it initiates and drives change in different areas. Accordingly, innovations can “appear in a variety of guises and at various levels of performance” (p.2). They can be found in classrooms, materials and examinations and initiated by teachers, trainers, policy makers, materials developers and curriculum designers.

For the purpose of this study, I particularly concur with Kennedy, Doyle and Goh (1999) and use change as a superordinate term, replacing it in occasions with innovation to “highlight the planned and deliberate nature of change” (p. iv). Understanding change in this

study thus involves taking a look at those locally planned practices aimed to bring out improvement in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, although I believe “we should strive for innovation and work towards deliberate, rather than unplanned efforts to innovation” (Stoller, 1997, as cited in Murray, 2008, p. 5), I also acknowledge that the implementation of new ideas may not always start as a conscious effort, but in fact, may evolve unsystematically from those needs and particular circumstances (critical incidents) that teachers and students, and in general organizations, experience day to day—as was the case of the institution where this study was conducted. Therefore, this study also examines those practices that go beyond the boundaries of planned intervention and which relate to how people personally deal with both expected and unexpected changes in their professional environment.

Despite the different definitions that have been associated with the term *change* and how it is particularly viewed in this research, there is consensus, however, on the idea that educational change (and hence innovation) is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to achieve, and that as a result there are a number of factors and conditions that must be considered in its planning, diffusion and management. In what follows, I provide an overview of these aspects.

The Problem of Change

Fullan (1991, 2007a) points out that there are three components at stake in the implementation of a new program or policy, and which may get transformed, further developed or altered during the process. There is the possible use of new or revised materials (or technologies), new teaching approaches, and the potential alteration of beliefs. The fact that people, and specifically teachers, might implement one, two or all three components, ultimately makes a difference in how change occurs and determines its success or failure. To have the desired impact, change should thus occur in practice along the three dimensions; otherwise, it may not be a significant change at all.

Nevertheless, as is known, the implementation of new initiatives does not always lead to the kind of change that may have been originally intended (Fullan, 2007a; Hyland & Wong, 2013). Changes in materials are also generally easier to introduce than those in methodological skills and values (Markee, 1997). Teachers could use new technologies or materials without altering their teaching practice, or they can modify some teaching behaviors without actually understanding the concepts and rationale underlying the change (Fullan, 2007a). The implementation of a new initiative may thus result in “people refining existing practices, replacing existing practices, or adding new practices to existing patterns of work, but which do not alter the fundamental nature of that work” (Anderson, 2010, p. 77).

Echoing Elmore (1995), Anderson notes that this has been distinguished as first-order and second-order change. First-order change is consistent with previous values and norms and does not depart radically from the past, thereby being less dramatic. As it seeks to make current practice more effective or efficient, underlying beliefs may go unchallenged. Second-order change, in contrast, is more challenging since it requires a dramatic shift in direction and new ways of thinking and acting (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). The former seeks to change practices and the latter to change structures. Second-order change, which is more profound and far-reaching in its consequences, is certainly the most difficult to achieve and hence takes longer. The opportunity for unintended consequences is also greater.

In second-order changes, there is a shift in values, beliefs and practices: “the fundamental way that organizations are put together is changed; goals, structures and roles shift” (Smith, 2008). As noted by Fullan (2007a, p. 36), changes in beliefs and understanding are the foundation of achieving long-lasting reform, as they challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purpose of education and help them reflect on what and why something should be done, and to what end. Nonetheless, behavioral change is not only linked to attitudinal change, but also to the cultural, social and political pressures that teachers and institutions face (Lamie, 2005). Certainly, not all teachers are ready to change, and not all institutions are prepared to support them (Hyland & Wong, 2013, p. 2).

Hargreaves (2005) discusses the many reasons why educational change is so difficult. Some of these are: The reason for the change is poorly conceptualized or not clearly demonstrated. The change is too ambitious or too specific. It is too fast for people to cope with or too slow. The change is poorly resourced or placed in the hands of the teachers alone. Key staff members are not committed to the change or, on the contrary, are over-involved, which can cause teachers to feel excluded; “resistance and resentment [being] the consequences in either case” (p. 2). Students are not involved in the change, or it is not explained to them. Leaders are either too controlling or too ineffectual. Lastly, the change is pursued in isolation and gets undermined by other unchanged structures, or it is poorly coordinated with and swamped by parallel changes.

In an evaluation of the role of the policy maker, Wedell (2009a) also argues that many educational changes fail to achieve their aims because decision makers “over-emphasize quickly visible concrete changes” (e.g., introduction of computers into schools) and “underestimate the importance of changes in people” (p.24). Practical constraints such as class size and the availability of sufficient appropriate resources are concrete and easy to observe, and so they can be changed quickly. In contrast, the type of training received by

teachers, the role of teacher educators, and the cultural assumptions about teaching and learning and how organizations should work relate to the way people behave and think. Changes in people are therefore less immediately visible, yet if people do not “change to fit change aims, any money [and effort] spent on the visible aspects of the context will be largely wasted” (p.25). Insufficient understanding of what change is like and blindness to the existing educational culture and teaching and learning conditions (Fullan, 2007a) are also aspects which may cause educational change to fail.

In the literature on ELT innovation, the reasons why large-scale innovation has been to a considerable degree unsuccessful have also been pointed out. Markee (1997), Wedell (2009b) and Van den Branden (2009) note that the attributes of the innovation and the way the change is communicated and implemented, as well as the characteristics of the context under which teachers do their work are all variables that influence teachers’ decisions to adopt innovations and integrate them into their practice. Markee (1997) also warns of the impact that sociocultural factors and individuals’ psychological profiles can have on a project’s success or failure, and on adopters’ decisions to adopt, reject or maintain the innovation.

To manage curricular innovation, according to Markee (1997), it is thus important to answer the question: “Who adopts what, where, when, why, and how?” (p. 41). It is necessary to look at the change process in itself (characteristics of the innovation, and aims and implementation procedures) and consider the broad range of interconnected personal and contextual factors that are at play and that involve, in essence, both the individual and the organization. Although this study is not focused on large-scale change, I believe it is important to examine what the process of change involves both at the macro institutional and organizational levels in order to better understand how it is experienced by individuals.

The Process of Change

The Institutional and Organizational Perspective

As Anderson (2010) maintains, one of the core ideas that has become ingrained in the discourse on educational change is that change is an organizational process over time. To characterize the overall organizational process through which institutions and people engage in efforts to substitute or alter existing practices with new ones, some education change researchers have employed the concept of stages or phases of innovation. One of the most well-established conceptualizations is that found in Fullan (2001a). Fullan refers to three broad stages of the change process: initiation, implementation and institutionalization.

Considering the wide acceptance that this work has had on innovation and change research, the subsequent section of this chapter is organized around these three phases. I pay particular attention, however, to the ways in which the process of change has been conceptualized and discussed in the English Language Education (ELE) literature. To do so, I draw largely on the analysis and review of the literature by Waters (2009), although I complement it with ideas discussed by scholars from both inside (Murray & Christison, 2009; Stoller, 1994, 2009; Wedell, 2009a; Van den Branden, 2009) and outside (Anderson, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994, 1997) ELE.

Initiation phase

The initiation phase consists of the process that leads up to and includes the decision to adopt and proceed with an implementation. This is the period in which issues like whether the change is really necessary, affordable and/or politically desirable are likely to be discussed (Wedell, 2009a). Initiation thus involves decision-making activities about the reasons and need for change, the programs or practices that will be implemented, the resources that will be required and how people will be engaged in the process (Fullan, 2001a). It also requires, among others, needs analysis, the gathering of support and a plan for implementation (Stoller, 2009). The evaluation done during the initiation phase may thus result in preliminary decisions to reject or adopt and implement the proposed innovation (Van den Branden, 2009). As Wedell observes, if changes never get beyond this stage, few people hear of them, but if a decision is made to proceed with what was initially agreed, a planning and implementation phase ensues.

Because educational organizations may adopt multiple changes simultaneously, there are a number of factors that can affect initiation like, for instance, the origin, design and quality of the innovation; the availability and access to the innovation (information); whether there is advocacy from central administration and teachers; the roles assumed by external change agents; whether the community supports or opposes the initiative; the existence of funding; and whether adoption decisions have a 'bureaucratic' (opportunistic) or 'problem-solving' orientation (Fullan, 2007a). According to Waters (2009), the ELE literature on large-scale change focuses on two of the initiation-related areas mentioned by Fullan: (a) the reasons why innovations tend to be advocated, and (b) characteristics affecting the quality of innovations. It also considers the ways in which contextual variables in ELE innovation can be conceptualized. In the following, I review these three areas.

Innovation rationale

There are various reasons motivating innovation and change in ELE. Some of the circumstances from which innovation can emerge include dissatisfaction with the status quo, a desire for more professionalism, the recognition of new (student) needs, faculty interest and suggestions, and external or top-down mandates (Stoller, 2009). Together with these drivers of change, as stressed by Waters (2009), a second dimension has to do with the idea of who recognizes a need for change and who proposes it. Markee (1997) comments that changes in which end users (e.g., teachers) act as internal change agents, referred to as immanent change, are likely to result in high levels of ownership and deep levels of development, unlike those in which people outside the social system are the only ones in control. Immanent change is what most change agents seek to promote, yet it is the most difficult to implement well. In the case of this study, and as will be better illustrated in Chapter 7, change was immanent; however, it was also driven by external mandates and other unexpected forces.

A final aspect that could motivate change in ELE is the role of extraneous factors. Drawing on the work of some applied linguists such as Richards, Pennycook and Matsuda, Waters (2009) draws attention to the fact that external factors could involve the influence of fads and fashions and the forces of the intellectual marketplace, and the global hegemonic influence of the ‘Anglophone cultural discourse’, which reflects an interest in advancing particular socio-political agendas, but also the ideas “resulting from a ‘critical theory’-based counter-hegemony originating within the ELE professional discourse itself” (p. 425). To Waters, it is evident that factors other than merely educational ones can also affect the rationale for many ELE innovations.

Innovation characteristics

As noted by Waters (2009), a second major factor affecting the initiation of innovations in ELE relates to the attributes that the innovations possess and the effects of these features on the potential for adoption. Drawing on the work of Rogers (1983), authors like Markee (1997) and Stoller (2009) describe the characteristics that an innovation should have in order to be adopted. For Markee, potential adopters should perceive that the innovation is relatively advantageous to them, compatible with current practice and beliefs and contextual conditions, and easy to understand. They should also feel that they are allowed time and space to try out the innovation, and do so in incremental stages, and that they are able to observe its effects at the level of student learning (Van den Branden, 2009, p. 664).

The main features of an innovation are thus: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. Stoller (2009) also asserts that whether an innovation is adopted or not depends largely on whether people's perceptions of the innovation fall within the 'zone of innovation'; that is, whether innovations are perceived as "being neither excessively divergent from, nor too similar to current practices" (p. 79), but as having a moderate or "sufficient" level of innovativeness. Stoller identifies the following parameters of this zone: compatibility, complexity, explicitness, flexibility, originality and visibility. In her view, to avoid being rejected, innovations should not be too simple or too complex, too explicit or too flexible, or too novel or visible.

Innovation contexts

Although the rationale for and the features of the innovation are factors widely discussed in the ELE literature on the initiation of change, so is the role of context. As noted by Waters (2009), the possibilities for innovation at the classroom level can be determined to a great extent by other layers of context— which Kennedy (1988) has represented with a hierarchy of interrelated sociocultural sub-systems (Figure 2.1). The outer ring (the cultural system) is considered to be the most powerful, followed by the inner rings (political and administrative structures), which in turn "will produce a particular educational system reflecting the values and beliefs of the society in question" (p. 332). Markee, nevertheless, considers that Kennedy's conceptualization is not value-free and encourages viewing culture as a monolithic construct. As an alternative, he suggests referring to a variety of interrelated cultures "than to posit culture as a separate variable" (1997, p. 56).

A further conceptualisation of innovation contexts is suggested by Holliday. Holliday (1996), as discussed in Waters (2009), talks about the concept of small cultures, which are "distinct from structuralist conceptualizations of 'large', national-level cultural tendencies" and include "student, host institution, professional-academic and international education-related values and norms" (p. 430). Holliday (1994) also distinguishes between two broad ELT realities and hence two main types of institutions, those located in Britain, Australasia and North America (the 'BANA' countries), and those that comprise tertiary, secondary and primary English language education in the rest of the world ('TESEP'). The purpose in BANA contexts (mostly language schools) tends to be instrumental, as students come as individuals or in groups to learn English, while in the TESEP settings is mainly institutional, as English is taught "as part of a wider curriculum and is therefore influenced and constrained by wider educational, institutional, and community forces" (Holliday, 1994, p. 4).

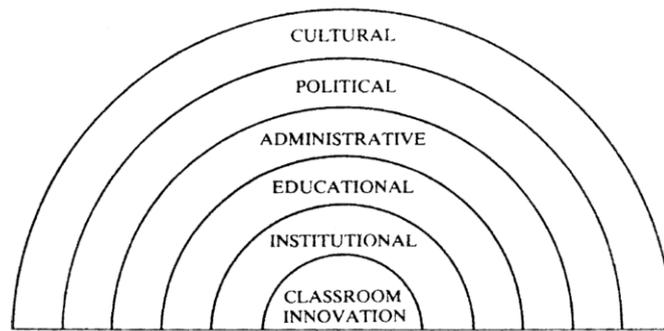


Figure 2.1. The hierarchy of interrelating subsystems in which an innovation has to operate (Kennedy, 1988, p. 332)

As a result of these and other characteristics, these institutions reflect different cultural tendencies and values, thus influencing the kinds of methodologies, and in turn innovations, that can be implemented in them (Waters, 2009). Hence, “a teaching approach which might be regarded as appropriate to a BANA setting is seen as potentially problematic in a TESEP one, and vice versa” (p. 430). However, as acknowledged by Holliday (1994), these distinctions are idealized and represent extreme examples at each end of a continuum. Different institutions will be located at various points along that continuum.

Besides, as a result of globalization and, as discussed in Ahmed and Donnan (1994, cited in Holliday, 2005, p.4), “the increasing movement of different types of people and their multicultural embedding in each other’s societies”, this division needs to be interpreted and treated with caution. Although Holliday’s distinction has been contested (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999), I believe it still helps us understand why some innovations are adopted or not in particular contexts. In the case of Colombia, which could be regarded as a TESEP country, the fact that English language learning is part of a wider (compulsory) curriculum brings into the picture a number of aspects that may not as relevant in ESL settings, as will be illustrated in subsequent chapters.

An additional contextual variable that can be seen to be linked to Holliday’s construct of small cultures is the role of school cultures, and, as part of it, the cultures of teaching. Culture is central to the life of schools, as it is to the life of any organization (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 1304). Although the concept of school cultures has been widely discussed in the general education literature, there has been less discussion of it the ELE literature. Hargreaves (1994, 1997) maintains that to understand why there are limits to the possibilities of change, it is also necessary to understand the culture of teachers. He points out that there are two distinct dimensions that can be observable in teacher cultures: content and form.

The content of culture refers to the shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and ways of life of those members of an organization, or a specific group within it. The form of teacher cultures, in contrast, describes the patterns of relationship and forms of association among

members of that culture. The form of teacher cultures may be *individualized* with teachers working independently and in isolation from each other; *collaborative* where teachers work together to solve problems and share ideas and materials; *balkanized* where teachers do not work either in isolation or with their colleagues as a whole school, but in different sub-groups (e.g., grade-levels or subject departments); or characterized by *contrived collegiality* “where collaboration is mandated, imposed, and regulated by managerial decree in terms of measures like compulsory team-teaching or required collaborative planning” (1997, p. 1305). Hargreaves (1997) acknowledges that there may be other patterns of association and that as a result other forms may become apparent. It is through cultures of teaching, however, that teachers learn what it means to teach and what kind of teacher they want to be within their community.

As can be seen, the successful introduction of innovation is dependent on factors such as the rationale for the change, the characteristics of the innovation and a host of complex, interrelated contextual factors. The extent to which the influence of contextual variables is taken into account during the planning stage of the innovation will certainly affect its outcomes. However, “despite the relatively long-standing and well-developed literature concerning contextual factors in ELE innovation management” (Waters, 2009, p. 432), innovation in ELE still fails to adequately take these implications into consideration. It is for this reason that Wedell (2003) urges scholars in the field to place contextual variables at the heart of the innovation initiation process.

To be able to do so, curriculum change planners should identify the degree of cultural shift that the proposed changes will represent for teachers and hence the kind of support that will be needed. They also need to determine the imbalances that such curriculum changes may introduce to the institution—once they have been implemented in the classroom— and the adjustments that will be required. Some of the factors that may support or undermine the proposed change during the period of implementation will be explored in what follows.

Implementation phase

Implementation refers to the period of time during which educators and change leaders attempt to put the selected change into practice in order to achieve particular outcomes (Fullan, 2007a; Stoller, 2009). In this phase, adaptations in the innovation and modifications in the organizational structure and behaviors are expected, as well as clarification activities (professional development) where potential adopters figure out how to implement the change. In this phase, as implementers build up more experience with the

innovation, they may decide to disconfirm or confirm their previous decision to adopt the innovation (Van den Branden, 2009). If there have been failures during the initiation and planning stage, as affirmed by Wedell (2009a), change may never really take place as expected, or be abandoned before reaching the final phase of the process. Implementation, therefore, requires positive pressure, support and impetus to get the change going (Fullan, 2010). It is the implementation phase of change with which this study is concerned.

According to Fullan (2007a), there are a number of factors that can affect whether or not a decided-upon change occurs in practice. These critical factors or “system of variables”, which determine success or failure, are organized into three broad categories: (1) the characteristics of the innovation, (2) local factors, and (3) external factors. The first category refers to the characteristics of innovations themselves. The second analyzes the social conditions of change, the setting in which people work and the “events and activities that influence whether or not given change attempts will be productive” (p. 93). And the last places the school in the context of the broader society.

Some of these aspects could be seen to overlap with those discussed in the ELE literature relating to the initiation phase, especially the features of the innovation and the organization. Nevertheless, what Fullan emphasizes in this stage of the process of change is the role of the people. Thus, it could be argued that while the initiation phase deals with the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘why’ of the innovation, the implementation phase focuses on the ‘who’, ‘how’ and ‘when’. It is for this reason that, as affirmed by Waters (2009), the ELE literature on the implementation of innovation has concentrated on the management of (or approaches to) the implementation process, the roles assumed by innovation adopters, the various psychological processes involved in the execution of the innovation, and the process of evaluation of the implementation. As this study is concerned with individual and local attempts at managing curricular changes rather than with large-scale reform, I will review only the second aspect discussed by Waters (2009), exploring in detail what the adoption of an innovation may involve at the individual level in a separate section.

Innovation roles

In addition to the type of approach chosen, the nature of the various roles assumed by those involved in the innovation is an additional significant implementation variable. A well-established conceptualization of innovation roles, and which is widely discussed in the ELE literature, is that found in Rogers (1983, 2003). Based on the time of adoption of an innovation, Rogers (2003) identifies five categories of adopters: the innovators (those risk takers who first take up the innovation), the early adopters (those who are respected by

colleagues and seen as testers of the innovation), the early majority (those who wait for results before deciding to adopt the innovation), the late majority (those who are more critical and cautious about the value of the innovation), and the laggards (those who resist the change and prefer to maintain the status quo). In the case of this study, as will be illustrated later, it could be said that participants belong to the early adopters category.

The most significant group in this process, as noted by Waters (2009, p. 438), are the ‘early adopters’. ‘Innovators’ tend to be viewed with suspicion by more pragmatic individuals due to what seems to be a dangerously idealistic behavior. ‘Early adopters’, in contrast, as respected opinion leaders (Markee, 1997), can encourage the early majority to adopt the innovation. The decision to adopt of this group can have a “similar, knock-on effect on the ‘late majority’ category, and so on” (Waters, 2009, p. 438). A critical mass of between 10% and 20% of adoption is needed for the innovation to take off, however.

Markee (1997) criticizes the terminology used in these categorizations of participants’ roles. To him, ‘adopters’ and ‘resisters’ are value-laden words reflecting a pro-innovation bias present in the diffusion of innovation literature. Resisters, for instance, are viewed as irrational or stubborn for refusing to adopt certain ideas. This terminology disregards the fact that “there are times when individuals *should* resist innovations that are harmful to them” [emphasis in original] (p. 44). Despite these issues, however, these categories are considered useful since they provide a framework for the evaluation of different participants and their roles and illustrate that the adoption of an innovation is likely to take longer to implement than expected (Kennedy, 1988; Markee, 1997). The last phase in the change process is therefore concerned with the effort to sustain the innovation.

Institutionalization phase

The line between implementation and institutionalization is to some degree hazy and arbitrary (Fullan, 2007a). According to Fullan, institutionalization is an extension of the implementation phase in that the new program is sustained beyond the first few years or the time frame that was initially chosen. It is therefore often referred to in the ELE literature as a concern with *innovation sustainability* (Waters, 2009), and linked to activities associated with the absorption of the innovation into organization structures and individual practices. As Wedell (2009a) notes, at this point the change is “no longer seen to be ‘new’ and ‘different’, but has instead become a more or less accepted and unremarkable part of ‘how things are done’ in most classrooms across the existing system” (p. 21).

In moderately complex changes, the total time frame from initiation to institutionalization can take from 2 to 4 years, while in larger-scale changes it can take from

5 to 10 years, sustainability still being an issue (Fullan, 2007a). In the context of English language education, sustainability has also been regarded as a problem. Scholars have argued that as many as 75 percent of all innovations can fail to survive in the long term (Adams & Chen 1981, cited in Markee, 1997) because, among other factors, adopters either reject them during the implementation stage or modify their opinions about their value and discard them (Van den Branden, 2009). Over time, as Stoller (2009, p. 81) claims, the original innovation may change into a weakened or strengthened version of the original.

Consequently, in the ELE innovation literature, as Waters (2009) maintains, institutionalization is perceived to have a greater chance of being achieved if: a) the innovation is designed and implemented in such a way that there is full understanding of the factors that affect long-term take-up; b) an overall strategy for fostering innovation sustainability is created from the start rather than at the end of the innovation process; c) secondary innovations³ are made available, “so that the kind of support needed to achieve the necessary level of in-depth understanding and ownership by implementers is created” (p. 450); and d) gatekeeper figures (Wedell, 2009) and/or opinion leaders (Markee, 1997) are identified and recruited so that the required support for sustainability is equally guaranteed.

Although this study examines the implementation phase of change, it also provides insights into the complex task of normalizing innovative practices, particularly when these are linked to a fast-changing phenomenon as is the use of technology. In sum, paraphrasing Hargreaves (2005) and Murray (2008), it can be claimed that change does not proceed through clear, discrete stages of initiation, implementation and institutionalization. On the contrary, it is unpredictable, complex and messy. The study of change is therefore anything but easy, as it takes place in a politically contested and multi-dimensional environment (Hargreaves, 2005). Change is also largely shaped, as noted above, by the psychological processes experienced by those who are directly involved in attempting to put new ideas into practice: the teachers.

Ultimately, it is the teacher who decides what innovations (new methods, technologies or materials) will find their way into the classroom (Hyland & Wong, 2013; Van den Branden, 2009). Innovations can be supported and facilitated from above, yet, if teachers have not fully embraced the concepts and fully endorsed the change or innovation “at both a conceptual and practical level, the implementation will often be restricted to superficial change, doomed to die out in the long term” (Van den Branden, 2009, p. 662). It

³ According to Markee (1997), curricular innovation depends on the development of both primary innovations (changes in teaching materials, methodological skills and pedagogical values) and secondary innovations (administrative and academic products/strategies). The latter (e.g., teacher training programs) should be created in order to support the former.

is therefore of paramount importance to acknowledge that change is also a process that evolves through not only organizational but also developmental personal phases over time.

The Developmental Personal Perspective

Neglect of the phenomenology of change - that is how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended - is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms.
—Michael Fullan, *Leading in Culture of Change*, 2007a

One of the causes of persistent failure in educational innovation, as Fullan and many other scholars have stressed, is that it is not driven by those who have to implement it. Wedell (2009a) and Fullan (2007a) remark that policy makers often neglect the importance of thinking about how those affected by the implementation will react to the change—a reason why teachers' views are not always taken into consideration during the planning stages of the innovation. Nevertheless, teachers are, as Murray and Christison (2012, p. 65) put it, “the linchpins in the implementation process” in that their knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning influence their abilities to adopt innovative approaches to instruction.

Because the execution of new ideas usually involves people altering aspects of their familiar professional practice (Wedell, 2009a), innovation does not only require a reculturing on the part of organization but on the part of the teachers as well (Fullan, 2007a; Wedell, 2009). By reculturing, Wedell means the need for teachers, and other individuals responsible for the implementation, to begin a process “of adjusting many of their established professional (and possibly personal) behaviours, and eventually also beliefs about their roles and responsibilities” (p.17). It is for this reason that education change and innovation researchers are equally interested in the concept of micro-agency (Kennedy, 2013). According to Kennedy, the study of micro-agency in innovation is interested in what motivates teachers (and learners) to change, their reactions to change, and why some individuals change and others do not. Models and theories of behavioral change, among other approaches, investigate these aspects and have been discussed in both the general education and ELE literature.

Psychological Processes in Innovation Implementation

Although teachers may have a favorable attitude towards an innovation, their intention to actually carry it out may not always be strong (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996). This occurs because, among other things, change is a highly personal psychological process (Fullan, 1998) that requires transformation of existing belief systems and deep conceptual

change (Kubanyiova, 2012). Most models of behavioral change, in an attempt to understand what Fullan terms the phenomenology of change, explore factors such as individuals' personal attitudes and beliefs, habits, emotions, previous experience, biases and knowledge; and social relationships and environmental conditions (Kennedy, 2013, p. 19). A model that has been widely used in social psychology, education and ELT, as affirmed by Kennedy (2013), is Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

As observed by Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) and Kennedy (2013), this model seeks to explain what influences individuals' intentions to adopt a desired behavior (an innovation). Intentions are seen to derive from attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, which are all influenced by beliefs. There are then three sets of beliefs determining how hard teachers are willing to try out an innovation and the effort they will put into it: a) beliefs about the outcomes of an action, which will lead to certain attitudes towards the innovation; b) beliefs about what influential others (e.g., peers, learners and officials) think of the innovation, which will lead to positive or negative subjective norms and influence intention; and c) beliefs about the expertise, skills and possibility (impact of external factors) to implement the innovation, which will affect the degree of behavioural control individuals perceive to have over the innovation (Kennedy, 2013).

According to Kennedy (2013, p. 20), the strength of the theory lies in its multidimensional nature and the fact that it combines elements such as attitudes, social norms and behavioral control. It thus helps explain, for instance, why a teacher who espouses a positive attitude towards a new teaching method might not put it into practice because perhaps peers or institutional authorities do not favor it (social norms) or because there is self-perceived lack of knowledge (perceived negative control). The TPB may thus help to understand teachers' differential take-up of a particular new behavior.

An additional framework that also underpins much of today's research is Hall and Hord's (1977, 1978) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The CBAM, which has been used to understand teacher change in curriculum change, has two developmental dimensions: one reflecting the dispositions teachers may have towards the change and which may evolve over time, called "Stages of Concern", and the other illustrating the progression in their behaviours as they try out and master the new professional practice, termed "Levels of Use" (Anderson, 2010). Hall and Hord have identified seven stages (going from 0-6) for each dimension (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Stages of Concern and Levels of Use (Hall & Hord, 2006, in Anderson, 2012, p. 31)

Progression in the Concept-Based Adoption Model		
Stage/Level	Stages of Concern (Attitudes towards change)	Levels of Use (Progression in knowledge and skills)
0 UNRELATED FOCUS	Awareness Aware of the change but little knowledge or interest in it.	Non use No use of innovation.
1 SELF FOCUS	Informational An interest in gaining information about the change.	Orientation Information seeking but not prepared to implement as yet.
2 SELF FOCUS	Personal Anxiety about implementing the change and how it will affect them personally.	Preparation Active planning to implement new approaches but at a later date.
3 TASK FOCUS	Management Accepts the innovation as useful but has concerns about implementing it into teacher practice.	Mechanical Use Using the innovations but in a teacher- focused way and struggling with mastery of new teaching skills.
4 IMPACT FOCUS	Consequence Considers the consequence of the change on the outcomes for the students.	4A) Routine Use New approaches are integrated into teaching strategies but with few adaptations to the regular program. 4B) Refinement Use Adjustments to the program based on the impact on students.
5 IMPACT FOCUS	Collaboration Focuses on working collaboratively with others to improve the benefits for the students.	Integration Actively seek opportunities to interact with colleagues to improve student results.
6 IMPACT FOCUS	Refocusing Modifications to the innovation or new approaches are developed.	Renewal Active exploration of changes to the innovation and seeking out alternative practices.

Although this framework does not represent a lockstep evolution in the concerns and levels of use of innovation users, but a possible progression dependent upon the influence of other contextual factors, Anderson (2010) notes there are nevertheless a number of criticisms. One is that teachers may incorporate new teaching ideas into routine patterns of use without necessarily considering the consequence of the change on the outcomes for the students. Research on teaching cultures also suggests that the shift to the Collaboration stage may be less an effect of teachers' individual mastery in the use of innovation than of whether shared goals and teacher collaboration are part of the organizational culture of the institution.

A further challenge is that teachers are likely to experience concerns that relate simultaneously to multiple stages in the model, but above all, that they may implement innovative practices on a daily basis without actually demonstrating high levels of understanding and skill in their use— what Fullan (2007a) refers to as false clarity. Developmental models of teacher change might also hold a normative view of teaching with a strong emphasis on accountability and conformity with ideal images of implementation. Drawing on Freeman (2013), it could be said that these models account for what is manifested through visible and accessible actions (behaviors and interactions), but may fail

to illustrate what is latent (what the change may mean to those involved and the implications it has for their professional identities).

In view of these limitations, and because educational change is inevitably a deeply emotional sense-making experience (Hargreaves, 2005; Zembylas, 2010), a number of scholars have instead drawn attention to the affective domain and its importance in capturing the emotional aspects of teacher change. Fullan (2001b), for instance, makes reference to the “implementation dip”. He defines it as “the inevitable bumpiness and difficulties encountered as people learn new behaviors and beliefs”. The Dip is “literally a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and understandings” (p.40). A closely-related concept to Fullan’s implementation dip is that of the transition curve (Waters, 2005; 2009) (see Figure 2.2).

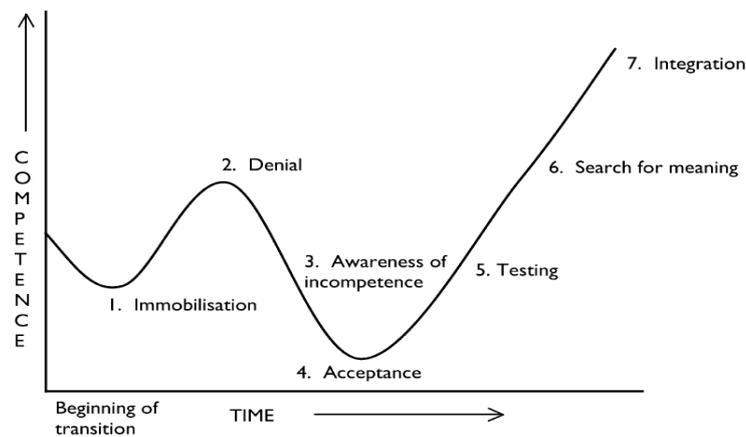


Figure 2.2. The transition curve (Waters, 2005, p. 221)

Waters claims that due to the significant changes in key meanings required by the introduction of new practices, at first individuals are likely to feel unable to cope with them (immobilization stage) and thus may block out the initiative (denial stage)— their professional competence dipping as a result. The key to moving beyond this stage is the ‘acceptance’ phase, in which they begin to come to terms with the inevitability of the change and the need to accommodate to the new work order. After this, there may be a “gradual deepening and strengthening of this process of re-integration of key meanings and an associated steady increase in level of competence” (Waters, 2005, p.222).

Grappling with the ‘pit’, as Anderson (2012) remarks, is fundamental to the process of change, and, although it may be difficult to deal with, it encourages a bias for action. However, not everyone goes into the pit or comes out of it since some people never accept change. The conservative impulse in educational practice can be so strong so as to overwhelm some people’s readiness and capacity to learn and change (James, 2010, cited in

Anderson, 2012). This emotional dip is therefore further explored by Piggot-Irvine (2005)—and reviewed by Anderson (2012) — in the “Change Grief Cycle” (see Figure 2.3).

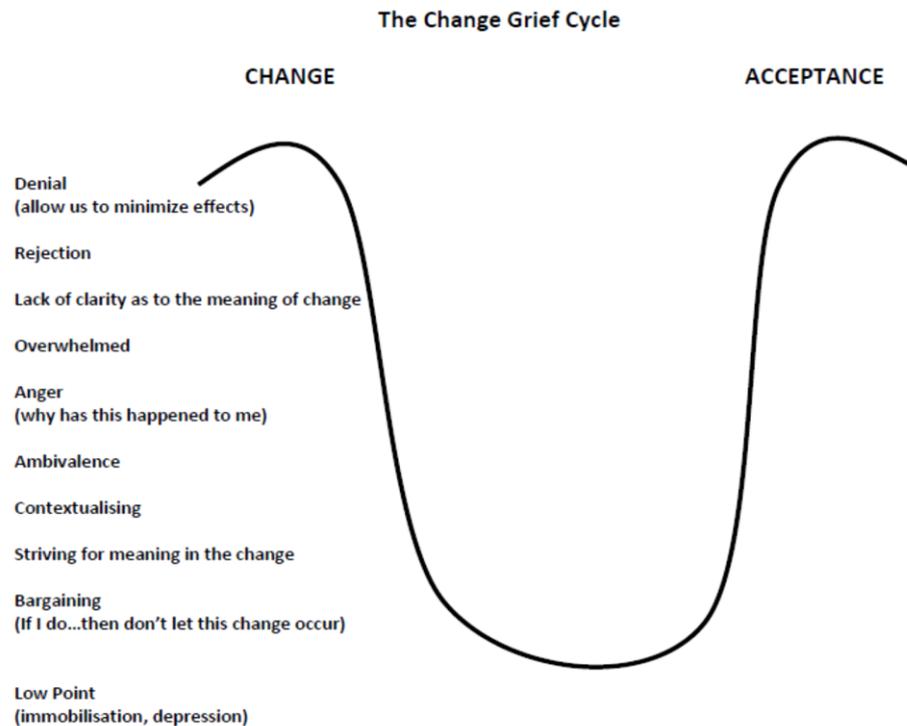


Figure 2.3. The change grief cycle (Piggot-Irvine, 2005, in Anderson, 2010, p. 38)

One of the implications of Water’s transition curve and Piggot-Irvine’s change grief cycle for the process of change is the need to encourage teachers, as Hutchinson (1991, cited in Anderson, 2010) suggests, to express their resistance and other conflicting emotions. As long as resistance is hidden, it remains a problem and thus is likely to undermine any long-term attempt at change. Resistance and conflict are essential for success (Fullan, 1998) and therefore should not be seen “only in a negative light” (Anderson, 2010, p. 444). Teachers’ resistance to change, unfortunately, has many times been associated with stubbornness, lack of imagination and laziness (Zembylas, 2010). Similarly, reform efforts have rarely addressed the emotions of change for teachers and the implications of these educational reforms on teachers’ emotional well-being (Hargreaves, 2004; Zembylas, 2010).

Hargreaves (2005) affirms that educational change efforts affect teachers’ relationships with their students and community members. Teachers make heavy emotional investments in these relationships, their sense of success and satisfaction depending on them. Hence, when teachers resist reform efforts, it is often because they see them as a threat to their self-image, sense of identity and emotional bonds with students and colleagues (Zembylas, 2010). Attempts for educational change may be unsuccessful “not

only because they may exclude rather than include teachers, but also because these attempts may have predominantly negative emotional implications for teachers” (Hargreaves, 2004, cited in Zembylas, 2010, p. 222).

Strongly related to the construct of teacher emotions is the concept of teacher identities. In the context of language teaching, the work of Kubanyiova, for instance, has brought attention to the concept of teachers’ personal motivations or ideal selves. Kubanyiova (2009, 2012), who draws on possible selves theory, explores how motivation is transformed into action and “how cognitive, motivational, and contextual factors interact in the highly dynamic and complex individual as well as socially constructed process of language teachers’ development” (2009, p. 315). Although her work focuses largely on the behaviors and attitudes teachers’ adopt in response to teacher development programs rather than on the phases they follow as they implement an innovation, it advances the discussions on why some teachers change as a result of reform initiatives, while others, having similar backgrounds and working in similar contexts, do not.

Kubanyiova represents her understanding of this process through the concept of *Possible Language Teacher Self*, which embraces “language teachers’ cognitive representations of their ideal, ought-to and feared selves in relation to their work as language teachers” (2012, p. 58). The Ideal Language Teacher Self constitutes the future images of identity goals and aspirations of the teachers; that is, who they desire to be. The Ought-to-Language Teacher-Self refers to teachers’ interpretations of their responsibilities and obligations (expectations of other stakeholders and normative pressures). The teacher’s vision of negative consequences is seen to represent a third type of possible self: The Feared Language Teacher Self. It refers to “someone that the teacher could become if either the ideals or perceived obligations and responsibilities are not lived up to” (2009, p. 319).

In the first case, the teacher will be motivated to invest effort in order to reduce the discrepancy or emotional dissonance between his or her actual and ideal selves. In the second case, by contrast, the efforts and actions will be motivated by extrinsic incentives and the teacher’s vision of negative consequences. Kubanyiova (2009) claims that this distinction is important as it helps to determine whether the implemented practices represent true conceptual change or are likely to be abandoned once the teachers’ perceived pressure of the project’s requirements no longer exists.

One of the main implications of Kubanyiova’s work is that dissonance is an essential (although not sufficient) condition for conceptual change to occur. Without this awareness, “there is no gap to be reduced and therefore no motivation to further engage with the reform input” (2009, p. 328). From this perspective, the dissonance between the

teachers' actual and desired future selves is a key catalyst for the teacher learning process rather than detrimental to their motivation and commitment. Nevertheless, when dissonance is triggered by unfavorable contextual factors, and "when the vision of the negative consequences of not satisfying those expectations is equally well-defined and central in the teachers' working self-concept" (p. 328), teachers are likely to employ strategies for reducing the threat by actively avoiding engagement with the reform.

On the whole, the literature on innovation and change from the perspective of personal development has highlighted, among other factors, the importance of constructs such as teachers' intentions to adopt an innovation, the phases of concern and levels of use they may go through as they implement it, the emotions they may experience during the process, and the identity goals and aspirations that may motivate them to engage in conceptual change. Despite the limitations that could be found in their application, particularly with the CBAM framework, these models and concepts show that the implementation process as experienced by individuals "is not a monolithic event, but, rather, can be variable in nature and hedged about with complex psychological effects" (Waters, 2009, p. 443). This perspective, as stressed by Waters, helps advance our knowledge about the causes of lack of success in ELE innovations.

As Borg (2003, p. 81) notes, language teachers are "active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs". What they do in the classroom is motivated by what they know, believe, think, and as argued above, feel about the different aspects of their profession. Thus, exploring the relationships between teachers' mental constructs and actions is likely to yield deep insights into what inspires them to adopt innovations (Van den Branden, 2009). Innovations that fail to "tune into what drives teacher actions will probably stand a smaller chance of success" than those that do (p.663).

Among the many innovations that have recently been adopted in second language education contexts, the integration of technology into the curriculum is one of the most supported. The introduction of technology into the culture of language learning is, however, a complex change, and, like any change, this process takes place on many levels and is affected by different factors (Nunan & Wong, 2005; Wong, 2013). Therefore, in the following chapter (part 2 of the theoretical roots of this inquiry), I turn my attention to the reasons for the adoption and implementation of such an innovation and what this means for language teachers and the institutions in which they work, particularly in the context of higher education.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL ROOTS OF THE INQUIRY (PART II)

Having outlined the relevant literature on the meaning and the process of change, in this chapter I review the literature on the rationale for the incorporation of technology into the language curriculum, and more specifically, the implementation of blended learning programs. Lastly, I explore what the adoption of blended learning models involve for language teachers, and restate the research questions I posed in the introductory chapter.

Educational Change and the Infusion of Technology into the Curriculum

As remarked by Sancho (2010) and others, among all the forces that can bring about positive educational change, one that has gained attention and has been strongly advocated in the past few decades, is the infusion of information technologies (IT) into the curriculum. Although technology has been viewed as the answer to educational problems many times before (e.g., use of audio and video), as Sancho notes, today's technology-driven change is different. New technologies are now embedded in almost all social realms and have become increasingly integrated into people's everyday lives—their development and use also being influenced by economic and political forces.

Education systems around the world have therefore introduced reform and pedagogical initiatives to respond to the IT imperative (Wong, 2013) under the assumption that if IT is an integral part of the new economy of the twenty-first century, it should also be an integral part of the educational system (Cummins, 2005). Schools are now expected to prepare students to respond to the demands of this new globalized economy (Cummins, 2005; Benson, 2005). The fact that educational reforms have transformed to meet the economic needs of an IT-driven world has not only placed IT at the center of the need for reform, but it “has also given IT a privileged role in the process of reform itself” (Benson, 2005, p. 180).

Consequently, it is not surprising that demand for the use of IT in ELT is extremely high and increasing rapidly worldwide (Davison, 2005; Markee, 2005). As noted by Van Den Branden (2009), the introduction of technology into the language classroom has been one of the innovations that have swept over the field since the 1980s. Technology has been used to support language teaching and learning while helping learners to develop their technological and digital literacy. Nevertheless, compared to other types of innovations (e.g., changes in teaching methodology and materials), those involving the use of technology are “still under-represented” in the literature (Waters, 2009, p. 451). And thus

the need “to justify why we think the use of IT is going to be advantageous...and to articulate why we think the benefits of using IT outweigh the substantial risks” (Markee, 2005, p. 45) is still apparent.

Rationale for the Change

Technology has increasingly been used in and out the language classroom on the grounds that it affords new opportunities and conditions for language teaching and learning, and there is certainly a growing body of literature that supports this claim. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is one of the recognized areas of instruction, scholarship and research that has emerged as a result of this interest, and which has examined extensively the potential benefits and limitations of using such tools or applications. Trends in CALL and reasons for the implementation of CALL activities and materials have changed over time, however, due to developments in language pedagogy, second language acquisition (SLA) theories and computer technology (Davies, Otto & Ruschoff, 2013).

In the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, the impetus to implement CALL activities in the classroom was linked to the possibility of enhancing learners’ L2 lexical acquisition and language accuracy, and was done through the use of grammar and vocabulary tutorials, drill and practice programs and language testing instruments (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). This early use of the computer for language learning has been described as ‘Structural CALL’ (Warschauer 1996; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Later in the 1980s and 1990s, based on the idea that learning was a process of discovery and development, computer-based activities were seen as an opportunity to give more control to the learner and focus on the use of the target language rather than on the language itself (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). This subsequent phase was described as ‘Communicative CALL’.

In the 21st century, with the advent of the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and a move away from a cognitive to a more sociocognitive view of learning (Warschauer & Healey, 1998), the reasons for using CALL activities and materials shifted to an interest in providing learners with the opportunity to use the target language in authentic social contexts, and to integrate technology more fully into the language teaching process. This led to a new perspective on technology use, termed ‘Integrative CALL’ (Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer & Healey, 1998), which sought to integrate various language skills and foster collaboration and learner agency.

In practice, however, structural and communicative approaches co-exist in many L2 classrooms, and integrative CALL has been a goal rather than a reality for many institutions. Bax (2003), in an alternative examination of the ways and reasons why technology has been

used in L2 classrooms, talks instead about Restricted vs. Structural CALL, Open vs. Communicative CALL, and Integrated vs. Integrative CALL. Integrated CALL represents the end goal of CALL as a field and the need for practitioners to work towards normalization—a state where technology is invisible and viewed as an integral part of every lesson. Nevertheless, important developments in technologies and research have taken place since Warschauer and Healey (1998) and Bax (2003) first analyzed the history and future of CALL.

With the arrival of cloud computing, social platforms and Web 2.0 tools, for instance, what the web might potentially achieve has been redefined. It has become a social platform for collaboration, knowledge and information sharing, and user-centered design and networking (Davies, Otto & Ruschoff, 2013). Although Bax (2011) now questions the assumption that normalization is both inevitable and desirable, “CALL has reached the stage of normalization insofar as so-called Web 2.0 applications have become a common social phenomenon” (Davies et al., 2013, p.34). Thus, building on Warschauer and Healey (1998) and Bax’s (2003) three phases of CALL, Thomas, Reinders and Warschauer (2013) identify a fourth phase of CALL: Social CALL. This shift to social CALL holds the potential for enhanced learner engagement and collaboration within more decentralized language learning environments.

As the approaches to CALL have changed, so has research on the role of computers in the language classroom. While early research highlighted the capability of certain CALL applications to support language skills acquisition (e.g., vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing), expose students to authentic materials, provide them with corrective feedback, and increase learner motivation (Liu, Moore, Graham & Lee, 2002), more recent studies, from cognitive interactionist (e.g., Blake, 2005; Smith, 2003) and sociocultural perspectives (e.g., Belz & Thorne, 2006; Lomicka, 2006), have underscored the potential of CMC for increased interaction and negotiation of meaning, greater levels of complexity, the construction of L2 identity and the development of intercultural competence.

The research focus has thus shifted from simply describing and examining computer technology to exploring how it can be used to enhance language learning (Liu et al., 2002). In the case of contemporary CALL research, studies have focused “less on providing justification for its use in relation to, for example, face-to-face instruction, and more on analyzing the sociocultural context of learners and instructors involved in the process of language learning” (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 6). CALL researchers have also often emphasized that any benefits from using new technologies are not automatically derived from the tools themselves, but rather from how these are introduced to the classroom and used in practice by teachers and learners.

As can be seen, the ways in which technology has been implemented in L2 classrooms have significantly changed over time as new possibilities to support language teaching and learning have been uncovered, transforming and expanding simultaneously the motives for which its adoption has been advocated. Although some scholars believe that the actual impact of CALL has been relatively modest and that the justification for its introduction into a language course is at times based on its potential “to contribute to learning, rather than on empirical evidence” (Johnson, 2002, cited in Levy & Stockwell, 2006, p. 104), the fact that technology has become embedded in most social realms has led to a sustained interest in its use in L2 education settings and a call for its normalization.

The long history of CALL also shows that, to a certain extent, “teachers have been blending face-to-face instruction with various kinds of technology-mediated language learning for decades” (Marsh, 2012, p. 4), although the purpose and ways in which they have been doing so are varied. Interestingly, however, although most language learners and teachers experience CALL within a blended environment and the approach of blending CALL applications with face-to-face (FtF) teaching and learning “is as old as CALL itself” (Neumeier, 2005, p. 163), blended learning “has hardly ever been the focus of scientific investigation” (p.164). Furthermore, as Shelley, White, Baumann and Murphy (2006, p. 2) note, inquiry into what is actually required to carry out teaching roles in such contexts is still lacking. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I therefore discuss what blended learning is and what its implementation involves for language teachers in higher education contexts⁴.

Blended Learning

As noted earlier, blended course offerings have grown dramatically in many institutions of higher education worldwide. Blended learning (BL) has gained momentum as a result of aspects such as the transformation and the expansion of higher education in many countries, and the effects of globalization (Bach, Haynes & Smith, 2006). An increase in the demand implies that “there is a reduction of input costs and resources in relation to the number of output graduates” (p.10). To cope with this demand, as the authors suggest, institutions have to use a variety of policies and funding mechanisms such as providing less classroom teaching input and making use of technology to link classroom activity with self-directed study. Technology plays a key role here since it can help institutions ensure that programs continue to be of higher quality even in the absence of contact hours.

⁴ The following section of this chapter draws on the state-of-the-art review I wrote at an early stage of my doctoral studies (see Mendieta, 2012).

The introduction of blended learning in general education and second language education settings has also been associated with: a) the accessibility of computer technology inside and outside the classroom, b) the expansion of the pedagogical potential of ICT for teaching and learning (Hong & Samimy, 2010), and c) the disillusionment generated in online learning with the stand-alone adoption of online media (McDonald, 2008). Owing to the problems faced with fully virtual environments (e.g. sense of isolation and low motivation), early e-learning adopters started to reject the “either-or view of learning online versus face-to-face” (McDonald, 2008, p.3), and instead, resorted to the creation of blended spaces so as to generate more satisfactory outcomes.

While blended learning is not new in language teaching, and, contrary to what some may think, it has been in use for more than 20 years (Sharma, 2010), it is also increasingly being implemented in undergraduate and graduate language teaching courses and programs. As Jonassen, Howland, Moore and Marra (2003) contend, it is clear that to be competitive in the global market, there is a growing pressure for university students to not only learn English, but also develop the technological skills that allow them to be successful on the world stage. It could thus be argued that “blended learning is a mechanism that bridges the old and the new by impacting policy and strategic initiatives in higher education at virtually every level” (Moskal, Dziuban & Hartman, 2013, p. 15).

BL has been adopted by many institutions based on the grounds that it can lead to the design of more effective teaching and learning environments and in turn to improved pedagogy (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Moskal et al., 2013). According to Tayebinik and Puteh (2012), in agreement with Oh and Park (2009) and Davis and Fill (2007), blended instruction offers teachers the possibility of spending more time with learners in both small groups and individually, and to create a flexible and active learning environment that has the potential to enhance students’ learning outcomes. BL has also demonstrated potential for fostering reflective practices and extending “learning far beyond the boundaries of traditional classrooms” (Moskal et al., 2013, p. 16).

Additional reasons for using blended instruction include easy access to knowledge, increased interaction among learners, personal presence and ease of revision of learning content (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). BL provides other benefits such as increased access/flexibility, increased student and faculty satisfaction and increased cost-effectiveness (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Graham, 2013; Moskal et al., 2013). Increased student enrollment—and income—and better utilization of physical facilities by requiring less seat time than fully face-to-face courses are also advantages associated with BL (Dziuban, Hartman, Cavanagh & Moskal, 2011; Porter, Graham, Spring & Welch, 2014). In the

language teaching context, as Bañados (2006) asserts, BL programs have relied on the potential of ICT to create a system to teach and learn languages more effectively in order to facilitate students' active participation in an increasingly global society. Nevertheless, blended learning means different things to different people.

Defining Blended Learning: A Fuzzy Concept?

Blended learning, often used synonymously with hybrid and mixed learning, has been defined in a variety of ways by many authors in the corporate, higher education and second language education literature. According to Whittaker (2013, p. 11), the term originated in the business world in connection with corporate training, then it was employed in higher education and lastly it appeared in language teaching and learning. Although consensus has not been reached on one definitive definition, the most common meaning of blended learning is probably the mix of face-to-face (FtF) and online provision (Whittaker, 2013).

From a corporate perspective, Singh (2003) describes blended learning as a combination of multiple delivery media (e.g., real-time virtual/collaboration software, self-paced web-based courses) that are designed to complement each other and promote meaningful learning. Singh and Reed (2001) propose five combinations of blended instruction: (a) offline and online learning, (b) self-paced, live and collaborative learning, (c) structured and unstructured learning, (d) custom content with off-the-shelf content, and (e) work and learning. Synchronous physical formats, synchronous online formats, and self-paced, asynchronous formats can also be part of the blend.

Driscoll (2002) also identifies four different ways in which blended learning can be defined. Blended learning can be seen as: a) a mix of modes of web-based technology, b) a mix of various pedagogical approaches, c) a combination of any form of instructional technology with FtF instructor-led training, and d) a combination of instructional technology with actual job tasks. In higher education, BL is defined as the mix of different didactic methods (e.g., expository presentations, discovery learning and cooperative learning) and delivery formats (e.g., personal communication, publishing and broadcasting) (Kerres & De Witt, 2003, p. 103).

BL has also been defined as an instructional approach that substitutes a portion of traditional FtF instructional time with online learning activities. Blended learning, as defined by the Sloan Foundation Consortium, lies along a continuum between fully online courses and fully face-to-face courses. Face-to-face instruction (traditional and web facilitated) includes those courses in which 0 to 29 % of the content is studied online. Blended instruction is defined as having between 30 % and 79 % of the course content delivered through the web. And online instruction refers to those courses in which at least

80 % of the course content is taught through the online medium (Allan & Seaman, 2006; Allen, Seaman & Garret, 2007).

In the higher education literature, the idea of defining blended learning in terms of percentages has been contested since it is not clear how much online learning is inherent to blended learning. Assigning a percentage seems an indirect measure that may be misleading since there are unlimited possible combinations (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Moskal et al., 2013). A few authors, therefore, do not address the substitution aspect of blended learning but rather view BL as the thoughtful integration of FtF and online learning experiences (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Blended learning is thus “the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 148). This means that designs should be informed by evidence-based practice and the organic needs of the specific context in which they are to be implemented and that the FtF and online instruction should be “fused in a way that capitalizes on the strengths of each” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013, p. 24).

In the language teaching and learning literature, some definitions for blended learning have also been provided. Neumeier (2005, p. 164) defines BL as a combination of face-to-face and computer-assisted learning (CAL) in a single teaching and learning environment. Stracke (2007, p. 57) provides a similar definition. She defines blended language learning as a particular learning and teaching environment that combines FtF and CALL. Dudeney and Hockly (2007, p. 137) describe BL instead as a mixture of online and FtF course delivery. Lastly, Sharma and Barrett (2007, p. 7) generalize their understanding of blended learning as a course which combines FtF classroom learning with an appropriate use of technology. The term, however, has not only been used to refer to the mix of teaching modes (CALL and FtF). It has also been used to indicate the combination of technologies (email, phone, web), methodologies (presentation-practice-production, TBLT), and probably in the future, real and virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life) (Sharma, 2010).

Nonetheless, as Neumeier (2005) notes, the distinction between CALL and FtF teaching modes is no longer clear, as some classrooms are now equipped with advanced mobile technology. As Crook (1994, cited in Neumeier, 2005) states: “It becomes obvious that this distinction becomes increasingly blurred as we interact with, around, at, in relation to and through computers” (p.165). Authors like Claypole (2010, cited in Sharma, 2010), for instance, argue that there is nothing new about blended learning and that it is basically a response to the logical development of prior pedagogical tendencies involving the mixing of methods of teaching. And according to Westbrook (2008), in the future the term may even disappear or become redundant due to the number of definitions that have been attached to it.

Yet, although some authors contend that there might be nothing new about BL, institutions that use blended approaches, as Neumeier (2005) observes, base their practices on the idea that both FtF interaction and online methods have inherent advantages, and therefore are beneficial for teachers and learners. The most important aims of a BL design are thus to create a learning environment that combines the best of both models and that works as a whole. BL therefore remains an important concept in language teaching as “its overall focus is concerned with the attempt to identify the optimum mix of course delivery in order to provide the most effective language learning experience” (Sharma, 2010, p. 457). This is one of the reasons why discussions about BL are tightly connected to issues of design.

Blended Learning Design: The Perfect Blend

As noted by Garrison and Kanuka (2004), the real test of blended learning is the effective integration of FtF and online components “such that we are not just adding on to the existing dominant approach or method”. This means that blended learning design represents a “fundamental reconceptualization and reorganization of teaching and learning” (p. 97). As a result, no two designs are identical, and there is no single optimal mix or specific recipe to combine the elements of the blend (Hofmann, 2006; Moskal et al., 2013). It is this large amount of possible blends which makes the complexity of blended learning evident (Carbonell, Dailey-Hebert, Gijsselaers, 2013; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004), and which can both pose problems and provide opportunities for course designers.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, as Sharma and Barret (2007, p. 8) warn, “a blended learning course run without a principled approach may be seen as an ‘eclectic’ blending together of course components, and can end up as rather a mish-mash ...learners [suffering] ‘the worst of both worlds’ ”. To avoid such a ‘mish-mash’, a vast array of BL instructional design frameworks or models have been outlined in the literature (Alonso, López, Manrique & Viñes, 2005; Beatty, 2014; Hoic-Bozic, Mornar & Boticki, 2009; Kerres & De Witt, 2003; Picciano, 2009; Singh, 2003). Graham (2006) also asserts that blended learning can occur not only at the activity and course level, but also at the program and institutional level. Hence, although BL design frameworks have mostly been concerned with course design, there has recently been an emphasis on the need to explore BL implementation at the institutional level (Graham, Woodfield & Harrison, 2013; Moskal et al., 2013; Porter et al., 2014).

Issues such as policy development, infrastructure needs, program and faculty development, student learning support mechanisms, and strategic planning and organizational capacity are now being considered in the literature on blended learning. Connections between BL implementation and diffusion of innovation theories are also being

established. Due to the focus of this study on language teaching, I will review in more detail the work of three of the authors who deal specifically with blended language learning design: Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) and Neumeier (2005). Guiding design principles and recommendations have been discussed by other ELT scholars (e.g., Sharma & Barrett, 2007; Dudeney & Hockly, 2007), yet Neumeier's and Gruba and Hinkelman's work is particularly relevant due to its theoretical and/or empirical basis and the consideration of multiple variables.

Based on the idea that BL design approaches for the second language classroom should be purposeful, appropriate, multimodal and sustainable, and above all, introduced in an incremental manner, Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) suggest a number of design considerations that operate at different levels. Drawing on Jones' work (2007), the authors suggest adopting a three-tiered (micro, meso and macro) structure for the development of blended language learning arrangements. At the micro level, design considerations involve task design, and lesson and subject/course design. At this level, it should be determined, among others, what tasks will achieve specific language learning aims, how these tasks should be sequenced and integrated coherently in each blended lesson, and how the tasks, technologies and assessment practices chosen are aligned to the overall syllabus.

At the meso level of design, the need to align classroom practices with the policies of a course and the institution is highlighted— course being defined as the series of subjects that form a major and later lead to a degree. In that sense, Gruba and Hinkelman's recommendations are not only concerned with activity and course design, but with program design as well. They therefore suggest adhering to the expectations of the institution for graduates; discussing with faculty the departmental reasons to adopt technology, what the accepted level of integration is and the benefits of participating in curriculum change, as well as aligning the integration of technologies up and down an entire course of study in order to ensure that there are gains in both IT knowledge and language skills. They also bring attention to the importance of developing an “underpinning philosophy to help frame and articulate choices” (p. 38) and considering and putting in place a risk management plan.

Besides establishing links to larger institutional goals, Gruba and Hinkelman suggest taking into consideration the national/international guidelines that may influence the overall direction of the curriculum. At the macro level of design, they recommend assessing the extent to which the objectives of the subject (course) and the course (program) relate to those of national and international standards, and how accrediting body curricular policies and professional development benchmarks will be achieved. Although not particularly defined as a framework or model for BL design, Gruba and Hinkelman's set of considerations casts light on the complexity of blending technologies with FtF language

instruction. In their view, this activity involves much more than decisions about course design and therefore requires a comprehensive and institution-wide approach to planning and implementation. To a large extent, their work situates blended language learning within the broader agenda of innovation and change previously discussed.

While Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) view BL design in terms of micro, meso and macro elements, Neumeier (2005) focuses specifically on course design, or in Gruba and Hinkelman’s terms, on design at the micro-level. Neumeier describes a framework for the design of blended learning environments consisting of six parameters (see Table 3.1): (a) mode, (b) model of integration, (c) distribution of learning content and objectives, (d) language teaching methods, (e) involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors, and teachers), and (f) location. Neumeier’s work is certainly one of the few attempts made in the CALL field to conceptualize BL design and to help language educators “move closer to answering the initial question of which combination provides the optimal basis for language learning and teaching given the particular conditions at hand” (p. 176) — a reason why it has been increasingly adopted by CALL researchers in recent years (e.g., Grgurović, 2011).

Table 3.1

Parameters for Designing a BL Environment for Language Learning and teaching (Neumeier, 2005, p.167)

Parameter	Individual Descriptors
1. Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on mode • Distribution of modes • Choice of modes
2. Model of integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequencing of individual modes • Level of integration
3. Distribution of learning content and objectives and assignment of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel or isolated
4. Language teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of teaching methods in each of the modes employed
5. Involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors, and teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactional patterns: Individual vs. collaborative language learning activity • Variety of teacher and learner roles • Level of Autonomy
6. Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom, home, outdoors, computers room, institutional settings

The first parameter Neumeier (2005) establishes is the selection of the lead *mode*. She adopts Kerres (2001) criteria and defines this mode as the learning space where: a) learners often spend more time, b) the sequencing and organization of content is done, and c) students are guided through the learning process. This choice has to be made after a careful evaluation of the learning aims, learners’ needs and the available infrastructural resources. Together with the selection of the lead mode, two additional variables need to be

considered: distribution of modes (time in each mode) and choice of modes (sub-modes within each mode).

An additional aspect in Neumeier's (2005) framework is *model of integration*, which is divided into two additional components: sequencing of modes and level of integration. The former relates to the ways different modes are purposefully ordered and whether these are used in overlap or parallel to each other, and the latter is linked to the amount of flexibility (optional or obligatory use of activities) offered to the learner. Along with making decisions about the model of integration, a *distribution of learning content and objectives* should also be made. According to Neumeier, learning content and objectives can be incorporated into a BL environment in a parallel or isolated fashion. When there is parallel incorporation both modes (FtF and CALL) are used for the learning of a language skill or syllabus component. This skill can be presented online and then practiced in the classroom or vice versa. In isolated incorporation, "the skill would exclusively be acquired within one of the major modes" (p.171).

In addition to establishing learning aims and objectives, it is also necessary to consider the influence of the *language teaching methods* on the character of the course, particularly the CALL mode. While FtF learning "can be much more flexible and open to changes in teaching methods", some CALL environments, due to their limiting nature and rigid structure, may leave "very little room for spontaneous change in approach and procedure" (p. 73), and as a result, teachers may feel more comfortable with the FtF mode. Achieving methodological variety to counterbalance CALL mode limitations is suggested.

A subsequent parameter discussed in the framework is the *involvement of learning subjects*. This parameter involves aspects such as a) the types of interaction that can take place in the CALL mode; b) the variety of required teacher and learner roles; and c) the levels of autonomy that are expected from learners. In blended learning, due to the complex combination of modes and sub-modes, teachers and learners are also likely to adopt different roles in different learning situations. Not only can the switch from one role to another be immediate and dynamic (Neumeier, 2005, p. 174), it can also imply a significant change in the approach to teaching and learning, as students may have to shift from a teacher-guided environment, where they are more passive, and instruction is highly structured, to a learner-centered and self-directed environment, where they need to be more active and independent.

Learners therefore need to have a great level of autonomy, as they are "faced with a much greater scope and variety of roles than if their actions were only restricted to one mode of learning" (p. 174). However, the expected level of learner autonomy and the actual

possibilities for autonomous learning learners are provided with through course material might at times give rise to contradictions (Blin, 2004). Additionally, as some point out, not all students at all levels are necessarily ready to cope with and value the demands of independent online study, either because they have not developed sufficient self-regulation or because there are cultural influences that have an impact on their acceptability of self-directed study. Accordingly, teacher's support in the development of autonomy and the creation of opportunities for learner control in both FtF and CALL modes are crucial.

The last parameter is *location*, which refers to the physical space where learning takes place. In addition to traditional locations such as home and the classroom, new technologies allow for learning and teaching to take place in a wide range of locations. However, Neumeier (2005, p. 175) questions the idea that learning can take place everywhere and anytime, and by contrast, believes it is essential to offer participants learning locations "that they are either already familiar with, or with which they can become familiar".

On the whole, blended learning has been defined and put into action differently in different settings. This, not surprisingly, has encouraged researchers to describe the conditions that are necessary for its successful implementation and to examine whether BL actually lives up to expectations. Empirical studies that investigate the use of blended models with language learners can be classified, as Grgurović (2011) notes, into comparison and non-comparison. Comparison studies examine the effectiveness of blended learning by comparing blended instruction (FtF together with CALL instruction) with traditional instruction (FtF without CALL instruction) (e.g., Chenoweth, Ushida & Murday, 2006; Chenoweth & Murday, 2003; Scida & Saury, 2006)— some of the findings indicating that learning outcomes between both types of courses are comparable.

Non-comparison studies examine, among other aspects, effective course design (e.g., Bañados, 2006; Neumeier, 2005) and integration (Grgurović, 2011), and learner and teacher perspectives (e.g., Stracke, 2007; Murday, Ushida & Chenoweth, 2008). Only a few studies focus on teachers' experiences and role and identity changes in online learning modalities (e.g., Comas-Quinn, 2011; Nissen & Tea, 2012; Shelly, Murphy & White, 2013). Due to the unique characteristics of online learning, however, non-comparison studies have gradually occupied the attention of researchers. These studies, often qualitative, have provided more detailed depictions of blended learning classrooms (Gleason, 2013), and, of interest for this narrative inquiry, information about language teachers' roles, views and practices. In the subsequent section of this chapter, I will review some of these non-comparison studies (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Grgurović, 2011, 2014; Nissen & Tea, 2012; Shelley et al., 2013),

paying particular attention to the aspects that seem to make it difficult or easy for language teachers to change to BL.

Voices from the Blended Language Classroom

Studies that look at teachers' and learners' experiences with blended language learning vary in terms of their findings. Grgurović (2011, 2014), for instance, drawing on Neumeier's (2005) framework and Roger's (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, examined an intermediate ESL listening and speaking class that used LMS⁵ technology for the first time in order to find out how the blended learning model was used and how the two learning modes were integrated. An LMS was used by two ESL teachers— with different IT skills— and thirty-one students to combine FtF instruction and online learning in the computer lab and for homework. This case study also looked into participant's perceptions of the attributes of the innovation and the innovation-decision process they went through. Data were gathered from qualitative (in-depth teacher interviews, class and lab observations, and a student focus group) and quantitative methods (student surveys).

Observation data indicate that the learning modes were appropriately integrated as a result of the connections teachers made between modes, their monitoring of student progress and their presence during lab meetings. Students were also able to identify a connection between class and online work, thus confirming that the integration of modes was successfully accomplished. The use of LMS also allowed for all language skills to be incorporated and practiced in both modes. In terms of teachers' perspectives about the innovation, results suggest that the two teachers found a number of advantages in the use of the LMS, such as giving students the possibility to work at their own pace, saving time in oral skills assessment and allowing for more individualized instruction. Students were also able to appreciate the new possibilities for oral production that the technology afforded.

Grgurović (2014) also observes that the innovation was compatible with teachers' needs (compatibility), that teachers were allowed to test it through self-exploration and in training workshops (trialability), and that its use and advantages could be observed by colleagues (observability). Yet, while it was valuable and easy to use, it also consumed a lot of teacher time and there were some technical difficulties (complexity). Interestingly, unlike other studies on BL, the difference in teachers' technology comfort level and the technical problems did not influence their opinions of the innovation. In fact, they reported having had a positive experience with the blended course and an interest in continuing to teach it.

⁵ Learning Management System

The success of the BL model could be attributed to, among other things, the fact that the teachers volunteered for the project and that the online materials used followed the structure of the in-class textbook. The low level of complexity of the innovation (user-friendly materials) and teachers' opportunity to experiment with it were also factors affecting the implementation positively. Given that Grgurović adopted a diffusion of innovation theoretical framework, the findings of her study draw attention to the importance of anticipating how teachers and students may interact with the innovation before the adoption process starts and planning the intervention accordingly.

Other studies have indicated mixed or less successful outcomes, however. Comas-Quinn (2011), for example, evaluated the impact that the introduction of a blended learning model (tutorial support) in a distance Spanish language learning course had on a group of teachers working at the Open University (UK). Teachers' tutorial support involved a combination of FtF sessions, synchronous online lessons (through a conferencing tool) and asynchronous online activities (through VLE⁶ tools: forums and blogs). In contrast to Grgurović's study, teachers did not have the option to decide whether or not to implement the blended model and thus had to engage with all three types of teaching—online tutoring being new to many of them. Interviews, class observations, a survey and an institutional report constituted the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the study.

Although training and support were provided and teachers reported being confident in the use of synchronous and asynchronous e-moderation tools, findings suggest that they did not often make use of asynchronous tools in practice. Tools whose function was informative (e.g. teacher forum) were preferred over tools with more pedagogical value (e.g. blogs). Teachers also mentioned having experienced technical problems and having perceived a poor integration of activities, more specifically, an absence of a link between online tasks and assessment. Tools such as tutor group forums and blogs were viewed by teachers as either not useful or unnecessary, and some of them felt that the online experience had simply increased their workload.

The significant number of changes affecting the course, teachers' conceptualizations of the potential of online tools for language learning and teaching, and the institution's approach to training (focused on the *how* rather than on the *why* of online tuition) seemed to have made it difficult for teachers to successfully engage with the course. Teachers' willingness to change also appeared to have been influenced by learners' expectations as well as by traditional ideas shared by colleagues and students about "what language learning is and what their respective roles in the process are" (p.228). Comas-Quinn (2011),

⁶ Virtual Learning Environment

therefore, emphasizes the need to design teacher training programs that focus less on “learning to teach online” and more on “how to become an online teacher” since “a training approach that overlooks the importance of teacher self and teacher identity in the learning process is unlikely to be truly effective” (p.229).

Nissen and Tea (2012) explored how second generation tutors within two (ESP) blended and one distance (German) language learning courses provided by Stendhal University (Grenoble, France) linked FtF and online learning modes, how they viewed their roles in each modality and which aspects helped them develop ownership over the course. Two of the courses combined three modalities: individual online work on a learning platform (referred to as distant), FtF sessions in large groups, and conversation workshops in small groups. The German course did not include FtF sessions and the discussion workshops were replaced by video conferences with L2 learners in Germany, although it included individual and pair-work modules on a learning platform. Semi-structured interviews with seven tutors of the three courses were qualitatively analyzed by the researchers.

Second generation tutors are defined by Nissen and Tea as those teachers who have not been involved in course design but who perform as either FtF teachers or tutors (for the conversation workshops and online sessions), or who play both roles. The results show that while some instructors felt themselves to be intermediaries between the three modalities and the students, establishing clear links between them through their actions, others did not and had difficulty seeing them as a whole coherent system. Furthermore, although knowing what roles to play in more conventional modes such as the conversational workshops was relatively straightforward for most tutors, “it [was] much less clear to them what exactly their role as an online tutor should entail” (p. 157). Hence, some of them did not follow-up on students’ work as expected or did not consider the asynchronous modality necessary. In fact, most tutors, except those with previous experience as course designers, found the FtF modality to be the central one, despite the fact that course design was centered on online work.

Tutors’ feeling of involvement in and ownership of the course also varied. Nissen and Tea (2012) identified eight factors that explain this fluctuation. Some of these are related to tutors’ familiarity with and appreciation of the course content and the support made available to them, while others are associated with the possibility tutors had to: a) feel part of a team and work with other course actors and tutors, b) feel free to make instructional choices and influence curriculum design, and c) feel confident with the use of technology. Due to the complex design of the course and the number of people involved in its implementation (FtF teachers, tutors, course coordinators and course designers), the authors view the latter aspects as specifically related to the blended learning model. Like

Comas-Quinn (2011), Nissen and Tea emphasize the need to provide training for tutors that enhances their involvement and that allows them to better understand how the course works and what is expected of them, as many times, they are more familiar with FtF learning and thus attribute more value to it.

Lastly, Shelly, Murphy and White (2013) examined the way in which ten tertiary teachers from distance universities in the UK and Australasia responded to the conflicts and tensions motivated by their transition from classroom to distance, online and blended teaching. Unlike some of the above-described studies, this study focused on the development of teacher cognition rather than on their actual teaching practices. Adopting a narrative research approach, the authors analyzed a set of written (a narrative frame, Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008) and oral (follow-up telephone interview) narrative data.

Findings highlight that the switch from FtF to distance/blended teaching affected teachers both cognitively (practice) and emotionally, impacting on their sense of themselves as teachers. As in Comas-Quinn's (2011) and Nissen and Tea's (2012) studies, teachers had to adapt to a greater use of online (synchronous and asynchronous) teaching modes, which were gradually replacing FtF tutorials, and which, despite offering multiple advantages, also presented difficulties such as reduced non-verbal communication channels. The online modalities and technologies used in the program also gave rise to divided responses among participants. While some identified the potential of the online medium for language learning and teacher collaboration, others expressed their concern about the unpredictable participation by students and the possibility for technology to become an end in itself.

In their analysis of teachers' narratives, the authors also identified the significance of the emotional dimension of teacher narratives, which, in some cases, were influenced by tensions between long-held beliefs and practices and the requirements of the new teaching environment. For some teachers, it was easier to solve these tensions and thus overcome their cognitive dissonance, but for others it was far harder to find solutions. Nevertheless, despite experiencing emotional and cognitive dissonance, "teachers reported having a sense of achievement and enjoyment in their work" and increased confidence in the use of technology and their ability to work around difficulties (Shelly et al., 2013, p. 570). One could argue, however, that the fact that the transition from FtF to distance/blended learning was not forced on any of the teachers to some extent facilitated their involvement in the courses.

As can be observed, research on language teachers' perspectives about and experiences with blended learning has yielded very interesting results. Some researchers contend that teachers' instructional practices and feelings of satisfaction may be positively influenced by the implementation of the blend, while others indicate that they may find it

difficult to understand the purpose of the new modality and their roles in it. These findings bear some resemblance to what has been discussed in studies examining the adoption of technology innovation in ICT centers and school settings. Grgurović's study, for instance, confirms Markee's (2005) claim that the relative advantages and disadvantages motivated by the use of the technology and its complexity and compatibility with current practice are likely to influence users' choices. If the introduced technology-mediated practices are perceived to be too different from traditional FtF instruction, they may fall outside the 'zone of innovation' (Stoller, 2009), and hence be rejected or abandoned.

As Sergeant (1999, p. 81) maintains, "teachers will usually make a cost/benefit calculation based on how much benefit the activity will bring to the class against the amount of effort, time and risk involved for both themselves and the learners. The more complex the program or tool, the more the teacher will fear the failure of the activity". Comas-Quinn (2011) also highlights, like Nunan and Wong (2005) and Wong (2013), the fact that constraints such as lack of time and adequate training, and teachers' beliefs about L2 teaching and learning and the role of technology in this process, can significantly impact teachers' decisions and actions. Equally, teachers may oppose the use of technology when coerced by those in authority to implement the innovation, or as a result of technical problems and their fear of losing control and/or not meeting students' expectations.

Nevertheless, despite these similarities in terms of findings, there is something that seems to be particular to blended/online learning tuition: the significant change in teacher roles, pedagogical knowledge and identity motivated by the need to integrate and participate in two or more different teaching and learning modalities, and which may require, as Nissen and Tea (2012) suggest, a different approach to course design, teacher support and teamwork.

Becoming an Online Teacher: Changes in Roles, Knowledge and Identity

Changes in Roles and Skills

As Bañados (2006) states, teachers' and students' roles change considerably as a result of their participation in a blended program. While students have to take more control over their learning, teachers have to manage the online learning environment in order to create favorable conditions for language acquisition, strategic learning and the development of learner autonomy. As a result, they may have to take on roles as material designers and developers, producers of media resources, workflow managers and online tutors. As online instructors, as Hampel and Stickler (2005) note, they have to become familiar with the

technology, but more importantly, know about its implications for language learning in the context of useful teaching approaches and SLA theories.

Because teachers have to assess regularly the benefits and challenges of online learning, they need not only different skills from those experienced in the FtF language classroom, but also different skills from online teachers of other subjects. These, according to Hampel and Stickler's (2005) pyramidal representation, range from lower to higher level skills, and include: "the more general skills of dealing with the technology and using its advantages, the social skills of community building, language teaching skills, and the skills to teach creatively and develop a personal teaching style in an online medium" (p. 311).

In an alternative analysis, Compton (2009) talks about three categories of skills (technology, pedagogy and evaluation) at three levels of expertise (novice, proficient and expert). When teaching online, tutors should be able to handle hardware and software issues, judge the effectiveness of technology for language teaching, and learn to use it creatively. They should also be able to develop community building skills and promote socialization and active participation. Lastly, they should be able to assess the effectiveness of CALL tasks and the overall syllabus and make any necessary modifications. Through her model, Compton questions the assumption that a teacher who is good at teaching FtF lessons can easily 'jump in' and teach in the online medium. After all, "online language teachers cannot be expected to become effective based on training meant for face-to-face classrooms when these two environments involve different skills and responsibilities" (Compton, 2009, p. 96).

In a similar vein, Mortera-Gutierrez (2006) contends that success is not just having traditional FtF instructors in place and providing them with computer communication technology, expecting they will develop acceptable skills, but "it is training them with pedagogical and didactical tools, and teaching them how to handle blended learning courses" (p. 335). Although online pedagogy is not something entirely new and mysterious, and, in fact, some of the problems online teachers face are similar to those encountered in FtF lessons, some of these issues will need different solutions (Hampel & Stickler, 2005).

Changes in Beliefs and Identities as L2 Teachers

It is clear that switching from classroom to distance (blended and fully online) teaching environments requires the development of new roles, skills and pedagogical knowledge, yet it also motivates, as White (2007) remarks, a disruption in teachers' beliefs about what it means to teach and learn a language, and in turn a shift in their identity as language teachers. Drawing on Strambi and Bouvet's (2003) insights, White notes that, as

FtF language instructors, teachers often have fairly stable expectations of what they need to know and do in order to manage their role with a degree of competence.

The experiences and values they have developed as classroom language teachers will shape how they approach the task of becoming online language teachers (Comas-Quinn, 2011). This established identity is disrupted, however, by the new demands of the new online learning environment. Having to relinquish control to the students in terms of learning content and aims, among many other requirements, is likely to entail a “different process of identity enhancement which, initially at least, [teachers may find] demanding and in conflict with their personal and professional needs” (White, 2007, p.104).

As Comas-Quinn, de los Arcos and Mardomingo (2012, p. 129) suggest, online learning can result in a contested space where traditional hierarchies and relationships between tutors and learners are in a state of flux and where new relationships are continually being forged. It could thus be argued that distance/blended learning challenges not only the pre-established conceptions and expectations about what, when, where and how to teach/learn, but also the conventional roles of students and teachers, impacting in turn the ways in which they construct their identities as L2 learners and teachers.

Considering what has been discussed throughout this chapter in terms of the adoption of innovation, teacher change and blended learning design, it could also be claimed that the reasons why teachers succeed or fail in their attempt to put into practice blended learning models are associated with personal aspects (knowledge, emotions, attitudes, beliefs and investments), but also with a broad range of contextual (e.g., training, resources available, organizational structure) and design-related factors. Depending on the ways in which all these complex, interrelated factors play out in educational institutions, teachers may end up supporting the implementation of the blend, favoring “one of the delivery modes to the detriment of the other” (Sharma, 2010, p.457), or opposing the whole experience.

Some of the studies on blended learning described above, however, despite illustrating the difficulties in becoming an online teacher and suggesting significant implications for teacher development, focus primarily on the description of challenges and changes in teachers’ skills and roles. How teachers deal with these changes in roles, responsibilities and actions, and the extent to which they successfully engage in online teaching are widely explained in relation to the characteristics of the course, issues of training, and teachers’ beliefs and perceptions. However, less attention is paid to the way in which wider educational, institutional and community forces constrain teachers’ work, and how these conflict with their beliefs, expectations and L2 teacher identities.

There are some aspects absent in research on blended language learning, such as who the change is initiated by, what its antecedents and real drivers are (e.g., improved pedagogy, cost effectiveness, flexibility), how it is communicated to teachers, what role opinion leaders and other key agents play in its implementation, and to what extent the structure and culture of the institution facilitate teachers' capacity to change and achieve goals. Blended language learning studies often revolve around the implementation of specific courses, yet, how this process is influenced by favorable and unfavorable sociocultural and contextual conditions is not always taken into consideration.

From a personal perspective, some of the aspects that are little studied include the emotional implications that the adoption of blended learning models has for teachers, how resistance and conflicting emotions are dealt with by teachers and other stakeholders, and whether teachers engage or not in true conceptual change. How teachers' language learning and teaching trajectories may influence their interpretation of the change and how they come to challenge or reconfigure what may be required of them in blended/distance teaching settings are issues that, with the exception of Shelly et al. (2013) narrative inquiry, have equally escaped the attention of some researchers examining blended learning.

Methodologically speaking, it could be pointed out that research on BL has focused on teachers' beliefs and knowledge and how they evaluate their practice, but the relationship between cognition and actual instruction is not always established, as studies (except for Grgurović's) are not always informed by classroom observation data. Similarly, the way in which teachers' pedagogical choices and their understanding of online language teaching change over time is not present in the literature since few studies are longitudinal. Lastly, although issues of integration have recently been given more attention (Grgurović, 2011), further evidence is still needed in order to better understand how well the different components of the learning experience (FtF, self-paced and online learning) are integrated, and what this means for teaching and learning (Blin & Munro, 2008).

Consequently, I have decided to pose the following research questions in order to bridge some of these gaps in the literature. It is my intention to advance our understanding of how teachers and other change actors develop their practice in blended learning environments, how they come to terms with the challenges and opportunities motivated by such a change, and in what ways their adoption efforts are influenced by personal and external factors.

Research Questions

1. What stories of change do teachers live by when participating in the implementation of a blended language learning program?
2. In what ways are these experiences of change shaped by available institutional and organizational stories on language teaching/learning and ICT use?

As stated in Chapter 1, this study revolves around an interest in knowing what change looks like from the point of view of the teacher, how it unfolds in actual practice, and what factors beyond teacher's control influence the process. Situated in the context of the implementation of blended learning, it attempts to capture the ways in which teachers integrate different learning modalities in practice and how they deal with and make sense of the changes that this new curriculum generates in their professional knowledge landscape. Although this is not a study on large-scale ELT change, it certainly acknowledges the importance of looking at how individual's experiences are embedded in and influenced by larger sociocultural contexts, and does so by adopting a narrative methodology.

Sancho (2010) emphasizes that questions about the relationship between education and technology are as much about technology and society as they are about technology and schools, and thus imply taking into consideration the wider societal and political context in which these new technologies and educational systems are located. Thus, by examining the ways in which a blended learning program is put into action, this narrative inquiry may well capture the ways in which teachers appropriate and embed new teaching values into their own pedagogical toolbox (Evans, 2009), as well as expose how they come to blend their theories of best practice with those new ideas introduced by reformers and local change agents.

As claimed by Kennedy (2013), investigating teachers' personal histories and narratives is a potential fruitful methodology to study educational change from the perspective of those who implement it and cast light on the relationship between teachers' behaviours, beliefs and established social norms. Studies that focus on what is latent rather than on what is manifest (Freeman, 2013) may not only provide insights into the working conditions, social relations, and moral/personal values and concerns that engage teachers emotionally with reform efforts (Zembylas, 2010, p. 231), but also unveil how these and other personal factors influence and are influenced by larger institutional and organizational narratives.

Concluding Thoughts

In this and the previous chapter, I have reviewed the theoretical concepts that underpin this study and which are concerned with teacher change and innovation, technology and blended

learning. Interested in better understanding what lies behind the failure or success of educational change, I have explored how change is defined in education settings and what processes institutions and teachers go through as they try to achieve the aims and outcomes established for new curriculum initiatives. I have equally discussed some of the rationales for change in language teaching education, particularly in the context of the IT imperative, and which in higher education institutions have revolved around an interest in blended learning.

This review, though far from comprehensive, has also attempted to illustrate some of the issues that have been identified as factors affecting teachers' transition from FtF to blended settings, as well as those that are yet to be examined. In so doing, this chapter has shown that, by drawing on some of the constructs explored in the educational change and innovation literature, future studies on blended learning might not only capture how personal and contextual factors intertwine in what at first sight might seem a simple combination of learning modalities, but also advance our understanding of what it takes to normalize the use of technology in L2 learning settings. Lastly, I restated the rationale and aims of this narrative inquiry. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological approach I adopted during this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE INQUIRY

The human being alone among the creatures of the earth is a story telling animal: sees the present rising out a past, heading into a future; perceives reality in narrative form.
—Novak, ‘Story’ and ‘Experience’, 1975.

After an exploration of the theoretical concepts that framed this research, I now discuss the methodological roots of the study. This chapter is devoted to narrative inquiry, the approach that informed and guided my interpretation and analysis of participants’ professional change experiences. Although there is not a simple, clear definition of narrative and no single way of going about narrative research (Barkhuizen, 2013; Riessman, 2008), there are certainly some aspects that illustrate the core meanings and significance of this mode of inquiry. Hence, to better understand why and in what ways this is a narrative inquiry study, in the next few pages, I examine some of the ideas that have been highlighted in the literature with regard to this research approach⁷.

I first give consideration to the meaning and nature of narrative. Then I provide an overview of the origin of narrative research and describe some of the epistemological and methodological considerations that determine the role of the researcher, the different orientations narrative studies can take and the processes involved in narrative analysis. I also define the nature of the work I conducted by locating the methodological choices I made in terms of epistemological orientation and data analysis and representation practices. Lastly, I discuss some of the challenges facing narrative researchers and how this method of inquiry has been employed in the education and applied linguistics fields.

Defining Narrative

To trace the origin of *narrative*, often used synonymously with the word *story*, it is necessary to consider the beginning of humankind. Riessman (2008), citing Barthes (n.d.), notes that narratives began with the history of mankind and that therefore “there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative ... it is simply there, like life itself” (p.11). We are storytelling creatures who construct narratives to make sense of lived experiences and, ultimately, of our and others’ passage through the world (Moen, 2006). Through the act of storytelling our experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful

⁷ This chapter draws on the ideas discussed in the state-of-the-art review I wrote at an early stage of my doctoral studies (see Mendieta, 2013).

(Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Narrative descriptions, as Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5) notes, exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world.

Essential elements for a narrative are the tale (or story), the teller and the addressee (Toolan, 2001). The story element in narrative, however, is a special type of discourse production; a story is a sustained emplotted account with a beginning, middle and end (Polkinghorne, 1995). As stated by Scholes (1982, cited in Carter, 1993), in a story there are at least three basic elements: (a) a situation involving some conflict or struggle, (b) a protagonist who engages in the situation for a purpose, and (c) a sequence with implied causality (a plot) during which the conflict is resolved: “A narration is the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time” (p.6).

In a story, as Polkinghorne (1995) claims, events and actions are put together into an organized whole by means of a plot. This process of emplotment, where a prior action is causally linked to a later effect, is what actually distinguishes a story from a simple list of facts. During the act of narration the narrator gives order to elements that would otherwise be random and disconnected. Narratives provide connections, coherence and sense. They give our experiences and understanding structure; they are our way “of being and dealing with time” (Carr, 1986, cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.2). Narratives are, nevertheless, told to a specific person, in a particular setting, at a particular time and for a particular purpose. If told to a different person, the same story would be different (Chase, 2005).

Narratives are also based on people’s life experiences and entail chosen parts of their lives; they are not “an objective reconstruction of life— [they are] a rendition of how life is perceived” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.3). As Riessman (2008) states, every time an account takes place, speakers select and evaluate those events they perceive as important and connect them sequentially so as to allow listeners to take particular meaning away from their story. This action reflects “the power of memory to remember, forget, neglect, and amplify moments in the stream of experience” (p.29). There is the possibility to “use flashback, flash-forward or freeze-frame; small events in the story can be scrutinized or changed; certain events can be given prominence whilst others are ignored or we can isolate one small incident and apportion it a status beyond its importance” (Hendy, 2008, p. 25).

Additionally, our stories are constantly being restructured in the light of new events and they “do not exist in a vacuum but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 2). According to Moen (2006), in agreement with Elbaz-Luwisch (2005), narratives are both personal and collective. They are shaped by the knowledge, experiences and feelings of the narrator as well as by the interlocutors and the

cultural, historical, institutional contexts in which they occur. As stated by Pavlenko (2007, p. 180), our stories do not completely belong to us:

They are co-constructed for us and with us by our interlocutors, real or imagined, by the time and place in history in which the events portrayed have taken place and the time and place in which they are told, by the language we choose for the telling, and by the cultural conventions of the speech community in which the narrative is located.

Stories not only highlight an existing relationship between the narrator and the audience, but also expose issues related to identity and cultural membership. As Riessman (2008, p.7) points out, through storytelling, we engage in a process of identity construction; we construct who we are and how we “want to be known”. Through the words and the narrative structures we use in the crafting of our stories and through the very content of these, we identify with other members of society and show our affiliation to a particular cultural group. In so doing, we also assign identities to others, “both to the characters who appear in [our] narratives and to [our] interlocutors” (Menard-Warwick, 2011, p.565). In brief, it could be said that our stories manifest our human nature; they mirror how we are socially and culturally positioned in the world (Sikes & Gale, 2006). In that sense, storytelling is both a cognitive (meaning-making) and socially-situated activity (Barkhuizen, 2013).

But what does narrative and the act of storytelling mean in this study? In view of all the essential elements and characteristics of narrative just described, I can say that the main narrators in this study are my participants and that the stories are their accounts of their personal and professional experience. The central topic or situation involving some conflict or struggle in these stories is the enactment of a newly introduced English language teaching curriculum that combines multiple learning modalities, and which is situated in a particular sociocultural and historical moment of (private) higher education in Colombia. I as the researcher am the addressee, but at times, as observed in Chapter 1, also become the narrator. Our words, as will be illustrated in subsequent chapters, reflect our membership to the ELT profession and what being a language teacher involves, personally and collectively, in changing times driven by the IT imperative in education.

The Narrative Turn

In the last decades, narratives and, in particular, the stories people tell about their lives have become the focus of the evolving field of narrative research (Pavlenko, 2002; Craig, 2007; Riessman, 2008). There is an increasing interest in narratives in fields like psychology, sociology, education and in other areas in linguistics, such as language

teaching, L1 and L2 acquisition and sociolinguistics. According to Riessman and Speedy (2006), narrative has penetrated almost every discipline and school and it no longer refers exclusively to literary work. It is now interdisciplinary and therefore does not fit “within the boundaries of any single scholarly field” (p. 426-427). As Pavlenko (2002) and Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014) point out, narratives have become both the object and the form of narrative inquiry and a legitimate means of research for all areas of social research. But, how and why were narratives given entry to the field of social science research?

Although the idea that human beings are storytelling creatures is ancient, narratives were not seen as relevant to research until recently (Carter, 1993). In an attempt to define narrative, Currie (1998, cited in Sikes & Gale, 2006, para. 6), suggested the term *homo sapiens* be revised to *homo fabulans* to indicate that we are actually “tellers and interpreters of narrative”. Throughout time, however, in our attempts to claim what is to be valued as “truth”, our *homo sapiens* seems to have overshadowed our *homo fabulans*. In our task of objectively knowing the world, stories used to hold no relation with the discovery of the “truth”, and they had, in some way, been marginalized. Additionally, as Polkinghorne (1995, p. 7) notes, the word story had carried, for some, a connotation of falsehood or misrepresentation, as in the expression, “That is only a story”.

An impetus for change developed, however, as a result of various methodological, political and social happenings such as the interpretive shift in modern approaches to inquiry, the recognition that story embodies a way to understanding human actions (Carter, 1993), as well as the creation of women’s movements and a contemporary preoccupation with identity (Riessman, 2008). The latter, as stressed by Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 2), situates “narrative inquiry within a broader turn away from the quest for ‘grand’ social theories that would enable social scientists to predict human behavior”. The fact that narrative research can give voice to those who are often seen as the objects of the research or who are marginalized outside the academy, thereby expanding the range of voices that are heard in research reports, is a further explanation for its upsurge (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Hayes, 2013).

Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) note that the turn or turns to narrative research represent a change in: a) the relationship between the researcher and the researched, b) a move from the use of numbers toward the use of words as data, c) a change from a focus on the general and universal toward the local and specific, and d) an increasing acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing. Narrative research therefore implies changes in the relationships among researcher and participants, the kind of data collected, the focus

of the study and the kinds of knowing embraced by the researcher. On the whole, narrative research is a move away from positivism.

In this shift from positivism, the contribution of Bruner's work is crucial. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) stress, Bruner's distinction between paradigmatic and narrative knowing articulate the historical basis for the credibility of narrative knowing, and in turn of narrative research. In paradigmatic knowing, individual things or actions are believed to belong to a concept or category, while in narrative knowing events are linked into a context-rich network. Paradigmatic knowing relies on the logic of rationality and makes use of formal abstractions, concepts and constructs, which are independent of any particular context. Narrative reasoning, by contrast, emphasizes the temporal context and complex interaction of the elements that make each situation unique: "While paradigmatic knowledge is maintained in individual words that name a concept, narrative knowledge is maintained in emplotted stories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.11).

Bruner's work not only ratifies the existence of more than one way of reasoning, but also opens a door to an alternative method of inquiry that challenges the "singular mode advocated" by the (quantitative) research tradition. In the education field, as Carter (1993, p. 6) observes, narratives became a way of capturing the complexity of the phenomenon with which educational researchers contend, and thus, "redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness". In applied linguistics, the presence of narrative in research was inspired by, among others, "sociocultural critiques of the reliance on 'scientific' experimental and survey methods in the search for cognitive universals in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Research" (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 11).

It is important to note, however, that despite the enthusiasm motivated by the narrative turn there are differences of opinion in the epistemological and ontological commitments of narrative inquirers and those who do not identify as narrative inquirers (Clandinin, 2006). As a result, different methodological choices are made by those with an interest in all things narrative. In what follows, I will therefore explore in detail the diverse ways in which narrative researchers can define their work. To do so, I will look into aspects such as the relationship among researcher and participants, the focus of the study, and the type of data collected and analysis conducted. These issues will be discussed under the headings of the narrative researcher and narrative research analysis.

The Narrative Researcher

Narrative research, as illustrated above, is unconstrained by the characteristic objectivity of positivism and focuses instead on interpretation and the understanding of meaning. Narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the participants are “in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006, p. 10). Who the researcher and the researched are will inevitably emerge in the interactions as they both bring their own experiences, histories and worldviews to the inquiry process. Depending on the orientation of the study, however, the relationship and discursive collaboration between researcher and participants may be close in some cases or slightly more distant in others.

Barkhuizen (2011), echoing Ochs and Capps (2001), draws our attention to the fact that narratives as research could be placed along a tellership continuum, “with the extent and kind of involvement of those participating in their construction determining where on the continuum they lie” (p. 398). Toward one end, narratives involve a high level of discursive collaboration and thus are told *with* another (e.g., life history interviews). Toward the other end, by contrast, narratives are told *to* others and hence involve less or no participation from the audience. In a similar line of thought, Clandinin and Huber (2010) point out that narrative researchers situate themselves in more or less relational ways with their participants. While some see themselves and their participants “as co-composing each aspect of the inquiry as well as their lives as they live out the inquiry”, others see themselves and their participants “at more of a distance, and acknowledge the relational aspects as less important” (p. 436).

Nevertheless, despite the varying levels of involvement there may be between researchers and participants, narratives are naturally co-constructed discursive artifacts. As Riessman (2008) observes, a narrative researcher “does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation” (p.219). Researchers are not passive listeners, on the contrary, they are part of the story that is being told or created (Barkhuizen, 2011). In some studies, researchers act as both characters and narrators. As characters, they become actively involved in the construction of the narratives and thus shape their content and structure. And as narrators, in the interpretation and retelling of the narratives, they “represent participants’ accounts of lived and imagined personal experience” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p.393).

As Clandinin (2006) points out, narrative researchers cannot step out of or remove themselves from the inquiry. Instead, they “need to find ways to inquire into participants’ experiences, their own experiences as well as the co-constructed experiences developed

through the relational inquiry process” (p.47). They too become part of the world they study. For researchers like Clandinin, the fact that this relationship may alter the phenomena under study is not regarded as a methodological problem to be overcome, but is in fact the purpose of the inquiry. As a result, relationships, research purposes and how the researcher is going to be useful in those relationships are to be collaboratively negotiated.

In this inquiry, as stated in Chapter 1, I was actively involved in the construction of the narratives due to the fact that I was a former staff member of the institution where it was conducted. The teachers who participated in the study were not only language teachers from my native country but also former colleagues. Having been a member of the community implied that, to a large extent, my own language teaching story was part of the stories that I collected. My own experiences of professional change were bound up with those of the teachers and teacher leaders that I interviewed. What I observed in the classroom was also many times a reflection of my own practices, joys and challenges.

It was thus not difficult for me to empathize with the participants and to understand the achievements, difficulties and tensions that they experienced when trying to come to terms with the changes that had been introduced in their work environment. The collegial relationship that I had developed with them also allowed me to get access to those secret stories of practice that had not been made known before, and of which, in my previous position as a teacher, I had not become aware. By being a part of the community, I was able to access those stories that, as Craig (2009) states, would not otherwise have been narrated.

Nonetheless, not everything was known to me. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, I entered the inquiry field in the midst of stories. New stories were created after I first left, after I returned as a researcher, and once I left the community again when the inquiry was over: “As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave” (p. 63). Thus, as in Craig’s 2007 (p. 177) study, while I had a broad knowledge of the research context, I was not able to predetermine which unfolding events and interests would be viewed by the participants as significant. Neither did I know what conversations they would start and what topics of mutual importance we would explore collaboratively.

Narrative research clearly motivates a change in the relationship between researcher and participants. However, it also implies a change in the type of data collected, the analysis conducted and the research formats chosen to represent the experience of the researchers and the researched. What constitutes the focus of the inquiry and how narrative data are analyzed and represented in studies are often discussed under the construct of narrative analysis.

Narrative Research Analysis

Focus of the Inquiry and Analysis

As noted by Barkhuizen (2013), for most narrative researchers, narrative guides their philosophical approach to research, as well as their theoretical and methodological choices. However, because definitions of narrative and narrative research differ according to the disciplines in which they are embedded, these methodological choices, as noted earlier, vary from study to study. For instance, studies can investigate narratives as their research object, where the focus of analysis is on the narrative itself, or they can take narratives as a means for studying other questions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998).

In the former, researchers focus on the formal aspects of the narratives, such as the structure of the story or the use of language, and in the latter they concentrate on the content of the narratives. In applied linguistics, research aimed to learn about the content of participants' experiences, and with an emphasis on autobiographical 'big stories', is referred to as *narrative inquiry*, while that concerned with the analysis of the language and structure of narratives, particularly 'small stories', is described as *narrative study* (Barkhuizen, 2011).

It could be claimed that *narrative inquiry*, referred to also as the study of 'big stories' (Freeman, 2006), gained momentum in educational research with the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1987, 1999, 2000). Connelly and Clandinin (2006), following Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, note that arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry are inspired by a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. It is their contention that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, and that "narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry is therefore described as "the study of experience as story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477).

Narrative inquirers, as Moen (2006) contends, use narrative as a way to represent a qualitative study (e.g. autobiographies and life histories), as a method of inquiry and as a frame of reference in the research process. In Connelly and Clandinin's terms (1990, p. 2), narrative is both phenomenon and method; it names the structured quality of experience to be studied and the pattern of inquiry for its study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualize narrative inquiry through the metaphor of a three dimensional narrative inquiry space, which involves: temporality (time— past, present and future— in which

experiences unfold), sociality (emotions and moral dispositions, and interactions between people) and place (the concrete place or places in which experiences are lived out and told).

These three dimensions or commonplaces of narrative inquiry imply that studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters, focus on the personal and the social and occur in specific sequences of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This, as noted by Clandinin and Huber (2010) is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies. Narrative inquirers are interested in studying “the complexity of the relational composition of people’s lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 436). Narratives are thus assembled from ethnographic data collected over an extended period of time, such as interviews, written reflections and field notes from classroom observations.

In applied linguistics there has also been an (auto)biographical turn and as a result there are a number of studies that narrate and/or analyze accounts of language learning and teaching experiences. In language teaching and learning research, Barkhuizen et al. (2014) have identified five categories of studies based on their approach to narrative and narrative inquiry: language memoirs, studies of language memories, autobiographical case studies, biographical case studies and studies of multiple narratives. Made after a review of more than 175 papers published over the last ten years, this classification is an indication of the growing presence of narrative in research, but also of an interest in focusing “on the people who teach and learn languages and how the activities of teaching and learning languages fit into their lives” (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 11). In most of these (auto)biographical studies, the focus of analysis is on the meaning and content of the narratives; “what they are about; what was told; and why, when, where, and by whom” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p.401).

More recently, however, as Barkhuizen (2011) highlights, attention has been paid to the structural and linguistic make-up of narratives; that is, to *narrative study*. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) comment that “there is now a great deal of research on the language, discourse, structure and sociolinguistics of narratives, which is less concerned with what narrators say than with how they say it” (p.4). Pavlenko (2003), for instance, explores how a group of pre-service English language teachers position themselves in terms of linguistic, social and professional identities in their writing. In her study of linguistic autobiographies, she examines how linguistic features are used by participants to show affiliation to specific imagined linguistic and professional communities.

Other researchers examine snippets of mundane talk in conversations or stories told in the course of everyday interaction (referred to as small stories), and which tell of past, imagined, or hypothetical events (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 399). Rugen (2013), for example,

analyzes small story data in order to illustrate the unstable process of identity construction a group of pre-service Japanese teachers goes through as they are learning to become English teachers. Critics of the ‘big story’ research approach, as Benson (2013, p. 247) notes, suggest that much of autobiographical research fails to recognize how narratives vary in content and form according to the discursive purposes of narrators in particular contexts of interaction. The ‘small stories’ perspective that these critics advocate focuses, instead, “on the ways in which selves and identities are ‘done’ in interactions...in which narratives are made use of” (Bamberg, 2007, as cited in Benson, 2013, p. 247).

It could thus be said that while ‘big-story’ research is aimed at learning about the content of participants’ experience and analyzing “the underlying insights and assumptions that [the stories illustrate]” (Bell, 2002, p. 208), ‘small-story’ research is concerned with the ways in which participants’ perform their identities during interaction and how narratives are discursively constructed. Narrative researchers, however, do not attend exclusively to content or form in their analysis. To a large extent, an analysis of content involves an analysis of form and vice versa. As noted by Pavlenko (2007), it is important to consider not only what was said (subject reality) by participants, but how it was said and why (text reality). By analyzing the rhetorical influences that shape narrative constructions, that is, by attending to the structural aspects of narrative, we will be able to better understand how stories are being told and why they are being told in a certain way. Riessman (2008), similarly, suggests combining content and structural analyses in order to enhance the quality of the analysis.

Context is equally relevant in the study of narratives. Narratives, as Riessman (2008) observes, are received in interactional, historical, institutional and discursive contexts. They gain their meaning “from our collective social histories and cannot be separated from the sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts from which they emerged” (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, p. 308). Context, however, can be interpreted on a number of levels. It can be examined at the micro level of interaction, at the level of the narrative telling and at the sociocultural macro level underlying narrative construction (Barkhuizen, 2011, 2013).

In the first level, labelled by Barkhuizen (2013) as ‘Talk’, sequences of turns and the role of the speakers in the conversation are analyzed in detail, “following very much a conversation analysis tradition” (p.6). Narratives here are viewed as co-constructed through collaborative, negotiated performance. The second level of context, labelled as ‘Telling’, refers to the local context of the narrative telling and hence to issues such as the time of day, physical setting, language choice and purpose of talk. At this level, as Barkhuizen (2013) observes, the focus of analysis goes further, although without forgetting the narrative text. The third, broader level, labelled by Barkhuizen (2013) as ‘Macro-context’, relates to the

multiple sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts that go beyond the text or conversation and beyond the researcher's and narrator's control. Clearly, how context is defined and analyzed also defines the character of the study.

From a sociolinguistic narrative analysis perspective, analyzing context involves attending to historical, political, economic and cultural circumstances of narrative production, as well as to "the influence of language choice, audience, setting, modality, narrative functions, interactional concerns, and power relations on ways in which speakers and writers verbalize their experiences" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 175). It involves looking at both global and local contextual factors. However, not all narrative researchers follow sociolinguistic approaches to narrative analysis, attending to local (textual) influences affecting narrative constructions (Barkhuizen, 2011).

Context in 'big-story' research, for instance, refers to the spatial, cultural, social and institutional contexts in which experiences take place and are narrated (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). One could thus argue that in these studies narratives are explored, to a large extent, at the telling and macro-context levels. In short, although context, content and form are inextricably linked and are present at the analysis stage of all narrative work, the degree of attention that each of these aspects receive and how they are analyzed may vary substantially from study to study. In addition to having different foci of analysis, narrative studies can also employ different approaches to analyzing and reporting data.

Analyzing and Reporting Narrative Data

Polkinghorne (1995), building on Bruner's distinction between paradigmatic and narrative reasoning, refers to two approaches to data analysis. One that employs paradigmatic cognition, named 'analysis of narratives', and other that employs narrative cognition, defined as 'narrative analysis'. In the first type, researchers collect stories as data (e.g., written autobiographies) and analyze them with paradigmatic processes. Paradigmatic analysis is employed to identify the concepts and categories that are present in the data as well as to note relationships among categories. In the second type, data are not reduced to themes and categories but put together into a coherent whole. The researcher's task is to configure the data elements (not usually in storied form and which could come from field notes, participant observation, documents and interviews) into "a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.15). In this type of analysis, the outcome is often a story. In sum, while 'analysis of narratives' moves from stories to common elements, 'narrative analysis' moves from elements to stories.

Drawing on this distinction, Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 74) discuss three approaches to data analysis observable in language teaching and learning research. In relation to the construct of ‘analysis of narratives’, they describe two approaches: one based on the thematic analysis of the content of narratives and the other based on discourse analysis of the structure and language of narratives. Researchers interested in the content of narratives often adopt an ‘analysis of narratives’ perspective and hence code data according to emerging themes, patterns and categories. Those studies that pay attention to the ways in which narratives are put together (text structure), as well as those that explore the interactional features through which speakers identify themselves and others in interaction can also follow an ‘analysis of narratives’ approach.

In relation to the concept of ‘narrative analysis’, the authors talk about one approach: narrative writing. Here researchers use narrative writing as an analytical strategy to examine narrative and non-narrative data. Studies in which “data are not coded but reduced to condensed statements of meaning, which can later be used to reconstitute a narrative” or in which (re)storying is a strong observable element in the reporting of findings can be said to use this approach (Barkhuizen, et al., 2014, p. 87). It is important to note, however, that there is a degree of similarity and overlap between these two approaches and that researchers can engage in both ‘analysis of narratives’ and ‘narrative analysis’. They can do so by, for instance, representing the findings of their research through a coherent story as well as a discussion of separate, extracted themes (Barkhuizen, 2013).

As can be seen, there is very little consensus on the methods and techniques to collect, analyze and report narrative data. An idea that many researchers do agree with, however, is that narrative research is an interpretive process that takes place at all stages of the inquiry. The interpretation starts immediately when one story is selected out of any number of other possible stories and it continues during the entire research process, even after the research report is finished (Moen, 2006, p.7). Meaning making takes place when stories are told, when researchers analyze their data and discuss their interpretations with participants, and when stories are retold (in research texts) and interpreted by others. Narrators, researchers and readers engage in meaning making at various stages of the research process. Barkhuizen (2011) refers to this multistage, active meaning making as ‘narrative knowledging’.

Yet, because there is plenty of space to move and plenty of opportunity to experiment in the narrative research field (Barkhuizen, 2011), it is particularly important for researchers to explain why and in what ways their work is narrative. One attempt to help researchers within applied linguistics define the narrative character of their work has been recently made

by Barkhuizen (2013). In what follows, I will briefly describe his framework while providing an overview of some of the methodological choices I made throughout this inquiry.

Narrative as Methodology in this Study

Barkhuizen (2013) has proposed a framework which attempts to capture the various approaches to narrative data collection, analysis and reporting used by applied linguists, and which nicely synthesizes many of the issues discussed in this chapter so far. The framework consists of eight interrelated dimensions, each in the form of a more-or-less continuum, and which all relate to the three levels of context described above: the linguistic context, the context of storytelling and the broader socio-political context. In order to illustrate the nature of the work I have done and the extent to which it is narrative, I will locate my study within this framework (see Figure 4.1). I will do so by placing an X along each dimension to show the relative place of a particular (methodological) aspect along the more-or-less dimension.

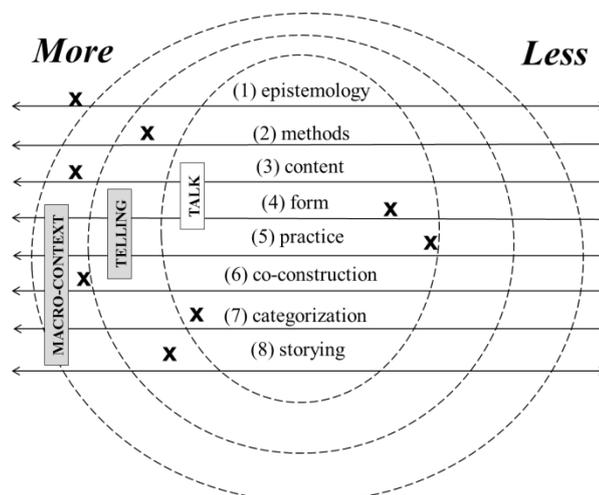


Figure 4.1. Locating my study within the framework (Adapted from ‘Dimensions of narrative analysis’, Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 6)

The first two dimensions in Barkhuizen’s (2013) framework refer to narrative as epistemology and as method. Although researchers might make use of narrative data-collection and/or analytical methods, they may show more or less commitment to a narrative epistemology. In a similar vein, methods typically associated with a narrative methodological approach “may be employed more or less in a particular study, which itself will more or less embody a narrative epistemology” (p. 8). Considering that I decided to make sense of the stories a group of Colombian ELT teachers narrated as they came to terms with changes in their work environment, this study shows a strong commitment to narrative as epistemology. Adopting such an epistemological stance places this study on the

left end of the first dimension of the framework, and similarly is reflected on the selection of various narrative data collection methods (see Figure 4.1, Dimensions 1 and 2).

It is also important to mention that due to my interest in researching human experience as represented by story and “reflecting on, talking about, and showing a critical understanding” about teachers’ experiences (Flowerdew & Miller, 2013, p. 45), this study is framed within a narrative inquiry perspective. As a result, the local meanings of actions—as defined from the actors’ (participants and researcher) viewpoints— were at the heart of the inquiry and were understood in relation to aspects of time, place and interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Similarly, data were gathered through ethnographic data collection methods such as narrative interviews, classroom observation, questionnaires and official documentation.

Since this study is defined as a narrative inquiry (as opposed to narrative study), I became interested in ‘learning about the content of the experiences of the participants and their reflections of these’ (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 8). This research, therefore, focused more on the content of narratives and the broader sociocultural contexts affecting and shaping teachers’ narrative constructions and less on their structure and form. Despite the fact that I paid attention to how language was produced by participants, my analysis focused largely on subject reality (see Figure 4.1, Dimensions 3 and 4).

Similarly, data underwent a narrative thematic analysis in which stories of practice were identified and examined with the intent of capturing *what* blended learning was all about and *how* it had been experienced by teachers individually and collectively. Overall, the analysis to which this study was subjected followed a narrative inquiry tradition by attempting to uncover the ‘big stories’ teachers lived by, along with their students and colleagues, as they attempted to switch to a blended language learning environment. These stories to live by were composed of personal, organizational and institutional stories that were written by teachers and for teachers in terms of language teaching and ICT use, and which came to shape the language learning opportunities they created with and for their students.

Nonetheless, understanding what underlay teachers’ narratives in terms of past experience, theories of best practice and readiness to adopt change could not possibly have been attained unless there was an exploration of context. For the purpose of this study, I did not address context as that which was created in interaction, but as that which mediated as well as went beyond the process of storytelling. Describing the way people go about making sense of their experience in specific moments and places and within particular social, cultural and institutional contexts is, as stressed by Clandinin and Rosiek (2006), the purpose of narrative inquiry. The context of talk was thus analyzed in relation to the

language choice made by the narrators in particular moments to attain specific objectives, rather than in terms of the here-and-now interactional patterns occurring in conversation.

The fifth (practice) and sixth (co-construction) dimensions in Barkhuizen's (2013) framework refer to the idea of whether narratives are told *with* or *to* others. Dimension 5 refers to "the role of narratives in the doing of social lives, both locally within the context of individual exchanges and in the wider context of community collective meaning-making activity" (p. 10). Here researchers pay close attention to the ways narrators and addressees participate in storytelling and make sense of the stories at the moment of telling. Although in this study I did not examine the relationship between participants' storytelling practices and their social lives, due to my knowledge of the community under study, I placed greater emphasis on co-construction. This level of discursive collaboration was evident in the process of interviewing, as both participants and I jointly negotiated turns and shifts in topics (Riessman, 2008), and my background knowledge shaped my listening and questioning. It could thus be argued that, in contrast to dimensions four and five, in this sixth dimension, this study is located on the more end of the continuum (see Figure 4.1, Dimensions 5 and 6).

This active process of co-construction was also reflected in the approaches I used to analyze and report data, and which Barkhuizen (2013) illustrates in dimensions 7 (categorization) and 8 (storying) in the framework. In the case of this study, there were elements of both 'analysis of narratives' and 'narrative analysis'. While thematic analysis led to the identification of salient themes and patterns, an interest in preserving and illustrating participants' unique experiences and in combining excerpts from different data sources into a unified narrative whole, led to a process of restorying. While some sections of this Ph.D. thesis are organized around themes, others are dedicated to participants' individual stories of practice. My interest in examining blended learning from the perspective of the teachers would result, however, in placing greater emphasis on (re)storying than on categorization (see Figure 4.1, Dimensions 7 and 8).

By locating some of the methodological choices I made during this inquiry along the eight dimensions proposed by Barkhuizen (2013), I hope readers can understand the nature of the work I did and at the same time establish differences with other narrative studies. I also hope for this exercise to be seen as an affirmation of the claim that narrative research means different things to different researchers and that as a result it might be best considered "an umbrella term for a mosaic of research efforts, with diverse theoretical musings, methods, empirical groundings, and/or significance all revolving around an interest in narrative" (Smith, 2007, p. 392). Making sense of people's experiences is not without its difficulties and challenges, however.

Challenges in Narrative Research

“What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it”.
— Gabriel García Márquez.

In the literature on narrative research, there are various discussions around the dilemmas or issues narrative researchers face at different stages of their work. Some of the most recurring themes are the role of interpretation and the question of truth. Narratives, as Barkhuizen (2011) stresses, undergo multiple layers of interpretation by the time they are constructed as data: “What we hear in an interview or read in a teacher journal has imposed structures on and re-shaped the actual life events” (p.406). Life events are filtered through the meaning-making processes the participants and the researcher go through. This phenomenon, as Barkhuizen himself and others like Bakhtin (1986) contend, naturally raises the question of whether the stories we are told are true.

Addressing this question, Moen (2006) reminds us of one of the claims inherent in narrative research: the existence and presence of different subjective positions from which we experience and interpret the world, and therefore, the absence of a static and everlasting truth. As argued by Cadman and Brown (2011, p. 451), truth is always partial, constructed, contextual, contingent, possibly conflictual, morphing and ever unfinished. Consequently, establishing a difference between a life as *lived, experienced* and *told* is crucial for narrative researchers, a distinction that has been made by Bruner (1984) and other authors like Polkinghorne (2007) and Pavlenko (2007). In Bruner’s (1984) terms, a life lived is what actually has happened. A life experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is. And, a life told is a narrative or several narratives influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience and by the social context.

In life as told, both the narrator and the interlocutor inevitably step away from the real-life event or events that prompted the story in question (Moen, 2006). Narrative research therefore presents stories about remembered events and how these were interpreted rather than focusing on how they actually happened: “What interviewees choose to tell the researcher is their perspective on the events that make up their lives, and the stories are construals of their experience” (Hayes, 2013, p. 64). Thus, as stated by Bell (2002), whether or not people believe the stories they tell is relatively unimportant as the inquiry goes beyond the specific stories to examine the assumptions inherent in their shaping. Similarly, as Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 5) suggest, “as long as we guard against the risk of

treating narratives as offering access to the ‘truth’ about language teaching and learning”, they can help us “understand the ways in which individuals organize their experiences and identities and represent them to themselves and to others”.

In addition to the question of truth, there is another issue facing narrative inquirers: the risk of legitimizing the values of a particular culture. In emphasizing narrative, as Schiff (2006, cited by Barkhuizen, 2011) observes, researchers may be “reifying a Western, arguably middle and upper class, concept as the universal mode of shaping and articulating subjective experience” (p.395). They also might neglect other ways “of organizing experience or the importance at times of leaving experience unorganized” (Sartwell, 2006, cited by Barkhuizen, 2011, p.395). Narrative inquiries may neglect that people may structure and tell their stories in ways that are quite different from Western narratives: “A story elicited in one language may be shaped by conventions of another and thus may not be heard as such or may be misunderstood” (Pavlenko, 2002, p 214).

In this regard, Riessman (1991) and Pavlenko (2002) suggest attending to differences in narrative conventions so as to avoid the silencing of non-conforming voices as well as the privileging of some participants’ stories over those of others. Carter (1993) also cautions researchers to sanctify storytelling work to the point that they “simply substitute one paradigmatic domination for another without challenging domination itself” (p.11). Narrative researchers must therefore be aware of issues involved in story, such as authenticity, interpretation and normative value so to make sure their work is both credible and morally responsible. They should also maintain ethical sensitivity and principle in the representation of the findings— something I certainly committed myself to in this inquiry.

Nonetheless, despite the inherent risks or dilemmas facing narrative researchers, there is no doubt that the study of narrative has become a legitimate approach to doing research in applied linguistics and education. *Narrative inquiry*, more precisely, has drawn our attention to the experiences of those directly involved in the acts of teaching and learning.

Why Narrative Inquiry?

Narrative inquiry has contributed in different ways to the education and applied linguistic fields. It has become a means to understand teaching, teacher education and school change from the perspective of the central actors: teachers, students and administrators (Bell, 2002; Hayes, 2013). The interest in studying teaching through storytelling is grounded on the claim that the stories that we read and hear about in the classroom help us learn not only about the subject matter of instruction and the strengths

and shortcomings of teaching itself (Webster & Mertova, 2007), but also about the ways in which teachers make sense of their professional experiences. As Elbaz (1991, p. 3) explains:

Story is the very stuff of teaching... This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way.

Thus, the use of narrative has emerged as “the means of getting at what teachers know, what they do with what they know and the sociocultural contexts within which they teach and learn to teach” (Johnson & Golombek, 2004, p. 308). They also give an indication of how teachers create instruction in response to their emotions and values, and how they place themselves in relation to others. As stated by Clandinin (2006), narrative provides the possibility to understand how the personal and social are intertwined in teachers' lives and how these experiences are shaped by the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives in which teachers have lived— home and school places that shape largely the nature of the stories they live and tell. It is because of this possibility to explore the sociocultural, physical and temporal contexts in which teachers' experiences with blended learning developed that I chose to frame this study as a narrative inquiry.

When researchers divide the reality of the classroom into elements, as Moen (2006) observes, there is a risk of losing sight of the whole. In narrative inquiry, however, the complexity of the classroom is not broken down and the multivoicedness of teaching is captured: “In this way, narratives bring practice up close (Carter, 1993), contributing, we hope, to provoking, inspiring, and initiating discussions and dialogues, something that is crucial for reflection on practice and its development” (Moen, 2006, p.9). These discussions, as Moen observes, give teachers the possibility of making their voices heard; views that contrary to those of politicians, researchers and administrators seem to be absent from the public debate on teaching. The fact that narratives can bring practice “up close” rather than “out there” is an additional reason why this study is defined as a narrative inquiry.

According to Clandinin (1986), the lack of success of curriculum implementation reported in the literature is linked to a view which minimizes the teacher as an active, autonomous agent and a user of practical knowledge. This practical knowledge not only refers to what teachers know about the instructional content they teach, but also to the knowledge they hold about themselves, their students and their school context. Viewed from a narrative inquiry perspective, teachers are more than the implementers of others' reform strategies who are devoid of agency and whose knowledge is determined by policymakers (Craig & Ross, 2008). Accordingly, when curriculum is understood as narratively

constructed and reconstructed through experience, the stories lived and told by students and teachers of what is relevant, meaningful or problematic for them are deemed valuable.

But narrative inquiry is not only useful to those interested in understanding teachers' experiences. There are a number of reasons why narrative inquiry is also valuable for teachers (Barkhuizen, 2008). By inquiring into their own experiences, teachers are compelled to question and reinterpret what they think they know about teaching and learning. When teachers articulate and unravel the complexity of their own practice, "they develop their personal practical knowledge to the extent that they act in the future with insight and foresight" (Barkhuizen, 2008, p. 233). Narrative inquiry thus enables them "to make sense of their professional worlds and to make worthwhile changes in themselves and their teaching practices—to develop as teachers" (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, p. 309). This study therefore also intended to create a safe space for teachers to disclose their views about the role of technology in language learning and teaching and to reflect on the reasons behind their instructional choices. Looking at their practice from a distance, teachers were able to see their and their students' experiences of change with new eyes.

Whatever its limitations may be, narrative inquiry offers researchers the opportunity to present the complexity of teaching and learning to teachers themselves and to the public. In applied linguistics field, narrative inquiry is particularly relevant because "it helps us to understand the inner mental worlds of language teachers and learners and the nature of language teaching and learning as a social and educational activity" (Barkhuizen et. al, 2014, p. 2). It also helps us understand language teaching and learning, as noted earlier, from the perspectives of those who do the teaching and learning.

Inquiring Narratively into Teachers' Practice

During the few last decades, educational researchers have used narratives to study teachers' experience of reform in the context of their professional lives and careers. Themes and concepts such as teachers' images and personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986), pedagogical content knowledge (Gudmundsdottir, 1991), teacher as curriculum maker (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992), professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), narrative authority (Olson, 1995), narrative communities of knowledge (Craig, 2001), curriculum as a multistoried process (Olson, 2000), and multivoicedness (Elbaz-Luwisch, Moen & Gudmundsdottir, 2002) have all been proposed with the objective of providing interpretations for and calling attention to issues of identity, agency, diversity and multiculturalism— aspects which have undoubtedly exposed an alternative understanding of school change.

A significant number of studies have built on this early work and have advanced our knowledge of how reform ideas are received, acted upon and put into practice by teachers, and the impact that these have on the personal and professional lives of teachers and their ability to manage change (e.g., Anderson, 2012, Hendy, 2008). This body of literature, which Richardson (1990, p. 13) refers as to learning-to-teach research, provides evidence that “teachers do change and elucidates the powerful and inevitable relationship between experience and personal biography, and what and how one learns to teach”. Interestingly, although “the legitimacy of studying the lives and careers of teachers through their own narratives of experience has been widely accepted in general education research for some time”, this practice has had slower acceptance in TESOL (Hayes, 2013, p. 64).

Recent publications, however, show that this has considerably changed (e.g., the special issue on Narrative Research in TESOL in *TESOL Quarterly*, Barkhuizen, 2011). There are a number of studies that have adopted narrative epistemologies and/or methods and which have focused on matters, such as L2 teacher identity formation (Simon-Maeda, 2004; Tsui, 2007; Liu & Xu, 2011), teacher agency (Hayes, 2013), teachers’ pedagogical beliefs (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010), tensions between beliefs and practices (Wette & Barkhuizen, 2009; Xu & Liu, 2009), teacher professional development (Barkhuizen, 2008; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Rugen, 2013), and of interest to this study, curriculum change (Wu, 2004) and teacher cognition in the context of technology-driven change (Shelly, Murphy & White, 2013).

It is clear that both general education and applied linguistics scholars have become interested in looking at the ways in which teachers’ narratives shape and inform their practice. Nonetheless, despite the growing body of research on language teachers’ practice, studies dealing with teachers’ personal and professional experiences in the context of an increasing advocacy for technology use, as noted in Chapter 3, are still scarce in applied linguistics. This study, by analyzing the experiences a group of EFL teachers went through as they attempted to implement a blended learning program, is therefore an effort to contribute to current discussions on curriculum change, innovation and language teaching and learning.

As Shelly et al.(2013) remark, these stories can contribute to our understanding of how teachers construct and engage with emerging language teaching contexts, but more importantly, of “what it means to be a language teacher in the course of twenty-first century change” (p. 572). What is more important, by helping teachers to identify the prescribed stories that have been written for them by those in authority, they might be able to notice how they are being positioned as language professionals and in turn attempt to change those stories they and their students have been given. As Clandinin (2006, p. 52) says:

Perhaps in listening and attending to teachers' stories ... we can create conditions that allow us to give them back their stories and perhaps help them see the social, cultural, and institutional stories they work within and that shape them. As [teachers] begin to awaken to other stories of community, we might see [them] begin to re-story [their] stories to live by. Perhaps we can begin to work together to change those social, cultural and institutional narratives.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the narrative turn, as well as what narrative research involves in terms of the relationship between researcher and participants, the kinds of data gathered and the process of data analysis. I also defined the narrative nature of the work I conducted by locating some of the methodological choices I made along Barkhuizen's (2013) narrative analysis framework. Lastly, I described some of the dilemmas facing narrative researchers and the contributions that this approach has made to the educational and TESOL fields. In the next chapter, I will describe the data collection methods and procedures I adopted in this study. Ethical considerations will also be considered.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research methods and procedures that I adopted during this narrative inquiry. I first describe the research setting, who the participants are and how they were selected. Then I outline the data collection methods and procedures that were used, and how data were managed, analyzed and represented. Lastly, I discuss the criteria by which this inquiry can be evaluated.

Research Setting and Participants

This narrative inquiry was carried out at a private higher education institution in Colombia, which I will refer to as Riverview University⁸, and which is located at the outskirts of the capital city. Within this organization, the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) was the specific setting where data collection took place during the second semester of 2012. DFL is an independent academic unit that offers general English courses to undergraduate students of non-English majors and the local community, as well as other language learning programs and TESOL postgraduate degrees. The central focus of this research was on the English proficiency program, which consists of seven courses and in which an average of 2000 students enroll each semester. As noted in Chapter 1, in the past I worked for this academic unit as an ELT teacher and leader in charge of teacher supervision and curriculum design. As a result, gaining access and consent was straightforward given my well-established relationship with the members of this community.

Taking into consideration these supportive conditions, I sought and obtained ethics approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) (reference number 2012/7917, Appendix A). It is important to note, however, that although my knowledge of the research site granted me easy access to the participants, it was also necessary to ensure that they did not feel compelled to participate in the study. Accordingly, after having communicated to the then Director of the Department the purpose of the study and its relevance to the organization and having gained her authority to undertake it, potential participants were approached by a third party (Mrs. Vargas)⁹. This person was acquainted with the researcher and the participants but was in charge of academic tasks that bore no relation to those of the English proficiency program. The

⁸ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of the institution.

⁹ Pseudonym

UAHPEC was satisfied that the research would be in accordance with these and other guidelines.

Given that this research focused on the adoption of a blended language learning program, I was primarily interested in speaking to those change agents who were involved with curriculum planning, design and evaluation; namely, teachers, teacher leaders and administrators. DFL had a large number of staff members who could have potentially participated in the inquiry; however, due to the individual nature of personal narratives, only a small sample was selected. Eight staff members (four teachers and four teacher leaders) holding different management and teaching positions were recruited. Fifty-nine students (aged 16 years and over) enrolled in four blended learning classes (one class per teacher) were secondary participants, whose classroom participation, discussion and assignments were observed and recorded. The former Director of the Department also voluntarily accepted to take part in the study. Her role as participant, however, was also secondary. The criteria and procedures adopted for the recruitment of these participants are explained next.

Participants Recruitment Process

Considering that I was formerly a staff member, internal purposeful sampling was used to identify information-rich cases within DFL (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). The selection of participants followed a four-step sequence. Firstly, I approached the former Department Director, gave her details about the research and requested her permission to conduct the study at this academic unit. She granted me permission and agreed to take part in two interviews. Subsequently, Mrs. Vargas held a short meeting with the academic leaders of the EPP program in order to inform them about the project and invite them to participate. The focus of leadership work engaged in by these leaders ranged from administrative to curricular (curriculum design), to professional development work (mentoring). Four teacher leaders, who had worked at DFL for a different number of years and served full time in formal leadership positions, were recruited at this stage. One of these teacher leaders performed as the Director of the Department's self-access center, and another would later be appointed as the General Program Director. These teacher leaders had also additional teaching responsibilities

Once management members had been recruited, the selection of teachers took place. Mrs. Vargas asked the teacher leaders to nominate four teachers (with varying degrees of experience with the use of technology and blended learning) and then proceeded to invite them to participate. All four teachers accepted to take part in the inquiry. Two of them worked full time and supported teacher leaders in a number of academic tasks, and the other

two performed only as English teachers and worked on a part-time basis. They all, however, were eager and available to participate in frequent interviews. In view of my interest in following their implementation of blended learning very closely and the amount of time that I was planning to spend with them in and out the classroom, I believe that choosing only four teachers was both an appropriate and viable decision. Biographical information on participants and a brief description of their roles are presented in Table 5.1. An individual, detailed account of their teaching careers, responsibilities and experience with the use of technology for personal and teaching purposes is provided in the next chapter.

Table 5.1

Biographical Information on Participants

Pseudonym	Age group	Total years of teaching experience	Number of years at DFL	Roles at DFL
Lorna	40-50	20	15	*(Former) Department Director
Lucía	30-40	16	3	*Former curriculum leader. *Appointed leader of the Planning Committee prior to the start of the inquiry, and then General Program Director later in the semester. *Teacher of advanced ELT courses.
Acablo	30-40	13	5	*Former curriculum leader. *Appointed leader of the Teacher Support Committee prior to the start of the inquiry. *Teacher of advanced ELT courses.
Amelia	30-40	10	3	*Former curriculum leader. *Member of the Teacher Support Committee. *Teacher of advanced ELT courses.
Salomé	30-40	6	3	*Former curriculum leader. *Appointed Director of Riverview’s Self-Access Center (RSAC) in 2010. *Teacher in distance language courses offered by RSAC.
Lucinda	20-30	6	3	*Teacher of elementary ELT courses and distance language courses offered by RSAC. *Teacher assistant and online tutor in the EPP.
Rayuela	30-40	16	2	*Teacher of elementary ELT courses. *Teacher assistant and online tutor in the EPP.
Oriana	30-40	8	3	*Teacher of elementary ELT courses.
Ziyad	20-30	3	2	*Teacher of pre-intermediate ELT courses.

After recruiting the eight focal participants of the study, I discussed with each of the four teachers the selection of the blended class that I would observe during the academic term (see Table 5.2), and an observation schedule that was convenient to both parties was established. Finally, at the start of the term, I had a meeting with the students enrolled in each class in order to disclose the details and implications of the inquiry and I invited them to answer a set of online questionnaires. I equally explained that my research focused on teaching practices rather than on their individual performance, and they were assured that in

case they decided not to take part during classroom observations they would be given the option to join another class. No student objected to this data collection procedure.

Table 5.2

Information on Classes

Teacher	Class observed	Class size
Lucinda	Elementary (Level 1)	8
Rayuela	Elementary (Level 1)	16
Oriana	Elementary (Level 2)	11
Ziyad	Pre-intermediate (Level 3)	24

It is worth adding that although my initial interest was to observe lessons across the different courses offered in the program, I unfortunately was unable to do so as the four participating teachers were all assigned elementary and pre-intermediate classes a few days before the semester started. This was a disappointment as learners with diverse language proficiency levels and language learning backgrounds would have added an extra dimension and further interest to a somewhat homogenous student sample. Even so, I tried to make the most of the opportunity I was given to observe some of the learning experiences of this group of language learners.

As part of this recruitment process, teachers, learners and management read and signed the UAHPEC Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (which were provided by Mrs. Vargas) and were assured that information disclosed during interviews and/or observations would remain confidential and that no identifying information would be included in the outcomes reported from the research. They were also encouraged to select a pseudonym in order to maintain their anonymity and were given the option (except for students) to request access to audio files and transcripts if desired. The selection of participants holding different positions within the Department and with varying years of teaching experience allowed me to gain different insights into the design and implementation of the blended strategy. It provided me with a better picture of how blended language learning was interpreted and put into action at this particular institution. It is important to add that I also had informal conversations with other stakeholders (e.g., former director of the self-access center) in order to gain a holistic picture of community perceptions of the blended learning program and learn more about its antecedents. This information was also added to the dataset.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

In narrative inquiry, as observed in Chapter 4, a number of ethnographic data collection methods can be used as the researcher and the participants work together in a collaborative relationship. Data can be in the form of field notes, journal records, interview transcripts, one's own and other's observations, storytelling, autobiographical writing, pictures, documents such as school and class plans, and other texts such as rules and policies (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). More recently, other forms of data such as multimodal narratives (e.g., digital learning histories) are also being used in narrative studies in applied linguistics. Whatever the methods used, what is often the case in 'big-story research' is that data are collected over an extended period of time.

In the case of this study, data were gathered for a period of 16 weeks (second semester 2012) through regular contact with teachers, management and students. This period in the curricular history of DFL corresponded to the start of the second implementation stage of the blended learning program. Although it would have been ideal to stay an additional semester in the institution and thus witness the evolution of participants' perceptions and practices, I needed to accommodate my research design to teachers' availability as well as to my funding. Within this particular timeframe, narrative interviews, classroom observation, student questionnaires and official documents were methods used for data collection. While interview transcripts and field notes from classroom observation were used as primary sources of data, questionnaires, policy documents and other teaching materials were employed as secondary data sources.

Narrative Interviews

The reasons for deciding to collect participants' narratives through interviewing are varied. On the one hand, participating in interviews was more practical for participants, whose schedules were very full. Interviews could be done at the time and place of their convenience and required less preparation for the participants than producing written texts. On the other hand, narrative interviewing allowed me to promote greater equality in the conversation and thus prevent participants, especially teachers, from feeling either compelled to answer in a way that would please me or hesitant to disclose certain views or aspects of their practice. As Riessman (2008) contends, in narrative interviews, "the model of a 'facilitating' interviewer who asks questions, and a vessel-like 'respondent' who gives answers, is replaced by two active participants who jointly construct narrative and

meaning” (p.23). A narrative interview is viewed as a dialogue between speakers where both narrator and interlocutor negotiate openings, turns and shifts in topics.

By giving up the control of a structured interview format, greater equality in the conversation is encouraged. Participants are also given the opportunity to own the narrative (Kramp, 2004). In this inquiry, equality was supported by establishing an atmosphere of trust and by allowing participants to tell the stories that were relevant to them. Instead of planning in advance a set of questions to be asked in each interview, I designed a number of prompts which were explored spontaneously with each participant. This allowed teachers to feel free to follow their own agenda, and simultaneously gave me the opportunity to build on their responses by asking clarification and follow-up questions. As a result, no two interviews with teachers or teacher leaders conducted around the same time and focusing on similar matters were alike. Oftentimes participants raised questions, reflections or anecdotes that significantly changed the course and structure of the interview. Many of the stories that surfaced were different from what any of us could have anticipated.

In a narrative interview, as mentioned before, researchers are also likely to establish different relationships with their participants. Unlike other narrative studies, interviews in this study were not characterized by participants’ long turns at talk and little participation on the part of the researcher. In contrast, because of my former role in and knowledge of the research site, each interview resembled a spontaneous conversation between two colleagues and members of the same professional community (see Appendix B). My prior knowledge clearly shaped my listening and questioning, allowing me to select and respond to information (Riessman, 2008). Decisions made as to when to turn on and off the recorder, what questions to ask or leave out, what responses to attend to and how to behave (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were all evidence of both the interpretative and dialogic nature of the interviews that were conducted and my role in their co-construction. How I chose to make this decision-making process visible is described later in the chapter.

The interviews that took place during this study had a three-step sequence. There was an initial interview conducted with teacher leaders and teachers aimed at learning about their professional careers, their previous experiences with the use of technology and the implementation of blended learning. At this stage, my aim was to contextualize the educators’ past professional experiences. Drawing on this narrative material, I engaged in ‘narrative analysis’ and created the individual background stories that are presented in the following chapter. The Department Director also participated in an interview where she discussed the reasons for the use of technology in the classroom and the recent change to blended learning. Once the academic term started, an ongoing interview process with the

purpose of exploring participants' views about the opportunities and challenges experienced during the second implementation stage of the program was initiated. The teacher leaders took part in one interview by mid-semester, and teachers participated in three meetings throughout the 14-week period.

It is important to note that my research and interviewing agenda at this stage emerged and developed as a result of the language teaching practices observed in the FtF and online learning modalities and the teachers' reflections on their experiences. Every new observation led to the identification of new ideas and/or themes which I discussed with each of the four teachers in the following interview. Similarly, some of the reflections teachers made during our conversations would draw my attention to issues that I had not considered before and which I decided to explore in subsequent observations. In the same way, I was able to identify the topics that were worth discussing with teacher leaders in future interviews. This linked and iterative observation-interview process helped me obtain a better understanding of the changing nature of teachers' and learners' experiences with blended learning, as well as compare and contrast these experiences across cases.

At the end of the term, a final interview was conducted with all participants in order to learn, among other considerations, what their assessment was of their and the community's experiences with blended learning and what their suggestions were for the future of the program. One participant, Ziyad, was, unfortunately, absent from this interview. All participants were interviewed individually and interview prompts, other than those employed for the first meeting, were designed during fieldwork. A total of 34 interviews were conducted in Spanish (the participants' and researcher's mother tongue), each lasting approximately between 40 to 60 minutes for leaders and teachers, and between 60 and 90 minutes for the Department Director. The places where they were conducted ranged from a designated office to the self-access center to other quiet areas of the campus.

Participant Classroom Observation

All four teachers welcomed me into their classrooms as a participant observer. Classroom observation was thus conducted in each of the four classes selected. Face-to-face lessons (for each class) were observed five times during the semester for a total number of 20 lessons. Lessons lasted between one to two hours. The focus of these observations was primarily on the teachers, and more specifically, on the ways in which they integrated FtF and CALL modalities. I was interested in knowing how teachers managed each aspect of the course and how they attempted to create a harmonious blend, but more importantly, what strategies they resorted to when faced with difficulties. I therefore looked at the kinds of

tasks and activities they carried out with students and the types of technologies and resources they chose for the FtF and CALL modes of the course. I paid special attention to the language used by teachers and students when making reference to each of these course components, and also to the type of issues that emerged during the lessons.

To achieve this end, I requested permission to look at lesson plans, teaching materials and other course documents (e.g. syllabus). Initially my observations were very broad in scope, but over time as I gained an understanding of teachers' (blended) teaching practice; my focus narrowed. The observation of lessons placed the information obtained through previous interviews in perspective, and served as a basis for the design of the prompts used during subsequent observations. The analysis of interview and observation data allowed me to identify not only how teachers put blended learning into practice, but also how they interpreted and adapted prescribed curriculum goals and other institutional requirements. The extent to which teachers' beliefs and views about the role of technology in language teaching and learning, as well as the impact of factors beyond their control, defined the character of the blended course also became apparent.

My role as a researcher in the classroom and the degree to which I became involved in the activities of the lessons was negotiated individually with each teacher. All teachers preferred, however, that I help them monitor students in pair and group activities rather than act as an outsider or, as they perhaps thought of observers, an evaluator. I therefore did not take notes while in the classroom but became an active participant, helping teachers and guiding students in the development of tasks. This role allowed me to get to know students better and made every member of the class feel more comfortable with my presence. The observation schedule was also flexible and responded to teachers' availability and workload constraints and to the academic calendar of the university, thereby avoiding interruptions with induction, mid-term and final exams weeks.

As a result of my previous experience with classroom observation, during which a few learners reported having felt uncomfortable with the presence of the video camera, I also decided to audio record rather than video record the lessons. I placed the voice recorder on a desk at the front of the room, which, fortunately, clearly captured teachers' discourse and teacher-whole class interactions. All these different decisions permitted me to become a member of each of the four language classrooms and have access, as I said before, to those stories that would not otherwise have been narrated. In recognition of the fact that through these choices I could also forget or neglect important details of teachers' and learners' experiences, immediately after each lesson and while events were still fresh in my mind, I wrote extensive notes on the development of activities and any other aspect that had caught

my attention, which then I typed up at home later that day. Within the same week of the observation, I also transcribed the audio files and inserted the typed notes into the transcript itself (adding extra details when necessary) in order to record the original events as accurately as possible and to determine what questions might be useful for the next interview (see Appendix C).

My observation of the classroom was also complemented by an exploration of what was taking place in the CALL mode. I specifically paid attention to and kept a weekly record of the tasks designed for this component of the course, examining in more detail the activities in which teachers and learners engaged in prior to and after a visit to the classroom. To do so, I requested and was granted access to *e-Riverview*, the institutional learning platform built on the open-source Learning Management System (LMS) Moodle 2.0, and which was used to organize and deliver content and online learning activities (synchronous and asynchronous). Accessing and exploring the LMS provided me with evidence of teachers' and students' online interactions and participation, and helped me identify how links between different learning modes were established. The focus of this analysis was less on the nature of students' interaction, mostly due to their limited written production, and more on the roles teachers and learners played in this online environment. I also examined the level of student engagement with the activities proposed by teachers. Together with the observation of the (FtF and online) classroom, I attended professional development sessions and staff meetings. I occasionally talked to the teachers during break and lunchtime and spent time with them and with students in the self-access center.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) claim that narrative inquiries can begin with the telling of stories (when the researcher analyzes what the participant tells), or with the living out of stories (when he or she comes alongside participants in the living out of stories). In the first case, studies are more complex and take longer since researchers should be involved and participate in all facets of the life that is being studied. I could thus argue that this study started with the telling of the stories, with teachers' narratives of their teaching and personal experiences, but gradually navigated to the living out of stories, as I engaged in an ongoing process of observation and participation in events that allowed me to become involved in the life of the classroom and the community.

Student Questionnaires

As noted above, information retrieved from questionnaires was used as a source of secondary data. I decided to use this method since it allowed me to elicit information from all students in a more efficient manner than could be done with individual interviews. My

intensive observation activities did not permit me to approach students individually or in groups, although I was aware that this could possibly have helped me hear their voices and perhaps obtain richer data. While at some point I considered requesting students to compose narratives of their technology-mediated language learning experiences, due to my knowledge of the research site, I knew this was not a viable option. The few contact hours they had per week and their multiple academic commitments made it unlikely for me (and for teachers) to do this as a classroom activity or to assign it as homework.

Accordingly, students enrolled in the four classes observed were invited to answer three online questionnaires at different moments of the academic term. These surveys, which were written in Spanish and piloted before the academic activities started, were designed through Google documents. They were also embedded in the institutional LMS in order to provide students with ready access, anonymity and flexibility, and to retrieve and store data more efficiently. Most items were close-ended, although for some questions students were requested to explain briefly the reasons for their choices or to write a short narrative text (a narrative frame). Some of the close-ended items were Likert-scale type with four answers, while others were multiple choice questions (see Appendix D for a sample).

The first questionnaire was intended to gather information about students' previous experiences with blended learning, particularly in relation to the use of the institutional LMS. For students enrolled in Level 1 courses, questions were related to their background: demographics, the extent to which they used technology for personal and learning purposes, and their opinions about the role of technology in language learning. The second and third questionnaires explored students' engagement with and perceptions of the effectiveness of the different tools, activities and elements of the course, and were made available before the midterm and after the final exams respectively. The last questionnaire also asked students to write a short narrative about the aspects that they liked and disliked about the course and their suggestions for the future. My aim was also to look for possible changes in students' perceptions of the course over time, and, therefore, some items were repeated in the three questionnaires.

Unfortunately, during the data collection process and as I tabulated the answers, I noticed that level of return had been very low, especially for the first and last survey. Less than 40% of the total respondents (51 students) answered questionnaire 1 and less than 12% answered the final questionnaire. Although the links to the questionnaires were embedded in the institutional LMS and students were reminded by teachers and the researcher of their activation, only a few of them chose to complete them. It seems that due to their heavy

workloads learners found it difficult to set some time aside to answer these surveys, even though they had been designed to take no longer than 20-30 minutes.

Document Analysis

As stated in previous chapters, the analysis of the personal stories of change participants lived out did not only involve gaining an understanding of teachers', academic leaders' and students' perceptions about blended learning and what occurred inside and outside the classroom, it also involved exploring the connections between these individual and collective stories of practice and larger institutional reform narratives. As pointed out by Lincoln and Gruba (1985), documents provide a stable and rich source of data that is grounded in the context where they were created and do not intrude upon the context the way the researcher might. As a result, I decided to obtain a number of national policy statements from the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN in Spanish) in order to identify the ways in which major reform movements have transformed higher education, particularly in relation to the use of technology in the second language curriculum.

Archival data informing the ways in which Riverview University had interpreted and adopted national policies on language-in-education and ICT use were also collected and analyzed during and after fieldwork in order to understand how this community responded to as well as adapted such stories of reform. I was interested in identifying what particular pedagogical discourses and practices were adopted over time as well. These official documents included: institutional development plans, pedagogical and design guidelines for virtual learning, guidelines to diagnose teachers' competence in educational computing, and research and accreditation reports. Curriculum documents from DFL (syllabi, performance reports, teaching and learning guidelines, and training resources) were also accessed.

By analyzing the above, I was able to capture *change* as officially reported in documents, but above all, situate both the Department and the University within the recent history of educational reform in higher education in Colombia. I was also able to identify the institutions' rationale for the use of technology in the curriculum and the change to blended learning, or in Waters' (2009) terms, the antecedents of the innovation situation. Aware of the fact that every document is written for a specific purpose and audience, and that they may have been altered or represent biased viewpoints (Yin, 2008), I examined them with caution and, as with participants' narratives, I did not view them as offering access to the 'truth' but instead examined the assumptions inherent in their shaping.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were a useful tool to keep a record of my observations of what was happening in the classroom and the learning platform. They also recorded my participation in other activities and events taking place at DFL and my conversations with different community members. They recorded my reflections of the interviews I had with participants and were written soon after the interviews were over, as I did after lesson observations. Fieldnotes allowed me to establish a relationship between those stories being created by teachers and learners in the blended classroom and those being told by other community members in other professional spaces.

Additionally, I used this tool to narrate my own experiences as a researcher as well as reflect on my emotional reactions to what I observed inside and outside the classroom and to what I discussed with participants during interviews and informal conversations. In the fieldnotes, I reflected on progress and my role in the inquiry and tried to identify whether there were aspects that I was taking for granted and questions that, as an insider, I had difficulty in asking. Through this reflective exercise, I thus attempted to make the familiar strange and achieve a balance between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspectives of the research. For a timeline of data collection phases (interviews, observations and questionnaires), see Appendix E. Having described the methods and procedure used for data collection, I now describe how these data were managed and analyzed.

Data Management

To ensure that data were stored properly and organized systematically and to guarantee easy retrieval, I followed a number of management procedures. Both interview and observation data, which were audio recorded using a digital device, were downloaded onto my personal computer and saved in folders named after participants’ pseudonyms. Dated and coded matrixes were then created to transcribe these audio files verbatim, as was also done with the information registered in the field notes and recorded in the classroom. The PDF and Excel files retrieved from Google Docs with students’ responses to the questionnaires were also saved in digital folders. This procedure was also followed with the official documentation that I had accessed through the web. Once data were properly sorted and transcribed, I uploaded all the files to the qualitative analysis computer software NVivo 9 for backup and analysis purposes.

It is worth noting that although I was not interested in capturing “each micro moment of the talk-in-interaction” (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 2008), I decided to include

short supporting statements, overlapped talked, pauses and break-offs in conversation during the transcription of interview data. Due to my role as an insider, I believed it was important to identify how each interview developed and how shifts in turns and topics were mutually negotiated in order to ensure that equality, in fact, was being established. By monitoring my own subjectivity and participation, I tried to ensure that participants had indeed had the opportunity to shape and ‘own the narrative’.

I also made a few decisions with regards to the process of translation. Except in the case of classroom observation data (teachers and students used both English and Spanish), all data sources were in Spanish. Since it was easier for me to make sense of participants’ narratives in my first language, I decided not to translate interview data in full and proceeded directly to analysis; only extracts to be included in the thesis were translated into English. These translations were “the informants exact words, with some shortening and omission at the discourse level to avoid redundancy” (Gao, Li & Li, 2002, cited in Barkhuizen, Benson & Chick, 2014, p. 27), and were revised by an independent translator to ensure accuracy. In the case of classroom observation extracts, excerpts are presented in this thesis in both the original language and in translation. How I went about analyzing these and other non-narrative data is explained in what follows.

Data Analysis and Representation

As stated in the Chapter 4, the analytical focus applied to this research was primarily on the content and meaning of narratives and on the broader sociocultural contexts shaping participants’ narrative constructions. Thus, to an extent, I followed paradigmatic (Polkinghorne, 1995) analytic methods. Nevertheless, data were not only reduced to themes and categories but also configured into a coherent whole. The analytic steps I followed to analyze data, condense this information into manageable units and transform it into story form are described next.

Step 1: Exploratory Analysis

Having obtained an initial sense of participants’ experiences through the process of transcription and translation, I used NVivo 9 qualitative analysis software to further extend my preliminary analysis. I decided to run word frequency queries in each of the folders in which I had organized the data (management, students, teachers and official documents) in order to get an idea of the words that were used more often. Unusual words emerged from these queries as I checked them in the broader context of the sentence in which they appeared. Once I had run word frequency queries, I did a text query for the term *cambio*

(change) and other central constructs from the research questions. These queries were run on all data and proved to be much more insightful than the word frequency search as they allowed me to see how a particular concept was used by different people and in different circumstances.

During this stage, I used the memoing feature of NVivo 9 to describe step by step the analysis process that I had followed, report the results of each analytical step and record my interpretations of the findings and analysis. Before moving on to the subsequent analysis stage, I made the decision to omit questionnaire data. On reading the figures and open-ended responses, I realized that, due to the low level of return, the results did not tell me much about students' perceptions of their experiences with the blended course, let alone help me trace changes in their opinions. Unfortunately, I could not create a faithful picture of what engaging in blended learning meant to the fifty-five students whom I had observed. I extracted, however, those responses that seemed to indicate either connection or divergence with teachers' narratives, and I use a few of them in the findings chapters.

Step 2: Coding and Recoding the Data

I then coded data sources inductively (Litchman, 2013). I did a first analysis round on the printed data material. I looked for (among others): those instances (observed and reported) of accomplishment, conflict or tension that were motivated by the change; the emotions and interpretations that these situations evoked; and the decisions and actions that were adopted by participants as a result. After re-reading interview and classroom observation transcripts, I identified key ideas that were often, explicitly and implicitly, mentioned by each participant and others that were not as frequent, but equally salient, and noted them down alongside the printed text in the margin. I also made notes at the points where I felt important stories were being told. This physical manipulation of the data enabled me to create a better picture of each participant's professional experiences and to identify existing connections among the multiple narratives they each produced.

It also helped me recognize shifts in the story of change of the community, at both the personal and organizational level, and thus address the research questions. Having done this, I used NVivo 9 in order to refine my analysis, make interpretations across the complete dataset and identify commonalities and differences. To do this, I grouped the ideas that I had identified into a larger themes and sub-themes, the result being a themes list (or nodes list in NVivo terminology), which changed and developed as the analysis continued. Because this study was exploratory in nature, themes were not identified in advance but emerged during the process of analysis, although to a certain extent my analysis was also guided by

knowledge of the context and ideas from the literature. As I had done in the previous phase, I recorded my reflections and analytic choices in memos.

Step 3: Identifying a Storyline

During this analysis stage, I decided to print the themes list and each section of data and re-read this material again for the purpose of identifying a storyline that could help me illustrate participants' individual change journeys, and as a result, preserve the integrity of each unique voice, especially that of teachers. To that end, I created a number of visual displays highlighting critical moments and shifts in teachers' overall curriculum implementation experience (see Appendix F), as well as showing connections within cases (teachers) and across cases (teachers and teacher leaders). As a result of this exercise, not only was I able to recover the narrative character of the data, but also identify the stories of practice that would allow me to report the findings. Here, I would start to navigate along the 'analysis of narratives'—'narrative analysis' continuum.

Step 4: Restorying

This final stage is related to the process of constructing and reconstructing the social meanings in the data through writing and is therefore also linked to decisions about data representation. As noted by Liu and Xu (2011), what distinguishes narrative inquiry from thematic analysis is the 'restorying' process, or in Polkinghorne's (1995) terms, engaging in 'narrative analysis'. However, although Liu and Xu and other researchers who adopt Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) view of narrative inquiry place strong emphasis on restorying, as observed earlier, in this PhD thesis some sections are organized around themes and others are dedicated to participants' individual stories of practice. Due to the number of (personal, organizational and institutional) aspects and cases (teachers and teacher leaders) that I set out to examine in this inquiry, I decided to engage in narrative writing (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) to achieve specific purposes such as introducing the participants to the readers and drawing attention to the teachers' experiences of change. To discuss other cases or inquiry aspects, I chose to structure my writing in a more thematically-oriented fashion.

This storytelling process was thus distilled into five broad findings chapters: Teachers' learning and teaching trajectories (Chapter 6), historical antecedents and rationale for the change (Chapter 7), design for blended learning and integration choices (Chapter 8), classroom implementation stories (Chapter 9), and leading and facilitating the implementation process (Chapter 10). While Chapters 6 to 8 set the context for the study

and provide background information, Chapters 9 and 10 are the heart and soul of the inquiry. In Chapter 9, I present teachers' stories of practice on a case-by-case basis so as to highlight variation in their individual experiences, while in Chapter 10, due to my interest in identifying how the process of change was facilitated by those in authority, I illustrate the views shared by teacher leaders and the Department Director and present them collectively. In both chapters, I discuss data extracts in the chronological order they were produced in order to avoid the loss of the sequential coherence of the narratives in the re-organization of data (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) and to capture changes in participants' experiences and perceptions over time.

Step 5: Analysis of Relevance

In some narrative studies researchers leave participants' stories open for interpretation, while in others they choose to report explicitly on their analysis. Because I attempted to extend my inquiry beyond significance for the participants and reach out and find meaning for the readership of the final report (Flowerdew & Miller, 2013, p. 52), I believed it was important to connect the meaning of participants' narratives with theory and practice. As Menard-Warwick (2011, p. 571) emphasizes, the academic value of narrative analysis lies in the light it can shed on research questions as a way to construct new disciplinary knowledge. Thus, in this final analysis stage, participants' experiences of change initiatives were discussed in relation to the educational change and innovation literature in order to better understand the reasons for the multiple tensions and challenges they went through and reported. In some chapters I do this by offering *a reflective coda* after having presented participants' story of practice, as was done by Craig (2003) in her analysis of narratives of school reform. Offering an interpretation of participants' narratives, as Chase (2005) suggests, can bring into light aspects of people's social worlds that may often be taken-for-granted. In the conclusions chapter, I also reach out towards practice through the discussion of the implications of the study for teachers, and, more broadly, institutions interested in switching to blended learning.

Criteria for Judging the Inquiry

Talking about reliability and objectivity in narrative research is difficult, even inappropriate, due to its interpretative nature and the level of subjectivity that is involved in data collection, analysis and reporting. This does not mean, however, that narrative researchers do not have to develop arguments to convince readers of the validity of their knowledge claims (Polkinghorne, 2007); as with other qualitative researchers, it is also their task to articulate criteria for judging their research. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) point out that

narrative inquirers, whether they adopt paradigmatic or narrative analytic methods, need to address three issues concerned with the quality and ethics of data analysis and representation: rigor, trustworthiness and the generalizability of the findings. These are the three criteria by which this study can be evaluated by the readership.

Rigor

By rigor, Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 89) mean “the degree to which an analysis is systematic with regard to both the coverage of the data and the application of analytical procedures”. In this study, rigor was achieved by doing a systematic review of the data and by documenting the process of data analysis, so that it can be open to scrutiny and critique. In this chapter I have provided an explicit and detailed account of how I went about data management and analysis, data re-configuration and the reporting of the findings, or in Connelly & Clandinin’s words (1998), the construction of the research texts. To be able to do this, I relied on the record of the thoughts, feelings and events (kept in both field notes and memos) that influenced my methodological and analytical decision-making throughout the inquiry. In addition to these steps, in subsequent chapters, I offer rich descriptions of the research context and the participants’ backgrounds and experiences, which I trust will convey the sense that data have been analyzed rigorously.

Trustworthiness

By trustworthiness, Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 90) refer “to the rather complex question of the relationship between the findings of narrative inquiry studies and the underlying ‘realities’ they purport to represent”. Due to my role as a former community insider, this I believe to be the most important evaluation criterion of all, as it relates to the credibility of this narrative inquiry and my work as a developing narrative inquirer. I therefore attempted to achieve trustworthiness through various means during the data collection, analysis and representation phases.

The utilization of multiple sources and methods was one of the ways to enhance the credibility of my findings. Firstly, I aimed at *source* triangulation by recruiting teachers, students, teacher leaders and administrators so as to gain a complete picture of what implementing blended learning meant to different community members. Secondly, I aimed at *method* triangulation by using multiple methods such as interviews, classroom observation, document analysis and questionnaires. During the process of data collection, I also tried to make sure that stories were told with fidelity (Riessman, 2008) by staying at the research site for a prolonged period of time and by building trust and rapport with the

participants (Liu & Xu, 2011). I also invited the participants at the end of data collection to share their views of their participation in the inquiry and asked them whether there was anything else they wanted to share or that I might have missed during the interview process.

During the process of analysis, I was also aware of the risk of treating participants' accounts as factual representations and thus analyzed them bearing in mind the sociocultural and political contexts that shaped their construction. I was equally aware of the need to be aware of my own interests, assumptions and predispositions, and to question the interpretations I made of the narratives I heard. As Maykut and Morehouse observe (1994, cited in Hendy, 2008, p. 60), "insiders, outsiders and researchers each bring a perspective to that which is being studied. What distinguishes the qualitative researcher from the others is disciplined analysis". Disciplined analysis in qualitative research also means to allowing room for reflexivity; that is, to make the research process and decision-making visible.

As stressed by Lutrell (2010), the reflexive practitioner ought to make his or her decision-making process visible at personal, methodological, theoretical, epistemological, ethical and political levels. Through the different chapters that compose this narrative inquiry, I have tried to make my own voice visible and acknowledge my part in the interpretation of what I saw and heard, and my emotional responses to that information. By acknowledging my position in the research, as Hendy (2008), I seek to provide readers with a more honest and informed reading of the work I produced. I have specifically tried to achieve reflexivity through various means: by tracking my thinking and emotions in field notes during the inquiry, by acknowledging my role in the construction of the narratives through transcription and the reporting of findings, by understanding and describing my autobiographical relationship to the research topic and the methodology adopted, and lastly, by including my own voice and making explicit my own change journey. In some chapters, I therefore used first and third person data or included exchanges between participants and the researcher.

Trustworthiness was further enhanced during the crafting of the narratives. To keep loyal to the ways in which participants represented themselves to me (Menard-Warwick, 2004) and to respect the integrity of their narrative constructions, I used extensive quotations and wove these directly into the narrative in, as noted above, a chronological fashion. This simultaneously helped me dilute "the omnipresence of my interpretative voice" (Anderson, 2012, p. 71), or as Denzin (1994, cited in Anderson) suggests, avoid the researcher talking for the participants. I have also provided many examples of the actual data (e.g., transcripts and field notes) and presented "thick descriptions" that help give "the context of the experience, [state] the intentions and meaning that organized the experience, and [reveal] the experience as a process" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205).

Lastly, to ensure that I had accurately rendered participants' experiences and fully captured the meaning these had for them, I also shared with them the final research texts, presented in Chapters 9 and 10, via email. I asked them to verify the authenticity of the personal stories of practice I had retold and gave them the opportunity to identify any omissions and add any further comments should they wish to do so. All participants accepted the stories as written and requested no alterations, although they did describe how they felt when reading the texts. Oriana, for instance, explained how reading the narratives had "reinvigorated her" and helped her become aware of her professional growth (personal communication). Ziyad also commented that his participation in the study and the reading of the narratives had helped him "reflect on his job as teacher" (personal communication). This respondent validation process, which was also embedded during data collection by, for example, asking participants to elaborate on or clarify what they had said in interviews, seemed not only to have "endorsed my retelling" of participants' stories and the purpose for which they had been written (Hayes, 2013), but also encouraged teachers to reflect on the meaning of those narratives.

Generalizability

The stories told in this thesis are based on the experiences of a group of Colombian ELT teachers working at a particular tertiary institution at a given time and influenced by a number of special circumstances. Thus, although we can learn valuable lessons from this community's individual and collective efforts, results cannot be generalized to a wider population (Chase, 2005). Therefore my goal, like that of many other narrative inquirers, was not to produce generalizable findings, but a rich and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences of change. Nevertheless, although findings cannot be generalized, I believe they may be transferred to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The IT imperative in ELT and education is certainly something that is not unique to the research setting that I studied. Thus, by providing thick descriptions of the context and the circumstances under which blended language learning was implemented in this community, I hope readers can create in their minds a picture of what implementing such an innovation actually involves and assess the degree to which these experiences are transferable to their own contexts or resonate with their own lives and careers as teachers and researchers. By doing an analysis of the relevance of the narratives and including a reflective coda in some of the chapters, I also hope readers can establish the contribution to theory that this study has intended to make, or as Barkhuizen et al. (2014) contend, consider points of connection with other narratives and analyses.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have described the research setting where this inquiry was conducted, the process of participant recruitment, and the methods of data collection and data analysis that I employed in the design of the study. The steps and procedures that I followed during the process of management, transcription and coding of the data, and during the construction of the narratives texts that I present in the following chapters were also outlined. I concluded by discussing criteria (rigor, trustworthiness and generalizability) by which the reader and I can evaluate and critique the quality of the study. These evaluation criteria were employed in an effort to ensure that the research findings and interpretations can accurately be described as systematic, credible and transferable. This chapter has shown that the process of data collection and analysis in this study was systematic and rigorous and that methodological choices that I made fit with the purposes and nature of the inquiry's aims and questions.

Having described the theoretical and methodological roots of the inquiry, the second part of this thesis opens up a window into the world of higher education in Colombia, in particular, that of English language teaching. Guided by an understanding of knowledge as something that is provisional, transactional and "narratively constructed and reconstructed over time" (Craig, 2003, p. 9), and therefore directly connected to past experience, my inquiry journey, as that of an archaeologist, starts in the past so as to be able to develop new understandings of the present and possibly the future. I therefore continue in the next chapter with a description of participants' language teaching trajectories. I introduce them through a series of short background narratives.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Having described the methodological choices I made throughout this inquiry, it is now time to introduce the participants of the study. To do so, I referred back to the first narrative interview and created a series of individual background stories to illustrate teachers' career and some of their experiences with and opinions about technology. I chronologically describe teachers' work history, including the different roles they performed at DFL up until the moment of our first conversation, as well as narrate how they came to engage with ICTs. These stories provide evidence of the 'narrative analysis' aspect of this inquiry and illustrate participants' experience of becoming and being as English language teachers "in the course of twenty-first century change" (Shelly et al., 2013, p. 572).

As mentioned in Chapter 5, each of these texts was returned to each participant upon culmination, and therefore, represents an act of collaborative construction through which I sought to "make their lives present" (Cortazzi, 1993, p.16). The first four stories presented below are those of the four teachers whom I collaborated with in the classroom (*Lucinda*, *Rayuela*, *Ziyad* and *Oriana*), while the remaining four belong to those teachers who, due to their academic and management positions, were behind the design of the blended strategy (*Amelia*, *Lucía*, *Acablo* and *Salomé*). Given that information from the initial interview was used in the construction of these stories, I use extracts to illustrate participants' experiences and personal practical knowledge and reference them indicating the number of the interview (**Int. 1, 1: 32-35**) and the line numbers where these utterances appear in the original transcript (**Int. 1, 1: 32-35**).

Lucinda

Lucinda (in her 20s) started her language teaching career in the same university where she did her bachelor degree in English philology. The first teaching experience that came to her mind when thinking about her career, however, was her pre-service teaching practicum. Although several years had passed, it was still vivid in her mind how difficult it had been for her to cope with the practicum due to her lack of pedagogical knowledge, a large class, and lack of resources. Having "survived" her practicum, yet still a student, she started working as a teacher assistant in the English general courses offered by her university. She was in charge of supporting students in the development of listening and speaking skills. While performing as a teacher assistant, Lucinda also started working as a

language teacher in private language schools and as a freelancer with multinational companies interested in having their executive employees learn English. She also worked with in-service teachers from a small town near Bogotá city and taught them how to plan and implement activities to teach English to children. When she was about to graduate, she started working as an online tutor in the self-study language learning program her university had opened in 2007.

As a tutor, she was in charge of giving students' feedback through the course's learning management system and providing them with language support through face-to-face and online tutorials. As a result of this experience, she decided to focus her undergraduate research work on the content of the interactions that had taken place among her and her students in the online environment. Very proudly, she admitted that this research work allowed her to publish her first article in one of the university's specialized journals. These experiences as an online tutor influenced Lucinda's teaching philosophy and her understanding and interpretation of autonomy, blended learning and language teaching.

After working in the institution where she had studied and prior to her job at Riverview University, she worked with children and teenagers at a school. Lucinda commented she had had an incredible experience teaching children, but a "terrible one" teaching teenagers. She was a female young woman in a very traditional school where all other teachers were male and where students were used to an authoritarian regime: "Even the school's director, when observing my classes, would discredit me in front of the children. This person was from a German school, 100% grammar, and so when I asked the kids to play a game, he would tell me: *How is this possible? This cannot happen*. So, that was a clash between what I had learned and how things happen in real life" (Int. 1, 1: 42-44).

By the time we met again, Lucinda had been working as a language teacher at Riverview University for three years and was working in both the blended and distance language programs DFL offered. During this time, due to her interest in and knowledge of technology, she also performed as a teacher assistant and as an online tutor. For the second semester of 2012, she was going to work for the distance English learning program that was offered to all students and staff members, and which was administered by the self-access center. In our first interview, besides recounting her professional career and reflecting on the influence of varied experiences on her language teaching philosophy, Lucinda also shared her perceptions about technology and blended learning. When asked about her experiences with technology, she responded with a firm opinion of the role of technology in the curriculum, which I would later perceive in her practices, and to which she referred to more than once in subsequent conversations:

Well, I have an opinion; I do not think that all learners are the same. There are some students who do things very well when they are combined, and there are others who are more into face-to-face or who are more virtual. Obviously, there's now a phrase that says TINO; *there is no other option*; we all have to deal with and know about technology. Technology is in medicine, in everything, but I think there should be more variety. Students should have the opportunity to choose. (Int. 1, l: 46-50)

Lucinda, despite being technologically literate herself and in favor of using technology in language education, felt that teachers and institutions were being pushed towards the use of technology without having time to assess the danger of disregarding students' varied learning styles and preferences. Yet, aware of the fact that in the current information-based society there is actually "no other option" with regard to the use of technology, she believed in the need to help students become proficient in English as well as technologically literate and tried to do so, as best she could.

Rayuela

Trained in foreign languages at a private Colombian university, Rayuela (in her 30s) began her teaching career at a large private language school in Bogotá in 1995. Like Lucinda, this first experience was part of her in-service teaching practicum. After teaching English to children and teenagers in this institution, Rayuela decided to move away from the teaching profession and work as a translator in the public sector for a few years. Later on, when offered an ELT position at a private university, she decided to go back to language teaching. This time Rayuela collaborated with the hospitality and tourism program provided by this institution and was in charge of planning and implementing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program. Due to the experience she had gained in teaching ESP courses, she soon received an invitation to work as a language teacher in a different private university. In this new setting, she taught technical English to business and engineering students.

Rayuela's next post was at a public university. She worked for the same self-study language program Lucinda had worked for. It was at that moment, Rayuela recalled, when she "started venturing into virtual teaching as such" (Int. 1, l: 11) since one of the bases of the program was "to support language learning and the development of autonomy through the use of ICT" (Int. 1, l: 12). In fact, this is when she started to make use of technology for language teaching purposes, as well as work on blended learning. Afterward, she decided to stay away from the teaching profession once again and started working independently in a business-related field. In 2010, however, having regained her passion for teaching, she accepted a language teaching post at DFL.

A year later, thanks to her successful teaching experiences, she was offered a full-time teacher assistant position, and this is how she started to assist curriculum leaders with online design and student support. As a teacher assistant at DFL, Rayuela helped curriculum leaders plan and design learning tasks for both the FtF and online components, and as an online tutor, she guided students through the use of the LMS, supported teachers (of her team) with new online tasks, and assessed students' levels of participation —duties which were also performed by Lucinda and other teachers assistants. For semester 2 in 2012, however, due to organizational changes taking place at DFL, Rayuela was not going to perform as a teacher assistant but as the leader of the Learner Support Committee.

During our first interview, Rayuela, not only talked about her professional career, but also reflected on her experiences with technology. “I think that in the beginning you are afraid of technology, and that fear prevents you from exploiting resources effectively” (Int. 1, l: 14), she said, while recounting her pathway to the use of ICTs for language teaching and learning. “I think”, she added, “it has to do with ignorance, basically, when you do not know something, you’re afraid of it” (Int. 1, l: 19). She went on to explain:

With a few keystrokes you can do a series of activities and tasks, and say that for example you push a button and delete something, then all the work that took you hours and hours to complete can be lost. Well, that’s where the fear comes from... Fear can also be generated because there are elements that are not under your control, right? I think this is why most teachers prefer the face-to-face lessons ... they want all the variables to be covered. (Int. 1, l: 20-23)

Rayuela recalled her initial experience with technology as being one of “fear”. She acknowledged she felt this way as a result of her lack of IT knowledge when she first started to work in a blended program. As she suggested, this fear is not only indicative of teachers’ lack of technological literacy, but also of their desire to keep things under control. While Rayuela’s fearful experiences with technology were a thing of the past by the time of our first interview, the issue of losing control would be present in her lessons and future conversations.

Oriana

Oriana’s (in her 30s) professional experience started in 2005, eight years before our first interview. She majored in English Language Teaching at a public university in Bogotá. During our initial conversation, she remarked she had never taught ESL in schools as her interests had always been linked to tertiary education. During these years of experience, and prior to her appointment as a language teacher at Riverview University, she had taught English to undergraduate students in different private universities of the city. She described herself as a reflective professional who had always been interested in evaluating her own practice and in keeping up to date with the latest advancements in language pedagogy.

Oriana also commented that she perceived herself as a very flexible teacher, able to adapt to the needs and teaching profiles of each of the institutions for which she worked.

Oriana had been working for almost three years at DFL by the time we had our first conversation. Both Ziyad and Oriana worked on a part-time basis teaching different general English courses, and they had a keen interest in and knowledge of ICTs. Although she had not been a teacher assistant, as Lucinda or Rayuela had been, Oriana was highly technologically literate and had contributed to some of the activities done by the self-access center. Her interest in the use of technology did not develop as a result of previous teaching posts or postgraduate studies, however. It developed out of her teaching and learning journey at DFL.

Well, when I first arrived [at the university] I was totally neophyte (laughter) in the use of technology. In fact, in my house there was never a computer... So coming here has brought about a dramatic change in me that I attribute to this university. Training on technology has been very good, and I think I arrived knowing nothing. (Int. 1, l: 77-83)

Although Oriana was also a young teacher, she distinguished between the learning and teaching experiences she had lived as a student and the teaching practices in which she was currently engaged. The fact that there was no computer at home also seems to imply that her language learning and teaching education process did not particularly involve the use of such technologies. Yet, after almost three years, Oriana felt that technology and, in particular, some tools used for the design and management of educational activities were no longer “unfamiliar” to her due to the training she had taken. She also indicated that this confidence and knowledge on ICTs was a plus since students could now see her as “not only the language teacher, but the person they can rely on when technological problems occur” (Int. 1, l: 86-87).

Over the past years, Oriana had also broadened her understanding of what autonomy is and implies— an issue of significant importance in her role as a teacher at DFL. However, as with her knowledge of technology, coming to terms with the concept of autonomy was something that had developed as a result of her experience at Riverview University:

I had never been autonomous in my life; I was always the kind of person who asked the teacher, ‘please tell me what to do and how to do it’, and that suddenly changed here. The university has enabled me to grow personally and become a more autonomous teacher. At first the change is drastic... Now I know what it means to be an autonomous professional, and so I want my students to develop their autonomy too. (Int. 1, l: 145-149)

Joining DFL implied two significant challenges for Oriana: to develop her technology literacy skills and to become a more autonomous professional. To her, both of these aspects had brought about changes in her practices and attitudes, yet she was pleased

with her personal and professional growth. She saw in her own learning process an example of the implications of developing technological literacy and becoming a more independent person; therefore, she had committed herself to reach the same results in her students.

Ziyad

Ziyad was the youngest of all participants (in his 20s). Although he had worked for some time in language schools, his language teaching career actually started in the Department of Foreign Languages. He undertook his undergraduate studies at a public university in the northern part of the country and graduated in 2010 as a language teacher. Then, after having been accepted in one of the Masters programs offered by DFL, he decided to move to Bogotá in order to start his postgraduate studies.

In 2011, as a result of his excelling academic performance, he was offered a position as a part-time language teacher. Ziyad considered his job at DFL very enriching in that it had been his closest experience with students who were going through undergraduate education: “This experience has been a very rewarding one... You learn a lot from them in the sense that they share or talk about issues that are unknown to you. So I think that your work as a teacher stretches you a little more and you start looking at other possibilities that you never thought of when teaching in language schools only” (Int. 1, l: 8-11).

Ziyad had taught English at DFL for almost two years and had worked with different teams of teachers when we had our first interview. Unlike Lucinda and Rayuela, he had not performed as a teacher assistant nor was he going to be a committee leader during the upcoming academic term. However, like all teachers at DFL, he had participated and collaborated with some of the planning, assessment and materials design duties that were requested by the curriculum leaders he had worked with. For the new semester, he was going to work with Level 3 and 4 students, and as a result of the organizational changes in the Department, he was also expected to be engaged in CALL design.

“My experience with technology here was like a complete change for me” (Int. 1, l: 25), replied Ziyad when asked about his experiences with ICT. “First, I had never experienced it as a student”, he continued, “So, to be able to perform well, I had to start not only to read but to explore ... I needed to participate in those online sessions” (Int. 1, l: 25-27). While Lucinda’s and Rayuela’s first contact with blended learning occurred as language teachers, Ziyad’s first experience took place in the in-service professional development program he was undertaking.

As part of the program, he needed to participate in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions, so he had no choice; he had to make use of technology. It was this

need to succeed in his studies that prompted him to explore different tools and resources, and that later would motivate him to do the same in his lessons. Yet, it was clear that his past learning and teaching experiences had not prepared him for what he was now experiencing as both a learner and an educator:

I started to explore technology... because, if I had to use it in class, I had to know about it first ... But the change was a bit harsh; I felt a little strange. Even though I am contemporary; I'm not from the old guard to say that I've never seen a computer (laughter); I perhaps did not grow up in that culture of virtual learning. Or perhaps what I understood by virtual or blended learning was something like sending an assignment via email, but then I realized that it was much more than that. (Int. 1, l: 30-34)

Having been able to come to terms with the dynamics of online work and self-regulation, Ziyad now actively supported the use of technology in and out the classroom, and believed it allowed him: “To leave the door open for students so they can also be autonomous and explore all these new learning resources by themselves” (Int. 1, l: 37-38). Yet, like Lucinda, he felt that teachers’ practices should not be constrained by a pre-established curriculum, but instead, there should be room for greater freedom, variety and collegial work.

Amelia

Having majored in language teaching from a public university, Amelia (in her 30s) started her professional career in 2001 as an English teacher at an elementary school. Two years later, she was offered a position as a high school teacher of English and literature. While working in this institution, Amelia undertook a postgraduate degree in Applied Linguistics. Through this experience, as she remarked, she gained confidence as a language teacher and language user, and she improved her knowledge of pedagogy and research. On completing this professional development project, but still working as a high school language teacher, Amelia decided to apply to the VIF (Visiting International Faculty) program in United States and left the country in 2006. In this new international setting, she performed as an elementary Spanish teacher and later decided to start a master’s degree in TESOL in 2007.

It was in United States where she was faced with the use of technology as part of the curriculum for the first time: “When I arrived in United States everything was completely different, I had to use an interactive whiteboard; I had to use technological resources basically for everything. So it was a bit complicated because I did not know much, but I learned on my own and then I started to use many tools” (Int 1, l: 20-23). Like most teachers who participated in this study, her knowledge of technology was something she had gained as a result of her own desire to explore tools and software rather than something she had

learned in workshops. It was her own interest in exploring and using technology which actually helped her become knowledgeable in the use of ICTs for teaching and learning.

Yet, her knowledge and use of ICTs had changed significantly over time as new technological devices and tools were constantly streaming into the market, “pushing” teachers to use technology all the time and to adapt to the frequent changes. She recalled shifting her interest from using software like Microsoft Word to using a wide variety of resources that now included even mobile devices: “If I compared what I used before to what I use now, I have changed a lot because I now use resources that I did not even think of in the past”(Int 1, 1:33-35). Reflecting on why she had developed an interest in technology and how it had helped her as a language teacher, she also added:

Well, I think that it has much to do with what you believe and what you like. If you do not like technology, no matter how good it is, it won't help you, it won't work. So I think that in my case it has been a plus because I like it, and I like using it a lot in or out of class. In fact I started using technology long ago... It helps you show students that there is something beyond the book, or ... what the teacher gives them. So personally, the experience has been good for me. (Int. 1, 1: 47-53)

On returning to Colombia, Amelia was appointed as an English and academic writing teacher at a public University in Bogotá, and subsequently, she secured a part time position as a teacher at Riverview University. Amelia joined DFL around the same time I did, and like me, after having performed as a language teacher for a while, she was appointed as a curriculum leader. Like the other six curriculum leaders from DFL, she was in charge of developing the curriculum of one of the levels of the English proficiency program. In this role, which she performed for two and a half years, she was responsible for designing the syllabus of the course, developing materials and tests, managing the course LMS, collaborating with teachers and guiding their work, and assisting students.

Curriculum leaders, who also performed as language teachers, were charged with developing and implementing the language and ICT-related policies of the University, and who, as a result, collaboratively defined what blended learning was to be like for the Department. They therefore had strong leadership skills and knowledge on ICTs and syllabus design. By the time of our first interview, however, Amelia had been recently assigned as a member of the Teacher Support Committee and was going to be in charge of guiding all teachers with the planning of their courses and of subsequently visiting their classrooms. She had also started working as a teacher educator in one of the Master's program offered by the Department and had received a certification as an ICALT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching) Tutor granted by the University of Cambridge.

Lucía

Trained in foreign language teaching (French and English) at a public university in the northern part of the country, Lucía (in her 30s) started her language teaching career in 1995. Upon the culmination of her professional practicum, she joined the Languages Department of her university and worked as an English teacher in this academic unit for four years. During this same period of time, she also worked as French teacher at the Alliance Francaise and at state education agencies. Later on, she decided to leave her hometown and move to a nearby city. She became part of English Department of a well-known private school and taught English to elementary and secondary students. Having worked for three and half years, she traveled to Ireland through a teaching exchange program funded by the Colombian government and started teaching Spanish to high schoolers. As a result of her experiences overseas, on returning to Colombia, she decided to move to the capital city.

She then joined one of the most prestigious language schools in the city, and as part of the partnerships of this institution, obtained her first appointment as a language teacher at a higher education establishment. She worked for various private universities until the end of 2008, when she decided to apply for a language teaching position at Riverview University. Lucía and I would initiate a similar learning and teaching journey at DFL, becoming both curriculum leaders in 2009. Along with Amelia, we would participate in the Department's most recent story of curriculum change; the story that motivated the design of this study.

Having closely worked with Lucía for a few years, I was aware of what little interest she had in technology when she joined DFL and how she had adapted to the dynamics of a technology-enhanced language instruction over time. Unlike other participants, Lucía was not always eager about the use of technology, and in contrast with Oriana, who became very enthusiastic about it soon after she joined the Department, it took Lucía some time to convince herself about the value it could offer to the language learning process of her students. In consequence, when asked how she thought her perceptions about technology had changed in the past few years, she commented:

The change has been hard especially because at first I was not, nor do I continue to be, very fully convinced about technology, but I know I like it. Knowing that everything had to be done through the LMS... well that made me change my attitude and, well, it's not hard to learn. I often become wedded to things, so I tried to look for all the positive things. Our LMS, which for many is boring, well I am now a number one advocate ... I like it. I think it is a very valuable tool for students. (Int. 1, l: 11-16)

Considering Lucia's remark regarding her reasons to make use of technology, it could be argued that for her, like for everybody else, there was "no other option". As she

indicated, the fact that “everything had to be done through the LMS” made her take a step forward and start exploring what this technology, as well as the tools and applications associated with it, could offer her and her students. Nevertheless, once she identified some of the benefits of technology, and specifically what the learning management system could bring about in language learning and teaching, she became an advocate.

As a result of the positive professional expertise she had gained at DFL and the prospect of a long-standing career at Riverview University, in 2010, Lucía decided to undertake a Master’s degree in education. After becoming an advocate of DFL’s LMS, she focused her research project on the benefits that the implementation of such technologies could bring about on students’ use of learning strategies and autonomy development. With her graduation in 2012 and DFL’s new organizational changes, Lucia’s career would become filled with challenges and new opportunities.

By the time we met again, Lucía had been appointed as the leader of the Planning Committee and was in charge, together with her team, of designing the general syllabus of the seven blended courses of the English proficiency program. Towards the end of the term, however, she was offered the position of General Program Director; an offer she heartily accepted. In this capacity, she became the leader of the various language programs and diploma courses offered by the Department, and her duties, although still linked to academic matters, were highly administrative-oriented. This position would allow her to see DFL’s dynamics from a different perspective.

Acablo

Acablo (in his 30s) was the participant with the longest working history at DFL. By the time Amelia, Lucía and I joined the department, he had been working as a language teacher and as a curriculum leader for some time. He had clearly seen the evolution of the Department with regard to language teaching and learning and the role of technology in that process. His professional career prior to his full-time teaching post at Riverview University had also been a long and successful one.

Acablo undertook his studies at a public university in the capital city, and like most participants, he majored in language teaching. Prior to his graduation in 1998, he took an appointment as a language teacher in a language school. Both Lucia and Acablo worked for this same institution, although in different programs. While she worked with university students, he worked at the language school teaching English to children, teenagers and adults. He performed as a language teacher and tutor in this institution for thirteen years. During this period of time, he worked at three universities and two private schools.

In 2007, he received an invitation to join Riverview's University Language Department. After working as a part-time teacher for a year, he became a full-time staff member and started coordinating one of the courses of the proficiency program. In this role as curriculum leader, which he performed for four years, he ran different courses and implemented a number of language learning projects. In 2008, following his interest in seeking quality in education as well as knowing that "things can always be done better", he decided to enroll in the Master's in management and administration of educational institutions offered by Riverview University's school of education.

For the new phase of the blended program, Acablo was going to act as the leader of the Teacher Support committee, working hand-in-hand with Amelia and other former curriculum leaders and teacher assistants. Like Amelia, he had also become an ICELT Tutor and had started working as a teacher educator in the Master's program offered by the Department. Due to his teacher training experience and the knowledge he had gained during the ICELT tutor training program, in the 2012-2 term, Acablo would divide his time between the English proficiency program and the Master's program.

Like Ziyad and Lucía, Acablo had not engaged as much with the use of technology for language teaching purposes before joining DFL. He just used it "for personal stuff...to keep in touch and to share writings and resources with students" (Int. 1, l: 10). However, as a result of his career in the Department, he realized that language teaching and learning did not have to be limited by what the teacher can initiate and accomplish in the classroom. Thus, reflecting on this matter, Acablo came to believe that: "without the use of technology, it's like if we took everything for granted and just remained with ...the little things we can actually observe in class" (Int. 1 l: 20-21). Technology, in contrast, provided teachers with the opportunity to:

Have access to students' learning record in order to know what they have been doing and at the same time discern whether they are making progress or if there are things that are proving to be too difficult for them... [They can also] modify their planning and think about other types of exercises and activities that could better suit and address the needs of their students. (Int. 1, l: 15-24)

Technology, in Acablo's eyes, offered teachers' the possibility to generate alternative opportunities for language learning, as well as oversee students' language production so as to identify gaps in knowledge or areas for instructional improvement. It therefore prompted teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and helped learners to reflect on their own learning. It is as a result of what technology seems to offer to English teachers and students that Acablo, like other teacher leaders, became its advocate. Being in a leadership position evidently implied that the first person who needed to firmly believe in

what was being done was himself. As a result of such conviction, he had become a seller of ideas: “Despite not being a very good seller overall (laughter); I have been selling the idea of the use of technology to both teachers and students” (Int. 1 l: 71-72). This interest, however, would also be accompanied by a critical attitude that, in a long and successful language teaching career at DFL and other institutions, he had developed.

Salomé

Salomé (in her 30s) undertook her undergraduate studies at the same university Lucinda did. Having obtained her degree in English Philology in 2005, she started working as an English language teacher at a school where she taught children from kindergarten to third grade. However, despite her enthusiasm and energy, this first in-service teaching experience did not prove to be a successful one and gave her reason to resign after six months to look for a new professional venture.

Together with her family Salomé started a technology-related business (Internet Cafe), which allowed her to continue to nurture her knowledge of computer software and applications— an interest she had developed in her adolescence when her parents gave her her first personal computer. “Having a computer in your room was very unusual for the time...Therefore, when I entered the university I was at an advantage compared to the [student] population in general” (Int. 1, l: 20-24), she remarked as she recalled how distinct from her peers her experiences with technology had been. Working at the Internet Cafe was thus an opportunity for her to further her knowledge of ICTs.

After working at her family’s business and knowing teaching children was “not [her] thing”, she rejoined her alma mater and began working as an academic assistant in the Masters in disability and social inclusion program. In this capacity, she supported both teachers and students through the organization of bibliographical resources and was in charge of other academic-related matters— a professional experience which would allow her to start developing her management skills. During this time, she also worked as a language teacher and taught evening English lessons to staff members.

In 2007, Salomé joined the EFL teaching team of a well-known private organization that offered short training courses, as well as business development programs, among other academic services. In her role as an EFL teacher, she taught general English courses but also trained in-service EFL teachers in cities on the outskirts of Bogotá. This institution, as well as the university where this study took place, was in fact one of the establishments participating in the training programs developed by the government (as part of the National

Bilingual Plan) in order to help English teachers improve their language skills. It was at that moment when Salomé discovered her passion for teaching adults.

On completing this project, she was appointed Coordinator of the English Department and became responsible for organizing all the administrative and academic processes of this academic unit. She engaged in planning activities, teacher support and the writing of proposals for the creation continuing education courses. In 2009, while still in this managerial position, Salomé initiated her Master's degree at Riverview University and became interested in areas such as autonomy, learning strategies and the use of Web 2.0 tools. She would in fact apply this knowledge to the implementation of subsequent training projects organized by her institution in partnership with the District Education Board, aiming at consolidating the Bilingual Plan's goals with regard to teachers' exploration of new language teaching methodologies.

Having excelled in her postgraduate studies, Salomé, like Ziyad, was offered a teaching position at DFL. She joined the Department around the same time Lucía, Amelia, and I did, and like the three of us, she worked as a part-time language teacher before securing a full-time position as a curriculum leader. Despite being technologically literate and having worked as a language teacher for some time, Salomé recalled that it was at DFL where she actually started using technology for language teaching purposes and “to implement small learning projects” (Int. 1, l: 36). One year later, owing to her knowledge of CALL and the outcomes of the technology-enhanced projects she had carried out while she was a curriculum leader, she was appointed Director of DFL's self-access center (RSAC).

In this new position, Salomé was charged with the execution of the Distance English Learning Program (DELP), and with the organization of the broad range of self-access, learning support and evaluation services offered by the Department. She was also a key collaborator in the blended learning program, considering that she was involved in the administration of the courses published in the University's LMS, the facilitation of training and advisory sessions, the virtualization of learning resources and a number of other activities. During the new academic term, she would work side-by-side with a team of student-engineers in the design of the online tasks planned for the blended strategy.

Consequently, due to her central role in DFL, I would invite Salome during my stay at Riverview University to discuss the different historical phases that the Department had experienced over time with respect to the use of technology, as well as to share her views on the opportunities and challenges produced by the most recently adopted curriculum changes.

Concluding Thoughts

The language teaching stories narrated above not only provide information on participants' professional career history, but they also reveal a common thread in participants' perceptions about and interactions with technology. They reflect, to some extent, the different events that marked the paths teachers followed as to the use of Information and Communication Technologies for educational purposes— experiences, which for most of them, took on new meanings or simply started on their arrival at DFL. Therefore, these background stories set the scene for looking into the experiences that this group of language teachers and teacher leaders went through as they tried to incorporate technology into the curriculum, specifically as they integrated face-to-face and online learning modalities.

Consequently, in the next four chapters, I proceed to respond to the two related questions I posed at the beginning of this inquiry: What curriculum stories do teachers live by when participating in the implementation of an EFL blended learning program? In what ways are these stories shaped by available local and institutional stories on language teaching/learning and ICT use? In the next chapter, I explore the history of Riverview University and the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures with respect to curriculum development and its recent interest in blended learning.

CHAPTER 7

A LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENT'S CURRICULUM CHANGE STORY

Having introduced the participants in the study, I now delve into the history of curriculum development by the educational institution where this study was conducted. To be able to understand what lay behind the stories of change I witnessed and was told during field work, it is necessary to first examine the history of the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL), mainly with regard to its attempt to improve and consolidate its English proficiency program. In so doing, I temporally situate DFL in relation to the natural expansion process Riverview University has experienced over time, but most importantly, I situate both the Department and the University within the history of educational reform in Colombia.

The next few pages illustrate how Colombia's change agenda has unfolded in the context of higher education, particularly in relation to the use of technology and the practices of second language instruction, but also how such an agenda has been interpreted and adapted locally. Hence, I address the second research question: In what ways are teachers' experiences of change shaped by available institutional and organizational stories on language teaching/learning and ICT use? By bringing to light these historical and contextual considerations, both the antecedents to the adoption of blended learning and how context shapes "what is available for teachers to know" rise to the forefront (Craig, 2003, p.179).

To write this chapter, I accessed policy statements from the Colombian Ministry of Education. I also accessed material from the university archives, such as annual reports and other institutional documents (institutional plans, guidelines for virtual learning, guidelines to assess teachers' competence in educational computing and research reports), as well as curriculum documents from DFL (performance reports, teaching and learning guidelines, teacher training resources, lesson plans, etc.). I also drew on interview data (first interview) where reference was made to reform and curriculum change processes. Lastly, I drew on my own recollections and personal experiences as a former language teacher and curriculum leader, many of these prompted by my return visit during the data collection period. An analysis of these sources of information allowed me to identify historical milestones and turning points in the University's and the Department's curriculum development history, as well as capture *change* as officially reported in documents and as experienced by some of the participating agents, myself included.

Thus, in what follows, I attempt to recreate the evolution of DFL's language program and the blended strategy in a narrative that weaves together information from official documents

with personal and community stories. This narrative of progress and transformation is presented first through the eyes of the former Director of the Department, and then through the eyes of the teacher leaders participating in this study. Considering that the start of a new curricular phase in DFL coincided with my entry to Riverview University, part of this research text is also written in first person, thereby echoing my own voice and revealing the ways in which I became involved and contributed to this community's recent story of change.

I first provide an overview of the major reform movements that had been designed to re-structure the Colombian education system, and which have influenced the ELT field. I then describe the curriculum development phases DFL has gone through over the years. Lastly, I discuss what these changes have implied for teachers and their practice.

Higher Education in Colombia: A Story of Competitiveness

Education is often recognized as the main contribution to progress and development in a country. Thus, every so often or, as some suggest, at the end of an educational generation (Salas, 2005), nations engage in reform movements to ensure the educational system responds to changes in society and reflects the needs of its environment. In the case of the Colombian education system, a number of curricular changes have been introduced since gaining our Independence from Spain in 1810. However, it is the reform movement that began in the 1980s which has been the most significant to date. This reform materialized through the 1991 Constitution and the 1994 Education Act, which define education as a civic right that should be guaranteed to all Colombians. As a result, major efforts have been undertaken to increase quality and ensure the population greater access to different educational levels.

In the particular case of higher education, despite a growing expansion of the private sector, excellence and equity had not been central to the reform agenda before the 1990s. In the 60s and 70s, due to a rise in demand by high school graduates and a meager increase in size of the public universities, a rapid expansion of private higher education began, and with it the proliferation of institutions of dubious quality (Patrinos, 1990). As a result of a lack of inspection and surveillance, some of these establishments sacrificed quality for profit (Patrinos, 1990; Giraldo, Abad & Diaz, 2002), thereby disadvantaging students when competing with other graduates in the labor market, as well as reinforcing an already-existing unequal social structure. Consequently, in an effort to control the quality of the academic programs offered by both public and private universities a number of laws (Law 30 of 1992 and Law 60 of 1993) were created.

Nevertheless, on looking at the reports *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace* (Giugale, Lafourcade & Luff, 2003) and *Tertiary Education in Colombia: Paving a way for reform* (World Bank, 2003), it is noticeable that coverage (net enrollment rate), equity and quality were still unresolved issues by the beginning of the new millennium. Although there had been an important expansion of the education system and an increase in the enrollment rates in private institutions (up until the moment in which the country entered into economic recession), coverage was still low (15%) compared to other countries in the region (21% percent in Chile and 27% in Argentina).

The facts that there were disparities in enrollment between urban and rural areas and that the majority of enrolled students came from the upper two quintiles of income distribution (Giugale et al., 2003) also revealed a persistent serious problem of inequality. Problems of expansion and unequal access were also observable in the small number of Colombian workers who had attained higher education at the time (one in nine), and which according to the World Bank (2003, p. 35), were a disadvantage for domestic firms due to lack of qualified labor. Quality had also remained an issue. With these and other concerns in mind, in 2002, under a newly elected government, a new educational reform with strong emphasis on competitiveness (named *Educational Revolution*) was started.

During the *Educational Revolution* (2002-2006, 2006-2010), which lasted two presidential periods, multiple policies and programs to increase access and quality were enforced. One measure taken to ensure excellence in higher education was the issuance of Decree 808 in 2002, which established the minimum quality criteria to offer academic programs. It was at that point that the credit system was introduced in tertiary education and with it the need to consolidate a higher education system that enabled inter-institutional dialogue and mobility of different actors within and outside the system. This quality assurance mechanism would lead some Colombian universities to reorganize their curriculum in interesting ways, as was the case of the university where my study was conducted.

To further enhance quality and contribute to the country's competitiveness, three pathways were adopted: articulation between education and workforce, bilingualism, and the use of Media and Information and Communication Technologies (MTICs in Spanish). The MTICs implementation project was created as a resource to support innovative teaching and learning. The Colombian Bilingual Plan was designed as a means to strengthen the learning of a foreign (English) and second (Spanish) language in the country. Considering the relevance of these programs for this study, I explore them in detail in what follows.

Use of ICTs Across the Curriculum

Despite an interest in incorporating new technologies into education in the late 1990s, it was not until the launch of the 2002-2006 Education Sectorial Plan that this initiative materialized nationwide through a number of key projects and actions. From that moment, institutions and teachers have been strongly encouraged to make use of media and ICTs to support teaching and learning and innovate in the classroom. Similarly, projects aimed at developing infrastructure, improving connectivity, providing teachers with training and creating educational content have been developed. These efforts have resulted in the implementation of a countless number of programs and collaborative projects designed to lead the nation into a new educational era. In the context of higher education, as expected, the ICT use policy has generated not only action to improve infrastructure and ensure the effective use of technology in the classroom, but also the implementation of virtual (online and blended) courses and programs as a strategy to cope with the challenges of coverage, flexibility and the decentralization of academic supply.

Virtual learning

In its short history in the country, virtual learning has had unprecedented growth and development. *Unimedios* (2007), a magazine published by a prestigious Colombia tertiary institution, is one of the sources that discusses the origins of virtual learning in the country. According to this report, the first virtual experience in the field of education dates back to 1984 with the appearance of Logo, a programming language designed specifically for instructional purposes. It was not until 1998, however, that e-learning arrived on the scene with the creation of online courses in the context of distance education, and which at that time were offered by only two of the universities of the country. Since then, many programs have been designed and implemented, increasing the academic supply significantly.

As reported by the joint World Bank-OECD 2012 report, there are now tertiary programs offering 80% or more of content online, available at the undergraduate and graduate levels. By 2009, for instance, 36 institutions offered such programs with over 4000 students enrolled (World Bank & OECD, 2012, p.34). This claim is further supported by the organizer of *Expo E-learning 2013*, an event that brings together the online training sector, who stated that 200 higher education providers in the country are currently offering online training, either in addition to classroom instruction or as undergraduate programs and

graduate courses (Colombia Digital, 2013). In the particular context of language teaching, there are is a growing number of programs aiming at incorporating technology into the language curriculum in both online and blended formats.

To consolidate e-learning in the country, the past and the current governments have engaged in various initiatives. One project that has been of particular relevance is the study conducted by the Ministry of Education (MEN in Spanish) in 2006 to assess the models of virtual learning in tertiary institutions. It showed that there was a limited offer of virtual undergraduate programs, lack of institutional policies and guidelines to direct the development of quality of virtual programs, and insufficient teacher training. As a result, the government opted for: a) promoting the creation of virtual education projects based on the development of basic and professional skills; b) promoting the development of e-learning solutions under strict quality processes; and c) ensuring that the directors of higher education institutions develop strategic plans for the incorporation and use of ICT in their institutions (MEN, 2009).

It is still unclear, however, whether these policies have achieved their intended impact, or whether the large number of fully online and blended programs now being offered meet the benchmarks of quality set by government. For instance, in the analysis of the results of a survey aimed at diagnosing the level of use of ICTs in (virtual) distance programs, and which was distributed to 233 Colombian universities, Facundo (2005) found that by then there had been neither specific requirements for the creation of these programs nor emphasis on the design of prospective studies and theoretical and pedagogical models. As the author suggests, the focus of many of the institutions had been primarily on the technologies themselves rather than on the need to establish new pedagogical paradigms and prepare teachers for the challenges emerging from the use of a new teaching medium.

By and large, it is clear that the governments' ICT policy has led tertiary institutions to make important structural and curricular transformations— changes that have also been accompanied by the introduction of an ambitious language policy.

Second Language Education

In Colombia, language teaching and learning are currently tied to a national bilingual policy which requires students to be able to communicate in a second language (English) by the end of high school and/or tertiary education. This interest in the learning of foreign languages started in the Republic (1903-1927) when European languages like French were introduced in secondary education (Iafrancesco, 1998). Nevertheless, although French and other languages were part of the mandated curriculum at different points in

history, it is the English language which has occupied the area of language policy in the country during the most recent decades.

The 1994 National Education Act, as noted above, became the basis for the different changes that were to be generated in education and the area of language learning was no exception. This law reorganized the whole school system and established specific goals for foreign languages in the country. It granted schools and higher education institutions autonomy to define their content and pedagogical processes, and instituted foreign language teaching as another mandatory area in the curriculum (MEN, 1994, articles 21, 22, and 23). In 1999, the government presented the Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages in order to support teachers in the design, development and evaluation of newly-required curricula. It was expected that teachers, by using the guidelines, would establish achievable goals in order to develop learners' communicative competence in a foreign language, and likewise make decisions in order to promote meaningful learning.

Nonetheless, with the growing interest of the private educational sector in the mastering of a second language and in bilingual education, in 2005, the Ministry of Education presented the National Bilingual Program 2004- 2019; a project which aimed to make Colombian citizens bilingual (proficient in English) by the year 2019. Usma (2009a) maintains that this bilingual national plan, when compared with language legislation previously implemented, is a program with no precedents in Colombia. According to the Minister of Education of that time, “[The plan was created] from the need to strengthen the strategic position of Colombia in the world, determined by free trade treaties, globalization of cultural industries and the development of the knowledge society” (MEN, 2005, p.2).

Therefore, as indicated in the Sectorial Plan 2006-2010, the bilingual program seeks to raise the standards of English teaching throughout the educational system, and lead students to develop skills in this language according to international standards (MEN 2006a, p. 46). This plan, in the eyes of the government, is also a policy to promote equity as “the domain of a foreign language has traditionally been the privilege of a few people, mostly from higher socioeconomic strata”. Thus, with the implementation of the program, this competence now becomes “a competence of all” (MEN, 2006b, p.61).

As part of the planning stage of the policy, three studies were conducted in public and private schools in principal cities to assess teachers' communicative competence and pedagogical knowledge as well as students' English language performance. The results indicated that although educational institutions had been incorporating English in their educational projects for some time, teaching did not have the quality required, and the number of hours (three per week on average) devoted to the study of the language (in

secondary) did not lead to the expected results. An evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Education of a sample of students in the 8th and the 10th¹⁰ grades established that only 6.4% of 10th grade students reached an acceptable command. Similarly, an evaluation of English teachers (working for the public sector) showed that nearly two-thirds (65.4 %) were just basic users of the language and 33 % were at an intermediate level (MEN, 2006b, p. 61).

As a result of the low standards revealed, the Bilingual Program was launched and five areas were identified as targets of the implementation process. These areas involved: 1) the development of professional development programs, 2) the creation of standards for English teaching and learning, 3) the design and implementation of examinations to assess high school and university students' language competence, 4) the use of new information and communication technologies to support the teaching of English, and 5) the consolidation of bilingual and trilingual models in the different ethnic communities around the country (Cely, 2007, cited in Usma, 2009a).

The creation of standards has served as a parameter to align the English component of the state exams for high school (Saber) and university (Saber Pro) students with the Common European Framework. With this aligned testing system in mind, ambitious goals were established by the government in 2006. As indicated in the Vision 2019 document, it is expected that by 2015, 75% of English teachers in primary and secondary education will reach at least level B2 of competence. It is also expected that 70% of students in grade 11 and 100% of final year university students will reach level B1 in English in the state exams, Saber and Saber Pro, respectively (MEN, 2006b).

University graduates should be able to understand complex texts in their field of specialty, communicate fluently with native speakers, produce detailed texts on various subjects and argue their points of view. That is to say, they should be able to demonstrate a level of language competence considerably higher than that required for high school graduates. Future teachers of English should also show their competence in the language and their ability to teach it. With regard to future teachers, it is projected that 100% will reach level B2 and 50% should reach level C1 of competence. As can be inferred, the learning and teaching of English gained special attention across all the educational system as of 2005. Nevertheless, as with the case of the ICT use and virtual learning policies, it is still unclear whether the ambitious objectives of the national bilingual program are being achieved.

To date, without detracting from the scope and positive outcomes of the language reform, a number of Colombian scholars have examined the multiple challenges the policy poses for teachers, students and institutions (e.g., Ayala & Álvarez, 2005; de Mejia, 2006;

¹⁰ Secondary education is divided into basic secondary (grades 6 to 9) and mid secondary (grades 10 and 11).

Escobar, 2012; Gonzalez, 2007; Guerrero & Quintero, 2009; Herazo, Jerez, & Lourduy, 2012; Usma, 2009a, 2009b). These authors have drawn attention to issues that have been neglected (e.g., diminished presence of indigenous languages and cultures), or on the contrary, given more attention in the policy (e.g., support of transnational political and economic agendas), and have suggested there is a need for the program to be more connected to the reality of the country and more linguistically and culturally inclusive.

It is in this context of a marked emphasis on innovation, expansion and competitiveness that the stories of curriculum change of higher education institutions are currently being framed. Hence, having provided an overview of the reform movements shaping higher education and language teaching in Colombia, I now explore how Riverview University and the participants of this study have interpreted and dealt with such official mandates. Before proceeding, it should be noted that this discussion is structured into sections organized chronologically. However, because a series of events occurred in parallel, overlaps between sections may be evidenced.

An ELT Department's Change Story: From National Discourses to Local Actions

Currently located on the outskirts of the capital city, nearly thirty-seven year old Riverview University has had a short but fast-paced successful trajectory. Since its founding in 1979, this private university has rapidly grown in size and in the number of academic services it offers, from 6 undergraduate programs offered at the start to 21 undergraduate programs, over 28 postgraduate diplomas, 21 Master programs, and 1 doctoral program. This has evidently resulted in a significant increase in staff and student enrollment, with more than 9000 registered students and nearly 1600 (full time, part-time, and contracted) teachers.

The growth of the institution parallels the development of the capital city over recent decades and is the result of an increase in demand and the expansion of the higher education system as a whole, which, as noted above, started in the 1970s and reached its peak in the 1990s. Riverview University, like other Colombian private and public establishments, has undergone many changes in terms of its physical infrastructure and curriculum structure in order to respond to the educational demands of a country in need of skilled graduates capable of adapting to the new knowledge society and changing labor markets. Hence, as part of the academic services provided to the academic community and as a result of the objectives of internationalization and student mobility, the Department of Foreign Languages was founded back in the 1990s.

1996- 2001: Early Years (The Expansion of English Teaching)

The Department of Foreign Languages, structured as an academic unit at the service of faculties and other cross-curricular units, was created 17 years after the foundation of Riverview University. Despite the fact that the teaching of English had always been a part of Riverview's curriculum, it was on November 7, 1996 that the *Comisión Permanente del Consejo Superior* created DFL with the specific mission to design an overall plan of activities to support the learning of a second language within the entire academic community. The establishment of DFL also complied with the prerequisites of the Education Act of 1994, which had required foreign language teaching at all educational levels.

In 1997, DFL's English proficiency program was created initially with five courses aligned to the Common European Framework and structured around the development of communicative and strategic competences and a philosophy of independent learning. Each course was taught for three hours a week and constituted another mandatory area in the University's curriculum. At first, students' language knowledge was assessed through the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) at the end of the fifth level. Yet, with the creation of two additional courses in 1998 and increased instructional time (four hours), students were required to take high-stakes tests like TOEFL or IELTS in order to graduate. These accountability mechanisms would have an impact on teaching and learning as well as on teachers and learners, as will be discussed later.

With the start of the proficiency program, a testing process was also initiated in order to diagnose students' command of the language and match their language abilities to the course most suitable for their level. Since the creation of the program, following the identification of learners' level of proficiency, teachers would provide students with a self-access *Learning Pathway*¹¹ and then ask them to work independently on areas that needed reinforcement. This idea to encourage independent study through the use of pathways, which was implemented in conjunction with explicit instruction on learning strategies, the development of portfolios and the use of the technologies accompanying the textbook (e.g., audio tapes and video), began to gain momentum as the student population increased.

Therefore, by 2002, with a significant increase in the number of enrolled students and staff members in the university, DFL saw the need to consolidate its language teaching program as well as extend its academic services and learning resources. Also, with the advent of the Internet and an interest in computer-assisted learning, a more structured

¹¹ Teachers provided students with a document, guided by the syllabus and students' course book, with a list of competences they needed to work on and a list of resources they could use for that purpose. This guided scheme created semi-autonomous learning situations for learners as they could make their own choices as well as be directed by teachers.

attempt to integrate ICTs into the curriculum emerged. Thus, by the turn of the century, the Department had begun a new curricular period where the use of technology and independent learning were to become strategies supporting the teaching and learning of languages. However, this new phase of operation not only responded to a natural process of change, but was also influenced by a national process of reform.

2002-2004: Curricular Reform (The Adoption of the Credit System)

In 2002, as mentioned earlier, Decree 808, which established mechanisms of quality and transfer in higher education, was endorsed. In Article 18 of this decree, one credit was defined as 48 hours of academic workload. It is equivalent to the number of hours students must invest inside or outside the classroom with direct support of the teacher, plus the number of hours they must invest in independent study or other practices necessary to achieve established learning goals (MEN, 2003). With the consolidation of the credit system, not only in Colombia but in Latin America and Europe, it became imperative for higher education establishments to re-structure their curriculum in order to bring about changes in teaching practice and create opportunities for independent learning. Clearly, with the adoption of the credit system, it was necessary for the academic programs run by DFL to initiate a process of change too. As Lorna, the former Head of the Department, said in our first interview:

With the system of credits, it was clearer for the university and for the students that it was not only class time but ... they had to study three times more to achieve the expected level at the end of the seven courses. (Int. 1, l: 64-70)

Therefore, in 2003, DFL began its own reform phase by designing a new English Proficiency Program¹² to adapt to the new curricular system of the University and to meet the requirements of the Decree of 2002 with respect to the minimum quality standards of undergraduate academic programs. As recalled by Lorna, this curricular reform also coincided with a historical phase in DFL where there was a marked concern for students with low scores in TOEFL and IELTS, as these were indicative of a gap between the goals of the University in terms of the learning of English and the actual performance achieved by some students at the end of the program:

When students began taking the international test and realized they had barely passed English with 3.0 [C-], because they had relied solely on what they learned in the classroom, did not help them get the scores they expected, the idea of doing independent study took on added significance. (Int. 1, l: 90-95)

¹² In the same year the French and Spanish as a Foreign Language programs were also opened.

It was evident that unless there was a rigorous development of independent work, the number of hours devoted to classroom work would certainly not be sufficient to achieve the expected learning outcomes. The fact that students needed to practice the language in spaces other than the classroom and take greater responsibility for their own language learning, was something that, although previously considered, acquired even more importance at this new stage. The new curriculum thus involved not only an organization of learning activities into academic credits, but also an interest in fostering independent learning as a means to help students achieve their language learning goals and become more self-regulated learners.

It is because of this desire to enhance learners' language performance and foster independent learning that technology also began to play an important role at DFL. Although technology had been available for learners and teachers through general computer rooms and DFL's own multimedia resources, the Department saw in the use of educational technologies, and, more specifically in self-access, a way to attain some of its language learning goals. While going through the process of curricular reform, DFL ventured into the field of self-access learning and conducted two research projects, the final outcome being the creation of Riverview Self-access Center (RSAC) in 2004.

2004-2007: Implementing Self-access Learning

With the opening of RSAC, DFL moved away from the more conventional and highly-controlled nature of some of the language learning facilities that were used in the country at that time, and instead focused on the development and support of independent language learning. "At the time we were pioneers in the country", Lorna remarked, "We had self-access resources with answers, designed under clearly defined criteria, for all courses. We had software; we had designed learning pathways. It was something that had not been done before" (Int. 1, l: 214-219).

In its initial stage, the self-access center aimed to: a) encourage students to use the wide range of printed and digital language learning resources available; b) advise individual students in how to improve their linguistic competence; c) train students in how to decide what to study, find relevant material, set about doing the tasks in a logical order, and self-assess their progress; and d) develop guidelines for teachers and tutors to support independent study. As with most self-access centers, there was also development and use of in-house materials along with the use of commercially-available resources. In Lorna's eyes, providing learner support was particularly relevant to the success of the strategy; therefore, with the inception of RSAC, "the role of tutor [senior student] and language advisor

[teacher] is born” (Int. 1, l: 222) and becomes central to the task of guiding students in their process of learning to learn.

After its opening in 2004, RSAC started to consolidate its academic services as well as build a stronger connection with the teaching and learning practices taking place in the language classroom. In so doing, the Department was able to put into effect the credit system policy which required Riverview University to establish for each academic program a number of independent work hours. Having introduced students to the self-access center, teachers were encouraged to link their independent study tasks to the available resources. As recalled by Lorna, during the semester, “teachers assigned tasks that were related to RSAC” so that the students would visit the center (Int. 1, l: 233).

After a process of training, teachers were also required to take students to the center during class time so they could work on their language skills, as well as get acquainted with the printed and technological resources available for language study. New learning and teaching discourses and practices thus gradually began to be adopted at DFL as a result of the role played by the self-access center. In 2006, the Department opened the Distance English Learning Program (DELP). This program was created in order to meet the needs of a small segment of the student population which, due to the nature of their studies, had required a more flexible and independent learning environment.

2007- 2009: Self-access Learning Revisited

During 2007-2009, as a result of various challenging situations, DFL was led to re-think the role of self-access learning. Some of these challenges were related to the difficulties experienced in the administration and use of the center, the launch of Riverview’s plan for the use and application of ICT, which established the use of an institutional learning management system, and the expansion and needs of the distance learning program.

The Challenges of Self-access Learning

Although the use of RSAC seemed to have given rise to a renewed language learning culture and an interest in autonomy, its introduction was not without its stumbling blocks. Despite the many learning opportunities the center created for learners and teachers, those involved in its implementation were also faced with a number of problems. One of the most salient issues was the level of readiness of teachers to fully embrace self-directed and technology-enhanced learning. As the former director of RSAC commented in an informal

conversation, and which I recorded in my fieldnotes, some teachers could not adapt to the new curricular changes.

Teachers' struggle to properly use the self-access center was one of the aspects that caused tension. Despite having participated in training for independent learning, some teachers retained the same classroom dynamics while at RSAC; "they were not doing a transition between environments, thus repeating what they used to do in their lessons in a place with computers and self-access resources" (FN, 19 Nov. 2013). Conversations between teachers and the center's staff members about the philosophy and goals of self-access would result in some of these teachers, as I recall, not visiting the center on a regular basis or linking self-access to classroom work. As implied by its former Director, they did not seem to recognize that independent learning was part of the curriculum and not something additional, and that as part of their role as teachers, they needed to help students realize the value of self-study.

The use of technology in the center would also add to the challenges experienced by DFL's teachers and management. The use of CALL, as Benson (2011, p.152) points out, can be "*potentially* [emphasis in original] supportive of autonomy" in that learners, by controlling the technological device, are in control of certain aspects of their learning. By using computers and the Internet, learners can also gain wider access to authentic language sources as well as engage in genuine interaction in the target language. However, this teacher resistance was experienced despite the fact that the self-access center had also taken steps to train teachers in the use of technology. This resistance would be evident, for instance, in the frequency with which they used some of the tools available at the center, as I documented in my fieldnotes:

In thinking of my own teaching experiences at the center, I remembered the existence of a software package structured to guide students' writing process, which, despite having been purchased a couple of years earlier, was seldom used by teachers. As I talked to the center's ex-Director, not only did I learn that it had been bought at a high price, but that it had been difficult to encourage teachers to use it even with prior training. Unsurprisingly, based on this event and as a result of the national economic crisis, the University decided not to purchase additional software until what was already available had been put to good use. (FN, 19 Nov. 2013)

As can be seen, in spite of the opportunities that the self-access center aimed to create for teachers and learners in terms of independent language learning, there were some teachers who found it difficult to embrace change. Because of their difficulty in adjusting to the new learning and teaching dynamics motivated by self-access and CALL, the center did not appear to have been used to its full potential. The use of RSAC was not a credited

activity and most students visited the center according to the level of their teacher's advice; therefore, to some extent, teachers' attitudes also had an impact on students' responses toward self-access. It is clear that self-access at DFL, despite having been guided by a rigorous research process, was not alien to some of the issues experienced in other centers in the world. These contextual and personal challenges along with other external (advances in ICTs) and institutional (the adoption of an LMS) factors would eventually lead the center to make changes to its structure in the future.

Entering the Domains of Virtual Learning

Towards the end of 2005, Riverview University launched its 2006-2015 Institutional Development Plan. This document specified areas in which the institution was strong and planned to continue positioning itself in the coming years. It also diagnosed areas for improvement. As part of its strengths, Riverview identified the need to keep reinforcing the quality of its undergraduate programs and to consolidate its curricular reform. As part of its challenges, the University established the need to structure a more flexible, interdisciplinary and internationalized curriculum, and to incorporate virtual learning to a greater extent in all academic programs (Riverview University, 2005). This was noticeably a response to the government's ICT policy and the need to develop a strategic plan for the design and implementation of e-learning solutions.

In 2005, in alignment with the Institutional Plan, the Center for Educational Technologies (CET)¹³ created a proposal for the use and application of ICTs and developed *e-Riverview*; the institution's learning management system. It was intended that the LMS support the implementation of the credit system and the development of independent study, and be conducive to changes in teachers' pedagogical practice (Segovia, 2012). This learning platform is built on the open-source Moodle 2.0 and constitutes an online environment that sought to provide a higher level of interaction between teachers, students, and study materials through asynchronous communication processes (CET, 2007).

With the introduction of e-Riverview into the University's academic life, a process of teacher and student training was started. As part of their development plan, teachers now were required to take courses to learn how to design, implement and assess activities that guide students' independent work in the new virtual learning environment, and students in

¹³ The CET is the academic unit responsible for the training of teachers in educational computing and the training of students in the use of ICT, as well as for providing support to teachers on the use of technology in their pedagogical practice (Riverview University, n.d.).

turn were expected to participate in training sessions to learn how to use the platform. A goal was set for 2011 requiring all subjects of the curriculum to be hosted in this new learning environment. Clearly, these new institutional policies, together with DFL's own needs and challenges, would bring about new changes in the dynamics of language teaching and learning.

Owing to the technological needs of the distance English-learning program, which had started to rely on the web to provide support and ready access to resources, DFL was one of the first academic units in the University to make use of e-Riverview. Their interest in helping students from the FtF program in the development of their independent study goals was also one of the underlying reasons. This platform came into use in 2007 and was gradually incorporated into both the FtF (English and French) and distance programs so as to provide students with access to class and independent study learning materials, and with information about the syllabus and assignments of the courses.

The use of e-Riverview, which signified an entry into the domains of virtual learning, along with advances in technological infrastructure and wider access to computers, would cause the Department to observe a rapid change in the functioning of RSAC. Although students considered the center as a novelty and frequency of visits was relatively high when it was opened, as technology became more popular and widely used, the number of visits started to drop. The moment wireless Internet connection was installed in the University and students began using personal computers, "there was no point in telling them, you must go to the center" (FN, 19 Nov. 2013). Similarly, through e-Riverview, they now had ready access to resources and could do some assignments from home or any other place.

Although this center was only opened in 2004, the challenges inherent in its implementation, the technological advances associated with the use of the web, and Riverview's desire to venture into the field of virtual learning would rapidly lead DFL to re-configure the role of self-access learning. As claimed by Benson, because self-access centers are "primarily repositories for language learning resources, ready access to resources through the Internet may ultimately call their future as physical spaces into question" (2011, p.149). The future of RSAC as a physical space, however, would not only be called into question by ready access to resources through the Internet, but also by the promises of e-learning. A discovery journey to establish a clearer relationship among autonomy, technology and language learning would thus be motivated by the adoption of the institutional platform.

The participants of this study and I, due to our recent entry to the University and the Department, would contribute to the creation of this new curricular story in various ways.

Accordingly, the following pages in this chapter, although intertwined with the narrative accounts given by participants during the initial interview, are also written in first person and are a reflection of the story I helped co-construct since I was appointed language teacher and curriculum leader in 2009.

2009- 2011: Virtual Learning: Promise, Peril or a Lifesaver in the Face of Emergency?

As noted above, the Department started to experiment with e-Riverview in 2007. Progress would be first made in the distance program because of the benefits that the LMS offered in terms of access to content and feedback, but especially in terms of student support, scaffolding and assessment. In the face-to-face program, due to its large student and teacher numbers, change would take place at a slower pace. Curriculum leaders were expected to plan how best to integrate the platform with the FtF course they were coordinating and then slowly introduce it to their team of teachers so that they could in turn use it with their learners. At that time, however, the use of the platform had not yet been fully institutionalized; therefore, not all coordinators used it regularly.

During this time, the self-access center assisted initiated a process of digitalization of printed materials in order to create a bank of learning resources accessible through the LMS. This would lead to an increase in the development of in-house materials adapted to the goals of the curriculum and the needs of the students, but in turn would result in less frequent use of educational software and printed self-study materials. Moreover, as noted by the former Director of the center, with the rise of Web 2.0 tools, the Department would start to take advantage of some of the multimedia resources freely available on the Internet, which would also have an impact on software usage. With a shift towards e-learning, the center thus saw the need to strengthen services such as learner and teacher support, placing particular emphasis on one-to-one language advice, materials design and teacher training.

Between 2009 and 2011, this academic unit maintained a steady phase of virtualizing learning resources and integrating new technologies into FtF instruction. However, besides being a response to an institutional change process, this stage would also result from the relentless force of nature, and more specifically, the flooding that Riverview University experienced in 2011 during a severe rainy season. Therefore, given this particular situation, the last historical period of curriculum development discussed in this chapter is divided into three sections: before, during and after the flood.

Before the Flood: Experimenting with New Technologies

In 2009, I joined Riverview University. In reviewing the opening speech of that year, which I found in the University's archives, I had the opportunity to recall the President's words. On that day, among other topics, he referred to the progress that had been achieved in terms of curricular reform and stressed the importance of bilingualism and the use of ICT in the University's educational policy. He also reminded the audience of the horizon that had been set for the coming years and the challenges that the institution still needed to confront such as establishing a more stable culture of research and scholarship (Riverview University, 2009). Looking back in time, however, I can picture myself as a young professional who could hardly anticipate all the things that would occur in later years.

It was in my first year working as an English language teacher when technology, specifically e-Riverview, started to be more systematically integrated into the curriculum of the English Proficiency Program. One of the aspects which instilled curriculum leaders' desire to utilize the platform, apart from those previously discussed, was the need to fully realize the Department's goal of independent learning. Despite the reform made to the curriculum in 2003 and the creation of the self-access center, some students still did not seem to invest enough time in independent study, which was not only detrimental to their language learning, but also a sign of non-compliance with the credit system.

Designing activities for students to carry out when not in the classroom and monitoring this independent learning component systematically seemed to be the best way to provide a solution to this longstanding problem. Consequently, in 2009, the use of e-Riverview was institutionalized in the Department and all curriculum leaders and teachers were required to take advantage of it. It was around this time when the road to what in the future would become a blended learning program began to be paved.

During our first interview Salomé, the current Director of the self-access center, commented on the Department's implicit but firm goal of gradually combining FtF language instruction with computer-assisted learning:

From the moment e-Riverview started to be used, we began to step into blended learning, although it was not so explicit in our discourse. In this first stage what we did was to find materials that provided support to students and that allowed them to work independently on what they had studied in class. The Moodle platform provided us with that opportunity. So we were basically working from a perspective of independent work, and for that reason the structure of the LMS at that time was like a repository of materials. (Int. 1, 1: 19-32)

As mentioned by Salomé, although mostly used as a repository of resources, adopting the LMS signified an initial attempt to not only link but also integrate classroom

activity with self-directed study and computer-mediated learning. It involved taking a step forward with regard to the role of technology in the curriculum. While providing students with access to resources was DFL's initial target, curriculum leaders were also expected to create spaces for the interaction between student-student and teacher-student(s) and for the development of critical thinking and self-assessment skills.

With the introduction of e-Riverview, there was a clear intention to make a transition from a phase where there was no student-student interaction and the computer was mostly used as a tutor and a tool (Warschauer, 1996), to a stage where students were encouraged to create content and communicate with others. Despite the fact that the self-access center aimed to promote a communicative use of ICT, during the 2004-2007 curricular period, the approach to the use of computers was still restricted. Although technology had started to be woven into everyday practice, students acted as consumers rather than producers of knowledge and had minimal interaction with their peers (Bax, 2003).

As Maloney (2007) maintains, people are using new technologies to look at problems in many different ways: "to make new connections and form relationships between disparate, sometimes apparently contradictory, pieces of information, and ultimately to create something new that can be shared with others" (para.13). They are therefore supportive of student-centered approaches to learning given that students are encouraged to solve meaningful problems and reflect on their thinking processes. Yet, the challenge, and what DFL undoubtedly experienced, is to discover how to incorporate effectively these "paradigm-altering technologies" into language teaching and learning.

Institution-wide, five years after its introduction, only 25% of all the subjects of the curriculum had been included in e-Riverview (Segovia, 2012, p. 121) and only 34% of the full-time teachers had made use of the platform (CET, 2011). Although DFL was the academic unit that most actively made use of the LMS, there were a number of teachers that used it as a repository of resources and thus had not exploited its full potential. For the new academic year curriculum leaders and teachers had committed themselves to the difficult task of rethinking their approach to virtual learning. However, in April 2011, while trying to do so, the unexpected happened: the flood came.

The Power of Nature: The Story of a Flood

It all happened at 9:45 a.m. on 25 April 2011. Nationwide, it had been raining heavily during those weeks. It was actually one the worst rainy seasons in years. The local newspapers reported it as the strongest winter wave in Colombia in 60 years. In that particular morning there was a lot of traffic and the road to the University was littered with stranded cars. I remember I had to get off the bus a few hundred meters before the usual bus stop and walk to the

university. When going over the river bridge I crossed every day to get to my office, I noticed that the water was about to cover the wooden structure. Although I felt a bit concerned, what would happen just a few hours later never crossed my mind.

It was about 8:30 a.m. when my colleagues and I, who had been working in our offices, were requested to leave the campus. This was something entirely unusual, and we made several calls to confirm the evacuation notice before we finally decided to leave. All students and staff members were evacuated from the University by 9:00 a.m. The first thing I did when I arrived home at about 11:00 a.m. was to tune the TV to the news channel. I could not believe my eyes: the barricade that prevented water from overflowing had broken and water had covered the campus almost entirely. After a couple of hours, the water level had reached 1.5 meters, going up to two meters in some areas.

I only recollect bits and pieces of what happened afterward: an exchange of phone calls, text messages and emails to know more about the flood, but also to offer help to deal with the disaster. The one thing that I clearly remember was the President's decision to drain the campus and resume classes no later than one week. However, on May 21st, while the campus was being drained, heavy rain came again and the campus was flooded for a second time. This time the damage was more severe and it was impossible for us to return to the University as planned. Phone calls and emails would be exchanged once again, but this time with a hint of helplessness and sadness. This natural disaster was not only experienced by us but by many communities in the country; the University's case was just one among many.

Undeniably, the consequences of a severe winter season had faced the community of Riverview University with adversity, yet, despite countless difficulties, the semester was never suspended. After the first flood, help was offered by many people and educational institutions, and new plans to resume and finish the semester were promptly devised. The key to success: to recommence classes in unaffected branches and other buildings and make use of ICTs. A week after the first flood, all classes had started at alternate locations, and although the second flood made it impossible to meet the original recovery and restoration work timetable, faculty and students eventually returned to the main campus in July. During these three months, as one would expect, technology was the best ally of the University.

In the case of DFL, the use of technology was even more essential since there were more than 2000 students placed in different buildings according to their field of study and therefore scattered throughout the city. Our only option at the time was to teach online the lessons that were still missing and to continue working with the institutional platform, which luckily had not been affected by the water because its servers were not on campus. Language courses were initially delivered through

synchronous online tools like Skype and Elluminate Live!¹⁴ and through asynchronous means such as e-Riverview. Once physical space was made available, lessons were combined with face-to-face instruction.

As Salomé commented in our first conversation, the different experiences that took place during the flood emergency resulted in a definite shift into blended learning: “With the flood we saw the need to find other environments that could replace face-to-face instruction and thus decided to combine asynchrony with Moodle and synchrony with Elluminate ... It was then that we saw the opportunity to strengthen the asynchronous component we had been working on for years”. After the flood, having realized that some of the language learning goals of the proficiency program had been achieved through a combination of FtF and online provision, “we would start talking about blended learning as a viable approach” (Int. 1, l: 14-19). To both Salomé and me, the concept of blended learning had eventually been incorporated into the discourse of our community.

Nonetheless, things would not be easy after recovering from the flood and returning to the campus. During the second academic term, financial and infrastructural measures had to be taken, as Salomé explained: “We had to save on faculty and physical space. We had to save up some money, and that also influenced and accelerated blended learning in the Department” (Int. 1, l: 22-23). A new curricular stage full of changes and complex, critical pedagogical decisions was thus ahead of us.

After the Calm Comes the Storm: A Shift towards Blended Learning

Due to the financial constraints that the University had endured and knowing that the technology could effectively support teaching and learning, the Department decided to re-structure the English proficiency program. The time devoted to FtF instruction was reduced from four to three hours, and, as a result, the use of technology was broadened. There was a need to ensure that students achieved the same learning objectives within a new academic and logistical arrangement. This new language program would involve a shift from a technology-enhanced learning environment, where technology was mainly used to provide ready access to learning content and occasionally opportunities to produce content and engage in interaction, to a blended learning environment, where a component of the curriculum was to be developed and assessed online. This significant change would involve important decision-making, especially in relation to learning goals, assessment, teaching methods and materials.

¹⁴ *Elluminate Live!* is a web conferencing program, acquired by Blackboard Inc., where educational institutions and businesses can hold virtual classes and meetings.

One of the first challenges that the Department would face was related to the choice of technologies that were to be used in the online mode. Despite having combined synchronous and asynchronous tools during the flood crisis and having discovered their potential for interaction, incorporating a synchronous component into the new curriculum did not seem to be practical. Because of the difficulty of organizing synchronous sessions with a large number of students, as Salomé observed, “the Department started to explore, well, what’s better, to have 200 students in a room in Elluminate at the same time with one teacher? Or to exploit Moodle and work asynchronously?” (Int. 1, l: 19-21).

Lucía, who performed as a curriculum leader at the time of the flood, also commented on the difficulties language teachers may experience when delivering their lessons through synchronous tools such as web conferencing programs, especially in regard to pedagogy. She addressed the concern that teachers may not know how to create properly spaces for student-student interaction and instead could end up reinforcing or operating under a teacher-centered learning environment, or that, as it had occurred to her, it might have been difficult to keep students’ participation under control:

The problem with a synchronous hour is that it falls into a kind of lecture. So the same thing will happen. The same students who always participate in class are the ones who will participate there. And this happened to me. I had this experience with Elluminate during the flood. There were some students who entered the virtual room, greeted and said something and it seemed as if they were online, but then... I would start asking [questions] and well they were gone already. (Int. 1, l: 126-131).

Hence, as a result of the logistical and pedagogical constraints experienced during the months of April to June, synchrony was not one of the aspects to be included in the Department’s new language blended program, at least not at its early implementation stage. Instead, teachers and students were required to use the institutional platform and its asynchronous tools in combination with FtF instruction. With the choice of what seemed to be a more practical technological scenario, curriculum leaders and program Directors went on to make decisions about the learning goals and tasks for each mode, as well as to be more specific about assessment. This selection and distribution of activities and tools reflected their initial understanding of blended learning.

In the second half of 2011, the first implementation phase of the new curriculum, the CALL mode of the blended program was divided into two components: 1) An independent study component with activities and resources (worksheets and links to exercises on the web) through which students could review formal aspects of the language (grammar), and which could be done online or offline, and assigned at the discretion of each teacher; and 2) a compulsory component— a quiz-type online module designed directly in the LMS—

through which students could develop their reading and listening skills and be introduced to new concepts and topics. While the first sub-mode aimed to reinforce the linguistic aspects that had been studied in the classroom, the second aimed to prepare students for a new learning cycle and in that way replace the classroom teaching input that was no longer being provided.

This selection of sub-modes implied that students would mainly interact with content and with the computer rather than with their teacher or peers, as they were only required to practice receptive skills such as reading and listening. Accordingly, the following semester, due to the teachers' concern about the limited time students had to use the target language in the classroom, the need to create opportunities for interaction and scaffolding within the LMS was once again considered. With a reduction of contact classes, curriculum leaders and teachers had no choice but to find a way to finally address this situation, which, together with students' low engagement in independent learning activities, seemed to have become the Achilles heel of the Department.

Although Moodle supports the design of interactional learning tasks through the use of chat, wiki or forum, curriculum leaders and teachers mainly used it to store, organize and manage learning content. Seldom was it used to promote communication and collaborative work among students. Even after the flood, with the design of quiz-type learning modules, some of the discussion and content creation tools built into the LMS were still under-exploited. As a result, the Department decided to move towards a new blended learning phase. To Salomé, during this new stage:

It was possible to reach another level of interaction, another level of blended learning. We used to work under an idea of independent work where the student comes and downloads a resource and works with it but there is no interaction, but then, in the 2012 stage, we began to achieve student-student and student-teacher interaction in the platform, which was a giant step forward. (Int. 1, l: 31-34).

As can be inferred, during 2011, DFL and its staff members went through a fast-paced process of curricular change. Hence, it is not surprising that, despite their commitment to creating a more interactive online learning environment, the first year of the implementation of the blended program was somewhat chaotic, as pointed out by some participants in the first interview. Ziyad, for instance, recalled taking part in teaching practices that had not been entirely successful. During the first year of the strategy, it did not appear to be clear to him and other teachers what switching into a blended format actually meant: "Something negative was that maybe we didn't know how to carry it out, and so at first it was somewhat chaotic and did not have the impact we expected" (Int. 1, l: 38-40).

For Ziyad, as for other participants, the initial attempts at putting into practice a blended curriculum were overwhelming. It was the first time that, despite having worked

with technology and using an LMS for many years, everybody in the Department explicitly referred to the program as being blended. This, however, had not been a concerted attempt to change, as Acablo commented:

Well the difficult thing was that suddenly the use of technology was not an option, but it was basically imposed, although I do not mean it was something negative ... Now, looking back, we realize that it would have been very relevant to have delved a little bit more into the literature behind all this ... At that time we did it ... pretty much empirically. At some point we did not know exactly what we were doing to be honest. (Int. 1 L: 29-36)

Later in his narrative he added:

Having no clear idea of what it is that we want from technology and how it is that we want to make it part of our educational doings, what remains is thus a feeling of not wanting to use it. (Int. 1, l: 49-51)

Clearly, in an effort to comply with the desire of the University in using technology, Acablo and other colleagues had found themselves being forced to use technology in an empirical manner. Although this imposition was not perceived negatively, it had certainly caused teachers and curriculum leaders to rush into a trial-and-error phase in which attitudes of rejection were an unavoidable outcome. Like Acablo, Salomé reasoned that imposition and haste had been the possible causes underlying teachers' attitudes of resistance. Owing to the flood, teachers had been required to use different technologies to complete the academic term satisfactorily, yet when they were told the following semester that "face-to-face instruction was going to be reduced and replaced through online work" (Int. 1, l: 101-102), they felt worried as they did not feel prepared to cope with the change.

As stressed by Salomé, it would have been ideal if the initiative had sprung from the teachers; however, involving them in subsequent design of the strategy was something "that was finally going to be achieved" through the elimination of the role of the curriculum leader. Curriculum leaders and their assistants would no longer have sole control over the planning and management of learning and assessment activities of the seven courses comprising the proficiency program. As an alternative, four committees (Planning, Evaluation, Teaching Support, and Learner Support) were created and teacher and teacher leaders were expected to work together. Lesson planning and CALL design, among other tasks, and then became more decentralized processes in order to generate a greater sense of understanding and ownership. It is the Department's curriculum making story that takes place in the second semester of 2012 —the second implementation stage of the blended program— which is the main focus of this inquiry.

A Case of Technology-enhanced Language Learning: A Reflective Coda

As expressed above, in order to answer the research questions I posed at the beginning of this inquiry it was necessary to re-construct, with the help of the participants and official documents, the most important events that have informed the process of curriculum change at DFL. To better understand participants' experiences, I had to learn more about the context in which they had originated; I had to look beyond the present to the past (Phillion, 1999, p. 89). As a result of this exercise, I have come to see this community, just as Phillion did with Bay Street School, as an important part of the narrative of the history of language teaching education in Colombia. I have also gained an understanding of the fast-paced process of transformation Colombian higher education institutions have been through in recent decades.

In the case of Riverview University, the process of change has also been informed by particular views about teaching and learning and extraordinary contextual circumstances. Hence, after an examination of historical events, it is clear that DFL's attempts to comply with national and institutional policies intended to have college students become competent language users and lifelong learners, not surprisingly, have been guided by an interest in autonomy and the use of ICT. However, as it has possibly occurred in other Colombian tertiary contexts, these two areas have been integrated into the curriculum in different ways and for different purposes, and their integration has had an impact on different areas of teaching and learning.

In a period of over fifteen years, as the first row in Table 7.1 illustrates, there have been changes in the *location* for language learning and teaching, the *orientation* or scope of the curriculum, the *activities* and *resources* deployed inside and outside the classroom, and, particularly, the *knowledge* and *roles* required of teachers. Bearing in mind DFL's teaching philosophy, it is no surprise that— when compared with the literature— these changes also reflect the adoption of different approaches to CALL (Bax, 2003), as shown in the last column of the table. In what follows, I therefore examine the ways in which each of these curriculum dimensions has been transformed with the introduction of a new policy or idea.

DFL's curriculum development history started in 1996 from a strong desire to help faculty members and students become proficient English language users. At the time, as illustrated in the second row of the table, the learning process was mostly organized by the teacher and therefore located or taking place inside the classroom. However, Lorna's firm belief in the need for students to continue learning beyond the formal instructional day, especially in light of the reduced direct teaching time characteristic of tertiary education, would lead her and her team to design a curriculum oriented towards the development of learning strategies and independent study habits.

Table 7.1

Curriculum Development History at DFL

	Phase	Learning/ teaching location	Program orientation/scope	Activities implemented	Resources		Teacher's knowledge	Teacher's roles	Role of Technology
					Printed	Technologies			
Institution- nalization of ELT	1996- 2003	Classroom Home/ Library	Language learning strategies	Strategy training integrated into learning tasks	Class handouts; Learning pathway; Portfolio	Cassettes Videos; Overhead projector; Tape recorder; Email	Explicit strategy instruction	Resource; Facilitator	Restricted <i>Not part of the classroom, optional</i>
Adoption of credit system	2003- 2007	<u>And</u> self- access center	Self-access learning	<u>And</u> action planning; Self-assessment	<u>And</u> Independent study guides; Action Plan	<u>And</u> high tech self-access center (<i>Satellite television, Internet, interactive software, cd rom, audio books, etc.</i>)	<u>And</u> self- access language learning; CALL	<u>And</u> advisor at SAC; IT expert (educational software)	Open <i>Support to classroom instruction; whole CALL lesson</i>
2005- 2015 Institut. D. Plan	2007- 2011	<u>And</u> the Web (LMS)	Web-facilitated learning	<u>And</u> provide access to resources and information through LMS	<u>And</u> re-designed class handouts; Independent study handouts	<u>And</u> LMS; Wi-Fi connection; computers, video beams and audio system in all classrooms.	<u>And</u> course management systems	<u>And</u> course manager; material designer	Open <i>Small part of every lesson; whole CALL lesson</i>
Winter wave	2011-	Anywhere	Blended learning	<u>And</u> combination of CALL tasks and FtF instruction.		<u>And</u> web conferencing software; social media tools	<u>And</u> CMC; online teaching	<u>And</u> online tutor; course designer	Integrated <i>Throughout the lesson</i>

As a result, strategy instruction was incorporated into language learning tasks and combined with independent study activities. To support this learning and teaching scheme, resources such as placement tests, learning pathways and portfolios, as well as the technologies accompanying the textbook were used. To achieve the goals of the curriculum, it was thus necessary for teachers to gain knowledge about explicit strategy instruction and independent learning, as they needed to assume roles as a resource (model the use of learning strategies) and facilitators (help students carry out their learning plans), among many others common to the communicative classroom. During this curricular phase, which took place between 1996 and 2001, teachers would start experimenting with concepts linked to strategic teaching and gradually be introduced to self-access learning.

By examining the evolution of CALL, it may also be argued that *the role of technology* in the classroom was restricted (Bax, 2003). Technology (use of computer) was not central to classroom activity and was hence used at teachers' discretion. Being optional, it was not used on a regular basis. Tools such as videos and cassettes were frequently used, but visits to the general computer lab to conduct practice exercises were not common practice. It could be said that neither the scope of the curriculum nor the use of the computer appeared to have engendered structural changes to the culture and organization of the classroom. Due to a nationwide process of reform, however, these things would gradually start to change.

In 2003, due to the adoption of the credit system, Riverview University initiated a process of curricular reform. During this period, the Department's aim at fostering independent learning was thus revisited, giving way to the fitting out of the self-access center. As shown in the third row, between 2004 and 2007, teaching and learning experiences would start to *take place* both inside and outside the classroom. While classroom instruction was still combined with strategy training, the curriculum had now an additional *emphasis* on self-access. After having gone through a process of training, students were encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of *resources* (Internet, study guides, etc.) and support available at the center and to participate in *activities* such as action planning and self-assessment.

The incorporation of a self-access component into the curriculum would inevitably prompt changes in teacher's roles and knowledge. Teachers would be required to acquire *knowledge* about self-access learning and CALL owing to the need to help students become familiar with the resources of the center as well as teach them how to use them effectively. Accordingly, they would need to play *roles* as resources and facilitators, and even as advisors and IT experts. Participating in a self-access context meant that they had to acquire

new skills and take on more duties than they used to have before, but more importantly, that they had to rethink their teaching practice. The high tech nature of RSAC, where students could work at their own pace, interact with the computer, and expand their contact with the L2, would also lead to a change in *the role of technology*. As can be seen on the right-hand side in row two, the creation of the self-access center produced a shift from restricted to open CALL; teachers were now expected to use technology more frequently in order to support classroom instruction and independent study. However, although used less restrictively, technology was not yet part of every lesson.

While still gaining knowledge about self-access, DFL entered a new curricular stage in 2007. As indicated in row four, one of the events that marked this new phase was the creation of the 2005-2015 Institutional Development Plan, and with it, the adoption of a learning management system. With the enforcement of this institutional plan, which was informed by the national ICT implementation program, there was certainly no turning back with regard to the use of new technologies. The creation of e-Riverview meant that language learning and teaching were no longer *located* or confined to the classroom and the SAC but were also extended to the web. A curricular *emphasis* on web-facilitated learning would create the opportunity to manage and support students' in-class and independent study, as well as provide them with ready access to learning content.

Printed *resources* (handouts) used in the self-access center and in class were therefore digitized and uploaded to the platform, and due to important developments in infrastructure, teachers and learners were able to use technology inside the classroom too. As a result, teachers needed to acquire *knowledge* about course management systems and perform (new) *roles* as course managers and materials designers. By providing access to resources, Lorna and her team of curriculum leaders sought to better organize independent learning activities and to develop independent study skills in students. With an emphasis on the use of the web, the *role of technology* in the curriculum then became increasingly visible. Although whole CALL lessons continued to be developed at the self-access center, technology, and in particular the use of the platform, gradually began to take a smaller part in every language lesson.

As of 2011, as illustrated in the last row, DFL entered the domains of blended learning as a result of the forces of nature. Without access to a physical *location* to take classes, the idea of the classroom and the campus as spaces necessary for learning was challenged; learning and teaching a language could (and had to) be done from anywhere. During the flood, there was a combination of computer-assisted and FtF learning *activities*

in order to ensure academic continuity. Asynchronous and synchronous *CMC tools* were used along with the LMS, requiring students to adapt rapidly to an unconventional learning format and draw on their technological literacy skills and their ability to self-regulate. Teachers would have no choice but to step into online teaching and play *roles* as producers of media resources, course managers and online tutors (Bañados, 2006).

This unprecedented situation in the history of the institution would lead to a transformation of pedagogical and administrative practices, and would also “open a window of confidence” in the use of ICT. This confidence would be reflected in the approval of policies and guidelines that teachers and faculties should meet thereafter, the creation of virtual programs, and in the case of DFL, a definite shift to blended learning. *Technology* was no longer occasionally or partially used in the classroom; it had been integrated into all academic processes. Unsurprisingly, the convergence of unexpected circumstances and institutional aims would bring about drastic changes in each of the dimensions of the curriculum illustrated in Table 7.1, but above all, in the organizational culture of Riverview’s academic departments.

All things considered, it can be said that DFL’s view on technology-enhanced learning changed significantly over a period of fifteen years. This academic unit has gone from using the computer as a tool to practice skills in a non-drill communicative format (RSAC) and access and interact with content (LMS), to using it as a means to create content, and lately, to interact and collaborate (blended strategy). The computer has gone from being used in a disconnected fashion, where it made a greater contribution to the marginal rather than central elements of the language teaching process (Kenning & Kenning, 1990, cited in Warschauer, 1996), to being one of its constituent elements. In Bax’s (2003) terms, there was a gradual shift from a restricted to an open approach to CALL. However, as noted by Bax (2003), “this Open aspect of the technology and software [was] by no means matched by an Open attitude in other key areas of implementation such as teachers’ attitudes” (p.23). It could thus be argued that CALL although open in some respects was still restricted in others (Bax, 2003).

Concluding Thoughts

By and large, after revisiting the most salient events experienced at Riverview University, and in particular, the Department of Foreign Languages, it could be claimed that this educational community, both knowingly (policy/reform) and unknowingly (response to disaster), has attempted to turn ICT use into an institutionalized or *normalized* (Bax 2003)

practice. Through actions such as the conditioning of a high tech self-access center, the adoption of a learning management system and the design of a blended language program, this academic unit has striven to create a culture in which technology is flexibly and effectively used daily as a means to achieve language learning and teaching goals— a culture in which learner and teacher autonomy is also the norm.

This process of normalization, however, has been far from simple since both autonomy and CALL are “associated with a radical restructuring of pedagogy, a restructuring that involves the rejection of the traditional classroom and the introduction of wholly new ways of working” (Allwright, as cited in Benson, 2011, p.19). This restructuring of pedagogy and teacher culture, in narrative terms, has come to shape “the context of teaching by altering teachers’ in and out classroom places on the professional landscape” (Craig, 2003, p. 38). Teachers have had to adopt new teaching practices and therefore have faced the need to take on new roles, learn new skills and change their behaviors. In a period of over fifteen years, they have had to assume roles common to the language classroom such as being facilitators, language advisors and material designers, but also others that previously were not necessary like being producers of media resources, managers of virtual learning environments and online tutors. Trying to cope with change, their beliefs about the nature of language learning, the language classroom and the language teacher and learner have been constantly challenged, which has naturally created some tensions.

The introduction of new technologies through the SAC and later through e-Riverview would certainly add to teachers’ increasingly destabilized professional landscape. Although some technologies (videos, email) had been used at DFL in its early years, these were more commonly used by teachers in their daily lives and therefore did not involve a dramatic change in practice. However, having to make use of computer software, Web 2.0 tools and the LMS generated a disruption in their routine in that they not only needed to advance their technological skills, which may have involved steep learning curves, but also experience an increase in their workload. More importantly, ICT training may not have sufficiently prepared them to realize “the fundamental changes to teaching and learning that are enabled and required by the new medium” (Jacobsen, 2001, p.3).

Due to the (technical and conceptual) difficulty in effectively managing new tools, some teachers appeared to have emphasized the use of technology at the expense of other language learning and autonomy development goals. Teaching practices sometimes were directed less at language learning and autonomy development in principle than it was at the use of computer technologies (Benson, 2011). Later on, however, with a more solid

understanding of the affordances of virtual learning, learner autonomy became not only a means to enhance language performance but an end in itself. Teachers also began to overcome some of the difficulties they had experienced with the use of technology earlier. However, while still in transition, they suddenly had to switch to blended learning.

The introduction of blended learning, unlike previous curricular changes, would inevitably intrude upon teachers' private and secure in-classroom places since they had no choice but combine computer-mediated tasks with their FtF lessons. During the time of the flood, teachers experienced significant changes in their roles as well as a sense of bewilderment, yet, willingly, they supported the Department's story of curriculum change. Nevertheless, as remarked by Salomé, once everything was under control, they expected to return to "normal" practice. This, as mentioned before, was not the case and teachers would once again experience the unsettling nature of a new process of change, which— compared to previous initiatives— required an even more radical restructuring of their practice. It is in this context of unexpected changes and an interest in the institutionalization of the use of technology that teachers had to understand and do their job.

In this chapter, I have explored the history of the curriculum development managed by this academic unit and therefore provided further contextual information for this study. In locating this community's actions within Colombia's and Riverview University's broader narrative of reform, I have identified the ways in which language teaching and learning processes have been altered. I have come to unveil the *institutional* and *organizational stories of change* that would go on to shape the nature of the stories that the teachers would later live and tell. Having gained an understanding of the conditions and rationale for the change, in the following three chapters, I turn my attention to the second implementation phase of the blended program. I examine aspects of blended learning design, and how teachers and management members actually experienced and put this program into practice.

CHAPTER 8

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EFL BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM: UNDERSTANDING BLENDED LEARNING DESIGN

In the previous chapter, I traveled to Riverview University, and in particular the Department of Foreign Languages, and explored the history in which this academic unit is embedded and how its programs have been modified over time in response to various needs and circumstances. In narrative terms, like Phillion (1999), I explored both the context of place, the physical landscape in which DFL is geographically located, as well as the temporal context of this community as “it is nested in time, events and change” (p. 95) that occurred from 1996 up to early 2012. Now the focus of the thesis turns more specifically to the design and implementation of blended learning program, thus emphasizing the personal and social dimensions of narrative inquiry.

To gain an understanding of how DFL’s blended learning program was put into action during 2012, it is of importance to first give consideration to how it was (re)designed and how face-to-face and CALL learning modes were integrated. This chapter therefore includes a description of the characteristics of English proficiency program. To achieve this purpose, I draw on some of the parameters proposed by Neumeier (2005) that were mentioned in Chapter 3. Although teacher and teacher leaders did not draw exclusively on this framework during the creation of the blended learning courses, its level of detail allows me to describe in a clear manner DFL’s process of curriculum design. Lastly, I describe how FtF and CALL were integrated by the four teachers whom I observed during fieldwork.

Program Overview

At Riverview University first year students have always been required to take a placement test and, if not exempted, they are required to take all or some of the seven proficiency levels offered by the Department. As Table 8.1 indicates, each level or course is worth three credits and lasts 16 weeks. Except for the initial level, the total number of workload hours is 144 (nine per week): 64 contact hours (four hours per week) and 80 hours of independent study (five hours per week). Of the four weekly contact hours, one takes place in an online asynchronous mode. The course’s final grade can affect, positively or negatively, students’ GPA, and Level 3 and 5 courses are prerequisites for students to continue on to professional practicum. As in the first implementation stage, blended

learning was defined as the combination of FtF and CALL modes in a single teaching and learning environment, and delivered through the learning management system.

Table 8.1

DFL's Credit System for EFL Courses

Courses		Total credits	Number of weeks	Contact hours		Independent work hour		Total workload hours	
				Week	Term	Week	Term	Week	Term
DFL	LE1	2	16	4	64	2	32	6	96
	LE2 to LE7	3	16	4	64	5	80	9	144

Assessment and Evaluation

Prior to the change to blended learning, DFL's evaluation system had been mostly determined by the learning activities and tasks carried out in the classroom. Nevertheless, for the second term of 2012, a self- assessment process was included in order to prompt students to reflect on the degree to which they fulfilled the goals of the CALL component of the course. As shown in Table 8.2, students' achievement was assessed through both process and product-oriented means. The former was achieved through the implementation of different production-related tasks and self-assessment activities, whereas the latter was achieved through the administration of formal exams for each of the language skills.

Table 8.2

DFL's Evaluation System

FIRST & SECOND TERM	Production Skills (Speaking or Writing task)	4%	10 %
	Online Work (Self-assessment)	3%	
	Quiz	3%	
30% (each)	EXAM: Reading ,Writing, Listening, Speaking	5 % each	20 %
THIRD TERM	Production Skills (Speaking or Writing task)	4%	10 %
	Online Work (Self-assessment)	3%	
	Quiz	3%	
	40%	EXAM: Reading ,Writing, Listening, Speaking	7.5 % each

Interestingly, although there was a high level of integration (Neumeier, 2005), as most learning activities were made compulsory for students, compliance with the *online work* or CALL component rested entirely on students' discretion. In other words, even though students did not have much choice as to the learning activities they could perform inside or outside the classroom, most of what they did either individually and

collaboratively through the LMS was not formally graded or tested. Students were instead required to self-assess their performance in this learning environment at the end of each term. The question of learner autonomy and all the complexities it entailed were thus at the heart of DFL's blended program and teachers' and learners' practices, as will be seen later.

Resources and Technologies

A combination of publishers' learning materials and web content and applications, together with the institutional LMS and the self-access center were the resources and technologies used at DFL during the implementation of the blended program. Printed and online materials and learning activities were managed and organized through e-Riverview. This learning platform was particularly used to sequence and organize teaching and learning within the 16-week format of every course, and to distribute resources and activities into each (FtF and CALL) mode (see Appendix G). Some of the features used by teachers and students were forums, quizzes and assignments.

An additional resource used was the self-access center. During 2012, all staff members were required to work one hour per week at RSAC. The goal was to ensure that language support was made available to students from Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Additionally, there was a group of assistant students (highly proficient in English) who guided learners in the use of resources at RSAC and who offered advice when necessary. RSAC supported the blended strategy as a study space, but most importantly, as the place where students could receive language advice and work with a tutor on their writing and speaking skills. It was also the place where evaluative practices such as placement tests and the courses' required speaking tests were conducted, and where staff members attended professional development sessions. Lastly, it was the unit in charge of the digitalization of printed resources and the design of the modules for the CALL mode.

Standards Guiding Syllabus Design and Instruction

DFL's English Proficiency Program, revisited in 2011, was guided by the Integrated Performance Approach (IPAs) to teaching and learning, a set of guidelines developed and published by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to assess students' language proficiency, as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Following the IPAs prototype outlined in ACTFL's guidelines, a series of three communicative tasks was incorporated into the syllabus of each course. Each of these tasks reflected one of the three modes of communication—interpretive,

interpersonal and presentational—, and they all aimed to allow students to demonstrate what they had learned and whether they had gained confidence in their abilities and improved their proficiency (<https://www.actfl.org>).

These communicative tasks were carried out in both the FtF and CALL environments, although there was an emphasis on presentational (writing) tasks in the CALL collaborative mode. Within the FtF mode, the IPA was conducive to a presentation-practice-production staging scheme, particularly in elementary courses, yet, this methodology was combined with a task-based approach in intermediate and advanced courses.

Planning and Designing a Blended Learning Curriculum

Mode: Focus on Mode

As indicated in Chapter 3, the first parameter that Neumeier (2005) establishes in the design of a blended environment is the selection of the lead mode; that is, the environment where students spend more time and are guided through the learning process. At DFL, the FtF mode was considered to be the lead mode. Despite the fact that the time assigned to collaborative asynchronous work (one hour) and independent work (five hours) seemed to outweigh FtF contact time (three hours), it was in the FtF mode where content was presented and where students were exposed to teaching input and received direct learning support.

For most staff members and teachers, DFL's EFL courses had always been and continued to be rooted in FtF instruction. Even though the technological component had acquired more relevance with the passage of time and independent learning had gained a strong presence in the Department's credit system, FtF instruction was the mode that guided the design and implementation of the curriculum and one with which some teachers and learners still associated effective learning.

Distribution and Choice of Modes/Location

As suggested by Neumeier (2005), together with the selection of the lead mode, two additional variables need to be considered: distribution of modes (time in each mode) and choice of modes (sub-modes within each mode). DFL's blended program was constituted by two main modes: FtF instruction and CALL—the latter subdivided into independent learning (or self-study) and collaborative learning. As illustrated in Table 8.3, each of these *asynchronous* modes targeted different language learning goals, and as a result, made use of different tasks and resources. However, it is important to note that technology was used

across all the learning spaces that were devised for learners. For purposes of clarity, I will continue to make use of the term *CALL mode* to indicate specifically the technology-mediated learning and teaching practices taking place outside the classroom.

Table 8.3

Distribution and Choice of Modes

Mod/ Loc.	Face-to-face mode (Classroom)	CALL (asynchronous) mode	
		Independent work (At home/Anywhere)	Collaborative work (At home/Anywhere)
Sub-modes	Development of communicative lessons to a) <i>enhance all language skills</i> , and b) receive instruction and <i>training on learning strategies</i> .	Use of self-access <i>online and offline</i> materials to a) <i>review</i> content and strategies learned in class, and b) <i>prepare for</i> online discussion.	Participation in <i>text-based conversation</i> to: a) <i>discuss</i> and share opinions about course-related topics; and b) engage in <i>pre-writing (planning) activities</i> .
Tools and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Textbook ✓World Wide Web ✓Printed (hand-outs) and digital resources uploaded to the LMS ✓Mobile devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Printed resources uploaded to the LMS ✓Institutional LMS (self-grading quizzes and embedded media) ✓World Wide Web (links to external EFL-related content) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Institutional LMS (Asynchronous Discussion board) ✓Web 2.0 applications and hosting spaces
Time	Three hours of face-to-face instruction split into two sessions. One of two hours and one of one hour.	Weekly- assigned compulsory activities. Some additional exercises suggested for extra practice (5 hours).	Weekly- assigned inquiry and discussion compulsory tasks (1 hour).
	33% of total 144 hours	56% of total 144 hours	11% of total 144 hours

In DFL’s blended learning program, the CALL mode overlapped with the FtF mode in that it aimed to reinforce and expand on some of the competences and tasks developed in the classroom. Teachers and curriculum leaders conceived it to be the learning environment where students would not only conduct an independent review of what they had learned in class, but also where they would put this knowledge into practice by collaborating in online discussions and developing pre-task/planning activities. Students worked on this CALL mode at home and/or at the self-access center.

For the *independent work* or practice component, students were expected to spend the most time on grammar, listening and reading practice exercises; therefore, printed and online resources such as self-grading quizzes, videos, links to external web pages, among others, were the resources embedded and integrated into the LMS (see Appendix H). As part of their independent study time, students were also requested to do research on some of the topics discussed in the classroom. Although listening and reading were two of the skills targeted for the independent CALL mode, most teachers actually focused on grammatical practice.

Due to the (asynchronous) nature of the technologies available, the goals of the proficiency program (promote interaction and collaboration), and the reduced direct teaching time, it was decided to develop some of the presentational tasks of each course in a collaborative manner, as well as transfer the preparatory activities associated with these to the online environment. Students were thus required to work on some of the assigned writing tasks collaboratively and carry out the pre-writing activities involved in these through the discussion board or forum. For the CALL *collaborative mode*, online writing both as a process (discussion) and as a product (outcomes resulting from discussion and planning stages) became the sub-mode or language skill targeted.

As part of the guidelines provided to implement this collaborative mode, teachers were advised to select a writing task to be carried out step by step during each of three terms, and to ask students to team up, assign roles and distribute duties at the beginning of each of the terms. As part of their independent study, students thus needed to conduct research on a particular topic, and then on a weekly basis, work collaboratively on a different pre-writing or planning activity such as proposing and selecting sub-topics, sharing and discussing sources, and summarizing and synthesizing information, all this through the forum. In terms of the organization of the LMS, this meant that a new discussion board was made available every week with multiple forums being opened by each group of students.

To guide students in the development of this CALL component, SCORM package files, which contained instructions, useful language for discussion and models of written production, were integrated into the platform (see Appendix I). It is also worth noting that although the discussion board was the ALCM tool through which collaborative learning developed, some other free web hosting spaces and Web 2.0 applications were also used by teachers in assigning students to creatively display the texts they had created with their peers during the CALL and FtF modes. As with the independent practice mode, students worked on this mode at home and/or at DFL's self-access center.

As can be seen, in DFL's blended language program, there was parallel distribution of content (Neumeier, 2005) given that students had the opportunity to practice most language skills in both the FtF and CALL modes. Still, interpretive (reading and listening) and presentational (speaking) tasks were mostly part of the face-to-face component of the program, while grammar exercises and some of the presentational (writing) tasks were part of the CALL modes. Speaking, which was one of the skills that did not form part of the CALL component (there were no synchronous sessions taking place through virtual classrooms or video-conferencing), was nevertheless included by some teachers through the inclusion of voice-recording and audio-blogging activities.

Model of Integration: Sequencing of Modes

Although there was overlap between FtF and CALL activities in the language program, the two CALL sub-modes were arranged in orderly sequence. Independent practice followed face-to-face instruction, but preceded collaborative work for it was considered to be knowledge consolidation as well as a research/information search stage (Figure 8.1). Ideally, a face-to-face session would prepare students for independent practice. Independent practice would then prepare students for subsequent face-to-face instruction and collaborative work. And lastly, collaborative work would prepare students for a new learning cycle starting with face-to-face instruction.

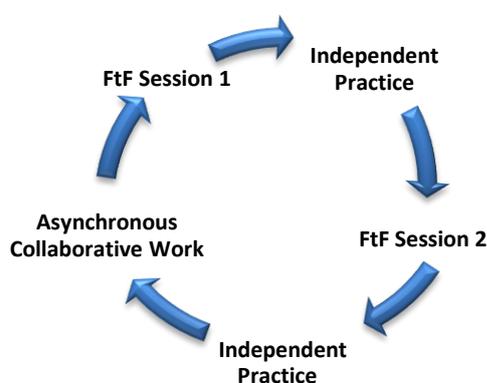


Figure 8.1. DFL's weekly instructional cycle

Integrating Face-to-Face and CALL Provision

As mentioned previously, along with the restructuring of the syllabus of the English proficiency program, DFL had also decided to introduce organizational changes to make the implementation of the curriculum a more participatory process. Despite there being a pre-established instructional cycle and a set of principles and requirements guiding blended learning practice, teachers were expected to participate more actively in decision-making and other related activities. Given that the role of the curriculum leader had disappeared, these former leaders and all other teachers began to work together in order to make the planning and design of the curriculum a more decentralized process.

Hence, before the start of the term, the group of faculty members in charge of reviewing the English proficiency program, the Planning Committee, presented the general syllabus of their course to each team of teachers so they could collaboratively and autonomously: a) distribute and sequence the course's sub-components into each learning

mode, and b) decide on a detailed weekly instructional route or pace schedule. This planning process also required teachers to make decisions about the instructional design of the CALL modules and the presentational tasks that would encourage students to interact with each other and collaboratively create an outcome at the end of each term.

This decentralized approach to planning and design clearly resulted in the blended learning experience varying significantly from course to course and even from teacher to teacher. It therefore became necessary for me to identify, through classroom observation and interviews, how the four teachers participating in the study had decided to integrate CALL into FtF instruction; namely, the kinds of activities they carried out with students in the FtF learning mode, as well as the kinds of technologies, resources and tasks they chose for the independent and collaborative CALL modes.

Accordingly, having discussed the historical and contextual events that had led DFL to implement blended learning as well as the principles and objectives of the proficiency program, in the second part of this chapter, I now continue with a brief description of Lucinda's, Rayuela's, Oriana's and Ziyad's classrooms. To write this section, I drew on classroom observation data, specifically hand-written field notes, as well as on interview data. I will reference the extracts from field notes by indicating the date, the number of the lesson observed and the name of the teacher (e.g., 24 Oct. 2012, Obs#4: Luc.).

Lucinda's Blended Language Classroom

Lucinda's classroom was one where students' attention was often drawn to the importance of carrying out online collaborative and individual work, and where they were exposed to a variety of language learning activities. After visiting her classroom a few times, I could recognize there was a clearly established routine, which usually started with feedback on the collaborative tasks assigned for the CALL mode or with a revision of individually-assigned practice exercises, and then continued with the development of one of the lessons from the course textbook.

Considering that the EFL elementary course she was teaching at the time was guided by the content of a newly-implemented textbook as well as by the organizational structure of the syllabus, some of the language learning tasks Lucinda provided students with were structured and teacher-guided, and some of her lessons followed a presentation-practice-production staging scheme. She followed this approach so they could gain confidence in using the language. Her lessons also included moments for instruction on language learning strategies.

Lucinda followed a similar instructional routine in the lessons observed. She worked on recap and review activities at the start of the lessons. After checking homework and setting the agenda for the day, she would work on vocabulary (contextualizing) activities, followed by listening and reading comprehension tasks and consciousness-raising exercises to focus students' attention on form (interpretative task). At the end of the lessons, she would often ask students to perform a role-play (main interactional task) or write a short text by following a given model. Written activities (presentational/target task) would mostly take place during the CALL collaborative mode or be assigned as independent practice.

Other communicative activities such as short interviews or jigsaw tasks, and the use of media, particularly videos, would also be part of the different stages of her lessons. As described before, technology at DFL was not only used in the online mode; it was also used inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, as part of her approach to language teaching in the classroom, Lucinda used technology on a frequent basis. Her roles, as in most communicative classrooms, were diverse, acting as a facilitator and independent participant within the group, as Breen and Candlin (1980) suggest.

The CALL mode, as in all DFL's English courses, was divided into independent practice and collaborative work; however, it differed from intermediate and advanced courses. For independent practice, all Level 1 students were required to work on the online laboratory (My English lab) that was supplementary to the course textbook. The recently-adopted textbook included a bar code that granted students access to the publisher's learning platform and in turn to a wide range of learning resources. These resources matched the content and topics of each of the lessons in the textbook and provided practice for vocabulary, grammar, listening and reading. Students were thus encouraged to access the lab on a weekly basis in order to review the vocabulary and language points previously studied in the classroom.

For the collaborative CALL mode, students were asked to team up, plan and write (through the discussion board) a script for a theatre play representing any real-life situation they would probably face when travelling abroad. This writing project, decided upon by all Level 1 teachers, incorporated some of the presentational tasks stipulated in the syllabus and added new elements. It was also a long-term project that took place over the course of the semester and that increased in complexity as students' knowledge of the target language progressed. Every week students were asked to collaboratively plan and write a different section of the script. They were also required to autonomously distribute roles within the group, give each other feedback and put together a final written product.

Lucinda's classroom, despite being an elementary EFL course, was a bustling one. Students participated actively in all learning activities and were encouraged to interact with each other and make inferences about the workings of the target language. Lucinda established not only a good rapport with her students and a positive learning atmosphere, but also a routine that helped them build their confidence as L2 users. Nevertheless, despite the active participation that I could observe in her lessons, she did not feel fully satisfied with her teaching. Although Lucinda was supportive of DFL's teaching principles and felt compelled to "strictly follow" (Int. 4, l: 169) the syllabus, she believed it limited what she could do with her students inside the classroom.

Similarly, despite her and her team's interest in engaging students in the project, the level of student participation did not fully meet her expectations. In response to this situation, she would sometimes project the LMS on the board at the beginning of her lessons to check students' participation or reinforce instructions. This struggle to reconcile the aims of the prescribed curriculum (which she felt morally obliged to support) with her own ideas about language learning and ICT use was something that I would perceive in Lucinda's lessons, and to which she would often refer in the interviews.

Rayuela's Blended Language Classroom

Rayuela's classroom shared a number of similarities with Lucinda's since they both taught the same course. As they structured most of their lessons according to the tasks stipulated in the syllabus and the content of the new textbook, the staging scheme and instructional routine they established in the classroom were similar. The roles and the activities they performed were alike as well. Like Lucinda, Rayuela devised communicative lessons where all language skills were targeted and where there was room for student-student interaction and instruction on learning strategies.

Testing students' knowledge of the target language, implementing noticing and consciousness-raising activities and providing models for oral/written production were also observable. A combination of inductive and deductive teaching was characteristic of both Lucinda's and Rayuela's classrooms. Yet, as human beings with unique beliefs, personalities and teaching styles, there were differences in the curriculum stories they created for and with their students. This was also the first time that Rayuela was teaching an elementary course.

During my visits to the classroom, I noticed that Rayuela made reference to the CALL mode at the beginning of the lesson. Unlike Lucinda—who did so but not on a

frequent basis—Rayuela often spent time talking students through the weekly assignments and explaining to them the characteristics and value of this work. She had been behind the planning of the course’s collaborative written project; therefore, I could see her eagerness in having students follow her instructions and comply with their online assignments. As a result of this interest, Rayuela played an active role in e-Riverview. Through the discussion board, she provided students with feedback on their use of the language, encouraged their participation and answered their questions when needed.

Other teachers like Lucinda, Oriana and Ziyad were less visible in the LMS, providing feedback mostly during the FtF mode or relying on peer-feedback practices. The independent practice CALL mode, as in Lucinda’s classroom, was mediated by the use of the online laboratory that was complementary to the course’s textbook. For the Department and the self-access center directors, this online resource was an alternative solution to reduce teachers’ workload with regard to the design of learning tasks and activities, as well as an appropriate tool to establish a clearer link between in-class and out-of-class learning contexts and motivate students to do independent study.

Students in Rayuela’s classroom were satisfied with the structure and materials of the independent CALL mode, and also with the activities carried out in each lesson. They often engaged actively in the different learning activities proposed by Rayuela and showed an interest in learning the language. There was also a good rapport between them, which contributed to the creation of a good learning environment. However, unlike Lucinda’s students, and as reported by Rayuela herself, some of these students had a command of the language that “was below average compared to other students of the level” (11 Sep. 2012, Obs#2: Ray.). In Rayuela’s eyes, this situation resulted in students’ showing a slow learning progress and it affected their fulfilment of some of the tasks assigned for the collaborative CALL mode. As in Lucinda’s case, student participation in the CALL mode did not meet her expectations, but with an added concern related to language performance.

Oriana’s Blended Language Classroom

Oriana’s classroom differed from Lucinda’s and Rayuela’s classrooms. There was no new textbook guiding or influencing the decisions and activities made in the classroom, and there was less teacher control in that students’ command of the language was more advanced. Besides, since Oriana was teaching most of the Level 2 courses offered by DFL, she had sole responsibility for the planning and design processes involved in the integration of FtF and CALL modes. This freedom, together with her interest in technology, allowed

her to use creatively web applications different from the ones suggested by the Planning Committee, which resulted in a greater sense of satisfaction that was maintained throughout the semester. However, within this high level of autonomy in terms of CALL design and implementation, a strong alignment with the pre-established syllabus was also observable.

During the FtF mode, Oriana focused her attention mainly on the development of oral and aural skills. Like Lucinda and Rayuela, Oriana drew students' attention to vocabulary and form through inductive teaching and the implementation of listening tasks and consciousness-raising activities. At the same time, she usually spent a fair amount of time on the development of the interactional tasks stipulated in the course's syllabus. Speaking was the skill that she emphasized the most in her lessons, while writing was mostly developed during the CALL mode. During some of my visits, Oriana worked—in lockstep teaching—on the listening comprehension tasks suggested in the course textbook, and then she had students plan and develop a particular communicative task.

Oriana, like Lucinda, made use of videos to provide input for the development of oral tasks and to model oral/written production. The use of mobile devices within the classroom was also fostered; students were often asked to record their voices with their mobile devices and then listen to their interventions as a way to identify their weaknesses and improve their oral performance. On some occasions, they were required to upload their audio files to the course's LMS and provide feedback to peers in terms of task fulfillment and other linguistic and pragmatic-related aspects. Rubrics were created by Oriana for this purpose and guidance was given to students regarding their use throughout the semester. Students thus had a very active role inside and outside the classroom as they were both involved in communicative practice and encouraged to self-assess their performance.

In Oriana's course the CALL mode was also organized into independent and collaborative modes; however, these were not distributed into two online learning environments like in Level 1 courses. Oriana, like Lucinda and Rayuela, had initially decided to focus independent study on vocabulary and grammar practice; she therefore created worksheets and uploaded exercises which she found on the web to the LMS. On noticing students' low level of performance in their first listening tests, this CALL mode later focused on listening.

The CALL collaborative mode, compared to the other three classrooms I observed, was different in a number of other ways too. Oriana implemented the guidelines given by curriculum leaders from a different perspective by using technologies other than the LMS in the development of the target tasks specified in the syllabus, and by adding a strong

component of peer feedback. She decided to combine the LMS, specifically the discussion board, with the use of various educational Web 2.0 applications and social writing platforms so as to allow students to express their knowledge creatively, practice their speaking skills and collaboratively work on writing projects. Once published, students were required to upload the links to their written and/or oral products to the LMS discussion board and to comment on each other's production and provide feedback. Some of the presentation and (audio/written) blogging tools used were: Glogster (<http://edu.glogster.com>), Audioboo (<http://audioboo.fm/>) and Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com/>).

In the various conversations we held, Oriana always expressed her satisfaction in terms of the structure of the CALL mode and she supported her choices based on the belief that technology allowed students not only to learn outside the classroom and become more independent, but also to author, edit and share their projects creatively and flexibly. Additionally, some tools (e.g., the Wiki) which are social and collaborative in nature, permitted her students to learn from and with others as well as “get to the real collaborative work” (Int. 2, l: 33) that was expected at DFL.

Ziyad's Blended Language Classroom

Unlike other participants, Ziyad taught two different EFL courses: Level 3 and 4. During fieldwork I visited one of the Level 3 classes, of which he was in charge. Ziyad generally organized his lessons in a communicative way, emphasizing the exploration and discussion of topics that were either part of the syllabus or selected by him. Due to the fact that writing was a predominant component of the course, Ziyad structured his lessons differently from Lucinda, Rayuela and Oriana.

There were lessons that were content-oriented and aimed at having students explore and discuss cultural issues, with no particular attention given to linguistic features, while there were others designed to preparing students for the writing stage of the course. In these writing lessons more explicit attention was drawn to form—particularly through the implementation of comprehension tasks and noticing activities. Providing students with models and creating spaces for peer feedback, which was part of DFL's philosophy of good teaching practice, was observable in both kinds of lessons.

Ziyad also made different choices in terms of the use of materials. Rather than relying exclusively on the required textbook, he created his own materials and often used media to capture students' interest and provide them with authentic models of language use. Like Oriana, he also made use of mobile devices in the classroom, albeit with a different

purpose. On a few occasions, at the beginning of lessons, he would invite students to look for information on the topic of the day. After having explored the web and shared their thoughts with their partners, students would be encouraged to use this new information as a way to increase their understanding and interpretation of reading and listening material. At other times, students would access the web during the planning stage of written activities or while preparing for an oral performance.

The implementation of the CALL mode, as with the other courses I observed, was implemented in an idiosyncratic manner that reflected not only the decisions that the Level 3 team made, but also Ziyad's own take on blended provision. Nevertheless, the way it was structured resembled to some extent the guiding principles established by the Planning Committee and the practices of teachers teaching intermediate and advanced courses. Independent practice study time was thus devoted to the practice of grammar, vocabulary, and listening and reading strategies. Students were also required to do research on topics related to the course's syllabus so as to prepare for subsequent online discussions.

The collaborative mode of his course focused on student-student interaction and it aimed to have students discuss their opinions about the topic of the week through the LMS and to work on one of the syllabus' target writing tasks. To guide students' discussion in the forum, questions and prompts were provided by teachers and in some instances reading or listening (video) activities were assigned as part of the session. Students were also asked to search and share information, discuss the relevance of information found and provide feedback. Every week, to organize and manage teamwork within the forum, students selected a leader to open the forum, and then at the end of the week, summarize the main points of the group's discussion or contributions to the task (see Figure 8.2).

Nonetheless, unlike Rayuela and Oriana, Ziyad did not altogether agree with the way the CALL mode had been integrated into the course. He therefore did not always request his students to carry out the activities made available on the platform. Although he invited students to profit from the resources and activities on the LMS, he was not particularly attentive to their fulfillment and did not always make reference to the LMS or CALL collaborative mode in the classroom. In fact, he and his students were not visible or present in the discussion forums created on a weekly basis on the platform.

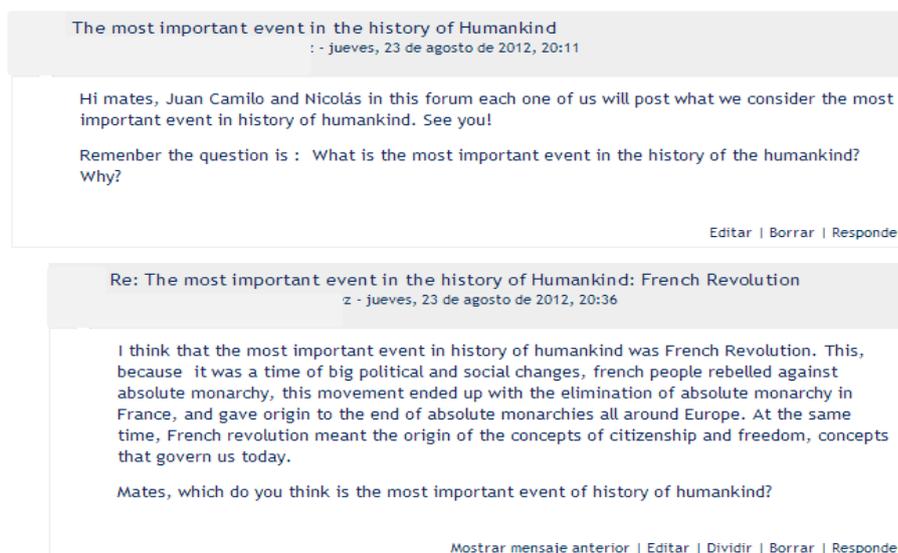


Figure 8.2. Collaborative task sample, Level 3

Instead, like Oriana, he decided to have students develop web-research activities and use voice-recording and blogging applications such as VoiceThread and Wikispaces. Ziyad was also interested in encouraging students to take advantage of the web to learn about current and cultural issues and allowing them to make choices in terms of learning content. He wanted students to take an active part in the development of the lessons by suggesting ideas and by searching for information and resources on their own—a reason why he did not feel comfortable with the modules that had been planned by other colleagues for the CALL collaborative mode. This decision would bring some consequences for him, however.

Concluding Thoughts

After having provided a general description of the characteristics of the English proficiency program as well as the learning opportunities that Lucinda, Rayuela, Oriana and Ziyad created for their students, it is clear that, as noted in Chapter 3, there is no specific recipe to combine elements in blended learning (Hofmann, 2006; Moskal, Dziuban & Hartman, 2010). As Jones (2007) and Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) contend, the practice of design for language learning often involves making a large number of difficult choices. The decision to decide which CALL components should be implemented to achieve the goal of the blend is perhaps one of the most complex. This process of design is, however, concerned more with the beliefs and values held by the designers in terms of the nature of knowledge and learning rather than with the selection of tools, methods and content (Jones, 2007, p. 173). Teachers and/or designers' beliefs about how a language is learned and what counts as evidence of this process (assessment), as well as the role of the learner, the teacher and the technologies is what ultimately defines the character of a blended course.

It is therefore understandable why there were salient differences in the way the four teachers designed and integrated the CALL component of the course into their classroom, and why they did not always adhere to the prescribed goals and other institutional requirements. Teachers' decisions, as Hargreaves (2005) claims, are largely shaped by their relationships with students, their feelings about what would excite and engage them emotionally, "and their feelings about what would excite and engage themselves as teachers too" (p. 292). This personal side to the implementation of the curriculum together with the fact that learning design may be created on-the-fly and technologies configured 'just-in-time' (Mackenzie, 2002, cited in Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012), can also explain why, despite the many efforts to create a harmonious blend, a number of constraints and tensions continued to take place during 2012. In the next chapter, through an exploration of teachers' reflections on their practices, I examine in more detail how they came to grips with the implications of the change and how they capitalized on its benefits and tried to work around difficulties.

CHAPTER 9

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EFL BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM: TEACHER STORIES

Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it's as simple and as complex as that.
—Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2007a

Having described the aims and model of integration of the English proficiency program as well as the overall teaching path *Lucinda*, *Rayuela*, *Oriana* and *Ziyad* followed during the academic term, I now examine how these four teachers responded to the implementation of blended learning and how they came to grips with the goals established by the Department. Consequently, I address the first research question I posed at the beginning of this inquiry: What stories of change do teachers live by when participating in the implementation of a blended language learning program?

To write this chapter, I drew on interview data as well as data from five classroom observations. An analysis of these sources allowed me to identify how teachers developed their practice in the new professional landscape and how they dealt with the implications of change. Having explored the institutional and organizational stories of change providing the contextual background of this inquiry, this chapter thus focuses on teachers' *personal stories of change* and takes into account their emotions, beliefs, actions and perceptions.

I reference the extracts from classroom observation transcripts by indicating the number of the observation and the page number where the exchanges appear in the original document (Obs#2, p.5). I also include extracts from hand-written field notes. Considering the uniqueness of the participants' experiences with blended learning, I first present their classroom stories individually and then, drawing on the literature presented in Chapters 2 and 3, I discuss the similarities and differences among these curriculum-making stories and what they say about the implementation of blended learning.

Lucinda's Story

Lucinda's experiences during the first implementation phase of the program, unlike those of many other teachers, had been highly successful. However, despite this level of success, she was not sure whether this would happen in the new semester. Prior to the start of academic activities, as stated earlier, teachers had been informed about the new

organizational changes taking place in the Department. The most salient or surprising change for most of them being the elimination of the role of the curriculum leader and the teacher assistant. To Lucinda, who had been a teacher assistant, this change did not make her feel comfortable, as she mentioned in our first interview:

This semester is going to be different. This semester I am not going to make decisions as to the design of the online component, so things are going to be a bit simpler, which I do not like much. (Int. 1, l: 95-96)

Although Lucinda was willing to embrace new ideas and put into action the decisions made in conjunction with colleagues, she could not help but feel uneasy. Not only did she have to relinquish control over the design of the CALL component of the course, but she also had to leave out most of the learning tasks she had already created due to the introduction of the new textbook. It was within this language teaching landscape that Lucinda's lived experience of blended learning was situated.

Thus, knowing that Lucinda was doubtful about the value of some of the DFL's recently introduced changes, I involved her in a collaborative inquiry journey in order to gain an understanding of how she dealt with organizational and curricular changes. This dialogic process would lead us to discuss issues such as a) the implications of the choices of technology, b) learners' ability and readiness to collaborate in asynchronous learning environments, c) the role of assessment in blended learning, but above all, her need for "more freedom"— themes that I will analyze in detail in what follows.

"You understand when students do not participate":

The Challenges of Using Technology

During my initial visit to Lucinda's classroom, which occurred three weeks after the start of the semester, I noticed that while the FtF component of the course was functioning as planned by the team of teachers, the implementation of the CALL mode did not seem to meet the expectations. Some students were not developing the online tasks that she had assigned, and others seemed to struggle with the learning platform. To cope with this situation, Lucinda would remind students of the importance of collaborating online, as well as make sure they had understood the task instructions.

As I was interested in exploring with Lucinda what I had observed, in our second interview, I decided to ask her about her perceptions of the design of the CALL mode, and more specifically, about what she believed could either enable or constrain students' participation in this environment. Although she touched on a number of topics, the role of

technology was one of the most salient and one to which she alluded again later in the semester. Despite her supporting the team's decisions, she found it hard to reconcile her views about the way technology can support elementary EFL learners with some of the practices established for her course; therefore, her opinions showed approval and objection.

For instance, when asked about the effectiveness of the online collaborative mode, Lucinda said she agreed with what students were required to do since "writing was the ability that more easily allowed teachers to have evidence of students' learning and verify their presence in the virtual environment" (Int. 2, l: 19-20). The discussion board was also the tool that best suited these purposes. This tool not only allowed teachers to obtain evidence of students' production, it also permitted shy pupils to have the opportunity to express their ideas without fear and thus become more confident language users. The level of engagement of one of her students helped her confirm this belief later in the semester:

I have a student, Clara, who is usually very quiet and seems very passive in class, but she is the most involved in e-Riverview. She always tells me 'teacher, I already did the activity', even if her teammates have not yet done anything. (Int. 4, l: 6-7)

Peer pressure could also "make students want to do a better job because other people are reading their texts", as well as help them "understand the importance of correcting themselves and their classmates" (Int. 2, l: 49-51). Nonetheless, while Lucinda supported the use of the institutional LMS and believed it could be used as a means to foster language learning and the development of self-regulation, she also commented that its somewhat unfriendly design and interface could have an impact on student motivation and participation levels, especially if they were at an elementary level:

The platform is not very friendly, which makes students not want to work on it... e-Riverview can be very monotonous and also unintuitive because certain activities can be placed in different places. (Int. 2, l: 10-13)

Lucinda also believed that it was important to rely on more than one learning mode. To her, students are in contact with the language "not just through the written word, but through images and audio; they are in contact with hypertexts and multiple genres in their daily use of social networks" (Int. 2, l: 58-60). As a result, she intended to use e-Riverview in distinct ways to prevent student boredom from having to do the same type of exercises week after week and instead feel more excited about e-learning.

With regard to the independent CALL mode, she also held conflicting views. In Lucinda's eyes MyEnglish Lab was "simply a virtual version of the conventional printed workbook" (Int. 2, l: 88-89) and did not offer an added value— her reason for not

emphasizing its use much in her teaching. Later in the semester, due to the technical issues some of her students were experiencing in accessing this online learning resource and the fact that they had difficulty using two different platforms, she decided to stop using MyEnglish Lab altogether. Consequently, during subsequent classroom visits, I mainly focused on the implementation of the asynchronous collaborative component of her course.

After our second conversation, I observed her classroom on two more occasions. I was interested, among other things, to determine whether Lucinda had managed to make changes to the online component of the course as she had planned. Prior to each of these visits, I explored the LMS but unfortunately did not notice any major modifications in terms of tasks, usage of tools, or in student participation levels. During my classroom visits, however, I recognized that there was a varied use of technological resources as well as a high level of student participation.

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Lucinda often used technology in her lessons. While I found these activities common to DFL's teaching practice at first, I soon realized that they were not part of the tasks planned and designed for the course; they were exclusively a component of Lucinda's classroom. Therefore, in the interview that followed, I tried to explore further her motives for using technology in class and how and why these differed from her and her students' experiences with the CALL component. What I learned reflected Lucinda's discontent with not only this learning mode but with the FtF mode as well.

"By making use of videos", Lucinda said, "I can provide students with authentic material... [Students] can take them as a model and know how things should be done ...as well as be guided by images and sound" (Int. 3, 1: 32-38). Besides, "it's something different from the textbook, which I've found very difficult to adapt to... and thus gives me a break" (Int. 3, 1: 39-41). Lucinda believed that the syllabus was mostly textbook-based, often limiting her freedom to design and carry out other kinds of activities that were less structured and of more interest to her students.

Her classroom had thus become a place in which technology was used in ways that allowed her to "take a break" by deviating from the prescribed curriculum, and more important, in ways that aligned with her beliefs about best practice. However, while technology allowed her to be slightly freer to modify her classroom practice, this was not the case in the course's online environment. She had not managed to incorporate into the LMS a wider range of learning tasks and richer sensory stimuli as she had intended. The nature of the online written project together with the need to follow the teaching plan which had been agreed upon earlier in the semester, made it difficult for her to make adjustments.

In the end, Lucinda would live two different stories of practice: One in which technology was used as she thought was appropriate, and one in which it was used according to her colleagues' expectations. Therefore, when asked about the difference between the way technology was used in and out the classroom, Lucinda noted again that the CALL mode lacked variety in terms of learning tasks and that the tools used (LMS) were unfriendly. Although she had agreed with the decisions that had originally been made as to the choice and use of technology, as time passed, she changed her opinion. To her, students' continued disengagement was understandable, or, as I perceived it, justifiable:

You sometimes understand when students do not participate because to be asked to write all the time seems a bit monotonous. So, it should be varied. Blended means that, combining all possible resources ... to ensure an efficient and effective learning (Int. 3, 1: 49-54).

Throughout the semester, as was observed, Lucinda struggled with the implementation of the different components of the course, the CALL collaborative component being the least effective. In trying to understand the reasons behind students' low participation in this mode, the choice and use of technology became, unsurprisingly, the first salient issue perceived. Nevertheless, as the inquiry progressed, Lucinda and I would start to discuss more complex matters such as students' ability to collaborate in asynchronous online environments and teachers' understanding and pedagogical knowledge of this process.

“One can also learn individually”:

The Challenge of Collaborative Online Learning

In discussing the impact of the selection of tasks and technologies in the implementation of the blended program, I started to wonder whether the learning and teaching ideas on which the CALL component was based were at the heart of the problem, rather than the technologies and tasks chosen. Given that collaboration and interaction were two fundamental concepts behind the design of this mode, after the second interview, I decided to examine more closely the nature of the collaboration taking place among students through the discussion board, how teachers structured and guided this practice and what was said about it in the classroom.

As mentioned above, in my exploration of e-Riverview, I unfortunately did not observe high levels of participation or collaboration. Students who contributed in the forums were essentially the same throughout the semester (see Appendix J). There were students

who, despite attending the FtF lessons regularly and participating actively, were never present in this online environment. Additionally, there were no observable threads in the forum, thus indicating an absence of student-student interaction— despite a key component of this particular course being to suggest changes or expanding on partners’ contributions— as well as a lack of teaching presence (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Trying to better understand why this occurred, through classroom observation, I realized that in some cases team members collaborated through other CMC means and uploaded only their final outcome to e-Riverview, while in others, only one member of the team worked on the weekly assigned task. This being an issue of concern, Lucinda discussed it with the class on a number of occasions, as could be observed in the following exchange:

T to class: This is (pointing at whiteboard) your homework to practice and this is the online work.
T to Clara: This is the online session. Clara can you explain it to your partners?
Clara: Tenemos que escribir el primer párrafo de la obra que vamos a hacer. [We have to write the first paragraph of the play we’ll perform]
T to Clara: Who are you working with?
Clara: Mmm, el corte pasado yo participé en el foro, pero nunca me contestaron. [Mmm, last term I participated in the forums, but my partners never replied]. (Luc-Obs#2, p.2)

After asking everybody who they had been working with and how they had organized their work, Lucinda reminded the class of the need to come to an agreement within their teams about their roles and responsibilities so that they could develop all written tasks in a collaborative and timely fashion. However, in a subsequent classroom visit, I found that some students were not working together as she had expected:

T to class: Can you tell me please what you have to do for the online session? Can you remind me about that?
S1: The first scene of the play.
S1 to S2: Le quedó bien. [You did a good job]
T to S1 and S2: Well, it’s teamwork.
S1 to T: (Laughter). No. Lo hicimos juntos. [No. We did it together].
T to S1 and S2: Aha. You did a good job (Laugh). You did a good job.
...
T to class: Remember to comment. Everybody must be present in the forum. No, “Well, I asked Luis to do it”.
S1: Noo (Laugh). (Luc-Obs#3, p.1)

In the interview following these events, Lucinda and I discussed our impressions of what we had perceived in the classroom. In her view, those tasks that are done through direct FtF interaction are likely to be more successful in that strong students, despite “exerting social pressure”, encourage their peers “to try to do things right... and also provide them with immediate feedback” (Int. 3, l: 110-114). In an asynchronous environment, however, it is easier for some students to avoid their commitment and “lean on their teammates” (Int. 3, l: 120-121). Besides student’s lack of engagement, Lucinda also believed that teamwork was not always necessary in out-of-classroom learning contexts: “One can also learn individually... not everything has to be [done] collaboratively”. She expanded further:

I think individual work is very valuable in elementary levels... There are students who are behind and they know ... they have to work harder to get to [the expected level], but they need time to do it at their own pace. (Int. 3, l: 124-138)

Although collaborating with others “could lead to increased interaction and more opportunities for peer feedback” (Int. 3, l: 135-136), she also felt that certain tasks and activities could work better when performed individually. In essence, Lucinda not only questioned DFL’s instructional cycle, which required all students from the proficiency program to carry out collaborative tasks on a weekly basis, but also reflected on her teaching, acknowledging that sometimes she failed to properly organize and guide such practices.

“I think I’m wrong”, she stated, “I’m not assigning the roles that everyone should perform. I think that if roles were given everything will improve” (Int. 3, l: 141-145). Not knowing how best to engender genuine and effective collaborative work in the online environment of the course was not a new issue in Lucinda’s narrative, however. It had been problematic the year before and evidently continued to be so in the new semester. At the time of our first interview, while reflecting on her previous teaching experience, she commented:

For me it was very difficult to organize collaborative tasks ... There are many things at once. First they need to become familiar with the whole idea of learning through technologies ... and second [they need to] learn to collaborate. If this is something that is difficult for us in the classroom, it is even more so in the virtual mode. (Int. 1, l: 80-85)

Concerned about the impact that this kind of collaborative environment could have on students like Clara, who clearly felt frustrated by the lack of commitment from her classmates, I also wondered about the role of the teacher. As Anderson (2008, p. 351)

stresses, it cannot be assumed that students have the necessary skills to undertake successful moderation of online class discussion. Thus, I asked Lucinda: “What do you think may happen if the teacher, who usually provides feedback and scaffolding in the classroom, is absent from online discussions?” She replied:

In advanced levels..., [when in doubt], students look on the Internet, on Word Reference, on language forums, or ask each other online. But in these levels, probably because they do not know the language or because they recently left high school, they expect the teacher to guide them and correct them. (Int. 3, l: 62-72)

To Lucinda, the discussion board had been conceived of as a space for students to express and interchange ideas freely, which was why she had decided to keep her participation to a minimum and instead provide feedback and follow-up at the beginning of the lessons. Giving feedback in the FtF class was also more practical “than having to repeat the same information for each student in the forum” (int. 3, l: 76). Still, Lucinda recognized that autonomous and collaborative learning was something for which some students were unprepared, and therefore, her “presence there was needed” (Int. 3, l: 78).

In addition to the need to advance her knowledge of online learning pedagogy—especially in regards to asynchronous collaboration— and to reconsider the value of her participation in this mode, Lucinda pondered on the role of instructions and CALL design, as these could also enable or constrain students’ collaborative learning experience. In her view, the design and delivery of effective instructions and task models in the LMS could in part compensate for the limited presence of the teacher. Yet, she was unsure whether this was being done properly by her and her teammates.

As Lucinda discussed and hypothesized about the different factors that had and could have shaped her and her students’ collaborative learning experience, I concentrated on the central meaning of her words. This allowed me to realize that, on the one hand, students’ linguistic knowledge and their levels of autonomy did not seem to be sufficient for them to effectively interact with the content (instructions and texts) of the LMS and carry out unstructured written tasks of the kind planned for this learning mode, and on the other, that teachers were not fully prepared to facilitate collaborative learning in asynchronous spaces. I therefore asked Lucinda: Should there be a distinct blended learning design?

“Perhaps”, she replied, “because the student population [is] different. When you have certain knowledge of the language ... you feel more confident to ask, to search and all that” (Int. 3, l: 81-86). However, as she indicated, her students were only now developing their linguistic knowledge, so she could not expect them to respond to the demands of an

online learning environment “overnight”. Besides, it was essential to consider the fact that many of them came “from a face-to-face model of education”, and that as a result, they expected their learning process to be more guided (Int. 3, l: 81-86). In our last interview, looking back on her experiences, she stressed the importance of providing more training for teachers:

No one has taught us to be online teachers ... because this was ... something imposed. Well, that occurred due to the circumstances [flood], but we have not received the necessary training... Our undergraduate training prepared us to be classroom teachers, but now we are being required to be virtual teachers. (Int. 5, l: 282-290)

By and large, as we both started to reflect upon the guiding pedagogical principles of the program, there would be a gradual shift in Lucinda’s narrative. She wondered about the value of asynchronous collaborative tasks and the appropriateness of the design supporting them but, above all, she re-examined her own knowledge and practice and showed an increasingly critical attitude towards blended provision. This reflective exercise would lead us to examine other external but influential factors such as the role of assessment.

“What they care about the most is the grade”:

To Assess or Not to Assess

Having explored with Lucinda the reality of her classroom and broadened my knowledge of her teaching experience, I participated in two more lessons. Although the way in which the course progressed was similar to what I had previously observed, there was something different: the level of proficiency of most students had increased substantially. It may be possible that students benefited from the activities carried out inside the classroom despite Lucinda’s discontent with certain elements of the curriculum. This led my inquiry in a new direction, as the following extract from my field notes illustrates:

As we approach the end of the semester, I have come to notice an increase in the level of proficiency of the students. This leads me to believe that the FtF learning mode has enabled most students to meet the course objectives. Yet, if this is so, would it not cause students to doubt the value of the CALL mode? (24 Oct. 2012, Luc-Obs#4)

This personal observation prompted me to consider the role of assessment in the implementation of the curriculum— an aspect that despite having been part of our discussions before, was yet to be examined in detail. Hence, in our fourth conversation, Lucinda and I talked about this matter. She indicated that some of her most proficient

students “did not see the relevance of the online written project” (Int. 4, l: 18) and only focused on the activities of the FtF mode. In comparing her experience in the blended program with that of the distance program, she had realized that students tend to prioritize the mode in which content is presented and assessed; that is, the lead mode (Neumeier, 2005). “In the distance program, the opposite happens”, she said and went on to explain:

Students focus on the online mode and forget about the FtF element because ... content is learned through the platform. The FtF [tutorials] are mostly to review what they already did there...They put more effort into what carries more weight...and do not always come to the [tutorials]. (Int. 4, l: 22-24)

Putting more effort into “what carries more weight” meant that students would do those activities and tasks that are evaluated by the teacher and that in the end would allow them to pass the course. In fact, I had witnessed this attitude through classroom observation before. In one of the lessons, for instance, a student asked Lucinda to remind the class about their assignments. After she had projected e-Riverview on the board and explained one of the independent practice tasks, the student asked whether it was graded or not, thus giving a sign of what his priorities were for the course:

T: It’s time for homework. Your homework is to finish page 131 and also to explore e-Riverview ... to do your online work... Here you have some links so you can do listening practice.

S1: ¿Pero eso tiene nota? [But is this graded?]

T: This is independent work, so it’s to practice. (Luc-Obs#2, p.2)

As described in the previous chapter, the CALL component of the blended program was only assessed through a self-assessment checklist in which students were asked to reflect on their degree of involvement and commitment to both the independent and collaborative learning modes. While the grade students assigned during this self-assessment process was added to the scores they had obtained in their formal tests, because of its low percentage, it had no significant impact on their final grade. Thus, knowing that in the end formal testing determined their success in the course, some students simply showed more interest towards classroom instruction. In our last meeting, Lucinda therefore highlighted the need to revisit the assessment criteria and practices of the proficiency program for future semesters:

If they want this to be blended they must assign a grade to the other part too. It sounds bad because the purpose of all this is different, but the philosophy of the student is: ‘I can pass with what I do in class.’ Or ‘But teacher, you know that I do very well in the exams, so why do I have to do that?’ And he’s right, if he is doing well in exams, he might not see the need of doing the virtual component. (Int. 5, l: 199-202)

Interestingly, although Lucinda considered it important that the curriculum be less prescribed and offer more choices for teachers and learners, her opinions about learners' autonomy and their motivations for learning English were somewhat deterministic. She assumed that students "do not do things because they are aware they'll learn more, but to pass the course" (Int. 4, l: 93-102), and that therefore, evaluating online tasks was essential. At first, Lucinda thought the self-assessment checklist would be beneficial to encourage students' self-reflection; however, at the end of semester, she thought otherwise. She admitted that her students had not come to appreciate this experience and preferred to combine it with more traditional evaluative practices. Her use of the language ("If they want this to be blended") also reveals that by the end of term she identified less with the strategy. It was this lack of a sense of ownership, observable from the start of the semester, which was at the root of Lucinda's problems with blended learning.

Lucinda's Story: A Reflective Coda

It can be said that Lucinda found it difficult to come to grips with elements of both the FtF and CALL components of her course. Having previously worked in a blended learning program, Lucinda had developed a personal theory regarding learner autonomy and the role of technology in language learning. Not only had this professional experience shaped her teaching philosophy, but it had also become a filter through which she assessed her experiences at DFL. This accumulated knowledge together with her interest in technology-mediated instruction had also helped her to succeed in the first implementation phase of the blended program. Nevertheless, things would play out differently for her in the second phase.

The choice of resources for the FtF mode, for instance, did not seem to match her teaching style and preferences. Lucinda had mixed feelings about the way technology was used in the CALL mode and the tasks developed through it. She also recognized that the blended program could place a substantial burden on students, especially if they were new to the proficiency program and the University. Likewise, Lucinda acknowledged that she did not know how to promote effective collaborative learning and questioned the impact of her limited presence on e-Riverview. Not having a clear idea of what her role in this space needed to be, she thus appeared to have succumbed to one of the twin dangers of independent learning, that of providing too little guidance (Sturtridge, 1997, as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 187).

Above all these issues, however, the most salient aspect in Lucinda's narrative was her yearning for "more freedom" (Int. 4, l: 180); her longing to be free to plan and design her course as she had done in the past. There was, as in Sally's case (Hendy, 2008, p. 108), "a sense of not being in charge and a loss of autonomy", although not in the sense of desiring individuality. Lucinda often felt constrained by her perceived need to abide by the guidelines established by DFL and the agreements made within her team; therefore, she felt uneasy when suggesting new ideas and proposing changes. Certainly, her ideal and ought-to selves (Kubanyiova, 2009) were constantly competing with each other, making her teaching experience unsettling and her narrative ambivalent. It would be her ought-to selves governing many of her actions, nevertheless.

Narratively speaking, it could be said that Lucinda had no choice but to live secret and cover stories of practice simultaneously (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). While the privacy of the classroom allowed her to take a break from the prescribed curriculum from time to time, the LMS made her actions visible to everybody and open to scrutiny, thereby making it more difficult to "put aside the sacred stories in which she did not believe" (Xu & Liu, 2009, p.507). As in Betty's case, in Xu and Liu's study, Lucinda was able "to author her stories in the classroom, whereas such authorship would be risky outside the classroom" (p. 507). She also lived different stories as she moved in and out of the classroom, more specifically, as she moved between language learning spaces.

This I consider caused her to de-emphasize the execution of the CALL mode and at times justify students' lack of interest. It might also explain why I often gained the impression of being caught in the observer paradox (Kubanyiova, 2009) and witnessing classroom behavior (when dealing with and talking about the CALL mode) that seemed to represent not so much her normal routines "but rather a display of what [she] believed [were] desirable and sought-after practices" (p. 321). It is no surprise then that Lucinda suggested reviewing the curricula of elementary English courses, even though she was aware that in the end her students had "made good comments" about the course and "had made progress" in their language learning (Int. 5, l, 21).

While Lucinda was able to re-evaluate some of her negative feelings about the implementation of blended learning, she believed there should be some substantial changes. Thinking of what could be done to improve students' learning experience in the future—besides assessing more rigorously the activities of the CALL component— Lucinda recommended: a) to increase "face-to-face instruction time" (Int. 4, l: 66-67); b) to offer students a wider range of online and FtF activities "so they have an option of doing things ...

according to their strengths and learning styles” (Int. 5, l: 146-161); and c) to allow teachers to “be free to do other activities” (Int. 4, l: 166-182). At our last meeting, summing up her experience and emphasizing her interest in liberating herself and her students from what she thought were standardizing practices, she added:

One should not force everyone to learn the same way and I could see it in my class ... Some [students] liked virtual learning and others did not... (Int. 5, l: 45-48). I do not think education should be homogenized. I think the duty of the teacher ... is to offer as many options as possible so students can achieve certain targets. (Int. 5, l: 238-239)

All things considered, like Hui, in Liu and Xu’s (2011) study, Lucinda went “from active participation to passive following” (p. 593). In the absence of alignment among her beliefs, intentions and the reality of her classroom, and the impact of a number of organizational and design-related aspects, she lost interest in adapting the curriculum or exploring other ideas. Lucinda chose not to challenge her colleagues and instead do what she was told; she decided to take on the role of survivor/pragmatist (Hendy, 2008) and “play the game” when necessary, avoiding openly voicing strong objections. As with Hui, playing along and acting as expected was easier and safer, even if there was “still a sizeable gap between what she was expected to believe and what she actually believed” (p. 594). In private, however, she would often question the validity of many initiatives.

Rayuela’s Story

As stated in Chapter 8, Rayuela agreed with the decisions made for the second implementation stage of the blended program. She had not only been one of the architects of the course’s online component, but would also act as the leader of the Learner Support Committee. During our first conversation, she thus indicated she had high expectations in terms of what the new academic term had in store for her—especially when considering the positive outcomes of her work as a teacher and teacher assistant during the previous year. For both Rayuela and Lucinda, having been in charge of the planning and design of the blended course’s online component had been a rewarding experience.

Rayuela also affirmed that technology had successfully supported her teaching during the last year. To her, once students identify the value of technology and the need to continue learning English outside the classroom, the teaching experience can become a successful one. Not only may students exceed teachers’ expectations, but they may also discover that technology can be an ally in their language learning: “They realize that the number of resources is virtually unlimited and that they can help them in their learning”

(Int. 1, l: 54). In addition to helping students expand their learning opportunities, Rayuela believed that the use of technology could be useful for the development of autonomy:

In the classroom ... you have to focus your lesson in one way or another; you cannot adapt it to each student. But with the help of all these new online tools, [they can] find their own learning path. (Int. 1, l: 62-65)

However, despite her positive experiences and her active participation in the design of the course, as the new academic term began to develop, Rayuela realized that some of her students were not responding to the CALL mode as planned and were not making as much progress in their learning as expected. Therefore, as in Lucinda's case, we would talk about the nature and influence of various personal, social and organizational decisions on her and her students' experiences with the course. Our discussions would center on a) the technical and instructional issues that arise when using technology, b) the organization of online collaborative work through ACOM means, and c) the relationship between students' level of autonomy and the assessment of learning outcomes— aspects which will be discussed next.

“The technical part also frustrates the student”:

The Challenges of Using Technology

As with Lucinda, I was curious about the way Rayuela would implement the blended course, especially considering that this was her first time teaching at the elementary level. During my initial visit to her classroom, I noticed a number of interesting aspects, one of which was that she spent a fair amount of time explaining to the class what they needed to do for the CALL mode. Some students did not seem to have a clear idea of what they were expected to do in the LMS, and as a result had not participated in the discussion board. Rayuela therefore went over the instructions for the tasks again and told students how to assign roles within their groups and how to open a forum. Students also shared with the class their experiences with MyEnglishLab, the platform they were required to use to do independent study activities. One student expressed the following:

St3: Yo entré e hice un ejercicio y pues el segundo no lo entendí. [I logged in and did an activity, but could not understand the second one].

No entendí porque me quedaron mal... O sea lo hice con el verbo to be...y muchos me quedaron bien, pero como dos o tres me quedaron mal, y pues según lo que había aprendido en el colegio era como yo lo había hecho. [I did not understand why some of the exercises were wrong... I mean I used the verb to be... and although many were correct, two or three were wrong. But according to what I had learned at high school, the way I did it was okay]. (Ray-Obs#1, p.2-3)

In response, Rayuela suggested the class send her an email through this learning platform or jot down the exercises they did not understand in their notebooks so they could analyze them in class. Right after this event, another student, who was trying to log in to MyEnglishLab from her personal computer, asked Rayuela about a message that had appeared on her screen. As I was sitting right behind the student, I noticed that this was an error message written in English— a text which she had probably found difficult to understand. Since Rayuela was concerned about the time she had already spent on technical issues, she told the student to wait and talk to her about the matter at the end of the lesson.

Having witnessed these incidents, in our second interview, I decided to ask Rayuela about the design of the CALL mode and what had occurred in her lesson. Like Lucinda, she said she agreed with the decisions that her team had made regarding the tools and learning tasks to be implemented online. She seemed to be more satisfied than Lucinda, however, with the overall design of the course and the structure of the collaborative written project since it allowed students “to gradually use and show what they had learned” (Int. 2, 1: 125-126). She also commented that her students liked using MyEnglishLab for they received immediate feedback and thus “knew what was right or wrong” (Int. 2, 1: 86-87).

Nevertheless, Rayuela acknowledged that there were factors that could impede the successful development of online learning activities, some of which were technical in nature. With e-Riverview, for instance, students did not know they had to first select the number of the group to which they belonged in order to be able to interact with their classmates through the forum. Similarly, with MyEnglishLab, as was the case with one of the students I had observed, “they forget their username or password and expected the teacher to solve this problem” (Int. 2, 1: 29-33). To deal with the situation, Rayuela took time in class to help students solve their doubts and communicated with them via email.

“How have you felt about having to deal with these various technical problems?” I thus asked. “A bit overwhelmed because students are not responding as I expected”, she replied. “In the end it is not only their responsibility but mine as well” (Int. 2, 1: 63-64). Despite considering herself part of the solution to the problem, the lack of time and large classes made it difficult for her to guide students more in the use of technology. Students’ socioeconomic backgrounds and their sometimes limited access to resources were, according to Rayuela, also factors that contributed to students’ difficulties with the CALL mode:

The population that we are working with is different from that of levels six or seven. These are students who do not come from bilingual schools; they do not necessarily have much access to technology even if one believes so and therefore their knowledge [of IT] is not very broad... They may not have the latest software and high-speed Internet either. (Int. 2, 1: 74-81)

Further on in the semester, she added:

I'm not sure if the University has made a study of how many of students have Internet and which programs they use the most. That I do not know; I have no idea. I think we have limited ourselves to use what we have here, but the students deal with a different reality at home. (Int. 4, l: 318-324)

Rayuela, like Lucinda, believed that there are a number of external factors that can affect students' experiences with blended learning and that teachers should therefore be aware of them. Yet, recalling the comments made by two students in my first classroom visit, I wondered if the fact that instructions in both learning platforms were only in English or that some students may not know how to make sense of machine-generated feedback (in the case of MyEnglishLab) could also have had some impact on their responses to the CALL mode.

With regard to students' interaction with MyEnglishLab, Rayuela believed that machine-generated tasks and feedback can in fact prompt noticing and draw students' attention to form, which may ultimately be beneficial to their learning process. Consequently, she was not worried that students feel doubtful about the nature of the feedback provided, although she recognized it was necessary for her to explain how to interpret it. However, she was concerned about the need to use English only in the learning platforms, particularly in the initial stages of the course:

There was a discussion about that because I had originally put e-Riverview and the instructions of [MyEnglishLab] in Spanish since I wanted them to do the exercises... But then I was told I had to change it and that's what I did. (Int. 2, l: 41-45)

Although Rayuela did not go so far as to say she felt constrained by the decisions made by others in the Department, as did Lucinda, the above excerpt indicates she may have not changed the language to English had she not been expressly required to do so. Although she was aware that the use of the target language could be beneficial by enabling and developing metacognition, as pointed out by Blin (2004, p.392), she was concerned that it could also prevent access to some aspects of the learning activity and in turn hinder desired outcomes. In response, Rayuela described the ways she believed students could be helped to deal with a possible language barrier. She spoke of creating a glossary of key words commonly used in instructions or a list with "forum language" for students so that they would learn how to interact with others through the LMS.

After our second conversation, I observed her classroom twice. Although reference was still made to the tasks of the online written project, no time was devoted to dealing with

technical matters. However, after observing students and teacher's activities in e-Riverview, I realized that Rayuela's plans to help students better communicate through the LMS had not been realized and that students' participation had not yet increased significantly. In our third interview, when asked about students' continued lack of participation, Rayuela commented that they found it difficult to manage two learning platforms at the same time. As a result, she and all other Level 1 teachers had decided to stop using MyEnglishLab for independent study activities and opt instead for the use of print resources.

Like Lucinda, she also believed that some students disliked e-Riverview's design and were not motivated to make use of it. In subsequent encounters, she thus emphasized the need to work on the layout of the institutional platform and offer more engaging resources. However, although agreeing with Lucinda about the convenience of exploring other online learning tools, she had a different opinion about the idea of using various resources simultaneously. In her view, students should demonstrate they understand the dynamics and purpose of one tool before learning to use another; changing too soon could in fact be "counterproductive".

Towards the end of the semester, after having faced and tried to solve different technical and instructional design-related issues, Rayuela had come to the realization that "the idea is not to design an unlimited number of [tasks], but to create a few that are well developed and meaningful for students" (Int. 4, l: 23-25). She also concluded that it was important to reduce and preempt technical and ICT-related knowledge problems since "the technical part frustrates the student when he realizes he cannot do the assignments" (Int. 4, l: 106-107). "In my class", as she indicated in our last interview, "there were those students who mastered the technology...and those who felt frustrated by it" (Int. 5, l: 102-104).

Rayuela therefore stressed the importance of providing training on ICT use to students, as well as working hand-in-hand with the Center for Educational Technologies, given that "in the first weeks of class, we spend too much time on something that we do not necessarily have to do, but that the student should already know" (Int. 4, l: 120-121). Teacher training was also necessary. Somewhat differently from Lucinda and Salomé, who thought that teachers should not deal with technical aspects, Rayuela maintained that teachers should in fact experiment with technology in order to know what works for language learning and what does not, although only by working collaboratively with engineers or IT experts.

Throughout the semester, Rayuela, like Lucinda, found it difficult to successfully implement the CALL component of her course. Having to deal with a number of technical

and design-related problems would be one of the first issues that Rayuela emphasized during our interviews and informal talks. Together with this aspect, she would also discuss the affordances of asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC) and online collaborative work, and the role of the teacher in the transition from FtF to online learning.

“I try to supervise every single student”:

The Challenge of Collaborative Online Learning

While the technical difficulties experienced in out-of-class contexts were a source of distress for Rayuela, what often seemed to cause more anxiety and concern were the students’ below-average learning outcomes. Halfway through the semester, after having analyzed students’ test results, Rayuela decided to help them improve their performance and thus suggested taking an extra hour of class on a weekly basis. In our third interview, she explained why she had made this unusual decision:

Well, I’ll tell you that the students were not progressing at the pace I wanted. Eh, it has been partly my fault and partly because I think four hours are needed at this level. I’ve done well so far. Students have shown interest, raising many questions, and I’ve realized the many gaps they have. (Int. 3, l: 140-143)

Since the beginning of the term, Rayuela felt that the success or failure of the course depended heavily on her. Thus, as time passed and the gap between the level of learner proficiency and the demands of the course continued to widen, she started to feel guilty. Her tone of voice and choice of words like “my fault” indicated a low sense of professional efficacy, which she tried to overcome by putting in more of her time to help students review class concepts. In doing so, she also came to realize that the course’s FtF instruction time did not seem to be enough to meet her students’ language needs and that certainly there were concepts they had not learned properly. Even so, Rayuela was aware that students’ low language proficiency and low participation in the CALL mode were not only related to her pedagogical choices, but also to other factors such as the challenges inherent in the use of an asynchronous learning medium. Hence, during our interviews, we would also reflect on the dynamics of students’ interaction and collaboration in this online learning space.

Exploring e-Riverview, for instance, I noticed that there were low levels of participation or collaboration, as was the case for Lucinda’s students. Unlike Lucinda’s class, however, students who contributed in the forums were not always the same, although Rayuela would often be the only person replying to their posts (see Appendix J). On reflection, she affirmed that not all students “know what a forum is for”. Even though

teachers explained its purpose, in practice, they did not seem to be clear that “a forum is based on interaction and is not just [a tool] to upload information” (Int. 2, l: 155-157). A few weeks later, assessing students’ performance in the LMS once again, she added:

Although there are groups that are getting there, not all of them understand the concept of asynchrony very well. They do not yet understand that they have to manage their time. Time is very important in online learning, more important than in face-to-face sessions since I am the one who controls it there. (Int. 3, l: 22-29)

Despite some students not allocating sufficient time to do their online work or “waiting until the last minute” to start doing assigned online activities, Rayuela was also aware of the possible shortcomings of ACMC:

On the other hand, these students are so busy that they may say: “Well, I want to do something that allows me to sit down and get it quickly out of the way”, but that’s not the case. They have to read and ask questions and then go back and read and reply again. (Int. 3, l: 106-108)

Together with the importance of knowing how to interact and how to do it effectively, Rayuela and I reflected upon the concept of time from various perspectives. We discussed the idea that students may not know how to manage their time in a virtual environment or do not have the extra time commonly required to work in that space. But more importantly, we wondered whether students may simply feel discouraged by the delayed and sometimes impersonal nature of asynchronous communication— a lack of social and teaching presence (Kear, 2010; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008) that can lead to disengagement from online learning. Rayuela also regarded some students’ difficulty to collaborate and provide feedback online as an additional factor hindering the successful development of the writing tasks that were assigned every week. Thinking of what Lucinda had recently told me about the need to assign clear learner roles, I also brought this issue to the fore:

Rayuela: In one class there was a [student] who wrote a whole paragraph and his partner wrote ‘Well done’ ... Then I replied: ‘Well, it’s good that you wrote that but I think the text lacks things which you could add’

Jenny: What you say is interesting because the student might not know what his role in the virtual mode is or feel he isn’t ready to take on certain roles ... May even think that that’s something the teacher should do.

Rayuela: Sure. For example, there are some who like [to give peer feedback] and take [the teacher’s role] and thus begin to correct... but how well they correct, that’s another problem. (Int. 3, l: 51-63)

Rayuela agreed with the idea of requiring students to make comments on their partners’ contributions and to suggest corrections if needed. Yet, she was unsure whether they were prepared to successfully assume a role that commonly belongs to the teacher—

especially that of the expert who makes evaluative comments. Hence, unlike Lucinda, who preferred to allow students to freely interact in the discussion board, Rayuela thought it was necessary to correct their language production. Through the platform, she would let students know what their mistakes were and how to improve their writing. Giving this kind of feedback was important not only because “they were making mistakes on topics they had already studied but could not yet handle” (Int. 3, l: 33-34), but because it allowed her to meet what she regarded were students’ expectations as to her role as a language teacher.

As part of her strategies to help students enhance their language performance as well as facilitate their participation in the LMS, Rayuela, like Lucinda, started to reflect on the ways she promoted collaborative online learning. As she did so, she recognized that in class she “tried to supervise every single student rather than encouraging them to interact more” because she wanted to ensure that their work and peer corrections were accurate and that “they were doing what she expected” (Int. 3, l: 8-10). Through the reflection space that the interviews had provided, she had become aware of the control she exercised and realized that to some extent her desire for her students to become more responsible and independent in the CALL mode contrasted with some of her in-class actions.

“To solve this problem” she had observed, she decided to provide students with models of expected outcomes in both learning environments so they could learn to rely less on her. She did so despite the fact that this seemingly practical solution clashed with her theories of effective language teaching. Early in the semester, she had admitted that she was “a bit afraid of” using models since she did not want learners “to over-rely on the model and avoid engaging in a process of creation” (Int. 2, l: 166-172). At that moment, Rayuela was worried that priming could “subvert the naturalness” of the task (Ellis, 2006, p. 26), thus turning the writing project into a mechanical exercise.

After some time, however, Rayuela chose to overcome her lack of confidence by designing models that were slightly different from the target tasks so as to guide students’ work in the LMS. She also explicitly talked to students about the purpose of asynchronous tools such as the discussion board. Both of these strategies were, in fact, observable in one of the classroom visits I made, as the excerpt below illustrates:

T to class:	How are you going to have the conversation?
Class:	Online.
T to class:	What is the importance of a forum?
Class:	That you have a conversation.
T to class:	Do people have to be in the same place?
Class:	No.

T to class: What's a forum?
Class: (No reply)
T to class: A forum is an online conversation tool... There are good things about using forums...I'm going to show you an example.
(Ray-Obs#3, p.1-2)

Rayuela had also become conscious of the control she wanted to exercise over the CALL component of the course. By talking students through the instructions of an assigned task in each class, she believed she could discourage them from exploring the LMS on their own and trying to cope with possible problems. An idea that “came to her mind” in the middle our third interview was thus “to ask students to read and try to understand the instructions days before actually having to carry out the activity” (Int. 3, l: 65-66) — this to encourage them to engage more actively with the content of the platform as well as share their ideas or doubts with their classmates.

As the inquiry progressed, Rayuela started to look more into her own practice and the different pedagogical and design-related aspects that seemed to have influenced in some way the implementation of the course— a reflective exercise that would be accompanied by a pervasive feeling of insecurity and inadequacy. However, while the emphasis and design of the tasks, the asynchronous nature of the technologies and her directive role in the classroom may have had a part in the process, she emphasized that in the end it was up to the students to take charge of their own learning.

“Students expect the teacher to provide all answers”:

The Question of Learner Interest and Autonomy

Despite students' difficulty to communicate asynchronously and the degree of control she, unintentionally, may have exercised in the FtF mode, Rayuela strongly believed that there was also a lack of commitment on the part of the students and would often refer to this aspect in our conversations. To her, students were not putting enough effort into performing their tasks online; she perceived a “lackadaisical attitude” (Int. 2, l: 72) as they did not inform her about their problems in time but waited until the last minute.

Besides, she admitted to being unhappy with the fact that they did not invest as much time and energy as she did: “They cannot feel alone because I'm always there. Therefore I tell them ‘you know I check what you do, so if I take the time to do it, you should take the time to do the activities too’ ” (Int. 2, l: 234-237). Halfway through the semester, when the lack of teamwork was also evident, Rayuela described how she had

reminded students that “it was their responsibility to promote effective participation within their team” (Int. 3, l: 191) and that not contributing to the tasks seriously affected the performance of others.

Wondering whether this phenomenon was linked to the level of integration of the learning modes, among many other factors, rather than to a simplistic and apathetic attitude on the part of students, at some point I asked Rayuela about the departmental decision not to close the discussion board on a weekly basis. She commented that this decision, despite seeking to give students greater flexibility, was ineffective and that she had chosen to give students specific deadlines to participate in e-Riverview. Rayuela had noticed that being too flexible and “giving too much time to students was counterproductive...since they [had] not yet reached a high level of responsibility and organization” (Int. 2, l: 99-101). In order to develop and achieve autonomy in beginning language learners, some structure was desirable.

Providing structure to the independent learning aspect of the course also implied, in Rayuela’s eyes, guiding students in the process of self-assessment. To do so, she had decided to keep a record of students’ participation in the LMS and the quality of their contributions so as to compare it against their self-assessment checklists. This allowed her to verify whether they had assessed themselves in a fair and objective manner, and in case it had not been so, to discuss with them what she had observed and invite them to reflect on their self-assigned mark. She negotiated with students— especially those who did not participate actively— the mark they had given to their work on the CALL mode:

At that time I told them that the problem with working online was not that they do not have the resources, but that they have to look for them. ‘If I have some difficulties, I have to look where and how I can fix them. That’s what the SAC, the teacher and peers are for’. (Int. 3, l: 125-127)

Rayuela firmly believed that interest and commitment could make a difference in people’s language learning experience. From her perspective, those few students who had carried out all assigned and optional activities had learned more and become more independent. As she claimed towards the end of the term: “It shows when a student has worked on these exercises and when he has not” (Int. 4, l: 52). However this had not been the case for most learners as they did not seem willing to invest time in a subject “in which they were not that interested” (Int. 4, l: 65). Hence, considering that the awareness she had tried to raise as well as the measures she had taken to exercise less control apparently had not had a significant impact on students’ attitudes, Rayuela could not avoid feeling frustrated.

She reasoned that an over-dependence on teacher's guidance was still a key issue in most of her lessons as "students expected the teacher to provide all answers" (Int. 4, l: 38) rather than try to answer their doubts and carry out the tasks independently. In our last encounter, she continued by explaining that students "still expected constant reaffirmation and feedback from the teacher...perhaps because that's what they're taught at school". Although she had tried to be less directive and had asked them to make use of available online and print resources as well as "prepare in advance for their lessons", not many of them had met her expectations. To her, it was evident that "they [had] not yet set a criterion to self-regulate and self-assess" (Int. 5, l: 104-110).

Rayuela and Lucinda both argued that the teacher-centered paradigm that still seems to prevail in some secondary schools has an impact on students' ability to accept self-directed study. Yet, unlike Lucinda who thought learners' attitudes towards the independent learning component of the course were only natural, Rayuela expected them to act more responsibly. To her, as Blin (2004, p.391) suggests, the amount of control applied by a learner depends, after all, on his or her will to exercise it. Consequently, in light of a seeming absence of interest and inner drive, she agreed with the idea of changing the assessment criteria of the course, particularly for the activities taking place online:

They still have this philosophy that there must be a mark in order for them to work. We would then have to rethink if we should ... assign a mark for online sessions. I think we should because while the student is taught about the importance [of online learning] ... we have to find some way for him to be aware that this will represent a mark that may increase his GPA. (Int. 4, l: 91-93)

Adopting such an extrinsic motivation strategy was, in her opinion, useful while teaching students about the value of online provision and helping them prepare for the demands of this mode of learning. As with Lucinda, however, Rayuela's interest in applying external control appeared to contradict her own ideas about learner autonomy in that de-emphasizing the course self-assessment element would imply limiting learners' opportunity to play a role in evaluating their learning outcomes, as well as reproducing the high-school teaching system and culture with which she appeared to disagree.

Rayuela's Story: A Reflective Coda

Rayuela's narrative of practice, like Lucinda's, in stark contrast with the success experienced during the previous year, highlights various moments of discontent. The fact that both worked with the same learner population explains why they faced similar difficulties, which were related to the use of technology, the organization of collaborative work and the

assessment of learning outcomes. However, unlike Lucinda, Rayuela did not disagree with the structure of the course or with the choice of technologies. Even so, she found it difficult to achieve the goals of the CALL mode and to boost her students' language proficiency. It would be the latter, however, which caused her to feel most frustration and distress.

As a result, Rayuela looked more closely at the functioning of the course's online learning mode as well as her own in-class pedagogical practice. She noticed that students struggled to interact in the LMS due to what appeared to be a lack of understanding of the purpose of discussion boards, poor time management and displeasure with the time-consuming nature of ACMC tasks. More importantly, like Lynee in Golombek and Johnson's (2004, p.320) study, Rayuela recognized a contradiction between her beliefs about student ownership over their learning and her own teaching practice. While the online mode required students to act independently, the classroom environment embodied a strong sense of teacher control.

On reflection, Rayuela acknowledged that she wanted to supervise every single student so that he or she did the right thing, yet at the same time, she expected them to work autonomously when not in the classroom. Hence, by constantly correcting students production and spending long periods of time in class explaining what was on the learning platform, Rayuela seemed to have succumbed to the other twin danger of independent learning, that of providing too much guidance. This interest in keeping everything under control may have obscured her ability to teach students how to self-regulate and instead to rely on peers and external resources.

Nonetheless, by putting Rayuela's story in a temporal perspective, it may be said that her actions were not related to a resistance to relinquish control, as she had been successful in the teaching of other courses at DFL, but rather to her limited experience in teaching elementary courses. She had found it difficult to teach students with a basic knowledge of the target language and more so within a blended learning format. Balancing the guided and structured nature of FtF instruction (common but also necessary in such courses) with the unstructured nature underlining the (required) design of the online mode was problematic. Her lack of confidence in her knowledge and expertise and her fear of failing to meet students' expectations (Kubanyiova, 2009) probably accounts for the decisions she made and her seemingly contradictory instructional actions.

Concerned about not living up to her students' expectations and those of change leaders and herself, Rayuela tried a number of strategies such as organizing extra FtF sessions with learners who required additional support, providing models for the

development of online written tasks and being less directive in the classroom. Yet, despite her efforts, students' language proficiency and participation did not improve as expected, thus causing her self-esteem and self-image as a successful and respected teacher (Kubanyiova, 2009) to be eroded. Unlike previous years, Rayuela experienced moments of professional self-doubt.

It is thus perhaps understandable why she judged her practice very harshly, even though she was aware of the various factors that could have influenced the implementation of the course. Her feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy were so dominant that she began to doubt her ability to teach elementary courses, as the following excerpts from our last two interviews suggest:

Rayuela: I have found it difficult to teach these courses...I've found lots of difficulties or perhaps limitations in my performance as a teacher.

Jenny: What do you mean by limitations?

Rayuela: Well, being able to transmit in very simple English what they have to do...knowing how much they should or should not understand, and to what extent what is not explained can frustrate them. (Int. 4, 1: 157-162)

While it was true that Rayuela doubted her capacity to adapt her practice in a way that blended learning could be implemented effectively, it is also clear that students' perceived lack of commitment intensified her negative emotions. She expected students to promptly respond to the changes made and the strategies devised throughout the semester, and therefore felt frustrated when this did not occur. The interest she had initially shown in considering how students' socioeconomic contexts may affect their experiences with blended learning, for example, faded with time and eventually she would claim that a lack of resources was no excuse for them to avoid taking responsibility for their work.

All in all, Rayuela's narrative illustrates how, despite agreeing with the goals of the curriculum and having developed a sense of ownership due to her primary role in the design of the online mode, her experience teaching the course was sometimes distressing and unsatisfactory. On noticing contradictions in her practice, Rayuela engaged in self-regulatory activity and implemented a number of different strategies; however, despite her many efforts, her emotional and cognitive dissonance could not be completely resolved.

It seems that the sacred stories that she had to live by (e.g. same curricular structure for all courses), or as Kubanyiova (2009) puts it, her context-related ought-to selves, were an impediment for her to adopt practices that reflected her intentions and beliefs. Unlike Lucinda, Rayuela did not make an explicit call for freedom, yet her stories indicate that her decision-making power was often constrained by institutional requirements. The strategies

she devised may have in the end tapped less into her personal teaching goals and more into those of the institution. Although she tried to play the role of enabler and thus support the change process, as a result of the difficult moments experienced, she became a doubter (Hendy, 2008) and questioned aspects of the reform.

Consequently, when asked about the future of the blended strategy, Rayuela would suggest increasing FtF instruction time “given that if students have problems learning the target language this will affect [what is done in] the virtual mode and more so if you don’t want to use their mother tongue at all” (Int. 4, l: 67-69). Additionally, she would recommend incorporating the online learning component into the curriculum progressively and involving students in the design of the curriculum. For more advanced courses, she proposed modifying the syllabus and thus have students study online part of what is done in class so as to maximize direct teaching time for interaction and solving questions, and at the same time “encourage them to take more responsibility for their learning” (Int. 4, l: 20). On the whole, Rayuela suggested having a distinct CALL design for DFL’s proficiency program courses — a very different concept indeed to the one she had experienced.

Oriana’s Story

“To date, we have a very clear idea of where we are heading. Unlike the past year, the student has now a clearer idea of where he is at”, Oriana emphasized in our first interview and went on to explain, “There is now a self-assessment item that is essential, I would say, to start generating autonomy in students... So I think this semester will be fruitful with regard to blended learning” (Int. 1, l: 51-53). Oriana, like Rayuela, talked with enthusiasm about the new academic term and her words revealed confidence in what would be a positive experience for herself and her students.

She therefore had high expectations. Oriana emphasized that she and the Department needed to gradually convert the online component of the program into “what it was intended to be” (Int. 1, l: 140-141). “I hope”, she stated, “we can evince what blended learning is really all about”, as well as “a favorable response from students” (Int. 1, l: 142). To Oriana, it was important for all teachers to “try to lower the threshold of resistance in students and help them see [blended learning] as an opportunity to become autonomous”. “Even if Colombia is not now a country where autonomy is encouraged”, she remarked, “we should be starting now because that is where we are headed” (Int. 1, l: 144-145).

Oriana’s enthusiastic and confident attitudes were not only evident at the start of the data collection period, but were actually boosted throughout the semester due to the positive

outcomes experienced in implementing the course. Despite some of the difficulties encountered with the use of new technologies and the intensification of her work, she was always pleased with her performance and that of her students. Accordingly, our conversations would often revolve around an interest in examining what was behind this perceived success and the nature of the changes she decided to make over time. We would reflect upon issues linked to a) the relationship between tailor-made course design and student engagement, b) the affordances and constraints of technology, and c) the role of assessment—the three sections that I will explore in what follows.

“Students met my expectations”: A Tailor-Made Blended Course

Considering that Oriana originally expressed a positive attitude towards the structure of her course, in our second interview, I inquired about the decisions her team had made as to the selection and distribution of the tasks and tools for each learning mode, and how she felt about these choices. In response she told me that one of the keys of the design had been trying to link the FtF component with the virtual one more clearly: “What we have done ... is to make the session on campus as relevant as possible for what they are going to do online ... so they can do a very good job” (Int. 2, 1: 9-11).

With regard to the selection of tools, as mentioned earlier, she decided to combine the use of the LMS with other tools such as Glogster, Wikispaces and VoiceThread. During my first classroom visit, Oriana made reference to Glogster by showing students how to publish the link to their online poster in e-Riverview and reminding them about the need to comment on the content and quality of their partners’ production. At that moment I realized that this written task did not require students to work in teams and that Oriana therefore was adapting the guidelines given by the Department to her own pedagogical goals. Further evidence of this practice was the fact that she had resolved to use Wikispaces rather than the discussion board for part of the semester, as she explained in our interview:

Jenny: What made you change to wikis? Most people are using the discussion board.

Oriana: Well, first to vary [activities], that was like the main motivation.... and second because I want collaborative work to be stronger.

Jenny: What do you think the forum does not offer?

Oriana: In the forum ... the student makes two comments to his partner... but in the end it’s just a comment. While with the wiki ... [they] actually work together. They are able to self-edit and edit their peers, so there is as a process of mutual responsibility. (Int. 2, 1: 23-36).

While Oriana was aware of the advantages of the discussion board and often encouraged students to use it to provide peer feedback, she believed that there were more suitable tools to foster collaboration. Considering that she had virtually sole control of the planning and integration of FtF and CALL modes, she chose to use those technologies she considered would allow her to motivate students to learn and achieve the objectives of the course. This freedom along with her personal practical knowledge would give her the confidence to judge whether what had been suggested was appropriate for her class, thus leading her to use e-Riverview slightly differently and explore other resources—an experimentation process that would also occur in the FtF mode.

Like Lucinda, Oriana used technologies other than those contained in the textbook used in the classroom. On my first visit I noticed that students had been using mobile devices to record their voices and that Oriana had requested them to listen to the recordings at home in order to, as she remarked, “check what they had said and [if interested] repeat the task”, as well as listen to another classmate and provide feedback. By doing so, “they could become aware of their mistakes” and “make a careful analysis of their production”, which was not normally possible in class (Int. 2, 1: 53-57).

Evaluating the results of these implemented activities, Oriana said that they had been positive since she had observed a high level of student participation: “There is a high number of posts and that speaks well of how instructions were given ... Students met my expectations and responded well to the idea of giving feedback (Int. 2, 1: 105-109). Not only had this response from students generated a feeling of satisfaction, but it had also allowed Oriana to feel reassured about the way she had integrated both learning modes and about the pedagogical and technological choices previously made.

As I was interested in knowing whether student engagement and in turn Oriana’s satisfaction was sustained over time, I observed two more lessons. Although students did not always collaborate through e-Riverview, and therefore it was not possible for me to observe the dynamics of their teamwork, through classroom observation I could confirm that they were interacting with the SCORM files that Oriana had uploaded to the platform to guide them through the tasks and the use of new technologies. Comments made in Spanish by students and by Oriana herself in one of the lessons observed illustrate this:

T: Quiero primero que todo felicitarlos, la gran mayoría hizo lo que debía hacer, que era comentar el post de sus compañeros y utilizar el lenguaje de negociación... Lo hicieron muy muy bien. [I first of all want to congratulate you, the vast majority did what was asked, which was to comment on the post of their peers and use language of negotiation ... You did a very good job]

- ...
- T: Ahora hablemos del trabajo online de esta semana...ustedes me van a ayudar a definir qué es lo que tienen que hacer... Bueno...cual era la primera instrucción? [Now let's talk about the online work of this week ... you are going to help me define what needs to be done ... well ... what was the first step?]
- S1: Ver un tutorial de cómo se crea una wiki...[Watch a tutorial of how to create a wiki...]
- T: Perfecto, muy bien.... [Right, very good...]
- ...
- T: ¿Cual es uno de los objetivos de la wiki ustedes que ya vieron el video?...[Now that you've watched the video, what's one of the purposes of a wiki?]
- S3: Que se puede editar lo que está escrito. [That you can edit your writing]
- T: Muy bien. Que ustedes serán capaces de auto-editarse y editar a sus compañeros... [Good. That you will be able to self-edit and edit your peers] (Ori-Obs#2, p.1-2)

As the excerpt shows, Oriana was pleased with students' performance and the fact that they had followed the instructions posted on the LMS. Students' participation and the outcomes of their work had undeniably turned into a barometer with which she was able to measure the effectiveness of her instructional design. In later interviews, despite the fact that some technical problems had occurred during the use of the wiki, Oriana said once more she felt "satisfied" (Int. 3, l: 11) since her students had enjoyed the experience to the point that some had reported "using it to work collaboratively in other subjects" (Int. 4, l: 06-07). With the use of tools like the discussion board, which students used "to plan a weekend away", or like Voicethread, which they used to record a conversation, Oriana also reported that student participation "had exceeded her expectations" (Int. 4, l: 04).

As students' level of commitment and interest was maintained, so was Oriana's sense of professional efficacy. Her self-confidence was not only linked to student engagement, however. The fact that students appeared to have developed metalinguistic and teamwork skills, as well as more autonomous attitudes, was also a cause for satisfaction. The use of written and oral forums to interact, but mostly to provide feedback, had helped students identify problems with accuracy, vocabulary use and pronunciation. Peer feedback and peer assessment practices, which were an active component of the course, had permitted students to become aware of their performance and "more easily notice mistakes" (Int. 3, l: 87-90).

Oriana also alluded to students' growing ability to self-assess. The use of the forum had seemed to help students "feel empowered to make a comment or even give advice" (Int. 2, l: 68-69). However, thinking of Rayuela's class and the opposite experience some of her students had gone through, at some point I asked whether this practice had been counterproductive for low-achieving students, to which she replied in the negative and remarked: 'In fact, it is a first step toward autonomy...since students, by giving feedback to

others, evaluate their own work" (Int. 2, l: 74-82). And later in the semester, she would provide an indication as to why this was so:

There is the case of two girls with difficulties at the written and oral level. I saw the feedback they gave to their peers and I enjoyed it because they said things like, 'look I recommend working on the pronunciation of this or that word'. They identified that their partners had pronounced incorrectly... That for me is good because they feel able to give feedback, which can also raise their self-esteem. (Int. 4, l: 32-40)

Oriana did not think students' language knowledge was a barrier for them to help each other and assess their performance. Rather she viewed self and peer correction as an opportunity for them to "notice a gap" in knowledge and become aware of target language input, probably under the assumption that people learn more from the things that they attend to than from those to which they do not (Schmidt, 2010, p. 2), and that they may learn more from their peers than from the teacher. As Swain, Brooks and Tocalli-Beller (2002) point out, in collaborative dialogue, learners work together to attempt to solve linguistic problems they have encountered and "co-construct language or knowledge about language" (p. 171-172). In so doing, they can be simultaneously experts and novices.

The creation of the wiki, which prompted a process of collaborative scaffolding, together with other tasks had also fostered less teacher dependence. The need to support each other was certainly true in Oriana's classroom since, like Lucinda, she was mostly absent from the LMS and Wikispaces. Although this was a constant source of concern, as she was aware that "teacher support is fundamental in online learning" (Int. 2, l: 110-112) and "felt terrible for not doing follow-up" (Int. 4, l: 12), Oriana considered that students had learned to work on their own and was happy that "her lack of time" (Int. 5, l: 116) had not negatively affected their learning experience.

The cumulative effect of in-class and out-of-class learning experiences appears to have helped students to learn how to use online resources and rely on their and their classmates' knowledge to solve any issues. As a result, Oriana did not have to be present in the online environment as much, although she continuously regretted not being able to do so. After all, collaborative scaffolding seemed to have become the perfect substitute for a lack of online teacher presence, as well as be evidence of independent learning: "because students were used to giving feedback to others, they continued to do so...even though I hadn't asked...They were able to achieve genuine collaborative work" (Int 5, l: 122-123).

Unlike Rayuela and Lucinda, Oriana had an overall positive experience in implementing blended learning and was happy with the learning outcomes and gains of her students. Her narrative therefore gives an indication of the satisfaction and sense of

fulfillment that she felt throughout the semester and the reasons and circumstances that led to these feelings. Nevertheless, Oriana also pondered on the aspects that sometimes disrupted the normal flow of activities, such as the use of new technologies.

“You end up deciding to use other resources”:

The Challenges of Using Technology

Although Oriana’s perspective of the whole blended learning experience was highly positive, she stated that she had faced difficulties with the use of technology. This was not something new since she had experienced problems with those students who showed weaknesses at the technological level in the previous semester as well. At that time, she came across students with varying IT skills and “there were even some students who had had trouble managing the LMS, which is something basic and not all new” (Int. 1, l: 56). This meant that even though e-Riverview had been used for a long time and was thus well-established, surprisingly, there were still students who did not seem to know how to use it.

While in the new academic term students did not appear to struggle with e-Riverview, they did initially show “some resistance to using technological resources different from the ones they were used to” and “complained” about the time it took them to do CALL-related activities (Int. 2, l: 86-88). As a result, Oriana resolved to be more flexible in terms of deadlines and, like Rayuela, take some time from the class to talk students through the task instructions. Interested in knowing what Oriana thought of “the significant amount of time used in class to guide students and what this said about the clarity of the blended strategy” (11 Sep. 2012, Ori-Obs#4), I asked her directly about this matter.

She admitted that she did not like having “to explain again in class what already appears on the learning platform”, yet she “couldn’t tell [students] just do the best you can” (Int. 2, l: 187-189). While students developed the habit of working and interacting with content online, it was necessary for her to go over the CALL mode in class. However, to avoid using up too much class time and to ensure students “did what was expected” (Int. 3, l: 139), she chose to give instructions in Spanish at the beginning of the lessons.

She also reflected on her design of the SCORM package files, especially with regard to the clarity of instructions: “I have also tried to analyze the instructions I give...because I find it hard to be as clear as possible...Therefore, I think a lot when I have to work on the design and instructions of the online mode” (Int. 3, l: 158). Her use of Spanish in class and the incorporation of students’ feedback on the design of CALL materials gradually helped

Oriana reduce students' resistance to working with technology and "made it easier for them to carry out the tasks" (Int. 4, l: 23-24).

However, besides dealing with students' need to develop online learning skills, there were other issues with regard to the use of multiple technological tools. Oriana faced technical problems common to freely available Web 2.0 tools— particularly with Wikispaces. Despite the "usefulness and value students had found in the tool", they experienced accessibility problems in that "access was restricted to limited number of people" (Int. 3, l: 19-20). In fact, one of the reasons why I was not able to observe students' interaction was because I could not be granted access. To avoid students feeling frustrated and knowing that the wiki was "the tool not the outcome of the activity" (Int. 3, l: 53-57), she gave students the option of using other means to collaborate, if desired.

Reflecting on her experience with this technology in our fourth interview, Oriana admitted that while she had used wikis before, "she was not aware of such limitations" and therefore her "instruction to give feedback to other group's wiki in fact conflicted with the features of the tool". Consequently, for the future she intended to "do better planning...and know the tool more thoroughly before actually implementing it" (Int. 4, l: 44-48). Later in the semester, with the use of VoiceThread, she thus decided to explore it inside the classroom so as to minimize the possible technical problems that might occur and help students avoid "making mistakes during the process" (Int. 4, l: 63).

Nevertheless, although Oriana was conscious of her role in the selection and pedagogically-relevant use of technologies, she believed that the institutional LMS did not offer teachers the resources they needed. While the design of the platform had improved significantly, it did not provide teachers the opportunity to develop a number of activities they found useful and engaging. As noted by Levy and Stockwell (2006), some of the limitations of LMSs "tend to guide the designer along a narrow path" (p.33), which may cause them to explore other resources. In Oriana's case, Moodle's wiki did not permit "groups to give feedback to each other" (Int. 3, l: 22-28), thus making her opt for an external tool:

The activities that can be made [in e-Riverview] are very limited...In the end, you end up deciding to implement other resources...especially because the activities do not always attract students' attention or have a significant impact in terms of collaborative work. (Int. 4, l: 72-104)

It is true that institutional decisions as to the selection and use of technologies shape CALL design in important ways (Levy & Stockwell, 2006), yet it also true that teachers' IT skills and knowledge, their evaluation of the tools chosen and their interpretation of the

objectives of the curriculum determine whether (or how) they use them. In Oriana's case, she decided to use open source applications together with the LMS, considering the autonomy she had to do so. This decision resulted in a few technical problems that— while resolved satisfactorily— could possibly have interfered with the learning process and affected students' motivation. To Oriana, however, the complex task of designing for blended learning was not only related to decisions about the selection of technologies, but also about the level of integration, and more specifically, the assessment process.

“I know students do the math”: To Assess or Not to Assess

In addition to the technological constraints experienced, the role of assessment was also highlighted by Oriana as an issue that could hinder or facilitate the change to blended learning. In the case of the independent practice mode, for instance, the absence of a grade seemed to have affected the investment made by some students. At the start of the semester, when comparing students' development of the collaborative and independent learning components of the course, Oriana indicated that it was not easy to “get the idea out of their heads that you should always work for a mark” and went on to explain:

They simply say ‘well, the independent work is optional, as should be the collaborative work’. So I emphasize that the ultimate purpose of Riverview University is to educate autonomous learners ...and that whatever they do will be reflected in their learning outcomes. (Int. 2, l: 170-176)

Not obtaining a reward and relying only on self-assessment procedures appeared to have created the illusion that certain activities of the online mode were discretionary, not to say less beneficial— a reason why some students did not comply with them. Given DFL's recent emphasis on collaboration and interaction, students seemed to have chosen to focus their attention on the collaborative mode at the expense of the development of independent work, and hence of the study culture that had played a significant role in the curriculum in previous years. However, the absence of a mark did not only influence students' perceptions, but teachers' as well, as was the case with Oriana.

Although Oriana regarded independent work as important, she also recognized that she sometimes neglected it. “Since I don't grade it, I am not that strict about it” (Int. 2, l: 180), she reported in our second interview. Knowing that “it could not be left in the background” because it was “part of the credit system of the course” (Int. 2, l: 182), she thus tried to take some time from her lessons “to check exercises from the workbook” and insist

on its relevance. Even so, she was much more flexible with this independent practice mode than she was with the collaborative element of the course.

Therefore, besides continually praising the outcomes of students' teamwork, Oriana gave great importance to the use of the self-assessment checklist, as this allowed her to stress the value and relevance of the tasks performed online and therefore increase the level of student commitment. She did this, like Rayuela, by keeping a strict record in terms of "what students did online, the quality of the content and the extent to which they fulfilled the task" (Int. 3, l: 76-78). Recalling students' first self-assessment experience, she stated:

Some assigned themselves a 4.5 or 5 mark... But as this was not consistent with the report that I had, I took time in class and told them: 'Well ... you got 5.0, but out of the five tasks assigned, you only did two, so please analyze this mark'. I try to guide this process of self-evaluation and make it a little more serious... [Now] they approach me and say: 'Teacher, this time my online work will still be 5 because I'm very attentive' (Int. 3, l: 80-85)

However, in spite of the change in attitude she had begun to observe in some students, she recognized that there were a few of them who did not participate actively in the CALL mode. To Oriana, this was not to be attributable to the online learning experience but to the learning of English in general. She added that participation in the FtF and CALL modes was very much related: "those students who do not attend class, or who through their attitude and body posture show that are not interested, are the same ones who do not participate online" (Int. 4, l: 110-113). As mentioned before, some of the problems teachers face online are no different from those encountered in the classroom (Hampel & Stickler, 2008). Learner apathy could not thus be interpreted as a result of incorporating technology into the curriculum only.

Oriana also believed that student levels of participation could be higher if the assessment criteria and procedures of the CALL mode were different. Like Lucinda and Rayuela, she suggested devising a stricter evaluation system.

The student knows that ...the percentage of the self-assessment mark [compared to that of the tests] is very small. I know that students do the math; 'eh what do I need [to pass the course]', right? In the end, this influences their participation ... Not having a higher value for their online work is a decisive factor. Although we have the intention of developing learner autonomy, this is not achieved as yet ... So, I think there should be a much stronger policy. (Int. 4, l: 70-79)

Not assigning a significant value to what was being done in the CALL mode meant that "the students could perfectly omit it" (Int. 4, l: 88) without this having major consequences on their final scores – even if for teachers it was clear that they could be

missing out on valuable learning opportunities. To Oriana, the interaction that takes place in the online environment was “more significant” than that taking place in the classroom in that “students are interacting all the week” (Int. 5, l: 206-207) and not just a short period of time— a typical situation in large FtF language classes. Therefore, the Department’s assessment criteria needed to be a reflection of what appeared to be more beneficial for learners, as well as give a more accurate indication of the sources of their learning.

Oriana’s Story: A Reflective Coda

As can be observed, Oriana’s attempt to design and deliver her course was, in her eyes, highly successful. Her narrative suggests that she had pride in her ability to blend various learning modes, and thus it is no surprise that in our last interview she said that “the semester had been a success for her” (Int. 5, l: 65). She was pleased that she had been able to do “what she had always wanted: to plan, design and evaluate the course”, something which, as she stressed, “was an earthly paradise for any teacher”— despite all the time that this required (Int. 5, l: 54-60).

The opportunity to have control over the design of the curriculum along with her decision to use technology in different ways and with different purposes than those suggested seemed to have created the perfect conditions for her to thrive. Oriana was able to tailor-make the course to her own pedagogical goals and the interests and needs of her students, all this without losing sight of the main learning objectives of the Department. In so doing, she was able to instill curiosity and interest in her students as well as create more opportunities for learning. This, in turn, appeared to have led to sustained levels of student engagement and the development of metacognitive and self-regulation skills.

In the same way, the positive responses of students permitted Oriana to evaluate her practice and gain confidence in her judgment, thereby generating a sense of both accomplishment and ownership. Feeling accountable for the implementation of the course, it was thus easier for Oriana to “sell students the idea” (Int.1, l: 128) that the blended program was beneficial. Students were perhaps more likely to understand its added value and why switching from a more conventional learning format, where technology was supplementary, to a blended model, where it played a more prominent role, could be favorable for some aspects of their learning.

In support of her discourse and to avoid creating an out-of-balance blend (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003), Oriana also engaged in a thoughtful process of planning and design; however, this was not enough to prevent problems from arising, mainly technical.

Interestingly, it seems that these problems, instead of discouraging her from investing time and effort, actually encouraged her to gain a better understanding of how to integrate different learning modes and adopt strategies to minimize student frustration. Because her interest in providing students with authentic learning experiences in the blended environment was, as Kubanyiova (2009) notes, central in her working self-concept, “other competing ought-to selves were rendered insignificant in guiding her behavior and therefore did not distract her from her developmental path” (p.329).

It was this reflective and committed attitude which, I believe, also motivated her to evaluate the value of the tasks and resources she had designed by, for example, asking students’ opinions about the use of Wikispaces. Not only did opening a space to listen to students’ voices allow her to make changes and adapt her practice accordingly, but it also prevented an overuse of Web 2.0 technologies, which could have interfered with the learning process rather than facilitate it. It was clear that Oriana had an enriching and rewarding experience with the implementation of blended learning and had also been able to fulfill the resolutions she expressed during our first interview. In Golombek and Doran’s (2014) terms, Oriana experienced both cognitive and emotional congruence.

The initial resistance she noted in students and the technical problems she had to deal with seem to confirm, however, some of the misconceptions that are discussed in the literature regarding the use of technology. The fact that teachers have to help students in the use of resources, for instance, has confronted the myth of the “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). Like Lucinda, Oriana had witnessed that some students, despite being active users of social networking tools, did not necessarily know how to use technology for academic purposes, nor how it could support their learning. Thus, as contended by Selwyn (2009) and Margaryan, Littlejohn and Vojt (2011), the claim that young generations have sophisticated skills in using digital technologies or are all technologically-savvy needs to be treated with caution.

The doubt that Oriana experienced with the creation of SCORM files (instructions and activities to guide students’ online work) also indicates a lack of clarity in terms of how best to design resources for online learning. Indeed, creating or repurposing educational content involves a significant change in the design role of teachers since there is a shift from content creation to customization, application and contextualization of learning sequences (Anderson, 2008, p. 347). As a result, Oriana expected the University to provide more training for teachers, especially for those working part-time, given that most of the existing development programs offered by the CET were directed to full-time teachers.

Part-time teachers, however, outnumbered full-time teachers and “therefore they were a human resource with considerable impact on the community” and who deserved more attention and investment (Int. 5, l: 272-273). Like Rayuela, Oriana felt that teachers “have the responsibility to support students both in the academic process and in the use of technology” (Int. 5, l: 335-336), and therefore they need more training. By providing this training, there was also a greater chance to “lower the affective filter” and the resistance of some teachers to adopt change and at the same time encourage them to put more effort into the development of the curriculum’s online element.

As can be seen, Oriana decided to take risks and explore new tools and ideas, yet, at the same time she played the role of a facilitator or enabler of the process of change. Like other participants, she was aware of a discrepancy between the stories that had been institutionally established and the ones she wanted to author with her students, yet unlike them, she was able to bridge the gap. As a result, as teachers in Shelly, Murphy and White’s (2013) study, she experienced “a considerable sense of achievement in [her] work”, as she found ways to “work around the difficulties” (p. 570). This perceived positive professional experience, I believe, might be explained in terms of Oriana’s interest in helping students become more autonomous and technologically literate, her willingness and ability to change aspects of the established course of action, and the seeming little interference of other contextual constraints (e.g., large class, language proficiency).

Ziyad’s Story

Although the first implementation stage of the blended program had been somewhat chaotic, in our first interview Ziyad also described how the program had evolved in a positive way during previous months. Like the other participants, he believed that students’ positive responses toward the blended program had gradually increased. As a result, Ziyad’s expectations for the new implementation phase, like those of Rayuela and Oriana, were relatively high. There were also goals that he still desired to achieve such as transferring more responsibility to students and helping them realize the importance of taking control over their own learning. Helping students take control of their learning, I believe, was one of Ziyad’s interests and an expression of his interpretation of blended learning—an idea he would repeatedly make reference to during our conversations:

One always comes with high expectations... I think it is now time for me to provide students with the tools and explain to them what these are for, and for them...well...to make decisions and say I’m going to use this or that... It’s transferring the responsibility that previously rested only with me. (Int. 1, l: 83-92).

Interested in knowing how he would implement his idea of transferring more responsibility to learners, I thus began my collaborative inquiry journey with Ziyad. Only a few weeks into the semester, however, I would realize that he was not happy with the structure and design of the CALL mode and that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, he had decided to deviate from some of the ideas set out in the curriculum. Consequently, in our interviews we would talk about a) the reasons for adapting the curriculum b) the consequences of this choice and c) the impact of his decisions on students' participation in the course.

“For it to be blended, I think you should do something else”:

Coming to Terms with Blended Learning

During the first visit I made to Ziyad's classroom, I had the opportunity to observe how he followed-up on one of the online tasks of the semester (WebQuest), which he had designed himself, as well as perceive the positive student response to this and other class activities. Despite this positive learning atmosphere, when talking about his teaching experience, Ziyad hinted that he was not satisfied, among other things, with the structure of the CALL element of the course, primarily because there were differences in the way he and his teammates would plan and execute it. Ziyad was not in accordance with them for a number of reasons, as the following exchanges from our second interview illustrate:

Ziyad: It shouldn't be like a class exercise. Otherwise, it's simply doing what is done in class but without the teacher: listen and complete, fill in the gaps. Not that this is bad, but for it to be blended I think you have to do something else; the student should explore and achieve something. (Int. 2, l: 40-45)

...

Jenny: How do you think it should be?

Ziyad: Well I think there should be more freedom ... by the student so that he can choose his own resources, right? And it's not to reduce my workload, no, it's not that I can't plan and implement an activity of reading or listening ... (Int. 2, l: 126-129)

Jenny: So what steps or stages should the design have?

Ziyad: Well, I'm not very clear about that ... but I wonder, eh, should the activities and stages of the online mode be similar to those of the class? I do not think so... (Int. 2, l: 131-137)

...

Jenny: So for you, what has been done is similar to independent study?

Ziyad: What I have seen is that there is no difference....We should also think about [the concept of] independent work. That is to say, it's independent. We should not assign the same worksheet for everyone to do. I think that they could design their own independent work, for instance. (Int. 2, l: 179-185)

To Ziyad, not only was it necessary to rethink the structure of the activities being conducted online but what the ultimate purpose of this learning environment needed to be. In his view, what had been planned and implemented thus far did not give students the freedom to choose the resources they wanted to work with or to inquire about topics of their interest; on the contrary, it was very similar to those activities often performed in the classroom. Reflecting on the language skills that could be developed online, he also remarked that it all “depended on the objectives of course” and, like Lucinda, that writing was not always necessary. “I think that if there’s writing...it should be free because sometimes you find in the forum: ‘answer the following questions from the text’, and so everyone writes the same. The first to reply says it all” (Int. 2, l: 145-148), he added.

Likewise, Ziyad observed that writing was not understood as process but as a product in that students “did their writing somewhere else and just uploaded the Word file to the LMS”— an indication that the goal of learners actively debating and negotiating their ideas and co-constructing knowledge through e-Riverview may not always have been met in practice. In consequence, he asked students to turn in the printed version of their texts in class, as he considered that posting them online would only increase his workload: “For the latest task they had, I told them not to upload it; my eyes are tired and do not want to sit two hours in front of the computer to correct” (Int. 2, l: 152-154). Unlike Lucinda, however, Ziyad believed that there was nothing wrong with the LMS, but “with the way it was being used” (Int. 3, l: 201).

By and large, throughout our conversations, Ziyad showed a very critical and reflective attitude with respect to the implementation of the curriculum. Yet many of his comments were not actual judgments against the ideas of his colleagues or the Department, but questions he had asked himself and for which he had no straight answers. Ziyad did not “have a clear idea” about how best to go about blending CALL and FtF instruction either, but still felt that teachers should be doing “something else”. As a result, he would design and implement other activities, although with similar objectives to those planned by his team.

As Ziyad did not invest time in the development of the independent or collaborative tasks established for the course, his students rarely participated in the discussion board or in any other activity posted on the LMS. During our second interview, for example, Ziyad recalled his students complaining about having problems with one listening activity— aimed to provide input for the development of a written task— and in turn his telling them that those were merely “practice activities” (Int. 2, l: 107). As in Lucinda’s case, as time went on, Ziyad de-emphasized the execution of the CALL mode.

He also recognized that, although using forums could be beneficial because they “promote interaction” and, if well used, the development of “critical thinking” skills, he had chosen not to work with them. This was so because the use that was made of this tool by students in general differed from what he believed was suitable and from what he had experienced as a postgraduate student, but also because he did not know how to prevent the forum from becoming a “yes-I-agree”, meaningless interactional activity or how to help students “find its value” (Int. 2, l: 217).

He would come back to this issue in a further meeting, this time revealing that he had not used the discussion board, not so much because it was not being used to collaborate or it was impractical to end up with “100 posts that he would not read” (Int. 3, l: 206-208), but because “I would not feel encouraged to do something there; I’d feel encouraged if I’m given a tool where I have to create something, where I have to manipulate or add information” (Int. 3, l: 47-50). Thus, in our last interview, he concluded by saying:

I think that virtual learning ... should include an element that comes from the student and not the teacher, because these activities are almost always guided by the teacher. At the end of the day the student says: ‘why should I do this if I can do it in the classroom?’ (Int. 4, l: 166-169)

Because he found it hard to identify himself with the goals and structure of the CALL mode, Ziyad preferred to encourage students to make use of the web and other resources to inquire about topics that were both established and non-established in the syllabus. By inviting them to contribute to the development of the FtF lessons and by having them carry out individual and collaborative tasks through technologies other than the LMS, he believed he could transfer more responsibility to his students and in a way fulfill the personal goal he had set at the start of the semester: “It’s not me giving them everything, the resource, the reading, no. It’s time for them to start looking for things on their own” (Int. 2, l: 36). Yet trying to do so was not without its challenges.

“I don’t want to be reprimanded for doing differently”:

Diverting from Established Practice

Trying to divert from pre-established practice was not easy for Ziyad. He struggled to find the best way to achieve his teaching goals since, unlike Oriana, he did not always trust his own judgments and also experienced tensions with colleagues. Constantly I noticed this lack of confidence, certainly on my first visit to the classroom. On that day, I realized that there were some issues with the WebQuest task that he had designed for his students

and all other Level 3 courses. Students had been asked to inquire about an invention and its value to humanity and then discuss in class what they had learned, for which they were given a list of options, resources and guiding questions.

Surprisingly, although this WebQuest seemed to reflect his interpretation of effective online teaching and learning, when the moment came to do follow-up work on this activity in the classroom, Ziyad doubted its appropriateness and for a moment thought of not doing it. During our second interview, recalling what had crossed his mind that day before entering the classroom and what I told him when he shared his concern, he said:

Well, it crossed my mind not to do it, not because I thought the activity would not be successful, but because it did not have a direct connection with the topic of the class. From what I've learned at the master's, it's not a good idea to start an activity and then follow up with something else... But reflecting on what you told me helped a little ... that we must try to find ways to connect activities rather than leave things hanging. Now, I also thought that students had not done [their homework] because one always has that prejudice...that usually they do nothing. (Int. 2, 1: 09-17)

This ambivalence, I believe, reveals a tension between Ziyad's beliefs about good teaching, which had been partly informed by the knowledge he acquired in his postgraduate studies, and his actual classroom practice. The idea of creating a seamless connection between activities in a lesson conflicted with the instructional cycle established for the blended program in that new content was taught every week. Our pre-observation informal talk, however, appeared to have provided a space for Ziyad to seek other validation (Golombek & Doran, 2014), in this case from the researcher, and regain some confidence in the importance of bringing online tasks to a closure. Later in his narrative, reflecting on the outcome of the discussion activity, Ziyad admitted to having been proved wrong by his students:

In class, I realized that about 70 or 80 percent did [their homework]... And I saw that many of them visited other pages and not just the ones I suggested; I realized that they had read. (Int. 2, 1: 18-23)

He also recognized the need to increase his self-confidence:

If I trusted more, not only in what I say and plan but in what the student can do, I think I would try to do [these activities] more often. But maybe I'm a little afraid of how things will play out. However, I think the best thing is to plan something and to try to see it through to the end and not just stay with what one believes could happen because this may never occur. (Int. 2, 1: 55-58)

Ziyad's unstable professional identity, however, was not only related to a lack of confidence in his capabilities or students' interest, but also to the apprehension he felt as a result of having a different opinion from those of his colleagues: "In this level, we haven't

yet reached an agreement... What happens is that I have an idea, and well the other teachers have theirs. They see [the CALL mode] as a space mainly for practice” (Int. 2, 1: 170-180). Ziyad had difficulty in working with his colleagues for he had openly voiced his concerns about the CALL mode and had deliberately chosen to do other activities. This attitude had undoubtedly caused tension, making Ziyad feel judged for thinking and doing differently, as the following excerpt illustrates:

This is not going against everything ... sometimes I have been told that I go against what is done here. And no, I am actually questioning what I do ... Besides, this is why one is here: to analyze whether a product works or not ... I think there should be more thought about this. We should sit down and think about how we can save work and help the student find it more significant ... It’s not that I’m judging what you do... it’s constructive criticism. (Int. 2, 1: 216-224)

To vindicate himself, he stressed that his actions were also associated with students’ reactions and comments about the blended learning program:

What happens is that the student comes to the classroom and I’m the one listening to his concerns ... I’m not the only one who evaluates the program; they are the ones who give me the main [input] ... And sometimes I say, well, I agree with you. Let’s find a way to fix it ... I think that’s part of my teaching philosophy. (Int. 2, 1: 232-238)

Despite these conflicting emotions, Ziyad tried to pursue his personal goals and beliefs and adapt the curriculum accordingly, thus making changes not only to the CALL mode but to the FtF mode as well. After having participated in two more observations, I noticed that he liked incorporating other resources into his lessons and that, unlike Lucinda, he rarely made use of the textbook. He only carried out those activities and tasks that he believed were of value or that fitted the goal of the lesson. In our third conversation, commenting on the reasons to adapt and create material, he alluded to his interest in being flexible and “stepping into students’ shoes” (Int. 3, 1: 06-07) and therefore selecting what they could identify with. Yet, when questioned whether he had shared those resources with his team, he came back to the idea of being judged for doing differently:

Well, actually I have not been able to share the material due to the way classes are set. I will not upload something I’ve created to e-Riverview and share it with teachers because it goes against what is required here, which is that we all follow the same path. I do not wish to be reprimanded for doing something different, which, in fact, has already happened. So, I’d rather not say anything. However, I do think there should be like a teachers’ community or something where ideas are shared. (Int. 3, 1: 15-19)

In one of the informal talks we had after a classroom visit, and which I partly recorded in my field notes, Ziyad also shared with me an event that had occurred early during the week. He had had a conversation with some of his colleagues who reminded him that he had not yet delivered something that was requested. This oversight, which he said was not intentional, made him worry that his colleagues thought “he was a careless and irresponsible person” (24 Oct. 2012, Obs#3: Ziy.). Ziyad was concerned about the opinions his colleagues might have of him, as well as the possible consequences that failing to meet their expectations could have on his future at DFL.

Like Hui, in Liu and Xu’s study (2011, p. 594), Ziyad felt accused of “being unwilling to collaborate and uncommitted to the reform”. Similarly, although he did not want to be considered as a non-conformist, his behavior and opinions eventually distanced him from his team. His interest in the creation of a teachers’ community therefore suggests a need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, a need to participate in a safe environment where ideas can be freely exchanged and discussed rather than judged or rejected. Sharing with others was also an opportunity to reflect on his own beliefs: “there are things I don’t do because I think that they may be of no interest to the student; however, I could be wrong” (Int. 3, l: 20-21).

Although he now preferred to avoid getting involved in confrontations and hence tried “to respect what is in the forums” (Int. 3, l: 202) by not discouraging students to do this work, unlike Lucinda, Ziyad continued to make changes to the CALL mode. After having observed what Oriana had done and achieved with her students, Ziyad decided to incorporate the use of wikis into his teaching since “students can edit their work ...and the idea of blended learning is to collaborate” (Int. 3, l: 42-45). Initially, he did this with his Level 4 courses. This time he was able to carry the idea all the way through and felt satisfied with the results as “students collaborated with each other and liked it” (Int. 3, l: 58-59).

However, despite being pleased with his work with wikis, Ziyad experienced some trouble when trying to plan a similar collaborative learning experience for his Level 3 students. Having to plan, explore tools and put new ideas into action, while everybody else was doing something different, proved to be a daunting enterprise. Ziyad felt time was against him and was not sure if the wiki fitted with the particular objectives of the course; therefore, “he did not know what to do” or how to plan for the CALL mode (Int. 3, l: 75-76). Once again, he would express his concern about not being able to keep up with the pace of the instructional cycle, as the realization of his ideas implied spending more time than the original syllabus had anticipated.

When asked how he would then plan to achieve the objectives of this learning mode, he talked about using VoiceThread. As part of one of his assignments for his master's program, he had explored this tool and "it had caught his attention" (Int. 3, l: 86), so he decided it to use it for his course. In his view, it helped students prepare for their computer-based speaking exams and "increase their confidence" (Int. 4, l: 32) to interact with the computer. He had also noticed, like Lucinda, Rayuela and Oriana, that those quiet, shy students took advantage of the flexible and less-threatening environment that this technology offered; "there was a boy who seldom spoke in class and who used this tool like saying 'Hey, I can really talk here' ...and he was the first to share his recording in class" (Int. 4, l: 50-53).

Nevertheless, while Ziyad wanted to make up for the time students were not spending on the LMS by using of Web 2.0 tools and implementing tasks with similar aims to those proposed in the syllabus, I often gained the impression that the lack of self-confidence and certainty Ziyad had experienced at the beginning of the term had, in fact, remained a constant throughout the semester. In some of our interviews, Ziyad would share with me some of the ideas he had in mind for the online task of the week, but on meeting again, he would indicate he had changed his mind or had not been able to design or assign anything at all.

His interest in remaining faithful to his plan of structuring the CALL collaborative mode in a different way and in adhering to what he had learned with regard to good teaching practice, together with the need to cover the content stipulated in the syllabus, made it difficult for him to integrate online learning into his lessons in a seamless manner. This in the end, despite the satisfactory learning outcomes he perceived, resulted in his students being assigned less online work than those students attending other courses since there were a number of ideas that he could not eventually carry out and learning objectives that he could not achieve. Added to this is the fact that not all his students actively participated online.

"If the student does not find it useful, he won't make an effort":

The Question of Learner Interest and Autonomy

Student participation in the online tasks, as in Lucinda's and Rayuela's courses, was not always high. The engagement I had observed at the beginning of the semester with the WebQuest was not regular. Initially, Ziyad attributed this to the fact that the design of the tasks and activities of the LMS did not attract students' attention, so they were not motivated to do them. However, after having created different tasks and used technologies

other than the LMS, I noticed that some students were not yet prepared to share the outcomes of the work that Ziyad hoped they would develop online. On one occasion, as I did with Lucinda, we talked about the role he thought he played in the online environment.

Ziyad saw his role as that of a teacher “mainly providing instructions”. He accepted that students “did not see him there” and that sometimes he “left them on their own” (Int. 3, l: 103-106). Because he knew that his support was crucial, he intended to be “more visible” and explore the technologies they were now using so as to interact with them more. Additionally, he pointed out that he had not provided students with enough models—another way to support them in their online experience— due to the fact that “ideas came to [his] mind at the last minute” and he did not have sufficient time to take action (Int. 3, l: 109). He further added:

Perhaps because they have not seen me there, it is only a very small percentage who participate ... Yet I told them once that one of the things of autonomy is that one should not have to be telling them what to do. (Int. 3, l: 143-147)

In our last interview, Ziyad came back to the issues of teaching presence and student interest. He emphasized this time, however, the possible impact that his constantly changing and adapting the curriculum had on students’ engagement and motivation:

Well, the fact of not having everything ready in advance might make some students choose not to take this seriously. Several times I have changed the instruction a little and ... I make changes on the fly... I think this is an issue, and it should not be that way. One should align with what is already established, or if there are changes, these should be done early... because this has an impact (Int. 4, l: 06-13)

Ziyad admitted that not planning changes to the syllabus well in advance could be detrimental to the successful development of the online learning activities. Briefly, he also conveyed the idea that it would be easier, and probably less unfavorable for students, if he simply followed the prescribed curriculum. To Ziyad, however, students’ attitudes also played a significant part. He also highlighted, like Rayuela, that no matter how much planning and effort teachers invested in the design of tasks and the selection of resources, it was difficult to generate interest in all students and help them see the added value of online (independent and collaborative) learning.

“If the student does not find it useful”, he said, “he won’t make an effort, no matter how great you think the idea is” (Int. 4, l: 13-15). Unfortunately, he added, some undergraduate students only feel motivated to do things when there is an external reward “such as a grade”, and many times they expect the teacher “to give them everything”, which

in the end makes things more complicated (Int. 4, l: 16-18). The idea that students may be willing to put more effort into their work if there is a mark involved was something that he had corroborated a few weeks before.

Students had suggested rating the oral task performed through VoiceThread, and so he decided to do it and “add this mark to that of a formal quiz” (Int. 4, l: 42) in order to encourage them to work online. This event suggests that Ziyad, as probably many other teachers did, adapted the evaluation criteria established by the Department given that these did not entirely fit the needs of his course. As in the case of Betty, in Xu and Liu’s 2009 study, Ziyad lived his secret story of empowering students to have a say in the course evaluation process, “though the sacred story required [him] to take charge of student assessment” (p. 505).

Thinking of the various aspects that could influence students’ attitudes, Ziyad also highlighted the idea that, although some students liked using technology, it did not necessarily mean that they would like to use it for learning purposes. He recalled having felt puzzled by the attitude of two of his students, who were avid video gamers but who did not carry out any of the activities he planned for the CALL mode. Nor did they show interest in using technology in the classroom. “They are always playing on their tablets”, he stated, “but when it comes to using technology for some of the activities of the lesson, they show an attitude of laziness...as if it were something difficult” (Int. 4, l: 74-75). Reflecting on the situation, he further explained:

I don’t tell them: “Turn that device off”. I’m not that kind of teacher. Maybe I lack authority or don’t know how to say things, I do not know. Although I have had this difficulty with these two students ... in the end one learns from them. (Int. 4, l: 91-94)

Ziyad did not see himself as the kind of teacher who forces students to develop activities or to behave in a certain way. Instead, like Rayuela, he expected them to take the initiative and act responsibly; therefore, he was not authoritarian inside or outside the classroom, though he questioned whether this attitude was something that he should change. His approach to deal with this perceived apathy or lack of enthusiasm on the part of (some) students was to inform them about the potential benefits of developing the activities he assigned for their learning, and more importantly, “to raise awareness”:

I try to generate awareness. Some may understand it now, some in the medium term and others perhaps in the long term. I think that this is probably what happens, that it doesn’t have to take place right now but in fact it might take longer (Int. 4, l: 96-98)

When Ziyad says “I think maybe that’s what happens”, interestingly, it does not only indicate his interest in helping students become conscious of the purpose and value of his instructional actions, but also signals a moment of self-awareness. It is by reflecting on his practice and the difficult moments he had faced with some students that he discovers that the product of his work, rooted in his unwavering belief in the importance of learners making decisions on their own, may not be observable in the immediate present. Autonomy is a process, not a product (Thanasoulas, 2000) and therefore it cannot be developed or observed overnight. Learning autonomously is a skill that takes time to master.

As with the other three participating teachers, Ziyad and I also talked about the possible influence of DFL’s assessment practices on students’ commitment to the blended learning program, particularly the online mode. Unlike them, however, when asked if this mode should be assessed more rigorously, he replied that it should not and, on the contrary, he claimed that the self-assessment process “should not be assigned any numeric value” (Int, 4. 1: 118), as its purpose was formative and not evaluative. This resonated with something he had mentioned in a previous interview: “I’ve seen that most teachers have an impact on that grade and that is not self-assessment; we are not helping them to reflect” (Int, 3. 1: 166).

Rather, Ziyad suggested establishing in a clearer way what was expected from students, as well as diagnosing their knowledge of technology and their expectations for the course at the start of the term. Both summative and formative assessment could be conducted by grading students’ learning outcomes (e.g., project presentation) through the use of rubrics and by using the self-assessment checklist to have students reflect on their learning process. With this in mind, he recommended making changes to the self-assessment checklist, especially, to make it more precise so as to provide greater guidance and raise awareness of what effective autonomous learning, whether independent or collaborative, may look like.

Although Ziyad, like most teachers, felt frustrated because not all students acted as he would have wanted, he was aware that the students, the Department and even he had helped to create the situation. He had not been clear enough in the planning and execution of his ideas, some students had not appreciated the value of the CALL tasks he had proposed, and those in charge of curriculum design were yet to revisit the goals of the program and the extent to which these were reflected in the evaluative system. None of this, however, made him think that to help students become more independent there had to be stricter, and probably more coercive, evaluation methods.

Ziyad's Story: A Reflective Coda

Having shared Ziyad's experiences with the implementation of blended learning, it can be said that his story is one of tension. As a result of his interest in allowing students to make their own choices as well as exploring online learning in a different manner, some of the tasks on which they worked in and out of the classroom were slightly different from those specified in the course syllabus or suggested by colleagues. The implementation of various Web 2.0 technologies was evinced in the CALL tasks he designed for all Level 3 students. Some of the topics he discussed with his students in class and the resources he used differed from those of the lesson plans and course textbook as well.

Ziyad would do this because of his belief in the need to make the blended learning program an opportunity to encourage students to engage in activities that go beyond the topics of the syllabus, perhaps leading to a more authentic use of the target language and a greater chance to exert control over their learning. This belief, which was tightly connected to the knowledge he gained during his postgraduate studies, conflicted with some aspects of the curriculum. Ziyad thus showed his concern about the idea of reviewing the same topics and linguistic knowledge studied in the FtF sessions outside the classroom. While he was not particularly against the idea, he believed it should not be the primary focus of the independent or collaborative online learning environments.

Capitalizing on the mediating role of technology, Ziyad sought to explore and make room for that learning that usually takes place outside formal educational institutions and that, therefore, is less prescribed and probably more valuable or relevant to the learner. In trying to do this, however, he faced many difficulties such as feeling accused of not being willing to collaborate and losing confidence in his own professional judgment, which to some extent resulted in abrupt changes in his instruction, on-the-fly planning and task design, and a continuous sense of uncertainty. This, coupled with the apathetic attitude of some students, also seems to have resulted in lower participation than expected. The fact that his image had changed was one of the things that concerned him the most, however.

Interestingly, although the objective of eliminating the role of the curriculum leader was to encourage teachers to make decisions collaboratively and autonomously about certain aspects of the curriculum, the secret story was that Ziyad, like Betty (Xu & Liu, 2009, p. 505), "was deprived in his independence in making ...decisions by [his] colleague[s]". Unlike Betty, Ziyad's relationship with his colleagues was not shaped by culturally-expected attitudes of submission and subordination of the young to the elderly; however, the sudden absence of a leader who had long been central to the culture of the

organization put some teachers in a situation where they did not know how to distribute power and reach consensus.

Similarly, when Ziyad “pushed the boundary” and wanted to play with ideas that went beyond the accepted and expected practice, as in Hui’s story, the “community tightened its control” (Liu & Xu, 2011, p.595) and he was placed in a position of unequal power. According to the sacred story, autonomous decision-making was expected, yet this did not always happen in practice. Ziyad could not therefore develop a sense of ownership over the blended strategy. Like Hui, as time went by, he felt completely constrained, and at times marginalized, by the community and thus decided not to express his concerns to avoid conflict. However, unlike Hui and Lucinda, he continued to make changes to the curriculum and live a secret story of practice inside the classroom—a reason why his reflections on his pedagogical decisions and practices would often reveal his internal conflict. Losing membership thus represented “both loss and liberation because, while enjoying a sense of freedom, [he lacked] a sense of affiliation” (p. 596).

It is thus understandable why Ziyad believed that eliminating the role of the curriculum leader had not been successful and why, unable to express his ideas freely, he used the interviews and other informal talks as spaces to seek validation. In his view, due to the absence of a leader, there had been many people in charge of many things and some teachers, like him, did not know exactly what their roles were or did not feel capable of performing certain duties. His narrative was often charged with a call, both explicit (‘I wonder’) and implicit (‘I’m not clear about that’) for validation, but also with idealized beliefs (‘we should do something else’) about online and blended provision (Golombek & Doran, 2014, p. 106). This perceived lack of direction and knowledge and his interest to learn from others in a supportive environment was also observable in his desire to be part of a professional development community.

All things considered, it could be argued that Ziyad’s story is, to some extent, one of disobedience. Although his ideas and beliefs were not significantly different from those of other participants, a combination of personal, circumstantial and organizational factors seemed to have forged a different course for his story. Ziyad had similar opinions to those of Lucinda with regard to the blended learning program, yet, unlike her, he decided not to follow the Department’s pre-established instructional route. He was also interested in incorporating other technologies into the lessons and did so with some of his courses, yet, unlike Oriana, he did not have the autonomy or support of his team to do it.

As a result, Ziyad felt he was regarded as a rebel, or in Hendy's (2008) terms, as a saboteur— someone who was not committed to the implementation of the new curriculum. Although Hendy uses the term “saboteur” in the sense of interfering with rather than frustrating the execution of initiatives, Ziyad's attempt at reducing the discrepancy between his ought-to and ideal selves caused him to modify aspects of the curriculum at the expense of implementing change as originally conceived by change leaders. Over the course of the semester, as in Hui's case, Ziyad would start to view himself differently, “so the way that others viewed [him] also changed” (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 595).

Concluding Thoughts

As noted earlier, in this chapter I looked into the *personal stories of change* Lucinda, Rayuela, Oriana and Ziyad experienced as they put DFL's blended learning program into action. I did this in order to find out how they developed their practice in the transition from a technology-enhanced to a blended learning environment, how they dealt with the implications of the change and what was most influential in the process. In narrative terms, I explored how they authored the new curriculum with their students in and out of the classroom and what secret and cover stories they lived as a result.

Accordingly, after examining the most salient curriculum-making stories lived by each of these teachers during the semester and their reflections on them, it could be argued that they faced similar experiences (see Appendix K for a summary). Nevertheless, although they were part of the same professional community, there were also events that were interpreted differently; “there were differences in the way different teachers appraised similar constraints” (Kubanyiova, 2009, p.325), which in the end led to a varied interpretation and implementation of blended learning.

Reflecting on the meaning of teachers' narratives, it may be said that, as in previous years, the perceived difficulty to ensure students' fulfillment of the learning goals of the program's CALL component continued to be a source of concern. All four teachers, like the participants in Shelly, Murphy and White's (2014) study, reported the “frustratingly unpredictable participation by students...or [their] strong preference for meeting face-to-face” (p. 568), as one of the issues sitting at the root of their problem with blended learning. In an attempt to identify the possible causes of this phenomenon, teachers reported having experienced trouble with aspects of the design and structure of the curriculum and the teaching and collaborative culture of the Department, among others.

They all seemed to have struggled in one way or another with several of the parameters described by Neumeier (2005) to conceptualize and design blended learning environments; namely, the *choice of modes and technologies* (selection of learning tasks and tools to be implemented in each mode), the *model of integration* (sequencing of learning modes, amount of flexibility offered to the learners and the extent to which course components responded to their needs), the *language teaching methods* (processes and pedagogical principles adopted for each mode), and the *involvement of learning subjects* (interactional patterns, variety of learner and teacher roles, and expected levels of autonomy). Added to this was the fact the implementation of blended learning, while allowing for greater flexibility and diversity, conflicted with a curriculum in which content and assessment were centrally defined. As a result, language teachers felt caught between opposing forces (Van Den Branden, 2009).

Teachers' experiences with blended learning were not only linked to issues of design, however. They were also related to changes in teacher culture and other contextual factors. Looking at these experiences in light of the literature on educational change and teacher development, it can be said that the team approach to planning, designing and integrating FtF and online learning appeared to have undermined teachers' autonomy and control of the curriculum in some cases, although it also seemed to have encouraged risk-taking in others. Lucinda and Ziyad, for instance, felt that collaboration was not spontaneous and voluntary but was instead contrived, administratively regulated and compulsory (Hargreaves, 1994).

In Ziyad's case, his teacher autonomy seems to have been exercised in a context more of isolation than of rich professional dialogue (Goodlad, 1984, cited in Fullan, 2007a, p.136). Feeling uncomfortable to challenge their colleagues' ideas, what we see in Lucinda's as well as in Ziyad's narrative, as Golombek and Johnson (2004) note, is an idealized conceptualization of what they would like to do in class but feel unable to. As in Jenn's case, one of their teacher participants, there is "only a commitment to action, and we do not have evidence of development in [their] material activity" (p.316). The determination that is observed in the data was thus "often stifled by a variety of competing ought-to selves primed by the educational and sociocultural contexts of the participants" (Kubanyiova, 2009, p. 355).

Oriana's story is different from Lucinda's and Ziyad's, however. The degree of consistency between her aspirations and the aims of the program and the fact that she was able to have more control over the design of the lessons seems to have allowed her to develop a higher degree of investment and a sense of ownership and self-efficacy. In her

pursuit to achieve her personal goals, Oriana adopted a number of strategies “with the aim to minimize the impact of contextual constraints in her [and her students’] development” (Kubanyiova, 2012, p.329). She faced challenges similar to those of other participants, yet was able to solve them. As noted by Anderson (2012), what is a barrier for one person “may end up being a catalyst for another as they take up the challenge the barrier presents” (p.39).

Interestingly, although Rayuela had similar motivations, beliefs and degree of control over the implementation process, as did Oriana, her experiences were significantly different. As stated above, Rayuela made a concerted effort to overcome the problems she encountered while teaching her course. This need became a force that pushed her to turn inward and identify contradictions in her practice, and thus try to implement a new model of activity for her class (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). Nevertheless, the gap between the demanding learning goals established for the course, which she expected students to accomplish, and students’ language proficiency made it difficult for her to fulfill her aspirations.

Hence, as a result of what she believed were poor results, Rayuela increasingly became doubtful about the value of the changes she had made to her practice and in turn about her ability to teach. She questioned her role and image in front of her students and felt a low sense of self-efficacy. Rayuela’s emphasis on supervising each student in and out of the classroom, as well as Lucinda’s, Oriana’s and Ziyad’s concern about the suitability of the chosen technologies, seemed to have been linked to students’ expectations. Interestingly, however, as in Kubanyiova’s study, the students’ expectations appeared to have been “in most cases interpreted by the teachers through their own identity goals rather than based on some kind of objective evidence of what the students really expected” (2009, p.326-327).

Despite the fact that students’ level of engagement did not meet Lucinda’s, Rayuela’s and Ziyad’s expectations, through questionnaire data, I realized that in general students did not have a negative opinion about e-Riverview or the activities uploaded to the platform. Student questionnaires, as mentioned in Chapter 5, were not considered as a source of primary data due to their low rate of return. However, two of the questions in the second questionnaire, which was the one with the highest number of responses, indicate that students’ views were somewhat different from those of their teachers (see Appendix L). For example, of all respondents (44 students), 33 (75%) expressed satisfaction with the activities carried out through e-Riverview and only 9 (20%) stated otherwise. Although the reasons these nine students gave are similar to those that teachers highlighted in their narratives, the relatively high number of students who appeared to be satisfied with the CALL element of the course confirms, to a certain extent, Kubanyiova’s claim.

Even so, despite teachers' tendency to filter students' expectations regardless of what their expectations actually were, the fear of not meeting students' or any other people's expectations was associated with the fear of adverse identity implications (in the case of this study, being perceived as a teacher who does not abide by the rules, or who is incompetent or unwilling to collaborate), and therefore was accompanied by negative emotions (Kubanyiova, 2009, p. 327). Throughout the interviews, it was thus not uncommon for teachers to express a need for other validation (Golombek & Doran, 2014). Seeking clarification and validation was something that, to a degree, all participants did. Even Oriana, who showed more confidence in her practice, in some of our informal talks, indicated her interest in knowing whether what I had observed in the LMS was clear and made sense. This attitude was more salient, however, in Ziyad's narrative due to his feeling of isolation.

On the whole, in the process of trying to cope with change, teachers shifted their identities to adapt to different situations based on the meanings that they derived from their professional knowledge, personal experience, the micro-politics of the setting and wider sociocultural contexts (Liu & Xu, 2011, citing Søreide, 2006). Participants in this study, as in Liu and Xu's and similar studies, identified a gap between their designated and actual identities. And to close the gap they "used different positioning strategies based on the situational meanings [they] derived from the context" (p. 594-595). Teachers like Lucinda and Ziyad, and to some extent Rayuela, "were working with their assumptions of what was expected of them and tried to live up to these expectations, even though they may have not personally identified with them" (Kubanyiova, 2009, p.321).

The actions and roles they performed were, however, more or less aligned with the expectations of peers and change leaders and more or less influenced by the social reality of their classrooms, a reason why they performed more or less stable professional identities. As noted above, although Oriana and Ziyad made similar changes to their teaching, she received support from her peers and saw herself as an enabler of the change process, while Ziyad, having disclosed his views on the pedagogical decisions made, felt regarded as a saboteur and excluded from the community. Similarly, despite teaching the same course, Lucinda and Rayuela worked with a slightly different student population and therefore could not achieve the same learning results. They also had different expectations for and experience with the course, thus adopting dissimilar attitudes throughout the semester.

This, as Kubanyiova (2009) argues, indicates that teachers' intrinsic aspirations, their awareness of a discrepancy between their current and desired-end states and the deployment of self-regulatory strategies may be necessary but not always sufficient to lead

to sustained change or development. The nature of the context-related ought-to-selves, or the sacred institutional stories to live by, and teachers' possibilities to act on them might make it more or less difficult for them to put these constraints aside and hence develop a sense of achievement and ownership. However, without developing a sense of mastery and ownership of the initiative, it is unlikely that any real change will take place. Having explored how teachers interpreted the change to blended learning and how they chose to put the program into practice, in the next chapter, I look at the other side of the coin. I examine academic leaders' and directors' perceptions about the implementation process.

CHAPTER 10

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EFL BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM: TEACHER LEADER STORIES

The litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilizes people's commitment to putting their energy into actions designed to improve things. It is individual commitment, but above all it is collective mobilization.
—Michael Fullan, *Leading in Culture of Change*, 2007b

After describing and examining the ways in which *Lucinda*, *Rayuela*, *Oriana* and *Ziyad* developed their practice in a blended learning environment and what was most influential in the process, I now turn to an exploration of the perceptions, beliefs and emotions of those involved more directly in the planning and design of the curriculum. I therefore continue to address the first research question of this inquiry, but from the perspective of teacher leaders and administrators. In this chapter, I focus on the experiences narrated by *Acablo*, *Lucía*, *Amelia*, *Salomé* and *Lorna*, who because of their leadership roles at DFL assessed and understood the implementation process differently.

To write this chapter, I drew on interview data collected at three different moments during the semester and on information recorded in my fieldnotes. The analysis of these sources allowed me to identify how change leaders interpreted and dealt with the change process and to what extent their narratives aligned or conflicted with those of teachers. First I look at the range of factors that, from their perspective, motivated both the challenges and achievements experienced during the second implementation phase of the program. Then, switching from the past to the future, I discuss what they considered were the lessons learned and the actions and conditions that deemed necessary for the blended learning model to succeed. Lastly, I discuss what their narratives may reveal, more generally, about the implementation of blended learning and the management of change.

The Story Continued: Barriers to the Process of Change

As stated in Chapter 7, DFL changed to blended learning as a result of, among other things, the forces of nature. This change, however, was also fueled by a long history of technology use and a firm belief in its potential for language teaching and learning. For management members, the use of technology allowed teachers to learn more about their students and adapt their practice based on this knowledge, and it also encouraged learners to

boost their language proficiency and become more reflexive and independent learners. It would be these beliefs, grounded in personal stories of success and a long professional career at DFL, which helped these teacher leaders to become CALL practitioners and advocates. Yet, as they all knew, knowing how to put blended learning in action had been anything but an easy task.

As Lorna had predicted, tensions and difficulties remained part of the second implementation phase of the program. Switching to blended learning involved, as Acablo maintained, “a process of re-engineering” (Int. 2, l: 104) that meant a radical shift in terms of teacher and student roles and attitudes. Things that had not been anticipated could also arise, unfortunately, creating additional problems. Of the different stakeholders, however, it would be the former curriculum leaders who would experience the complexity of getting the program up and running on a larger scale. These leaders performed as teachers, but also as change agents and intermediaries between their colleagues, students and directors, and were in charge of the successful implementation of the program.

As Christison and Murray (2009) maintain, behind every innovation there is a supportive administrator or someone with decision-making powers— a reason why it is important to explore innovation from a leadership perspective and the implications that managing the process of change may have on these professionals. Therefore, during the interviews, I invited teacher leaders to make a general assessment of teachers’ and learners’ experiences with blended learning and discuss the possible underlying causes of the positive and less positive aspects observed. With regard to the latter, for instance, they would highlight a) the challenge to engage learners in the online component of the program, b) teachers’ difficulties addressing changes in leadership practices, c) a lack of clarity in terms of the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of blended learning and d) the roles that teachers and learners should play — topics that I will discuss next.

“We are assuming that everyone learns the same way”:

The Challenge of Engaging Learners in Online Learning

As noted previously, students’ response to the blend was, without a doubt, what allowed teachers and officials to assess the degree of success of the new curriculum. Therefore, one of the obstacles to the implementation of blended learning was students’ unpredictable participation and their attitudes towards online learning. For teacher leaders, who closely followed students’ performance and behaviors in and out of the classroom, what they observed in teachers’ lessons was a source of concern. In Amelia’s eyes, who was

a member of the Teacher Support Committee and in charge of guiding teachers in lesson planning, “some students are used to being consumers [of information]” and do not interact with it critically, and so “they read once and if they do not understand, they do not understand and that’s it” (Int. 1, l: 30-32). “Being consumers”, like for Rayuela, meant not being able to solve problems independently, but above all, not being willing to do so.

“The fact that it is asynchronous may make them see it...as something extra that does not hold the same value of what is done in the classroom” (Int. 1, l: 85-86), commented Amelia, as she continued to reflect upon what could lie behind DFL’s struggle to normalize blended instruction. Understanding that online work, whether synchronous or asynchronous, could allow them to learn flexibly without barriers of time and space, was not something all students seemed to achieve. “I understand”, Amelia continued, “that in our online master’s program it is easy for people to comprehend the meaning of online work because they are far away; there is a need involved...but the fact that we can see each other here makes it hard for them to find a purpose” (Int. 1, l: 95-97).

Lucía, the Program Director and leader of the Planning Committee, also compared undergraduate students’ attitudes towards online learning with those of postgraduate students and concluded that it was difficult for the blended program to reach the same level of positive responses. She believed, as did other participants, that such a lack of interest was linked to the place that English had on the list of academic priorities of the students: “There is a need to consider our population, the priority that English has for them... I won’t deny that there are students who really love the language... but the percentage is relatively small” (Int. 1, l: 78-89). Later in the interview, she reinforced this point: “Their need comes after they graduate, then they realize all the time they have lost. Their focus now is on the core subjects of their degree program” (Int. 1, l: 335-337). In her role as a teacher and a teacher leader, Lucía had realized that undergraduate students’ interest in the second language was not necessarily the same held by working professionals, and that as a result it was only until they were faced with the requirements of the labor market that a genuine need seemed to develop.

However, while for some management members students’ responses to blended learning were in part motivated by an over-dependence on the teacher or their little interest in the English language, for Acablo, the leader of the Teacher Support Committee, the reasons were somewhat different. Reflecting on the causes of students not participating actively, especially in the collaborative mode, he commented:

To me some [students] ... feel forced to work with a group of people ... They refuse to work with someone else. They want to work alone. I guess it has to do with what happens in the classroom too because there are some students who distance themselves from the group and work independently. (Int. 2, 1: 28-32)

Like Lucinda, Acablo believed that “we are assuming that everyone learns the same way and that everyone learns collaboratively” (Int. 2, 1: 28-34). To him, although students lead social lives, they are not all interested in or capable of working with others, let alone participating in asynchronous virtual learning spaces. Interestingly, while for Acablo students’ low participation was connected to their level of motivation, for teacher leaders like Amelia, this would be perceived as a lack of commitment or autonomy. Oftentimes participants mentioned their frustration with students’ lack of independence, yet, as Little (2011) claims, “the difference is not between autonomous and non-autonomous learners but between learners whose autonomy is engaged with the process and content of learning, and learners whose autonomy is focused elsewhere” (p. 25).

To Acablo, there were also some students who chose not to work online because, despite being mandatory, what they did in class was enough for them. These students were often very active in class and did well in their tests, but would rather not participate in an online environment. This, unfortunately, had an impact on the attitude of those peers who awaited their contributions and who in the end “lost the motivation to participate as well” (Int. 2, 1: 60). Aware that some students favored one of the delivery modes to the detriment of the other, Acablo and other leaders discussed with teachers ways in which tasks could be more engaging and created opportunities for students to provide feedback on the program.

In the end, because of their dependence on the teacher, their little interest in learning English, or their preference for FtF instruction, students’ attitudes were central to the narratives of both teachers and management. Through their role in syllabus design, teacher leaders tried to find ways through which students feel committed to online learning, but in the end they believed their attempts had been unsuccessful with part of the student population. Despite their managerial roles, they therefore shared the same concerns of their fellow teachers (Van Den Branden, 2009). Teachers’ difficulty to address changes in leadership practices would be an even more significant concern for them, however.

“With the new strategy, there is no one telling you how to do things”:

Struggling to Cope with Changes in Teacher Culture

Learners’ attitudes towards the program were clearly part of the contextual circumstances with which teachers and management had to deal, yet, there were additional

factors that seemed to interfere with the process of change. Lucía, for instance, in her role as the leader of the Planning Committee, perceived a mismatch between what her team had established in the syllabus of each EFL course and what each team of teachers was doing in practice— a discrepancy that I had clearly observed in the classes I visited. To Lucía, the syllabus they had designed “was lost” in many courses (Int. 2, l: 48) in that teachers changed the suggested target tasks or skipped some of its objectives.

This change was made evident prior to examinations when some teachers requested modifications to the tests believing that their students were not adequately prepared to take them. To Lucía, the Planning Committee, the Teacher Support Committee (in charge of checking lesson plans and observing lessons) and the teachers themselves “had interpreted the syllabus from different perspectives” (Int. 2, l: 17-18). To cope with this situation, she tried to create more synchrony between committees and provided suggestions to particular teams of teachers. She unpacked the pedagogical reasons supporting the design of the syllabus.

However, together with the need to better communicate the aims of the program, there appeared to be other underlining causes contributing to the mismatch between theory and practice. “Not knowing how to distribute what is in the general syllabus on a weekly basis” (Int. 2 l: 70), was for Lucinda an additional difficulty. While in the past it was the job of the curriculum leader to create a timetable for his or her course, teachers now needed to make those decisions collaboratively and establish how much time should be devoted to the successful fulfillment of target tasks and sub-tasks. An inadequate distribution of content and objectives could definitely have an impact on both the FtF and online learning modes.

Being the person in charge of making recommendations to teachers’ lesson plans, Amelia had clearly noticed the gap Lucía talked about. She had also observed that some teachers were not structuring their teaching based on the syllabus and that as a result there were varying practices across courses. She firmly believed that if teachers followed the curriculum, the integration of FtF and CALL modes would be a lot easier, “as the syllabus was clear and well-structured” (Int. 2, l: 38-39). Amelia would therefore express her frustration with not being able to do her job the way she expected. In her experience of giving support to teachers, she realized that some of them were not attentive to the suggestions provided and instead “put a barrier to the blended element” (Int. 2, l: 09-10).

Amelia believed, however, that this situation was linked to the elimination of the role of the curriculum leader and, like Lucía, to teachers’ difficulty to work more independently and plan their lessons in teams:

Although they are educators and know about pedagogy, this has been a shock. I do not think it has to do with the work of the committees because I feel that focusing on specific areas has been positive, but with the fact that this figure, who used to do everything, no longer exists. (Int. 2, l: 18-20)

Wondering whether this difficulty was more noticeable in some teams than in others, I asked Amelia about this matter. She said she had perceived more problems in teachers working with initial courses— interestingly, those that I had observed. Hence, I asked:

Jenny: What do you think causes this difficulty?

Amelia: To me there is no team. I see that they are working in isolation, very lonely. There is a lack of communication. Having no coordinator, perhaps they feel they have nowhere to go, so they are doing what they think is right. (Int. 2, l: 44-45)

Salomé, the Director of the self-access center, agreed with Amelia's perception that some teachers did not seem to know how to collaborate with their teams, yet, she evaluated this situation from a different perspective. She acknowledged that DFL was "in a transition stage in which the teacher begins to become empowered, and which is not easy and naturally creates some tension" (Int. 2, l: 72-73). Some teachers, for instance, were not giving feedback to the lesson plans of their colleagues and instead worked independently, thus causing a fragmentation in the planning process. This indicated that "although there is a committee for everything...the teacher still feels alone" (Int. 2, l: 138). In line with this thought, in our last interview, she added:

Before, there was a person I could address. This person told me everything, what to do and when, and gave me individualized feedback. With the new strategy, there is no one telling you how to do things...Although we suggested teachers to assign and rotate a leadership position within their teams, these leaders were not always able to achieve communication between all team members. (Int. 3, l: 113-119)

While organizing teams of teachers had been one of the changes introduced to decentralize curriculum design, teamwork had indeed proved to be problematic. This situation seemed to be linked not only to a sudden shift in the distribution of power, but also to other more technical factors. To Lucía, for instance, one of the factors that made it difficult for some teachers to work efficiently with colleagues was their limited availability due to multiple jobs, which also affected their attendance at team meetings and training sessions: "If teachers come to one thing, they don't come to the other... So the process remains unfinished because we are not always together" (Int. 2, l: 101-103).

Like Lucía, Acablo had also noticed that due to contractual and schedule factors not all members of the Department had the same availability to work collaboratively. This was something that teachers and full-time staff members could not easily control, and which in the end had resulted in “some teams not been able to meet on a weekly basis”, as it had been initially proposed. “So there is no much interaction going on, and if that does not happen here, it won’t happen elsewhere”, he stated (Int. 2, 1: 88-90).

Acablo was also worried about the fact that some new teachers seemed to find it hard to keep up with the demands of the program and to process the information made available to them. Salomé agreed with Acablo and noted that while it was somewhat easier for experienced teachers “to plan blended lessons and follow the guidelines given” (Int. 2, 1: 13-14), new teachers appeared to struggle. She also believed that additional variables affecting teachers’ teamwork had to do with their working styles and the need to generate more spaces for discussion.

It has also happened that I do one thing and the other person does not agree, but never says so because there are no spaces for the sharing of ideas ... There are also people who because of their styles prefer to work independently. Some others do things and do not care about what the others think. (Int. 2, 1: 138-146)

To prevent this perceived lack of communication or experience with the program from interfering with the process of teaching and learning, Acablo and colleagues decided to make use of different communication channels to keep everyone informed about important matters. It was also agreed to centralize information through the utilization of a shared academic space in e-Riverview and to encourage teachers to post their comments and discuss issues related to their courses with colleagues. This strategy would work for some teams but not for others, unfortunately.

Therefore, in our last encounter, providing an assessment of teacher involvement and showing partial agreement with Amelia and Salomé, Acablo mentioned:

Being a leader is not something that is characteristic of our culture. Maybe we are not ready for this and thus assuming it is not entirely straightforward. Reaching consensus has been quite difficult, and this has even generated friction between many of the teachers to the point that some ended up planning lessons without consulting with others ... Unfortunately, I think we took it for granted; we organized it all...the groups, the duties, and even the protocols, everything. However, we did not observe an effective teamwork culture in all courses, which interestingly is the same thing we want to achieve in students. (Int. 3, 1: 21-28)

Acablo’s words suggest that engaging teachers in collaboration had been as difficult as it had with learners, essentially because the Department assumed that teachers would

welcome this practice and be prepared to handle it without any problems, but mainly, because it had not been defined in teachers' terms. Having organized "the groups, the duties and even the protocols" implies that collegiality was contrived in that teachers were told what to plan and learn, with whom to plan, and where and when to undertake the planning and learning (Hargreaves, 1994; 1997). While this practice had been introduced to provide teachers with more control, their participation was not always legitimate. Added to this teamwork problem was, however, the need to deal with an apparent lack of clarity as to the 'why' and 'how' of blended learning.

"This is really becoming an issue of constantly advising the teacher":

Making Sense of Blended Learning

Although the teachers' struggle to follow the syllabus and teamwork was, among others, one of the causes that seemed to undermine the implementation process, the most salient aspect stressed by management was teachers' difficulty in making sense of the pedagogical purpose of the curriculum and their roles in it. To Amelia, for instance, some teachers did not seem to clearly understand what effective online teaching involved: "Although we have offered workshops...we are still subject to the misconception that online work is sending students to navigate a website, or that virtual work is having them watch a video" (Int. 1, l: 141-144). To which she added: "This is really becoming an issue of constantly advising the teacher because of what one can see in their planners" (Int. 1, l: 152).

Halfway through the semester, Amelia referred back to this issue, pointing out that while many teachers had shown increased interest in planning lessons in which student-student interaction and collaboration was encouraged, it did not take long for some of them to go back to old practices and "upload a reading text with 20 questions", thinking that it was a suitable task (Int. 2, l: 06). Although Amelia drew teachers' attention to the issue of task design and its impact on language learning, in her view, some had chosen not to take her recommendations into account. Salomé also cited the misinterpretation of the guiding pedagogical principles of the blended program as one of the main problems of the process of change.

For instance, teachers' understanding of collaborative learning was varied: "each teacher seems to have his or her own interpretation of collaborative work. In some cases, it comes down to students posting anything on the forum instead of building knowledge together" (Int. 2, l: 47-48). As she stressed in our last interview, "the concept of collaborative online learning that had initially been construed became distorted" (Int. 3, l: 40). Online work turned into something students could do on campus or of which only one

team member became in charge, and thus the goal of students co-constructing knowledge through the learning platform was not always pursued.

To Lucía, besides being interpreted and accomplished in different ways, the implementation of the interactional and collaborative elements of the blended program also resulted in some teachers disregarding the need to encourage independent practice. As in Oriana's case, "they did not do it because whatever time they had to do follow-up, they would invest it in online collaborative work" (Int. 1, l: 36-37). Even though individual and collaborative work were both part of the curriculum, some students seemed to have focused on just one of these components; "So, if students do the online collaborative work, they don't do independent practice" (Int. 1, l: 34). As time went on, however, Lucía began to doubt the appropriateness of the decisions that management and other officials had made:

Who can actually tell me if what we are doing is right or not. Each person gave his point of view, and there is not enough time to read more and discuss... But who tells us...that in fact all classes must have an interactional component. Why it cannot also be a 50-50; 50% collaborative and 50% individual. (Int. 2, l: 154-157)

Further in her narrative, she emphasized:

Independent work was sacrificed and there is no mechanization. When I looked at [the platform]...there was no sufficient practice of what was studied in class and [instructions for] independent work were simply: 'Research about this topic so that you're prepared for the collaborative session'... And the rest? And the student who's got some weaknesses and who wants and needs practice? (Int. 2, l: 165-168)

The fact that individual practice had been sacrificed made Lucía feel frustrated and question the grounds on which certain pedagogical guidelines had been established, thus revealing a tension between her understanding of effective teaching and the need to support curricular decisions she had initially favored. Despite the efforts made by the self-access center to guide teachers in the design of online tasks, Salomé, like Lucía, believed that a new emphasis on collaborative work had overshadowed individual practice.

We forgot somehow about the importance of independent study and the time that the student must devote to reinforce or clarify things ...We lost the element of individual consolidation of knowledge... and well everything one must do on his own, such as reading and listening. (Int. 3, l: 82-88)

Creating a blend in which face-to-face instruction, independent practice and collaboration are harmoniously integrated proved harder than initially thought. Getting the mix right between opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction and group and independent study activities, as Anderson (2008, p. 348) claims, remains a challenge in

BL. Consequently, not having a clear idea of how best to go about blended learning, teachers and learners would play contradictory roles in the classroom and in the online learning environment.

“You know, it is this not knowing how to respond”:

The Challenge of Knowing When and How to Take Action and Provide Support

As indicated in the previous chapters, while some teachers were actively involved in the LMS, others preferred to be less visible. Similarly, while some encouraged students to act more independently in the FtF lessons, others exerted more control. Amelia, who had also noticed similar behaviors in some of the observations she had made, expressed her concern. Providing either too little or too much guidance was, in her eyes, not beneficial for learners. On the one hand, being absent on the platform could cause students to feel lonely and demotivated:

As a student, I write, yes, for my partners...but anyway my intention is that my teacher sees that I'm participating ...If a teacher is not actively involved with them, say closing the forum, 'I was here and read what you did', the student loses interest; that is completely true. (Int. 1, l: 106-110)

On the other hand, focusing on linguistic competence could also prevent students from freely communicating as well as have an impact on their willingness to engage in written interaction. To Amelia, using technology to have students do peer correction (as in Oriana's case), or explicitly correct students' language errors (as in Rayuela's case) was directed less at the development of communication, autonomy and teamwork skills than it was at the study of formal aspects of the language. Although she was not particularly against these activities, she believed technology, and, in particular, the discussion boards, could be used for more communicative purposes.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, Amelia was worried that teachers' interest in keeping everything under control could in the end reinforce students' dependence on the teacher, which she had already observed in some courses and talked about in previous encounters. In our second interview, she noted:

We teachers feel that if we are not there all the time students will feel lost, but we have created such a need and...dependence. But this dependence has to be minimized; otherwise, we are never going to promote autonomy. (Int. 2, l: 96-98)

“We have to change our mindset and stop being afraid to let go of the students, so that they can in one way or another learn from their mistakes” she added (Int. 2, l: 109).

According to Amelia, students should not be left completely on their own, but should be given some responsibility for their learning and freedom. “If we continued taking the role of parents”, she continued, “who gives them the fish instead of teaching them how to fish, they’ll never make it, and the autonomy that the Department is after won’t be achieved” (Int. 2, 1: 142-144). Amelia was concerned that, despite the guidance and support provided by academic leaders, some teachers did not seem to view the CALL element of the course as an opportunity to help learners become more autonomous. As Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) observe, teachers might hold analogous understandings of the concept of autonomy. Their views about the extent to which their learners are autonomous may also be divergent and underpinned by different conceptions of what counts as evidence of independent learning.

Lucía had also identified the role of the teacher in the online environment as a factor that could encourage or inhibit students’ performance. Nevertheless, somewhat differently from Amelia, she maintained that it was not always easy to know what roles to take. Thinking about what she had observed in her own courses in the previous year, she stated: “And what if everything is full of mistakes, you know, it is this not knowing how to respond. You know that you cannot be there correcting errors, and that if you do, you will probably be pointing out only the mistakes of that learner who is the weakest in the group, which can be counterproductive” (Int. 1, 1: 65-67).

Interestingly, later in the semester and speaking more from her role as Program Director than that of teacher, she expressed her concern about teachers providing little or no accompaniment and scaffolding. Rather than exerting too much control over learning, it seems that teachers did not offer sufficient support. In her new role, she had realized that some teachers had not done follow-up to students’ work: “I think that if we put a percentage, there is follow up to 20% of what students do on e-Riverview” (Int. 2, 1: 114-115). This feeling would later be confirmed by the analysis of the results of a student survey administered at the end of the semester: “There was no follow-up and that was in the surveys. Students were asked: Was there follow-up? No. Did the teacher regularly guide online work? No” (Int. 3, 1: 306-308).

Like Amelia, she believed this lack of timely feedback affected the quality of students’ work significantly, as they would “do anything for the sake of it”. “Many tasks...are pedagogically well-designed”, she continued, “but if there is no follow-up...the student does not contribute anything significant” (Int. 2, 1: 117-119). Although Lucía was aware that teachers’ feelings of uncertainty about what counted as effective blended learning could shape their

actions, she now assessed this situation from the perspective of the learners and was concerned that teachers' attitudes and decisions might put them at a disadvantage.

To Salomé, however, the lack of accompaniment that Lucía talked about had occurred due to the many roles teachers were required to take during the semester. While in the past, teacher assistants like Lucinda and Rayuela guided students through the use of the LMS and checked their level of participation, in the new semester, “teachers had to assume both roles [as teachers and tutors], which had not been an easy task.” (Int. 3, l: 49). Teachers had been required to manage more roles than they could possibly handle. The fact that the online tutor and the in-class teacher represented the same person also appeared to have led to tensions, as some teachers were unsure about the degree of control they should exert and the situations in which they should (or should not) provide support and feedback.

As Neumeier (2005) argues, in blended learning “subjects are faced with a much greater scope and variety of roles than if their actions were only restricted to one mode of learning [and teaching]” (p.174). While teachers at DFL were expected to, among other things, provide students with ongoing feedback and guidance in each of the learning modes, students were expected to exercise high levels of autonomy and know how to teamwork and peer and self-assess, which apparently generated diverse responses. To some teachers, students were not committed enough to their learning, and to some students, teachers did not provide support and timely feedback. Perhaps the instantaneous nature of online learning led to “an unrealistic expectation by learners that teachers [would] provide instant feedback and assessment on submitted assignments” (Anderson, 2008, p. 356).

Additionally, due to the complex design of the blended learning environment, it was not always easy for teachers to “know when and how to take action as well as how to handle different degrees of responsibility” (p.175). Although teacher leaders tried to address this issue during training workshops and post-observation feedback sessions, they had realized that drawing teachers' attention to the purpose of blended learning and the characteristics of ‘the perfect blend’ was no guarantee that they would know how best to support learner autonomy and help their students succeed in the online environment. The Department's professional development strategies seemed to have focused more on “learning to teach online” and less on “how to become an online teacher”, as in Comas-Quinn (2011) study.

In brief, in their assessment of the second implementation phase of the program, management members reflected upon the status that the English language holds in Riverview University, and probably many other institutions, the study habits and attitudes of learners, and teachers' understanding of the purpose of the initiative, as well as a number of

other factors that were beyond their control and that also interfered in the process. Throughout the interviews, teacher leaders hinted their frustrations, but more importantly, they tried to discover the roots of the problems, even if this implied questioning their own choices. Nevertheless, in the midst of what seems to be a narrative full of tensions, there was also room to discover and talk about instances of success.

The Benefits of the Change

Changing to blended learning had been somewhat chaotic during the first implementation stage, and indeed tensions were still experienced during the second phase as teachers and learners were still in a period of transition. Even so, many of the difficulties encountered were at the same time opportunities for improvement. Salomé, for instance, believed that DFL's effort to decentralize curricular practice had paid off and was an innovation worth maintaining regardless of the many issues presented. Curriculum design had become a more participatory process in that "it's not a single person who knows where we're headed, but everyone knows what we're up to".

Salomé had also perceived an improved ability to plan blended lessons. "Not in all courses or weekly instructional cycles", she said, "but there are teachers who have developed greater expertise in establishing synchrony between [FtF and CALL] modes" (Int. 2, l: 62-63). As noted by Lorna, teachers became more aware of the importance of establishing a clear link between FtF and online tasks, and also realized that "the virtual component [allowed them to meet] objectives that had not been achieved before, when they only relied on face-to-face instruction" (Int. 2, l: 03).

Acablo also remarked that he was satisfied with the idea of collaborative lesson planning in that it had resulted in more focused and contextualized lessons. By talking to peers, teachers seemed to have developed a more critical about their teaching, and had the opportunity to adjust the curriculum to the needs of their courses. In contrast to Lucinda's and Ziyad's perceptions, Acablo did not consider that tailoring the syllabus to the needs of the class and other personal goals was problematic or undesirable:

You could actually say that, except for the person who did the lesson plan and who actually implemented the class as planned, in all other cases, I saw a parallel planning. The implementation of the class had a variation in the particular style of each teacher, and this is what should happen ... So if I do not feel comfortable presenting content in one way, I will do it with my own resources, in my own way, achieving the goals anyway. (Int. 3, l: 34-39)

Interestingly, although Acablo was conscious of the adaptive nature of the curriculum and hence did not expect all teachers to carry out the lessons in the same way, his opinion of the team planning practice differed from those of teachers like Lucinda and Ziyad. While he believed that adapting the curriculum was to be expected, as a result of their own collaborative planning experiences, Lucinda and Ziyad sensed the opposite. This seems to suggest that what management expected of teachers and what teachers believed were management expectations were not always compatible.

Despite these differences in opinions, the teacher leaders believed that the organizational changes made could not only lead to improved planning practices, but also to better management of academic matters. In Salomé's eyes, the creation of committees had proved to be beneficial for both management and teachers. The creation of the Planning Committee, for instance, gave coherence and unity to the proficiency program, as it had established a clearer teaching and learning path for all courses. In our second interview she stated: "The curriculum has been consolidated...The teacher had clear guidelines with which to plan...and [thus] knew where he was going from the beginning" (Int. 2, 1: 162-163).

Despite the changes that had to be made along the way, Acablo also felt that the implementation of committees had been favorable, especially because it had allowed the Department to discover and draw on people's potentials and abilities. He explained:

All people who work here in the Department have different abilities, and although we are all professionals in languages, the things that are easy for some are not easy for others ... So I think this is very positive. If people are correctly identified and they are in the right place, they will obviously do a better job. (Int. 3, 1: 07-12)

To Salomé, "having information about the people with whom we work will allow us, through professional development programs, to empower them or to implement strategies such as peer observation or any other strategies that can help us improve" (Int. 3 1: 24-28). At the end of the day, as Lucía commented, DFL's organizational changes had allowed teachers to "shine with their own light" (Int. 3, 1: 05-06). Although this had not been achieved by everybody, it was still a step forward and something which had not occurred before, as decision-making was mostly centralized in the hands of a few people.

The implementation of blended learning also seemed to have been beneficial for learners. In their analysis of student surveys, Lucía and Lorna noticed that, despite a perceived lack of teacher support, in general terms students had found the online component of the course useful. Despite her reservations about the roles that teachers assumed during the semester and the emphasis they gave to certain aspects of the curriculum, as well as the unstable level of student participation, Lucía was pleased with what students expressed:

I read many of the things students said in the surveys and to my surprise there were very good comments; 'I like [the CALL mode] because I put into practice what I learned in class'. They see the usefulness of the online component...I found that interesting because it means that we are getting there slowly. Their complaints are mostly related to their grades...or a lack of support. (Int. 3, l: 297-307)

Lucía's analysis of what students expressed in the survey, interestingly, indicates that what teachers like Lucinda or Ziyad reported to be students' opinions about the CALL element of the course did not necessarily reflect those of the larger student population. In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, students participating in the study did not seem to have an adverse opinion about the institutional learning platform and the tasks developed through it either. Although their levels of participation were not particularly high, as teachers pointed out and I could clearly observe in class and on the LMS, their reasons for not participating may not have been necessarily connected to their dislike for the technologies used or the activities suggested. As Lorna noted in our last interview, changing to blended learning seemed to have been "more difficult for teachers than for learners" (Int. 2, l: 154).

Based on her involvement in the administration of the courses published in the LMS and the digitalization of resources, Salomé also conveyed her enthusiasm regarding DFL's improvements in CALL design. Adopting a set of guidelines to create and upload learning resources to e-Riverview and having a team of student-engineers in charge of the design of learning objects had resulted in homogenous design features across courses, which in turn had facilitated students' online learning experience:

They have perceived more organization ... The student does not come across an endless list of activities and exercises but sees something more straightforward ... Eh, this makes everything easier. (Int. 2, l: 55-57)

On the whole, for management members, the second stage implementation of the program was finally closer to what they and other academic officials had been waiting for a long time. To members like Amelia, the fact that they had decided to make substantial modifications to the curriculum had proved to be very effective, as there had been a very interesting interaction taking place between students in the forums. Although there were still some challenges for teachers, students and all the community in general, Amelia was satisfied and believed the program had gone through significant positive changes:

There have been many changes ... If I look back a few years ago, I see that, although we had been working with technology and wanted to include a virtual element, we did not have a clear idea of what it could be like. So, for example, I remember that we started uploading plenty of resources to the platform, for us that was effective online learning... Then we moved on to...work with online quizzes... But for me the fact that we moved to work collaboratively has proven to be good. (Int. 1, l: 51-59)

Moving “to work collaboratively” was something good for Amelia because students could become more independent and motivated to learn the language. Reflecting on what she had observed in more advanced courses, she stated: “I’ve realized there was a significant interaction going on in the forums... Those who did not want to participate at first started to do so later on ...I think we are getting closer to what online learning should be all about” (Int. 1, 1: 60-72). Because change leaders’ experience with blended language learning had evolved considerably over time and led to high expectations, I thought it was essential to discuss not only the past and present of the program, but also its future.

Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead

In discussing with management the opportunities and challenges experienced by teachers and learners during the second implementation stage and what they thought were some of its underlying reasons, we also looked ahead and reflected on the actions and conditions that seemed necessary for the blended learning model to work more efficiently in the future. Interviews became spaces in which changes and improvement strategies were proposed and in which participants, and myself to some extent, imagined the future of the program. Among the many issues deliberated upon, the most salient ones are those linked to blended learning design and the organizational culture of the Department.

With regard to the former, a number of aspects were mentioned. One of these was the need to continue evaluating the strengths and limitations of the technological tools currently available. Contrary to the opinions of some of the participating teachers, making use of the institutional LMS was still the best option. According to Salomé, some of the problems of adopting other learning platforms were related to the fact that, besides involving a higher monetary cost, “their administration is very complex” (Int. 3, 1: 246), as they are managed by the publisher and not by the institution. According to Lucía, there was also the issue of “institutional image” (Int. 3, 1: 342), which was represented by e-Riverview, and clearly could not be accomplished through tools owned by a third party.

Together with the need to evaluate the affordances of the technologies used, Lucía also emphasized the importance of revisiting the program’s general syllabus and giving more consideration to the integration of learning modes so as to guide teachers in the planning of each instructional cycle. Lucía was aware that the syllabus did not give much detail as to how to link FtF and CALL instruction and therefore she had already started to work with her team on this matter. In this process of revising the program, Salomé also recommended “to rescue the concept of independent work” and place more emphasis on

those activities that “allow the student to work independently, self-evaluate and reinforce the concepts and competences studied in class” (Int. 3, l: 200-202).

Evaluating the online component was also stressed by Lucía and Lorna. Interestingly, while they agreed with teachers about the idea of modifying the assessment criteria of the blended program and assigning a higher value to what students did online, both independently and collaboratively, Acablo further suggested considering whether the online component should be mandatory and a part of its credit system:

At some point I heard some comments from the students, because they make comparisons regarding the courses offered here and those that are out there in the market, where the virtual component is a plus and not part of the number of hours that should be covered... It would be important to observe what happens outside too because I feel that we have made a decision here internally, I might be wrong, but then ... it would be good to check because maybe this is a motivating factor that could make a difference. (Int. 3, l: 124-132)

Acablo’s narrative often gave an indication of his concern about imposing things on teachers and learners, and not surprisingly this was also observable in the recommendations he gave for improvement. He firmly believed that motivation was a factor that could hinder or enable the process of change and that, in the case of teachers, was also strongly linked to the amount of time they needed to invest in implementing the new initiative. Therefore, when reflecting on the Department’s planning and assessment practices Acablo, like Ziyad, stressed that the artifacts used needed to be modified so as to make them less time-consuming and thus help teachers be more efficient. Making reference to the self-assessment tool used during the semester, for instance, he declared: “I believe that the self-evaluation strategy is good; however... I think it would be good to have a tool that can provide us...with direct results” (Int. 3, l: 88-90). He then went on to say:

Sometimes we use certain tools and one of the things that we do not assess is whether we’re really going to benefit from them, not only in regards to the pedagogy ... but in regards to time. (Int. 3, l: 101-103)

Making modifications to the syllabus, as well as evaluating the technologies chosen, the assessment criteria established and the academic resources used implied, in the end, reconceptualizing the practice of blended learning. As noted by Salomé, it was important for the Department to re-evaluate the role of CALL in the curriculum and become aware of the fact that, as stated in the program, “our lead mode is the online mode and not the face-to-face one”. Revealing a slightly different opinion from Acablo’s, she stated:

We're still convinced that ours is a predominantly face-to-face program. So you talk to any teacher and she says: 'we have three hours of class and in that time we have to develop a lot of competences'. This is not the teachers' fault since this is our collective perception, but the reality of the facts and of the credits ... [is quite another]. (Int. 3, l: 306-310)

Like Rayuela, Salomé believed that students could study online some of the topics that teachers explain in the classroom in order to maximize this time for interaction and the resolution of questions. As the Director of RSAC, she also expected to attract students again to the self-access center and increase the number of visits, which as mentioned in Chapter 7, had dropped significantly after the introduction of mobile technologies. Unlike Salomé, Lorna did not believe that teachers and students were ready to switch to online instruction, yet, she had also reaffirmed her trust in the value of blended learning:

I cannot say that with 480 hours a university student can reach B1+. Today I was explaining that to the board of directors. Students need to take three times as long, or at least two times, to reach a B1+, which is what the university wants. And I can only achieve that if I get the student to work outside the classroom. (Int. 2, l: 31-34)

To achieve this aim, it was thus also imperative to provide greater guidance in the use of technology. In Salomé's view, an academic unit responsible for distance learning was badly needed at the University to support faculties in matters related to online provision. Up to the moment of our first encounter, "there was not a common language" (Int. 1, l: 127) being used between the Center for Educational Technologies (CET) and the Department. Therefore, she expected "to work along with them in the future" in order to attain a "greater level of synchrony", something she regarded as necessary for good practice.

On revisiting the curriculum, the need to assess the dynamics of some organizational practices also became apparent. As noted above, the elimination of the role of the curriculum leader had been a wise decision for management members, yet, it was clear that additional teacher support was still needed. Salomé remarked, for instance, that more people were needed to guide teachers in the change to blended learning, as the existing pedagogical support "emphasized face-to-face instruction...but there was less support available for the online element" (Int. 3, l: 128-130).

The Teacher Support Committee, in charge of observing lessons and giving feedback to teachers, had also been, as Acablo indicated, unable to cover the entire teacher population. Undoubtedly, in the transition from a predominantly FtF to an online or blended learning environment, a considerable number of people with expertise are required. To cope with this reduced number of experienced teacher trainers, in Salomé's eyes, it was thus

necessary to help teachers to work effectively with their teams, so they can “generate knowledge and discussion and indeed reach consensus” (Int. 2, l: 143-144). Additionally, as Acablo pointed out, it was important to help teachers develop their teamwork skills and as well as build leadership capacity in a number of teachers so as to build ownership and sustain the change.

Rethinking the professional development sessions offered during the semester, and recording and archiving them so that part-time teachers with multiple jobs could access them more easily, were also part of the intentions for the future. The main areas considered for these sessions, as suggested by Salomé, were “how to be an online tutor and how to [lesson] plan for blended learning” (Int. 3, l: 166), and what ICT skills and tools to use for these purposes. Both technical skills and pedagogical knowledge were the targeted areas for DFL’s teacher professional development. By and large, despite the number of problems experienced and the aspects that needed to be re-evaluated or modified, management members were still convinced of the value of the changes introduced and believed in the importance of sustaining them. Consequently, there were high expectations for the near future, as Acablo declared:

As I see it, [the program] will be more consolidated. And all these needs I have expressed will probably be already resolved...I feel there are many things to explore...many strategies to implement and a lot we can probably tell other academic institutions, either through meetings or even academic writings. I see it as a great opportunity for us all. (Int. 3, l: 163-165)

Concluding Thoughts

As noted above, the present chapter sought to address the first research question of this inquiry, although the participants who were the focus of attention were not only teachers, but also facilitators and advocates of the process of change. Because of their dual role, this research text taps simultaneously into participants’ personal stories of change as well as those of stories of change of the organization. It reveals the emotional dilemmas that management members encountered as they tried to mediate between teachers, students and the institution, and at the same time negotiate the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions and expectations present in the organization.

To some extent, the Department’s story of change was dependent on people like Acablo, Lucía, Amelia and Salomé. Their role was not only to communicate to teachers how they should implement blended learning and guide them in the process, but also evaluate the

impact of the program based on teachers' performance and students' learning outcomes. Therefore, their narratives give an indication of the moments of satisfaction and tension that they experienced while trying to perform their roles and introduce new pedagogical and managerial practices in their professional community.

On the one hand, their narratives suggest that the implementation was not entirely successful in that not all learners and teachers responded as expected. Like Ziyad and Rayuela, teacher leaders expressed their feeling of frustration due to the unpredictable participation by students and their over-dependence on the teacher, and like Lucinda, they reported feeling constrained by the place that English appeared to have in their list of academic priorities. As once noted by Lucinda, requiring learners to take English language credits influences in some way their motivation. Interestingly, although online learning activities have the potential to generate greater interest in learning, they also seemed to have been regarded by some, as Acablo maintained, as an obligation. Unintentionally, perhaps, one dominant practice (learning English) was replaced by another (blended learning).

Considering that learners' negative attitudes towards language learning can be minimized or heightened by their classroom experiences, members like Amelia, Lucía and Salomé expressed their concern about teachers' difficulty in teaching lessons in which on-campus and online instruction were seamlessly connected, and in which independent and collaborative learning tasks were appropriately distributed. The fact that some teachers had either found it hard to come to grips with the changes in roles and pedagogy required by blended learning, or had resisted, as Amelia noted, "the blended element", was also often a source of preoccupation. Conflicts between the degree of control the teachers perceived to be necessary or desirable and the level of control that the innovation ascribed to the learners (Van Den Branden, 2009, p. 667) were equally observable.

In their role as academic leaders, they had supported or suggested some of the changes made to the curriculum with the hope that teachers would welcome and implement them. What they observed, however, was that some of the learning activities had not been deployed by some teachers as originally stipulated in the syllabus and that as a result there had been diverse learning experiences across courses of the same level. This seems to confirm Breen's claim (1987, cited in Graves, 2008) that there are so many variables intervening between the planning of a syllabus and the learning that it is supposed to shape that the original plan may in the end become irrelevant. Accordingly, trying to encourage teachers to exercise their autonomy and at the same time maintain consistency throughout

the program was troublesome for management. Having being a former teacher leader, I could identify with some of the concerns they mentioned and understand their struggles.

In the change to blended learning, there were also difficulties at the conceptual level. Concepts like collaboration and interaction were used by DFL's community members on a daily basis, but there were diverse interpretations. There were observable differences between what was on the paper and in the minds of the leaders and what was done in practice. Such false clarity (Fullan, 2007a) was connected to the fact that, as mentioned by Lucía, Acablo and Salomé, there was not sufficient time for teachers and management to thoroughly discuss the meaning of the change. Although there was engagement with the new information, due to a "lack of in-depth knowledge of ideas and practices presented, there was often misunderstanding that led to misinterpretation" (Hendy, 2008, p. 110).

Hence, as the teacher leaders manifested, some teachers appear to have introduced the reform superficially, assimilating to what they already knew and thought was appropriate. They seemed to have changed on the surface by endorsing certain goals or imitating the behavior, "without specifically understanding the principles and rationale of the change" (Fullan, 2007a; p. 34). Amelia, for instance, remarked that it did not take long for some teachers to design tasks of a more mechanical nature once they sensed that supervision was over, or that knowing when to provide assistance and when to step back and hand over control to learners had been harder than expected.

The sudden shift in power caused by the introduction of a new organizational structure also appeared to have worked against rather than facilitated the change. Although teacher collaboration had been part of the culture of the Department, the way it was presented in the second implementation stage did not resonate with the story of centralized power to which teachers were accustomed. Because DFL was characterized by a role culture (Murray & Christison, 2009), in which roles and procedures were well-defined, some teachers found difficult to respond to such a change. Not all teachers were prepared to make a transition from a centralized decision-making culture to a more collaborative one, so power distribution became an issue. As time went by, management realized that this change in teacher roles may have been too abrupt and that there were a number of factors (time, personality, experience) that made it easier or more difficult for teachers to collaborate.

While apparently there was now more freedom, there were also more responsibilities that teachers needed to assume. Having to negotiate ideas with peers in a limited space of time, for instance, turned out to be for some more problematic than advantageous. The fact that collegiality was contrived also seemed to have generated conflict, as some teachers felt

that their autonomy had been threatened by their peers and that their participation was not always legitimate. For those who resisted and decided to work in isolation, their work was in many cases intensified. As Fullan asserts, collaboration is powerful; “it can be powerfully bad as well as powerfully good” (2007a, p. 147). Under some circumstances, greater contact among teachers can be beneficial, but in others it may be unfavorable. Besides, unless it is focused and sustained, collaboration per se does not necessarily result in advancement.

Management analysis of the implementation of blended learning also shed light on the contractual situation of many language teachers working in the higher education sector in Colombia. Unlike school contexts, the implementation of change in tertiary education faces additional challenges. Change, which requires considerable time for planning, training and discussion of ideas, is constrained by the reality of teachers’ contractual relationships with institutions and the need to sometimes take multiple jobs. This aspect frequently becomes neglected in research on reform and institutional planning for the implementation of innovation and, therefore, deserves more attention, as Acablo and Lucía highlighted.

It is as a result of the many challenges experienced that management members’ narratives, like those of teachers, are also charged with multiple and sometimes conflicting emotions. Lucía’s and Acablo’s narratives, for instance, show contradictory feelings since they were part of the team that had chosen to incorporate an online element to the program, but were also teachers who had once faced similar difficulties with their courses. They therefore felt uncertainty and even doubt about the appropriateness of the decisions they had made. Lorna too felt pressured by the University’s board of Directors and their assessment of the impact of the program. These teacher leaders were caught between strategies of commitment and strategies of control (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010, citing Little, 1995).

As Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) argue, teacher leaders many times suffer role conflict and ambiguity as they try “to combat the organizational constraints of the job” (p. 648). Teacher leaders must learn “how to negotiate the egalitarian culture, create opportunities for social learning, engage in collaborative work, learn the skills and abilities for managing disequilibrium, and find a way to support teacher learning over time” (p. 650). To gain legitimacy with administrators and teachers, they should also acquire new skills such as building trust and rapport and developing skill in others. However, such a variety of teacher leadership roles can create tension between the bureaucratic nature of educational organizations and their interest in enacting a collaborative approach to leadership. As a result leaders often get caught in the middle, finding themselves “in contentious territory” (p. 648).

Furthermore, leaders do not always undergo preparation for their roles, having to learn skills for leadership on the job (Murray & Christison, 2012; Wedell, 2009a). The types of knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in guiding others and managing change are not typically taught in courses offered in postgraduate programs either (McGovern, 1995, cited in Waters, 2009). In fact, only recently has it been recognized that change leaders also need support for their own reculturing. However, because their needs are so wide-ranging, formal training for leaders still remains rare (Wedell, 2009a, p. 41), as happened at DFL.

It is thus understandable why management members' narratives reveal tensions and ambiguity and why they felt the need to make changes to adapt to their roles. Throughout the semester, teachers modified their practices based on students' feedback and performance, and so did management according to teachers' and students' responses. Interestingly, however, on looking closely at their narratives, one does not only see conflicting discourses and emotions, but also instances of accomplishment in that they believed that changing to blended learning and decentralizing decision-making was worthy. Their experience as language teachers and leaders and their long careers at DFL led them to believe that they were closer to achieving what they had long been seeking, and so they would give details of their enthusiasm when thinking and speaking of the future of the blended learning strategy.

Accordingly, as with teachers, their narratives would gradually shift from a focus on the others, the student or the teacher, to the decisions they had made and what they in their role could do to help the community succeed in their effort to implement blended learning. These teacher leaders were aware of the limitations of the program, but also the ways these could be addressed. They were also conscious of the number of personal and external factors that affected teachers' and learners' experiences, and therefore did not feel disappointed with the variable results and tensions they had observed. The reflection spaces created by the interviews seemed to have helped them articulate some of the solutions to their problems and at the same time re-affirm their trust in the change and its underlying objectives.

As York-Barr and Duke (2004, p. 292) claim, teachers and their administrators "have ventured forth courageously into the uncharted waters of shared leadership, genuinely hoping to improve teaching and learning". Despite the difficulties, they have weathered the storms, kept afloat and remained on course. Surprisingly, however, the emotions of change leader, as members of the community undergoing change, are not often observable in

research. Numerous studies focus on teacher change, but fewer on the experience of those facilitating this process, even though they can be faced with a lot more emotional strain than teachers, as they deal with many processes and people simultaneously. As argued by Wedell (2009a), the leaders' role is central to almost every aspect of implementation in that they represent the 'bridge' between national and institutional policy and how it is experienced by teachers, and as a result, how they do their job should be given much more attention. Having examined the emotional and behavioral implications of the change for those charged with its implementation on a larger scale, in the next chapter, I draw the conclusions from the inquiry's findings and my interpretation of these.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

Aside from being inevitable, change is needed.
—Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2007a

In previous chapters, I focused on the heart and soul of this inquiry—the stories of change a group of English teachers from a Colombian tertiary institution lived out as they put into practice a blended learning program. Having introduced participants’ teaching and learning trajectories (Chapter 6) and considered the sociocultural, physical and temporal contexts of this community (Chapter 7), I then concentrated on the more personal and social dimensions of the inquiry. I explored the overall teaching path that four of the participating teachers followed during a semester and how they set about integrating CALL and FtF instruction (Chapter 8). Then, by looking at teachers’ reflections on their practices and management appraisal of the implementation process (Chapters 9 and 10), I examined the challenges and successes motivated by the change to blended learning and the different ways in which these were interpreted and handled. Throughout these five chapters, I addressed the two related research questions I posed at the beginning of this inquiry.

Adopting a narrative inquiry approach encouraged me to look into teachers’ *personal stories* of practice and how these influenced and were influenced by larger *organizational* and *institutional stories* of reform. It helped me understand what the behavioral, conceptual, sociocultural and political implications of changing to blended language learning were for the teachers and teacher leaders, and how all these factors were inevitably interrelated. There is no doubt that it was difficult to distinguish what teachers experienced personally from what was happening at Riverview and the Colombian higher education system. Thus, as I did myself and as Metzger (1986, cited in Huber and Whelan, 1995) suggests, I expect readers were able to listen in circles, to listen to the “stories inside stories and stories between stories” (p.143) while reading this manuscript.

In this chapter, after having developed a relationship with my participants and learned from this relationship, after “learning about myself, about research, about narrative inquiry, and about [blended learning]” (Phillion, 1999, p. 237), I move away from the intensity of that experience. Instead, I draw together the findings and seek to make sense of the diverse, and sometimes conflicting, curriculum-making stories lived and told by

participants and what these say about the implementation of change. In other words, I explore the links between teacher change, blended learning and narrative research. To achieve this purpose, I first summarize the main findings of the inquiry and examine what these reveal at a conceptual level. Then, I review the implications of such conclusions and present some recommendations for practice. I discuss the ways in which tensions can be managed so that teachers and their communities can more effectively deal with the implementation of blended learning, as well as highlight the contribution that a narrative approach can provide to the study of this phenomenon. In so doing, the personal, practical and theoretical justifications mentioned in Chapter 1 are revisited. Lastly, after considering the limitations of the study and mapping out some possibilities for future research, I make a concluding remark.

Blended Learning Implementation in an ELT Context: Story Retelling

I begin by providing a summary of the findings of the implementation of blended learning at the Department of Foreign Languages and examining what they reveal at a conceptual level. To do so, I draw on the main points discussed in Chapters 7 to 10 as each explores the change process from a different perspective. By highlighting the factors that both facilitated and hindered the change to blended learning, personal, local and national views on language teaching are revealed.

Why Blended Learning?

As mentioned in Chapter 7, in order to understand how participants developed their practice in a new professional landscape, I became interested in knowing why the community to which they belonged opted for blended learning in the first place. Having looked into the past and established how national reform agendas have unfolded over time, it became apparent that, although views on language teaching and learning have been altered and extraordinary contextual circumstances have taken place, the interest in turning autonomy and ICT use into normalized practices has always been central to the philosophy of this community.

As a result of this long history of integrating technology into the curriculum in both Riverview University and the country, strong support for its use during data collection became apparent. The philosophy adopted by the University was observable in the narratives teachers and other stakeholders co-constructed during interviews and in the stories teachers and students created in and out of the language classroom. The use of

technology was not therefore something that the participants opposed since this practice had been long part of their professional lives, and they had noticed some of its benefits and positive outcomes.

In a period of fifteen years, as Figure 11.1 illustrates, this community has developed an interest in and understanding of the potential transformative power of technology in higher education. When examining the participants' voices and institutional documents, it becomes clear that if carefully evaluated, driven by pedagogy and employed in conjunction with appropriate strategies, technology may enhance student learning and teaching as well as motivate positive organizational changes, which ultimately could lead to a richer educational experience for the learner, the teacher and the organization.

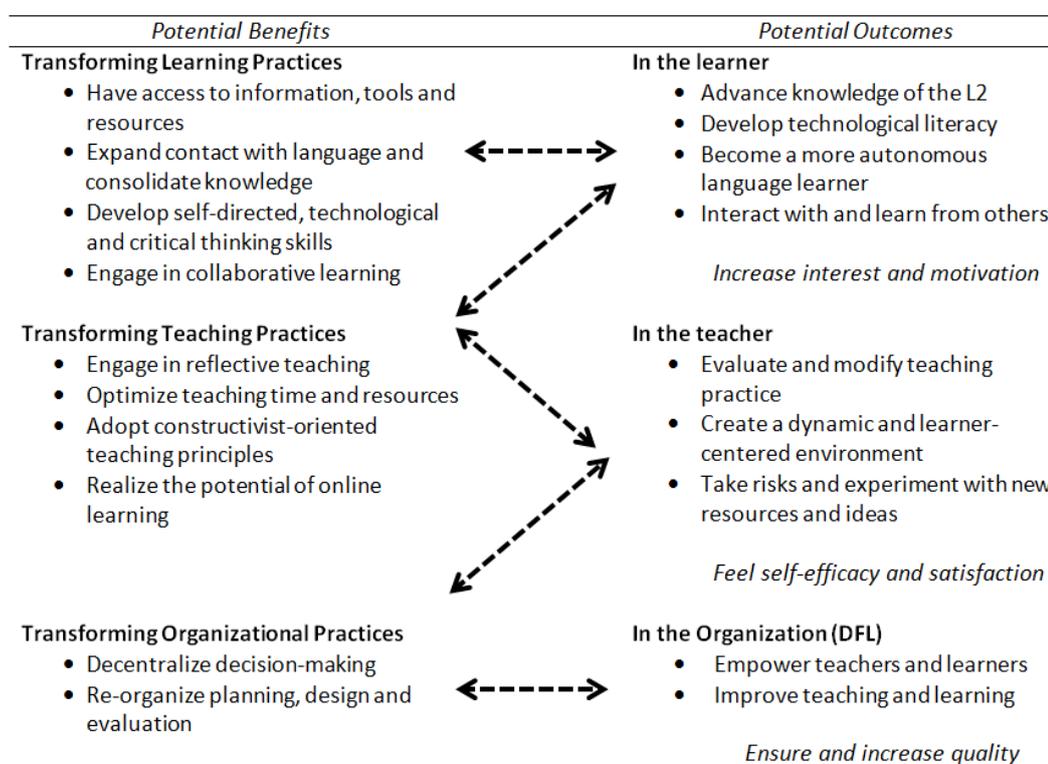


Figure 11.1. A case for the implementation of blended learning

As shown in Figure 11.1, technology can afford learners the possibility to access multiple resources, expand their learning opportunities and collaborate with others, which in turn may help them advance their knowledge of the L2 and be more independent and motivated. The use of technology can also encourage teachers, as stated by management during interviews, to reflect on their practice and, as a result, make appropriate changes or create more learner-centered lessons. In view of positive learning outcomes, teachers may thus develop a higher sense of self-efficacy and satisfaction. Interestingly, as the data suggest, an attempt to transform teaching and learning may also motivate changes in the

culture of the organization. By giving the teachers and students the opportunity to participate in a wider range of activities and to make choices, it is likely that administrators are also interested in the decentralization of curricular practices in order to empower them. In so doing, wholly new ways of designing, implementing and evaluating the curriculum are made possible.

Why Is It Sometimes Difficult to Blend?

Although institutions may implement curricular reforms in view of the potential of technology for language teaching and learning, there is no direct relationship, as the dashed arrows in Figure 11.1 suggest, between these perceived benefits and what occurs in practice. As is known, there is a broad range of personal, sociocultural and political factors, or as I call them, personal, organizational and institutional stories, that play a role in teachers' preparedness to adopt change. Next, I review what these stories were in this study.

Personal Stories of Change

As noted in Chapter 1, one of the objectives of this inquiry was to identify the stories of change that teachers lived by when putting blended learning into practice. In responding to this research aim, I became aware of the ways in which teachers' personal practical knowledge, their beliefs, emotions, motivations and resolutions worked as filters through which they assessed their and their students' experiences with the new curriculum. Additionally, I observed how, despite belonging to the same professional community, they interpreted and implemented blended learning differently.

As a result of their interpretation of the change and the extent to which they identified with its underlying objectives, teachers would perceive more or fewer constraints and opportunities for improvement. They would also adopt more or fewer strategies to cope with the challenges encountered and reduce the gap between their ideal and designated identities, eventually feeling more or less personal ownership of their practice. It could thus be said that "no two teachers had the same change journey" or experienced the changes motivated by the new curriculum in the same way. As in Anderson's (2012) study, the importance of exploring "the idiosyncratic change journey of each teacher" rather than considering them "only as part of...the whole teaching staff" (p. 127) was also a significant outcome of this inquiry.

The stories that Lucinda, Rayuela, Oriana and Ziyad lived and told over the course of a semester are thus examples of how individual teachers respond to change in the context of blended learning and what influences them to act in certain ways, such as their deeply

held convictions about technology use, learner autonomy and the role of the teacher and the student in the language learning process, among others. As in Hendy (2008), teachers' stories would reveal the degree of adaptation they would make to protect not only their students, but also their teaching ideals and self-image as respected professionals.

Interestingly, at the beginning of this inquiry I thought I would see these teachers perform a more "stable identity, with fewer unknowns" (Shelly, Murphy, & White, 2013, p. 572), as they were all amenable to the process of change and had previously had positive experiences with the use of technology. However, this was not always the case and most of them experienced a few disquieting moments, which indicates that teacher change is not a linear process, but is complex and dynamic, and that under certain circumstances expert teachers, despite having strong knowledge structures, can re-enter "the pit" (Piggot-Irvine, 2005, cited in Anderson, 2012) and feel distress and uncertainty.

Data also suggest that teachers, drawing on their personal practical knowledge, built their own interpretations of the value and aims of the proposed pedagogical and organizational changes. As in Hendy's (2008) study, none of them "undertook [the] new initiative unquestioningly" (p. 114) and hence tried to harmonize what was required with what they thought was good practice. In an attempt to solve their cognitive and emotional dissonance, some would adapt their lessons "to fit their own ethos", sometimes at the risk of being judged by colleagues, like Ziyad, while others "would yield to pressure" (p.114), as they did not feel in a position to do otherwise, like Lucinda.

This contradiction between the stories that Lucinda desired to author and the stories which she felt compelled to tell would play out for her "as a form of self-deception in which [she would] live and tell particular narratives in order to conform to perceived canonical versions of reality" (Craig, 2003, p.15). Interestingly, although the secrecy of the classroom at times offered Lucinda and other teachers the freedom to do what they felt was appropriate, the use of the LMS and other web-based resources also made their actions visible and open to scrutiny. Teachers' private and secure in-classroom places became challenged by an increasing use of technology in their lessons.

Due to the nature of their motivations, peer support and the social reality of the classroom, among other factors, some participants would in the end be able to live more coherent in and out of classroom stories than others. While teachers like Lucinda, Rayuela and Ziyad felt unable to fully satisfy their own goals and those of other stakeholders, "feeling simultaneously under pressure, guilty, and inadequate", teachers like Oriana developed a sense of mastery and accomplishment (Nias, 1989, cited in Day, Kington,

Stobart & Sammons, 2006, p. 605). It is important to note, however, that all four participants experienced not only the “anxieties of uncertainty”, but also the “joys of mastery” (Fullan, 2007a, p. 23), some being able to re-appraise some of their negative feelings about the change at the end of the semester, as was the case with Lucinda.

This not only confirms that change generates feelings of conflict in individuals, but also that if it works out well, the sense of accomplishment and professional growth is likely to replace the initial feelings of inadequacy (Fullan, 2007a). Hence, as suggested in the literature (Anderson, 2012; Hargreaves, 2005; Zembylas, 2010), emotional responses to change are key determinants of a teacher’s perception of their ability to adopt new practices. Teachers interpret educational changes in terms of the impact these changes may have on their own emotional goals and relationships. Emotions, however, are not only influential in those trying to implement the change, but also in those facilitating the change process since the way the change is communicated to people and adjusted in practice depends on them. They are also a fundamental piece in the puzzle.

In the case of DFL, management members, who performed as both teachers and people in charge of addressing the interests of other stakeholders (e.g., learners, Directors), would also be faced with personal dilemmas. Having to deal with the difficulties posed by the duality of their roles and the varying levels of teachers’ response and students’ participation, they would feel caught-in-between and at times question the grounds on which certain decisions had been made. To regain and re-affirm their trust in the value of the change, they would often look back in time and evaluate the community’s achievements, as well as envision the future of the program. Accordingly, it could be claimed that in teachers’ personal journey of change, whether they are teacher leaders or not, the ways things work in the community to which they belong is also of paramount importance.

Organizational Stories of Change

While it was easier for some participants to live with the conceptual contradictions and tensions arising from their attempt to implement blended learning, their personal stories, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced and were influenced by the decisions made by others in their work environment. Their actions were strongly linked to the interactions they had with students, colleagues and officials and to those administrative and curricular decisions often taking place beyond the walls of the classroom. It is for this reason that the second aim of this inquiry was to establish how teachers’ experiences of change were circumscribed by but also situated within broader sociocultural (organizational and institutional) contexts.

Data indicate that, of all the different organizational aspects affecting classroom practice, the perceived lack of autonomy in the design of the curriculum and the beneficial, but contrived and newly-introduced, collaborative culture were the most prominent sources of trouble for teachers. Not surprisingly, for management these same issues would be understood as a difficulty on the part of the teachers to assume leadership, and especially as a misinterpretation of key pedagogical ideas and values. A lack of knowledge and clarity as to how best to go about blended learning within the constraints and opportunities of a new professional landscape would be, however, common ground for teachers and management.

Not only does this point to the idea that in the implementation of innovation there can often be competing ideas, discourses and power relations, but also that “there is no such thing as a purely original concept that can remain the same as it passes from one person to another” (Hendy, 2008, p. 117). As stressed by Hendy, the moment an idea is communicated, a process of multiple interpretations is started, and individuals bring their own beliefs and background knowledge into their understanding of the new initiative. After various layers of dissemination, as might be expected, “further distortions arise”. It is for this reason that being attentive to how language is used during the implementation of the change is important.

In the case of DFL, as Lucía and Salomé pointed out, people interpreted concepts such as collaborative learning differently, some emphasizing collaboration over individual practice, for example. A central tenet of DFL’s philosophy, such as learner autonomy, was also recurrent in management narratives, yet teachers seemed to struggle to balance teacher control and learner choice in the online environment. Despite a long history of ICT use and an interest in autonomy development, there did not seem to be “common vocabulary on which to build an agreement of meaning” (Hendy, 2008, p. 118) and thus there were conflicting interpretations of both new and long-established ideas. This supports Fullan’s assertion that “the term travels a lot faster than the concept” (2007a, p. 152) and may explain why a need to revisit their view on blended learning was often mentioned by participants.

Misunderstanding of new ideas, or false clarity, is thus directly linked to the methods and time used for dissemination and the role of professional development. As in Comas-Quinn’s (2011) and Hendy’s study, teachers like Oriana and Ziyad felt that the structure of training sessions and the time allocated to them did not always help them understand new information and “find a common language with which to discuss it” (Hendy, 2008, p.119). Their many duties drew their focus to “day-to-day effects”, as Fullan names them, isolating them from meaningful interaction with colleagues and “limiting their opportunities for

sustained reflection” (Fullan, 2007a, p. 25). Not only was time insufficient for teachers to grasp the meaning of the intended change, but also for management to support teachers in the implementation, as Acablo maintained, and for teachers to help learners make the transition to online learning, as pointed out by Rayuela and Lucinda.

Although teachers in this study had gradually moved from an introductory to an informed interpretation stage (Hendy, 2008) over the years, and therefore were able to evaluate the benefits and limitations of the curriculum and adapt their practice accordingly, they still believed that their knowledge was not sufficient to cope with the demands of a blended program and thus often felt insecure. Some even questioned their own ability to teach, like Rayuela, and others, like Lucía and Acablo, doubted the suitability of certain aspects of the implementation. Teachers like Oriana and Ziyad would also often comment on their shortage of time and the “few intensive, ongoing learning opportunities...to deeply acquire new learning concepts and skills” (Fullan, 2007a, p. 24). Interestingly, this perceived lack of knowledge and clarity seemed to have been intensified, rather than alleviated, by a re-distribution of leadership roles.

A hierarchical structure containing positions of leadership that had long been part of the culture of the Department was replaced by the introduction of a teamwork strategy. While it is true that curriculum leaders used to work collaboratively with the teachers in their team, they were the ones making most of the important decisions related to the delivery of the courses. Requiring teachers to make these decisions collectively therefore implied a considerable change in their work dynamics, and even more so when the teamwork structure had been imposed from above. The goal of the administrators of empowering teachers would work for teachers like Oriana, who received support from her colleague, but not for teachers like Ziyad, who felt judged by his peers and excluded from the team. In the latter instance, developing a sense of trust and ownership is less likely, thereby affecting the short and long-term impact of the reform.

As in Anderson’s (2012) study, the findings of this inquiry suggest that peer pressure from colleagues, through everyday comments and actions, “is a major determinant on the direction in which people are encouraged to move” (p. 125). The nature of teachers’ relationships and interactions with their colleagues can also support or inhibit the change process. Consequently, if teachers feel that collaboration is imposed rather than organized in their own terms, they may end up feeling marginalized or work in isolation “to maintain and defend their sense of self” (Raymond, 1992, cited by Hendy, 2008, p. 36), and in the end the

idea of working collaboratively can become a negative experience— a phenomenon that management members indeed witnessed.

As Tsui (2007) contends, being able to participate in the construction of meanings that matter in a community can generate identity conflicts; “these conflicts could lead to new forms of engagement in practice, new relations with members of the community and new ownership of meanings. Or they could lead to identities of marginality, disengagement and non-participation” (p. 67). Teachers’ political participation in institution-wide decision making and in reflective critique of curriculum and instruction, among others, can certainly aid and sustain the attempt at reform (Blasé & Björk, 2010; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Fullan, 2008).

To help teachers take ownership of new meanings and succeed in their attempt to implement the change, the role played by change leaders is therefore of great relevance in that they are the ones who most of the time attempt to engage teachers in collaborative learning and decision-making. Despite the many challenges they have to confront, the job of academic and administrative leaders is, among others, to enhance the skills and knowledge of people in the organization and hold the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other (Elmore, 2000, cited by Fullan, 2007a, p. 15). It could thus be argued that the role of Acablo, Lucia, Amelia and Salomé in the implementation of the blended learning was, to some extent, the most difficult of all (Wedell, 2009a). They were expected both to lead and support teachers through “an educational reculturing process”, and to simultaneously “reculture elements of their own organization and their own role”, in order to be able to do so (Wedell, 2009a, p. 38).

Nevertheless, although teacher (classroom norms, resistance to internal threats of work intensification and relationships of power) and organization (patterns of relationships, ideologies, decision making and power distribution) micropolitical factors may significantly influence teaching and learning outcomes (Blasé & Björk, 2010, p. 241), the ways in which local and national educational policies shape such political processes and cultures undoubtedly have a bearing on the process of change as well.

Institutional Stories of Change

As stated in Chapter 7, a number of national reform movements have motivated significant changes in the Colombian education system, including the reshaping of the English language teaching profession. Accordingly, my understanding of DFL’s experiences with blended learning would not have been complete without considering this broader sociopolitical context. The findings of this inquiry thus reflect, to some extent, the ways in

which English language teaching has changed in the country in recent years, particularly in the context of higher education, and how Colombian ELT professionals have tried to adapt to the rapidly changing demands of their work environments. Having delved into DFL's history of curriculum development, it is also observable how language-in-education and ICT use policies have been interpreted at the local level, leading to the adoption of particular practices (e.g., self-access learning, technology-enhanced learning and online learning).

It is clear that DFL was founded in response to the larger story of expansion, competitiveness and internationalization of education that has permeated the higher education system since the 1990s. Its creation was fueled by Riverview's need to institute foreign language learning, but also by a desire to prepare students for an increasingly globalized society. Through the institutionalization of English as a compulsory subject and a graduation requirement and the inclusion of technology into the curriculum, this university, as many others in the country, has come to both implement and sustain the economics-driven aims and values of the country's language-in-education and ICT policies.

Yet, while some could consider that such decisions may open a wider gap between those who are technologically literate and proficient in English and those who are not, even to the exclusion of the latter group, it could also be argued that tertiary institutions and their teachers do everything possible to create an environment for the opposite to happen. Teachers are interested in providing learners with the opportunity to expand their learning horizons and enrich their knowledge of the world, so that they "will also reread and rewrite [it] to foster diversity and inclusion" (Murray, 2005, p. 40). However, trying to transform what could be seen as a story of exclusion into one of inclusion is no simple task.

The implementation of educational policies has led to greater accountability for institutions and their stakeholders. Organizations must go through a process of accreditation which, while creating more transparency and increasing reflection, puts considerable pressure on academic and administrative staff. Directors and coordinators, for instance, have to ensure that institutional objectives are met as their academic units are continually evaluated based on students' performance. English teachers, many of whom made little or no use of technology when they were language learners and student-teachers, also need to make sure their students become competent language users and use technology for that purpose. And students, meanwhile, are required to take high-stakes tests and achieve the expected results.

Lorna, in her many years as Department Director, personally experienced the rewards as well as the challenges that arise from trying to meet ambitious national and

institutional objectives, especially when there are multiple external and sociocultural factors that can hinder the process of change. As she and other participants indicated, one of the difficulties they have had to face is the lack of college-readiness of some of the first and second-year undergraduates. Many times teachers have had to work with those students who are not prepared for the demands of higher education.

According to the World Bank & OECD 2012 report, the academic standards Colombian students have achieved by the time they enter tertiary education are generally low in comparison with other countries: “there is a big gap between the knowledge and skills they have acquired in school and the knowledge and skills they need to have if they are to learn effectively at tertiary level” (p. 52). This often leads to academic struggle and a high dropout rate, with the least advantaged students being the most affected. This problem, as the report acknowledges, has required tertiary institutions “to invest considerable time and effort in remedying academic deficiencies that schools...could address more efficiently and at less cost to fee-paying students” (p. 120). It has also placed more pressure on teachers.

Rayuela’s experience with the Level 1 course she taught, for example, reveals the struggles that teachers and learners, especially those coming from small rural towns, might go through when there is an observable lack of knowledge and preparation. Although the OECD & World Bank report claims that the factor with the biggest influence on academic success is the school’s socio-economic category, not whether it is private/public or urban/rural, the disparities in quality between urban and rural areas and private and public tuition that were discussed in Chapter 7 clearly continue to exist. They have in fact become the topic of recent debates on the quality of Colombia’s education (Celis, Jiménez & Jaramillo, 2012; de Zubiría, 2014; García, Maldonado & Rodríguez, 2014).

During the implementation of change, teachers also came across those students who showed reluctance to learn English and/or to participate in a blended learning environment, partly because they did not have the choice of whether or not to join these courses. Trying to increase students’ motivation amidst such contextual constraints is not always straightforward. Additionally, teachers’ jobs can become more difficult as a result of the organizational structure of higher education institutions (hourly-paid contracts). The Department has opened a few full-time teaching positions in recent years; however, there were still a number of teachers who had to take multiple jobs and therefore had less time to participate in professional development programs.

On the whole, it could be argued that change was taking place in different contexts and at different levels throughout this inquiry, and that, as a result, participants were telling more

than one story at a time and were part of multiple stories authored by others. The number of parallel changes that were taking place at DFL seemed to have made it hard for teachers to focus their efforts. The process of change, however, was one of mutual adaptation in that “changes occurred both in implementers’ behaviors and in the innovation as initially conceived and designed by those promoting the change” (Anderson, 2010, p. 74). As the conceptual framework illustrates (Figure 11.2), during the implementation, “the varied interests, actions and influence of all stakeholders [were] implicated” (p. 76) and the unique sociocultural characteristics and social structural conditions of the different interacting contexts were at play. Changes made at any one level unavoidably affected what occurred at others, and all involved in the change were “learners in change” and “learning to change” (Kennedy, 1999).

Participants’ experiences with blended learning were undoubtedly influenced by a number of interrelated factors. As shown in the first innermost concentric circle, at the personal level, teachers were influenced by a) their personal practical knowledge, b) their interpretations of the value and implications of the initiative, and of the expectations of influential others (peers, learners and officials), c) their beliefs about best practice, d) their motivations and personal goals, and e) their perceived degree of control over the change. Nevertheless, these individual responses to change, which influenced teachers’ actions and attitudes either positively or negatively, were strongly linked to what happened at DFL at the organizational level.

As indicated in the first segment of the second circle, the underlying aims of the language policy of the University, and how these translated into DFL’s approach to the design and implementation of the curriculum, and in turn the required roles of teachers and learners, were also influential. As mentioned earlier, teachers experienced trouble with aspects of the design and structure of the curriculum. The integration of learning modes, the language teaching methods, the variety of learner and teacher roles and the expected levels of learner autonomy were some of the most cited. As a result of the adoption of blended learning and, in general, the integration of technology into the curriculum, teachers had to adopt new roles, learn new skills and modify their instruction. As stated in Chapter 7, they had to assume roles common and (previously) uncommon to the language classroom. Trying to manage multiple responsibilities, some of which had not been clearly understood or negotiated, and make sense of new pedagogical practices was certainly troublesome.

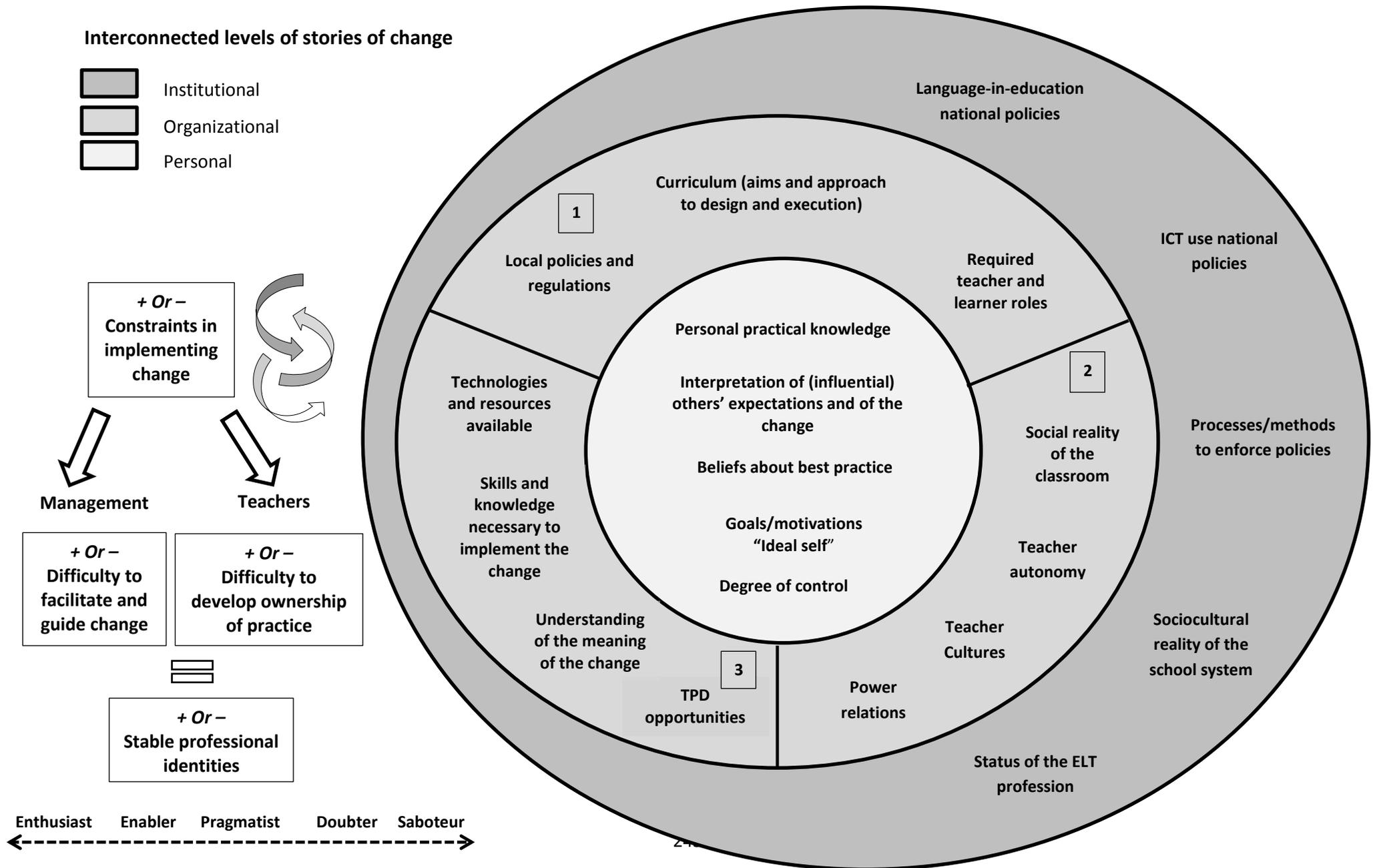


Figure 11.2. A Conceptual framework of the implementation of blended learning

In addition to coping with institutional dispositions and the radical restructuring of pedagogy required by blended learning, and as illustrated in the second segment, teachers also had to deal with the social reality of the classroom and the cultural norms and behaviors present in the organization. Inside the classroom, teachers were faced with the need to adapt their lessons to the particular characteristics, needs and sociocultural background of their learners, a task that was challenging for some and slightly easier for others. Outside the classroom, teachers also faced the need to adapt to a new collaborative teacher culture. While this new organizational arrangement worked in some courses and led to increased teacher investment and a sense of teacher autonomy, it resulted in a reduced opportunity to participate in decision-making and more asymmetrical power relations in others.

As reflected in the third and last segment, limited time for reflection and discussion, and the inability of some teachers to attend the professional development workshops made available also added to teachers' and management members' challenges to successfully implement blended learning. Having insufficient opportunities for professional growth, it proved difficult for some teachers to discuss the meaning of the change and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to implement it. Increased chances to make suggestions and learn from peers, evaluate the strengths and limitations of the technological resources available and establish stronger connections with other academic units (e.g. CTA) were often mentioned by participants.

From a broader sociocultural and political perspective, as the third concentric circle illustrates, the driving values of the language-in-education and ICT use policies, and more importantly, the methods used to enforce and assess their implementation (accreditation and evaluation) would also shape the process of change and place significant pressure on administrators, teachers and learners. The sociocultural reality of the country's high school system and the conditions with which some ELT professionals should exercise their profession would add to the blend as well.

All in all, as indicated by the three interlocking arrows on the left-hand side of Figure 11.2, it was the combination of different personal, organizational and institutional factors, but above all, what participants perceived to be most salient and influential, which caused them to identify more or fewer constraints in the implementation of blended learning and feel more or less cognitive and emotional dissonance. Depending on the extent to which their aspirations and actions were consistent with the reality of their professional context, aligned to the expectations of influential others (Kennedy, 2013) and influenced by external

factors, participants would be able to perform more or less stable professional identities and hence adopt particular strategies and attitudes.

However, while it is true that participants in general felt positive or negative about their experiences during the semester, it is important to note that they were not operating with one specific role. Their roles changed according to the circumstances (Hendy, 2008) and were related to their ability to live with the contradictions and tensions arising in their practice. As shown at the bottom left-hand side of Figure 11.2, participants, especially teachers, navigated along a professional role or identity continuum (enthusiast, enabler, pragmatist, doubter and saboteur). In particular situations, they favored an aspect of the implementation, yet in others, they were more skeptical and raised questions. As a result of having to straddle these two opposite ends of the continuum, imagined narratives of change were co-constructed, and a need for a new professional identity emerged. Thus, I do not attempt to fix their identity since they all assumed several overlapping or even contradictory behaviors and discourses, “even within the space of one interview” (Barret, 2006, p.7).

Having looked at the findings through a conceptual lens, it could therefore be claimed that switching to blended learning is a complex enterprise that goes far beyond getting the mix right, as many individual factors and context-specific situations come to shape the implementation experience. Blended learning involves a dramatic shift in direction and new ways of thinking. Accordingly, I now turn to discuss the ways in which tensions can be minimized so as to help teachers and change facilitators to more effectively design and put into action a blended learning course or program, and thus promote second-order change.

Where to Now? Blended Learning in Higher Education ELT Contexts

This study has raised important practical implications and recommendations for language teachers and academic administrators with regard to the design and implementation of blended learning programs. There is no doubt that these recommendations are relevant to the community where the study was conducted and are linked to the suggestions for improvement the participants themselves made. They can also be valuable for other institutions and/or language teaching departments interested in changing to blended learning and managing the tensions that such a change can generate, or in redesigning their blended curriculum. Teachers who are teaching or preparing to teach a blended language course could also learn from these suggestions, as these are both conceptual and pedagogical. My recommendations, like those of Gruba and Hinkelman

(2012), operate on a micro, meso and macro level, although they have a slightly different emphasis and structure.

Micro-Design Considerations

As illustrated in the conceptual framework (Figure 11.2), changing to blended learning is a complex enterprise and there are a number of factors that need to fall into place in order for it to be successful. Some of these aspects are related to decisions made at the course level. Despite the fact that teachers may support the implementation of blended learning and be technologically literate, as was the case of Lucinda, Rayuela and Ziyad, they still may experience trouble with: a) the choice/use of available technologies, b) the combination of FtF and CALL tasks and methods, c) the development of learner autonomy, and d) the assessment of learning outcomes. Although these issues have been explored in the course design literature (Neumeier, 2005; Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Whittaker, 2013), I wish to extend the discussions initiated by these scholars by pointing out some ideas that have received less attention. At the micro-level, the design recommendations I offer are thus related to these four course development aspects.

Choice and Use of Technologies

To anticipate some of the problems that language teachers may face in the teaching of blended courses, teacher leaders and/or course designers may start the process of design by assessing teachers' opinions about the technologies chosen for the course. In contexts where the implementation of BL results from the redesign of the curriculum, rather than from the need to develop CALL materials for a new course, teachers' diverse perceptions about and prior experiences with institutional technologies should be brought into the design process, as they can significantly impact the development of the blended lessons. Neumeier (2005), in agreement with Chapelle (2001), stresses the importance of securing "learner-fit" before engaging in course design, but I would say that "teacher-fit" is also necessary.

In tertiary institutions where LMS teaching is often the norm, teachers may feel, for instance, that the design and interface of the LMS could have an impact on student motivation, as was the case with Lucinda, or that LMS activities do not fulfill certain learning and teaching objectives, as mentioned by Oriana and Ziyad. As a result, teachers may decide to use technology to a lesser extent, or explore other technological resources, possibly experiencing an increase in workload and unexpected technical problems. Identifying what teachers believe are the advantages and limitations of institutional and non-

institutional resources can be done prior to the start of the course, through introductory training sessions, but also during its implementation through formal and informal conversations with teachers, as I did in this study. Contrasting these reflections with learners' perceptions may also illustrate whether there is a mismatch between teachers' and learners' opinions, and whether the problems teachers report are in fact caused by limitations of the available technologies, or as is often the case, by the way they have been put to use, among other contextual factors.

Language Teaching Tasks and Methods

Evaluating with teachers the uses given to technology in the course is also likely to lead to reflections on tasks and teaching methods. Neumeier (2005) stresses the need to achieve methodological variety across learning modes in order to counterbalance the possible restrictive nature of the CALL environment. However, while CALL can be associated with strongly guided methods and a rigid structure, I believe the opposite can also happen. The conversations I had with teachers and the observations I made of their practice indicated that the flexible structure of the tasks designed for the CALL mode at times contrasted with the more controlled and structured nature of the FtF environment. Accordingly, the potential conflict between the teaching methods and/or tasks chosen for the CALL mode and those selected for the FtF mode must also be taken into consideration.

One possible way to do this is to pay special attention to the process of task design. Giving additional thought to the aims and structure of learning tasks may help teachers and course designers identify which activities are more or less appropriate for each mode, and what teaching procedures may best support them. Following Gruba and Hinkelman's (2012) advice, I believe that teachers might find it useful to create a task design checklist to ensure consistent design practices, a framework for the evaluation of these tasks and a contingency plan (in case tasks do not work as expected in practice). Although the authors suggest drawing on Doughty and Long's (2003) language teaching principles for this purpose, I believe the principles for task-based teaching proposed by Ellis (2003) may also be suitable.

Development of Learner Autonomy

Given that that one of the primary aims of online/blended approaches is to foster self-regulated and interdependent learning, an analysis of teaching methods may also lead to an evaluation of how learner autonomy is promoted and the role of the teacher in this process. It has often been mentioned that the scope of the functions required in blended

learning requires a greater degree of autonomy by the learner, and that as a result teachers should guide students and help them learn how to work more independently and collaborate with others. However, what is less emphasized is that helping students engage in online learning is much more complicated than assigning different roles in different learning situations. As illustrated in the findings, switching to blended learning creates conflicts between the degree of control that teachers perceived to be necessary or desirable and the level of control ascribed to the learners. Teachers, as was the case with Rayuela, while advocating the development of learner autonomy can, unconsciously perhaps, be in control of most pedagogical activities in the FtF sessions. They may also find it difficult to help students handle different degrees of responsibility while in the online environment.

Thus, reflecting on teaching methods and tasks might also lead teachers to re-examine how autonomy is fostered and facilitated in and out the classroom. Some of the questions that could be asked during the process of course design, and which were to some extent pointed out by participants, are: In what ways do the structure and activities of the FtF mode support the development of the self-regulation and teamwork behaviors and skills that are needed to successfully operate in the online learning environment? When should teachers take action and provide support in the online learning mode, and when should learners work more independently? With regard to the latter, course designers and teachers may want to consider the possibility of promoting distributed scaffolding (multiple forms of graduated support, distributed across available tools, activities, and agents) (Tabak, 2004) and incorporating into the course expert scaffolding and modeling (Bax, 2011). Discussing how to do an ongoing diagnosis of student learning and how to calibrate support and fading (Putanmbekar & Hübsher, 2005) may also prove beneficial.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

An aspect tightly connected to learner autonomy and repeatedly mentioned by the participants in this study was the role of assessment culture and methods. Assessment is a critical ingredient of blended learning, as it enables learners to test out their knowledge and identify their progress, and it helps teachers to measure the effectiveness of the different elements of the course and to ensure the quality of instruction. The assessment methods used will show students what is important and how they should approach learning, and hence might or might not engage them in self-regulatory activity. At DFL, however, the CALL activities that learners were required to do were not all integrated into the system of

assessment. The assessment methods used did not seem to measure or reflect adequately what was taking place in the online learning environment.

Hence, on deciding about the degree of flexibility offered to the individual learner, it is advisable to examine carefully which tasks and materials are more or less central to the achievement of the stated objectives and to ensure that the former are aligned with the assessments methods, particularly when teaching inexperienced CALL users and/or beginner language learners. In the process of lesson plan development, Gruba and Hinkelman (2012, p. 35) suggest specifying how, and through which mode, tasks are to be submitted by students, establishing and announcing the criteria (rubric) that will be used to evaluate them, and nominating who will be responsible for learning (students, a peer, the teacher or a combination of these). Promoting an assessment culture favorable to learner autonomy, in which self-assessment is “more than tokenistic” (Little, 2011, p. 26) and students play a role in evaluating their learning outcomes is also recommended. In sum, changes in pedagogy should be followed by changes in assessment methods and culture.

Meso and Macro-Design Considerations

At the meso and macro level, the design recommendations I offer may prove useful when the implementation of blended learning, as was the case in this study, does not only involve the design of a particular language course(s), but takes place at a departmental or institutional level. This decision might require mobilizing a significant amount of human, physical and technological resources, as well as making a number of organizational decisions and putting in practice particular policies. As observed by Halverson, Graham, Spring and Drysdale (2014), many studies have investigated the effectiveness of blended learning at the individual course level, but few have provided guidance for institutions. In an attempt to do so, at meso level, my recommendations are related to aspects such as: a) clarity, b) teacher training, c) action research, and d) effective leadership. And at the macro level, they specifically refer to e) policy development. Although many other suggestions can be adopted from the education change and innovation literature, I concentrate on those aspects that were particularly salient in the study.

Clarity

One of most important aspects to bear in mind in the adoption of blended learning, and of any other new educational project, for that matter, is the need to ensure that there is clarity about the goals of the change and the practices intended to support it (Fullan, 2007a;

Lamie, 2005). Although teachers may agree on the need to change to blended learning, they may be not sure about the means to do so, or as Fullan (2007a) states, be clear about what they should do differently. Change leaders and teachers may also have entirely different views as to how the change should be implemented. Lack of clarity and multiple interpretations, in a context of constant turnover in staff, were undoubtedly seen by the participants in this study as aspects hampering their implementation efforts.

Opening and maintaining ongoing discussions between senior and novice staff about key pedagogical principles and practices is perhaps the one of the best ways in which role and conceptual clarity can be enhanced. Although teachers usually experience a shortage of time and having to teach a new blended course may only add to their workload, they are often willing to share their experiences with colleagues. Ziyad's interest in using wikis developed in fact as a result of the conversations he held with Oriana and the success she reported having experienced with her courses. Similarly, Oriana's interest in this tool was influenced in part by conversations she had previously had with members from the self-access center. These teachers took time from their busy schedules to look for peer support and advice because these exchanges suited their needs and interests.

These informal conversations, together with personal motivations, seemed to have had more impact on teachers' practice than some of the Department's formal training sessions. Accordingly, it can be said that encouraging teachers to organize spaces where they can share their thoughts and experiences in a more systematic manner might help them receive support and articulate explicit expectations. These spaces can be either physical or virtual. The latter may actually provide part-time teachers with more opportunities for participation, as well as expose novice teachers to ideas that have proven successful. When teachers come together to exchange good practice, there is a greater chance for change to occur as this enhances confidence, ownership and commitment to the change (Fullan, 2007a).

Teacher Training

The creation of collaborative learning spaces may also lead to the reconceptualization of teacher education programs. It has often been stressed that training should help teachers advance their technical and pedagogical knowledge (Hubbard & Levy, 2006) and gain a clear "understanding of the empowering and limiting features of any technology" (Levy & Stockwell, 2006, p.190). However, as Comas-Quinn (2011) observes, training should also help teachers learn how to become online teachers, which, unfortunately, did not happen at DLF. One important implication of this study is thus that

leaders and administrators must acknowledge the significance of dealing with emotional diversity and providing opportunities for teachers to understand and cope with the change. As Anderson (2012) suggests, emotional responses, both negative and positive, should be openly discussed and engaged with by leaders and managers as part of the change process. Consequently, I recommend organizing regular training sessions in which teachers can safely share their ideas and concerns about the implementation of blended learning, as well as evaluate whether the program has fulfilled their and their learners' expectations.

Teacher and student (oral/ written) narratives, or descriptions of lessons such as those included in this study, could be used as learning tools through which teachers and teacher leaders can reflect on what changing to blended learning represents for different community members. The results of these discussions may equally help these change actors identify sources of emotional and cognitive tension and formulate strategies to resolve the dissonance. This training, as Nissen and Tea (2012, p. 160) have suggested, can also combine face-to-face and online learning modalities, so as to allow teachers to experience first-hand what learning within a blended format involves and to improve their understanding of course design and the kind of tuition that can actually help language learners. All these different experiences might not only help teachers, leaders and managers find a common language with which to discuss the meaning of the change, but also challenge their beliefs and assumptions about online language teaching and learning.

Action Research

While training opportunities can significantly contribute to the success of blended learning, another way teachers can develop a greater understanding of blended provision and feel more involved in and committed to the change is by becoming researchers in partnership with their students. By identifying students' learning progress and evaluating the impact of the course/program, they can more readily identify its benefits and limitations, as well as make changes that can improve the overall learning and teaching experience. The result of these research studies can direct both teachers and teacher leaders to some of the micro-level design considerations previously named, or to the start of a new (re)design and implementation cycle. While this narrative inquiry was being conducted, a number of action-research projects were initiated by teachers as part of the postgraduate studies, and were supported with enthusiasm by teacher leaders and directors, as they added to the Department's efforts to evaluate the impact of the program and encourage best practice.

Effective Leadership

The creation of teacher training programs and action-research projects are ways in which institutions can help teachers make sense of the meaning of change. However, these and other efforts may be doomed to failure unless effective leadership is promoted. Acablo, Amelia, Lucia and Salomé, in their role as teacher leaders, were always committed to the change and willing to connect with teachers and guide them in the process. However, they felt at times that their job was not entirely satisfactory. It is therefore important that institutions also create opportunities for the professional development of their leaders. Leaders generally learn skills for leadership on the job (Murray & Christison, 2009); however, they also need spaces to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of their work. One way this could be done, besides setting up meetings with other leaders in the organization, is to engage in discussions with leaders of other tertiary institutions.

Blended learning is currently common practice in higher education in Colombia and many other countries, and therefore, sharing examples of good practice and reflecting on sources of concern might help leaders identify strategies to deal with those problems and hence to sustain the change in the long term. These conversations might also result in the creation of partnerships and collaborative projects, thus allowing institutions to learn from each other and have access to a greater range of physical, technological and human resources. When teachers and leaders work in tandem with community members within their institution and with individuals in other organizations, they are likely to better articulate the results of their teaching and research experiences in the wider education change agenda.

Policy Development

Putting local implementation and research efforts in a broader perspective, change actors may also hopefully recognize the influence of nationwide and institutional language-in-education policies and ICT standards in the design of blended learning. I therefore encourage teachers, leaders and program administrators to communicate to those in charge of policy-making in their institutions their change efforts, progress and needs, and to engage, if possible, in bottom-up initiated policy changes. As Murray (2008, p. 8) contends, “our language learners’ success depends not only on how they learn in our classrooms, but also on how well we can advocate for them to policymakers”. Similarly, policy makers are invited to examine whether the policies they have designed and the programs that have been

created as a result have yielded the results they expected. It might be the case that for some teachers and learners, blended learning has not been as effective as initially anticipated.

On the whole, I suggest, as do Gruba and Hinkelman (2012), that the competing demands that influence the varied and complex decisions that are at play in the design of blended approaches for the language classroom be all taken into consideration. And, therefore, I too recommend giving attention to micro, meso and macro level design considerations. As these suggestions are linked to the research approach I adopted, this study also offers methodological implications.

Blended Learning and Narrative Research

This study addressed the call for more holistic research into blended learning (Bliuc, Goodyear & Ellis, 2007) by adopting a narrative inquiry epistemological and methodological stance. Narrative research informed this study in two ways. First, it helped to conceptualize the research as the study of the implementation of blended language learning in the context of higher education from the perspective of the participants' lived experience. Second, it allowed me to understand how the personal and social were intertwined in teachers' lives over a period of time and how these experiences were influenced by larger social, cultural and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2006).

The main methods used (narrative interviews and classroom observation) and the participants recruited (teachers and teacher leaders) helped me provide a rich picture of what blending technologies in L2 learning contexts involved for not only teachers and learners but also the organization— something missing from previous studies (Grgurović, 2010). Without such an epistemological and methodological lens, I might not have been able to capture the community's change process in all its complexity, variability and multivoicedness. This inquiry may thus become an example for other researchers interested in exploring blended learning, especially when motivated by similar (reform) circumstances.

For the teachers, participating in the inquiry also implied being able to “become more critical and step into students' shoes” (Rayuela, *Int. 5, l: 370-371*), “become more aware of what you do in class...and identify things you have never thought of before” (Lucinda, *Int. 5, l: 374-379*), and “engage in...and develop further my reflective thinking” (Oriana, *Int. 5, l: 386-389*). Narrative interviews created an opportunity for reflection and meaning making, thus allowing teachers to “reshape their understanding of teaching and learning in...a critical manner” (Shelly, Murphy & White, 2013, p. 571), and also to envision the future of the blended program and their roles in it.

To stimulate this kind of introspection and get a deeper understanding of teachers' thinking, teacher leaders in charge of facilitating the transition to blended learning in their institutions can invite teachers to participate in narrative interviews during the different implementation stages of the program. As noted earlier, they can also draw on teacher and learner narratives during training sessions to encourage teachers to reflect on how they might deal with tensions and challenging issues, and thus help students benefit from the new learning environment. Teachers can also be invited to adopt a narrative epistemology or narrative methods in their action-research projects. As Barkhuizen (2008) notes, teachers might learn more about their practice by constructing, interpreting and reflecting on their own personal teaching stories. Lastly, technology could be put to good use by encouraging teachers and learners to use narratives as pedagogy and create digital language learning histories and/or stories about their technology-enhanced language learning experiences.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the compelling stories of practice revealed in this study, there are a number of limitations, and so results should be interpreted with these in mind. The limitations of this study are related to some of the methods used and methodological procedures followed, as well as my role as a researcher. Of all the different methods employed, the online student questionnaire, unfortunately, could not be considered a reliable source of data. Not being able to rely on learners' data, their voice was mostly absent in this study. As highlighted in previous chapters, the online questionnaires were administered three times during the semester and answered on a voluntary basis; however, because the rate of return was very low, the information collected could not be taken as a fair representation of the views of the majority of the target population.

Although students' attitudes and opinions were partially confirmed through classroom observation, most of what teachers expressed during the interviews was based on their interpretations of students' behaviors and could not be compared against students' own perceptions. Having the possibility to draw on their opinions would have probably allowed me to corroborate or refute the teachers' interpretations. Additionally, as Dörnyei (2007) argues, respondents' engagement with questionnaires tends to be rather shallow and therefore it is difficult to explore complex meaning with this technique. Written narratives (e.g., journals or narrative frames) or follow-up interviews could probably have been more adequate ways to collect rich data from learners.

Additionally, the classes observed (beginner and pre-intermediate) may explain, to a certain degree, the nature of some of the tensions reported by participants. Results from an action research study conducted by a DFL staff member (Carreño, 2014) with more proficient students indicate high levels of student satisfaction and thus contrast with some of the results presented here. I maybe could have captured the experience of implementing blended learning in a complete way had Lucinda, Rayuela, Ziyad and Oriana taught different language courses. However, as explained in Chapter 5, this was a factor that I could not control or plan for during the research design process.

The uniqueness of the setting and the characteristics of the curriculum also imply that findings are mainly representative of this particular community's change experience and thus cannot be generalized to other tertiary institutions or groups of teachers. As Clandinin and Huber (2010) remark, the knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is characterized by particularity and incompleteness, leading less to generalizations and certainties and "more toward wondering about and imagining alternative possibilities" (p. 440). Nevertheless, since the study provides rich descriptions of the context, teaching situations and research process, readers may well be able to find similarities and transfer the findings to their own contexts. They may also realize that the changes that were observed in this micro-environment and the contextual and personal factors that motivated them are also likely to be played out in other higher education settings in other countries.

Time, as in most studies, was also an issue in this inquiry. While I documented the second implementation stage of the blended program, it is evident that this was still a transition phase for Riverview University, and thus witnessing a number of unresolved issues and challenges was to be expected. Had this been a longitudinal study or had it explored a subsequent implementation stage, findings may perhaps have illustrated different aspects of the change process or revealed other transformations in teachers' practices. Change, however, is dynamic and not "a parade that can be watched as it passes" (Geertz, 1995, in Phillion, 1999, p. 92). Like Phillion (1999), I often felt a sense of having come too late and arrived too early, and thus not being able to go into teachers' classrooms at the right time in order to capture "something from the beginning to the end" (p. 92). Even so, I also came to realize that "the right time is the time I went, the time I stayed, the experience I had of the time I spent there" (p. 92).

Lastly, my role as both a former curriculum leader and a researcher could be seen as generating a conflict of interest or leading to biased interpretation. My knowledge of and relationship with the community, while granting easy access to the research site and

facilitating rapport with participants, may have also obscured my ability to make the familiar unfamiliar and explore certain phenomena. In the interviews, as in Anderson's (2012) study, the teachers may have also tried to meet my expectations. Nevertheless, the constant contact I had with participants, their willingness to share their experiences— despite me previously occupying a higher hierarchical position— and the detailed narrative accounts they provided allowed data to “become richer” (Anderson, 2012, p. 129), and so my dual role did not become an obstacle for the study. Additionally, as stated earlier, reflexivity was used to illustrate the collaborative sense-making process in which the participants and I engaged, and most importantly, to indicate how my prior knowledge, experiences and emotions came to shape the structure of the interactions that took place over the course of data collection.

Recommendations for Further Research

My suggestions for further research are both methodological and conceptual. Future studies could learn from the methodological limitations discussed above and bring learners' opinions and narratives into the equation, as well as examine the process of change over a longer period of time. A more elaborate research design could, in turn, help gain a better understanding of what changing to blended learning implies for different stakeholders and how the community sustains the change and “reinvents” itself (Anderson, 2012) through time. Furthermore, future research could extend to investigate other language learning programs with similar blended learning arrangements so as to compare and contrast experiences and provide a more detailed picture of the development and impact of blended learning in higher education. This can include private and public institutions in both rural and urban areas. Although these recommendations have the Colombian context in mind, they can certainly apply to language teaching scenarios in other countries.

How oral and written narratives can aid in the transition to a new professional knowledge landscape and help teachers construct meaning and transform their perceptions and practices might also prove to be an interesting research possibility. The use of teacher narratives in teacher professional development, while examined carefully in a number of studies on professional development and teacher research practice (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2009; Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Xu, 2014), has only recently been explored in the context of blended language learning (Shelly et al., 2013). Therefore, additional studies seeking to examine how narrative methods help teachers come to terms with and reflect on the challenges motivated by the changeover to blended learning seem

appropriate. As suggested in the literature, when teachers inquire into their own experiences, they may feel compelled to question and reinterpret their convictions and beliefs about teaching, and in turn, make meaningful changes in themselves and their practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2004).

In agreement with Graham, Woodfield and Harrison (2013, p. 11), I believe future research can also explore how higher education institutions that have decided to adopt blended learning make the transition between an awareness/exploration stage to an adoption/early implementation phase, or between an adoption/early implementation phase to a mature implementation/growth phase. As these scholars suggest, research could investigate the specific processes and interventions that successful institutions use to institutionalize blended learning. The role of support structures such as collaborative work cultures, teacher leadership and risk management plans also point towards a new direction for future research on blended learning. The study of how these and other strategies can guide and facilitate the change, engender ongoing improvement and help students and teachers succeed might contribute to our understanding of what affects the quality and effectiveness of blended learning initiatives. As Fullan (2007a) claims, many teachers are willing to adopt change at the classroom level and will do so under the right conditions.

Concluding Remark

I think there is no step back, not only for academic but economic reasons ... The latter is, in fact, one of the causes of the existence of blended learning, here and everywhere ... We might explore and do many other things, but I doubt very much that we will offer an entirely face-to-face program again. (Lucinda, Int 5, l. 340-344)

In conclusion, as I come to the end of this narrative inquiry, I am able to see how my understanding of blended language learning has advanced and evolved. Seeing things through the eyes of different groups and individuals, I have learned about the complex nature of teacher cognition and the many overlapping (personal, social, cultural and political) factors that affect the adoption of new ideas, and have discovered the difficulty in isolating one factor from another. Designing and implementing a blended learning curriculum as a result of institutional or nationwide reform is indeed concerned with more than the selection of tools, methods and content, and the integration of FtF with online learning activities. The challenges that teachers and leaders face as they switch to blended/online instruction are more complex and varied than reported in some studies.

Accordingly, I believe that the results of this inquiry contribute to a better understanding of blended learning models in the context of English language teaching,

particularly from the perspective of those who implement them. When blended learning is studied through the lenses of teacher change and narrative research, the aspects that make it more or less difficult for teachers to develop ownership of their practice, feel emotional congruence and perform stable professional identities become apparent. What makes it easier or harder for leaders to successfully guide the process of change also comes into the picture. As Lucinda noted in the last interview, there is no going back with regards to the integration of technologies with language instruction; therefore, examining what leads to effective blended learning provision will continue to be part of the research agenda. A better understanding of the process of change is therefore likely to help teachers, administrators and policy makers to implement more effective innovations (Hyland & Wong, 2013). The conceptual framework and the recommendations discussed above will hopefully provide a base from which researchers and educators can start or extend such inquiries.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Approval Letter from University of Auckland Ethics Committee

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Research Integrity Unit



The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Level 10, 49 Symonds Street
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Extension: 87830 / 83761
Facsimile: 64 9 373 7432

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

11-Apr-2012

MEMORANDUM TO:

Assoc Prof Gary Barkhuizen
App Lang Studies & Linguistics

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 7917)

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project titled **Blended learning and language teaching: Stories of school; school's stories** on 11-Apr-2012.

Ethics approval was given for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 11-Apr-2015.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to the Committee for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify the Committee once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of the Committee would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals if you wish to do so. Contact should be made through the UAHPEC secretary at humanethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

All communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application should include this reference number: **7917**.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

Secretary
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, App Lang Studies & Linguistics

Appendix B: Interview Data Sample

Code: IntsSal02

Date: 3 Oct 2012

Interview 2: Salomé

Person/	Transcript
J	(...) Estoy de acuerdo con lo que tú decías. Hay muchos procesos que se deben manejar, el aprendizaje en línea no tiene que ser necesariamente colaborativo, hay muchas cosas que deben ser individuales. Pero entonces parece que se adopta un concepto y se malinterpreta o se dejan de lado otros.
S	Si, sí, hay que hacer un trabajo fuerte allí. Eh, si me pasó en un nivel que unas profesoras decían, “pero es que no hicieron foro” (risa). Y para ellas que no hubiese foro era que el profesor había planeado mal porque no había colaboración (I-Ah huh). Y en realidad si hubo sesión en línea, el estudiante práctico, hizo algunas actividades, pero el profesor no, y justamente es un profesor de maestría, el profesor no vio la relevancia del foro. Pero para las otras profesoras era un crimen (risa) que no hubiera foro, entonces si hay que empezar como a trabajar en todo eso. Agregando a lo que tú dices, eh, el balance entre la presencialidad y la virtualidad, en el programa a distancia es digamos es un poco más sencillo porque sabemos que el estudiante tiene que aprender prácticamente solo (I-Ah huh). El éxito de su aprendizaje está en qué herramientas, qué recursos lo brindamos para que logre producir lo que esperamos que produzca, y la sesión de tutoría es solo para practicar speaking y resolver dudas de lo que ya trabajó. Con esa visión es mucho más sencillo (I-Ah huh), pero tener el componente presencial más alto que el virtual genera este tipo de situaciones. [Y eso es en teoría porque en créditos es más alto el virtual que el presencial] . Exacto. Eso es lo otro, debería haber más énfasis en lo virtual. Puede que en algún momento sea similar al programa a distancia y se potencialice la presencialidad para la comunicación.
J	Y de hecho es lo que hacen muchos programas blended. Todo el trabajo está hecho de manera individual y la presencialidad se usa para la oralidad.
S	Allí yo también estaba reflexionando sobre el concepto que tenemos __ (.) El orden mismo en que se planea es: yo le doy le doy en clase y vaya y practique, eso no genera tampoco como mucha expectativa por parte del estudiante en su aprendizaje y en su autonomía (I-Ah huh). El estudiante del programa a distancia está acostumbrado a que tiene que venir con ya las actividades de la plataforma ya hechas o sino va a perder la tutoría. Él sabe que el tutor no le va a decir es que te voy a explicar el tema = [O sea tal vez tiene más conciencia de que hay aprendizaje] . Sí.
J	¿Cómo ha funcionado la estrategia de los comités? ¿Qué impacto crees que ha tenido en la estrategia blended como tal?
S	Esa sensación de sentirse solo por parte del profesor, a pesar de que hay comité para todo (risa), siento que el profesor se sigue sintiendo solo al planear. Se sigue sintiendo solo al tomar decisiones, pero también es esa falta de trabajo en equipo y de manejo de tiempos de cada persona. El hecho de que unos sean catedra, y otros planta, cada quien tiene sus responsabilidades. A la hora de la producción, de la planeación, el profesor está solo, se está enfrentado solo al tema y lo digo también porque algunos profesores son cercanos. Yo tengo la oportunidad de apoyarlos y de darles material y que no empiecen de cero y acompañarlos. No puedo con todos, pues porque el tiempo tampoco da. Eh pero si hay que trabajar en ese tema de acompañamiento al profesor, no sé cómo. O consolidación de los grupos del nivel, de los equipos de trabajo para que si de verdad haya un acompañamiento, y los profesores generen conocimiento, discusión, y se pongan de acuerdo.

Appendix C: Classroom Observation Transcript Sample

Code: ObsRay01

Date: 14th August 2012

Observation 1: Rayuela

Time	Field notes and transcription combined	Interview questions/prompts
4:05 pm	<p>To start the class Rayuela opened VS to remind sts about the different activities they had to do for the online session. Some sts did not have a clear idea of what they had to do and as a result had not participated in the forums. One of the students talked about MyEnglishLab and the kind of exercises they needed to do there. She commented that she did not what was wrong with some of her answers; she thought they were OK, but the computer said the opposite and she did not know why.</p> <p>Rayuela explains sts each of the activities they have to do for sessions 1 and 2. She uses the LMS and shows sts the forums created for weeks 1 and 2. She clarifies the instructions by making sure sts understand new vocabulary. She shows sts how to create a post in a forum. Then she explains IW by opening MyEnglishLab.</p> <p>T: (Pointing at the board). You have to go to online session 2 ...You got online session2, I click yes, and I have some information.</p> <p>What is my task? What is my work? I have to describe the setting, cast and personal information.</p> <p>What is setting? Setting is the place (Ahh...Students say); cast is the people involved in the play...the members of my play. You also need to provide personal information of the people...the people in your play.</p>	<p>What activities have been devoted to the FtF session? Why? Which ones for the online session? Why?</p> <p>What happened after this session? How did she feel about sts participation?</p>

Appendix D: Student Questionnaire No. 1 (Levels 2 and 3)
(Template for web design)

Este cuestionario tiene como objetivo conocer el manejo que usted le ha dado a eRiverview y cuáles son sus percepciones acerca de esta herramienta de aprendizaje. Por favor, lea las preguntas con atención antes de dar una respuesta.

1. ¿En qué nivel se encuentra actualmente? _____
2. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha estudiado inglés en el Departamento de Lenguas? Seleccione el número de semestres.

1 2 3 4 5 or mas

3. ¿Tomó un curso de inglés en 2011-2 y/o 2011-1? Si _____ No _____ Si su respuesta es afirmativa, por favor continúe respondiendo las siguientes preguntas. Si es negativa, de clic aquí.

4. ¿Con que frecuencia usó eRiverview el semestre pasado? Seleccione uno de los siguientes rangos.

10-30% 31-50% 51-70% 71-90% 91-100%

5. ¿Con que finalidad usó eRiverview? Seleccione las opciones que considere necesarias.

- a. Para informarse sobre las actividades de clase semanales y trabajo independiente
- b. Para desarrollar actividades de trabajo independiente
- c. Para desarrollar trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros de clase
- d. Para interactuar e intercambiar información con el profesor
- e. Para recibir retroalimentación del profesor
- f. Para recibir retroalimentación de sus compañeros de clase
- g. Para dar retroalimentación al trabajo de sus compañeros de clase
- h. Para prepararse para exámenes y quices
- i. Para hacer uso de recursos adicionales (no sugeridos por el profesor)
- j. Para sugerir actividades o recursos para la clase
- k. Otro propósito, cuál? _____

6. ¿Qué habilidades practicó en eRiverview? Seleccione las opciones que considere necesarias.

Lectura Escucha Escritura Habla Gramática

7. ¿Cuál de estas habilidades practicó más? Seleccione una opción.

Lectura Escucha Escritura Habla Gramática

8. Por favor complete el siguiente texto acerca de sus experiencias de aprendizaje con eRiverview durante el semestre pasado. Lea TODA la página antes de empezar a escribir.

Aprendiendo inglés a través de *eRiverview*

Lo que más me gusto de *eRiverview* el semestre pasado fue que tuve la oportunidad

_____.

También disfruté de _____

_____.

Estas actividades me ayudaron a _____

_____.

_____ Sin embargo, algo difícil para mí fue que _____

_____.

Además, _____

_____.

Por otro lado, no me gustó _____ porque

_____.

Por ende, para este semestre yo sugiero _____

_____.

Student Questionnaire No. 1

This questionnaire aims to know how you have used *eRiverview* so far and what your perceptions are about this learning tool. Please read the questions carefully before you provide an answer.

1. What course are you in? _____
2. How long have you been enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages? Select the number of semesters.

2	2	3	4	5 or more
---	---	---	---	-----------
3. Did you take an English course in 2011-2 and/or 2011-1? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please continue answering the questions below. If no, [click here](#).
4. How often did you use *eRiverview* last semester? Select from the following ranges.

10-30%	31-50%	51-70%	71-90%	91-100%
--------	--------	--------	--------	---------
5. What did you use *eRiverview* for? Tick the options you consider necessary.
 - a. Inform yourself about weekly activities and independent work
 - b. Carry out independent study activities
 - c. Carry out collaborative learning activities with classmates
 - d. Interact and exchange information with your teacher
 - e. Get feedback from your teacher
 - f. Get feedback from your classmates
 - g. Give feedback to your partners' work
 - h. Practice and prepare for quizzes and examinations
 - i. Practice with extra resources (personal interest)
 - j. Suggest activities or resources for the class
 - k. Other _____
6. What skills did you practice in eRiverview? Tick the options you consider necessary

Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Grammar
---------	-----------	---------	----------	---------
7. Which of these skills did you practice the most? Select one option

Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Grammar
---------	-----------	---------	----------	---------
8. Please complete the following text about your past learning experiences with e-Riverview. Read the whole page BEFORE starting to write.

Learning English through eRiverview

What I liked the most about using *eRiverview* last semester(s) is that I had the opportunity to

I also liked to _____

These activities helped me learn _____

_____ . However, something that

was difficult for me was that _____

Besides, _____

I did not like _____

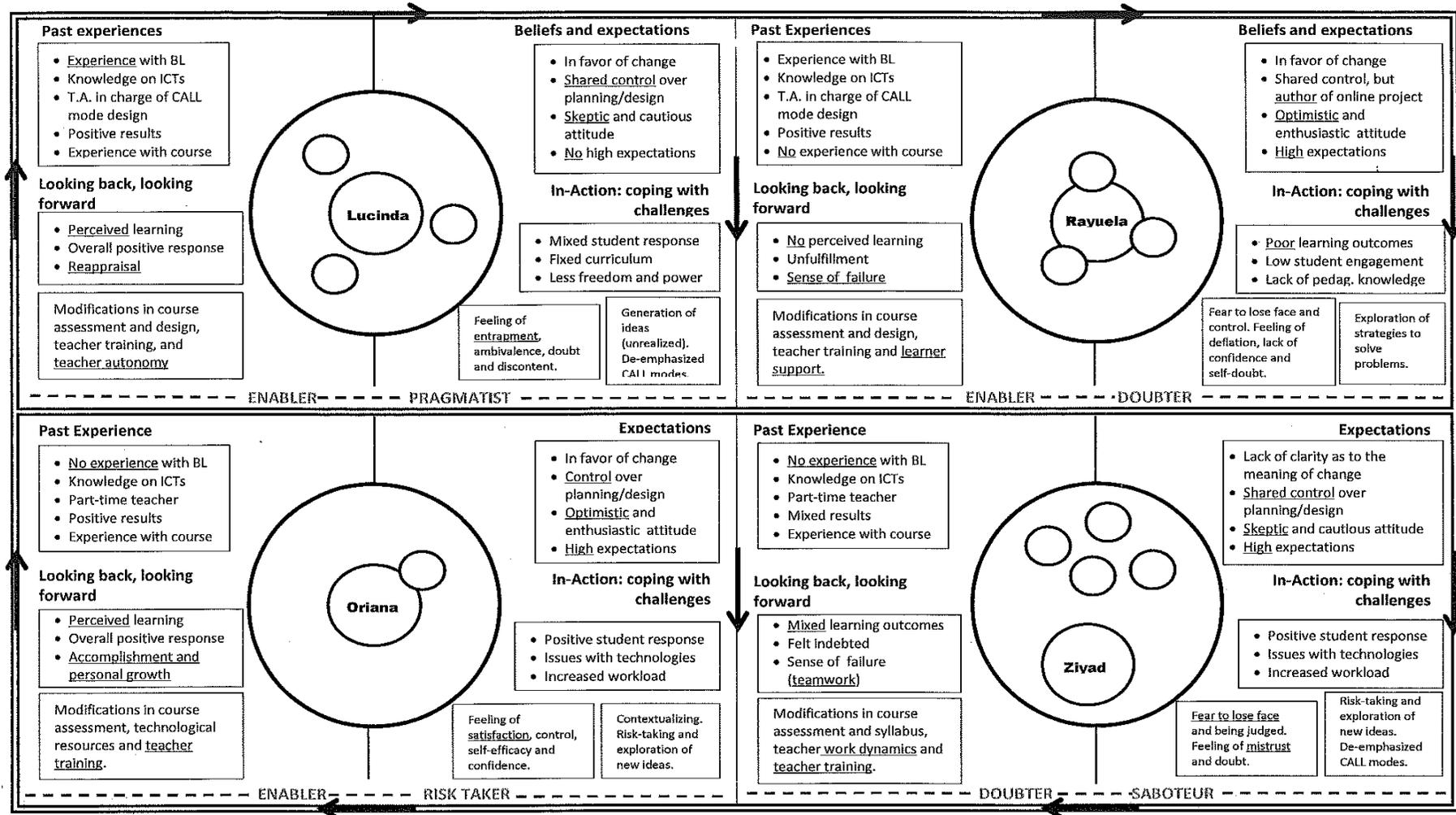
because _____

So, for this semester I would suggest _____

Appendix E: Data Collection Timeline 2012-2

Data collection procedure		Jul.	August		September			October		November			Dec
		3/4	1/2	3	2	3	4	1	4	1	2	3	1/2
Phase 1	Interview Department director 1st interview teacher leaders												
	1st interview teachers 1st student questionnaire												
	1st class observation												
Phase 2	2 nd interview teachers												
	2 nd class observation												
	3 rd class observation												
	3 rd interview teachers												
	2 nd interview teacher leaders 2 nd student questionnaire												
	4 th class observation												
	5 th class observation												
	4 th interview teachers												
Phase 3	3 rd students' questionnaire												
	2 nd interview Department director 3 rd interview teacher leader 5 th interview teachers												

Appendix F: Teachers' Stories of Practice-Visual Display



Appendix G: Sample of LMS Weekly Layout

WEEK 6

Somebody all of us admire



On Campus Activities

- First Session
- Second Session

Independent Study

- Instructions

Online Collaborative Work

- Online Session Week 6
- Online Project Consolidation Task

Appendix H: Sample of Independent Study Activities

Independent Study



Dear student,

The following is the independent work you will need to develop **after** the attending the **On Campus sessions**:

- Workbook, pages 45 and 46 in order to practice vocabulary and adjectives
- Workbook, pages 46 and 47 in order to practice the different uses of Passive Voice.
- [Click here](#) to practice vocabulary related to films.
- Vocabulary practice 2

To be ready for your online session: search information related to a representative film from a particular country, (except the U.S), you would like to promote in a film festival and complete this information:

- Name of the film:
- Date the film was released:
- Actors:
- Brief description of main characters:
- Plot in maximum 3 lines:
- Reasons to choose this film: I propose this film because it is quite representative and it shows...

Appendix I: Sample of SCORM Package Files

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">Insert logo Online Work Week 12</div> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px 0 5px 100px;">No name</div> <div style="padding: 10px;">  <div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; border-radius: 10px; width: 80%;"> <p>At this stage, in class you have built up groups of 3 people (It is suggested to choose members different from the ones you worked with the last term) Among those groups, you have previously discussed what you think it would be the most exciting destination for you to spend a weekend away. Now follow the next instructions:</p> </div> </div> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px; font-size: small;"> ? POSITION: 1/4 No name ◀ ▶ </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">Insert logo Online Work Week 12</div> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px 0 5px 100px;">Untitled</div> <div style="padding: 10px;">  <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>Activity 1: After deciding, collaboratively you will plan and create an itinerary describing the different activities you are going to do if you all decide visiting that destination in the forum "Planning a Weekend Away".</p> <p><i>Ex. Dear team members, as we decided to spend a weekend away in Vila de Leyva why don't we plan a camping there? First we are going to book some bus tickets in advance and once we get there, we are going to buy some tents to camp there. What do you think?</i></p> </div> </div> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px; font-size: small;"> ? POSITION: 2/4 Untitled ◀ ▶ </div> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">Insert logo Online Work Week 12</div> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px 0 5px 100px;">Untitled</div> <div style="padding: 10px;"> <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>Activity 2: In the same forum, among the group write comments about your members suggestions using language of negotiation <i>"In my opinion, Why don't we...? I don't agree... etc"</i>.</p> </div>  </div> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px; font-size: small;"> ? POSITION: 3/4 Untitled ◀ ▶ </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px;">Insert logo Online Work Week 12</div> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px 0 5px 100px;">Untitled</div> <div style="padding: 10px;">  <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>Finally, the week group leader will conclude with a summary of the most interesting ideas.</p>  <p style="font-size: x-small;">You deserved this break... Hav' a fun trip!</p> </div> </div> <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 2px; font-size: small;"> ? POSITION: 4/4 Untitled ◀ ▶ </div> </div>

Appendix J: Task Development Record Level 1 (CALL Collaborative Mode)

Lucinda's Class

Observation week #	Task	Student initiating post	Number of replies (thread)	Respondent (teacher/student)
3 (13-17 Aug)	Description of setting and characters	S1	0	
		S2	0	
		S3	0	
		S4	0	
		S5	0	
6 (10-14 Sept)	Write 1 st paragraph summarizing the plot of the play	S1	0	
		S2	0	
		S3	0	
		S4	0	
7 (17-21 Sept)	Write 1 st scene	S1 *	0	
		S2	0	
		S3	0	
		S4	0	
		S5 *	0	
11 (22-26 Oct)	Give feedback to other group's script (individual exercise)	S1	Not required	
		S2		
		S3		
		S4		
12 (29 Oct-2 Nov)	Write 2 nd scene	S1 *	0	
		S4	0	
		S5 *	0	
		S6	0	

*Same content

Rayuela's Class

Observation week #	Task	Student initiating post	Number of replies (thread)	Respondent (teacher/partner)
3 (13-17 Aug)	Description of setting and characters	S1	0	
		S2	4	Teacher & partners
		S3	1	Teacher
		S4	1	Teacher
		S5	1	Teacher
6 (10-14 Sept)	Write 1 st paragraph summarizing the plot of the play	No activity registered		
7 (17-21 Sept)	Write 1 st scene	S6	0	
		S7	5	Teacher & partners
		S2	11	Teacher & partners
		S1	6	
		S8	0	
		S3	0	
11 (22-26 Oct)	Give feedback to other group's script (personal exercise)	No activity registered		
12 (29 Oct-2 Nov)	Write 2 nd scene	S9*	1	Teacher
		S5*	1	Teacher

*Document upload

Appendix K: Summary of Teachers' Stories

Teacher	Central Story Themes	Factors Constraining/Facilitating Practice	Strategies Adopted
Lucinda	<i>“You understand when students do not participate”</i> : The challenges of using technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfriendly LMS design and interface* • Students’ lack of experience with virtual learning/ no digital natives • Lack of variety in terms of (CALL) tasks and tools • Sense of not being in charge/loss of autonomy • Difficulty in managing two different learning platforms* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize CALL mode in distinct ways (unrealized plan) • Use technology in the classroom in ways that aligned with personal beliefs* • Adopt only one learning platform*
	<i>“One can also learn individually”</i> : The challenge of collaborative online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited teacher presence* • Difficulty to participate in asynchronous learning environments and assume new roles* • Emphasis on collaborative tasks at the expense of individual practice* • Lack of pedagogical knowledge and role clarity • Increase in workload • Complex CALL design* • Limited linguistic knowledge of students* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness of the value and purpose of collaborative online learning • Evaluate teaching practice and role in each learning mode* • Provide feedback in FtF mode rather than on the platform
	<i>“What they care about the most is the grade”</i> : To assess or not to assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of relevance of the online tasks for the student • Formal language tests determine success on the course* • Limited assessment methods to assess online learning practices and products* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness of the importance of active participation* • Keep strict control of self-assessment process/negotiate marks with students*
Rayuela	<i>“The technical part also frustrates the student”</i> : The challenges of using technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical issues • Lack of time/ large class • Limited access to resources (for some students) • L2 used in learning platforms • Difficulty in managing two different learning platforms • Unfriendly LMS design and interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain instructions for CALL mode in class/ use L1* • Provide assistance outside the classroom • Create resources to facilitate online interaction (unrealized) • Design and assign fewer online tasks* • Adopt only one learning platform
	<i>“I try to supervise every single student”</i> : The challenge of collaborative online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited linguistic knowledge of students • Difficulty to participate in asynchronous learning environments and assume new roles • Poor time management (students) • Lack of social presence • Teacher control in the FtF mode • Limited experience teaching elementary courses • Lack of confidence in teaching knowledge and skills* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking an extra hour of class • Evaluate teaching practice and role in each learning mode • Be less directive and use models • Encourage students to interact more with instructions and learning content
	<i>“Students expect the teacher to provide all answers”</i> : The question of learner interest and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commitment from students • Little interest in the learning of English* • Over dependence on the teacher • Limited assessment methods to assess online learning practices and products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness of the importance of active participation • Keep strict control of self-assessment process/negotiate marks with students

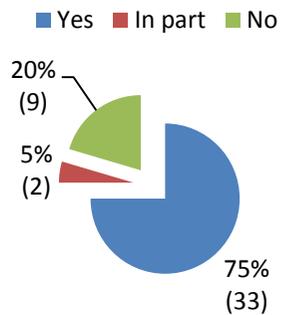
Table continued

Oriana	<i>“Students met my expectations”: A tailor-made blended course</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control over planning and integration of learning modes • Student engagement and positive attitude • Confidence in teaching knowledge and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt instruction and CALL design to teaching goals and students’ needs* • Implementation of new tasks, resources and tools*
	<i>“You end up deciding to use other resources”: The challenges of using of technology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student resistance to using technology • Complex CALL design • Limitations of freely available technological resources • Limitations of the institutional LMS (narrow range of options) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain instructions for CALL mode in class/ use L1 • Evaluate teaching practice and role in each learning mode • Give students options to use other tools • Explore and use new tools in class
	<i>“I know students do the math”: To assess or not to assess</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited assessment methods to assess online learning practices and products • Formal language tests determine success on the course • Emphasis on collaborative tasks at the expense of individual practice • Little interest in the learning of English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness of the importance of active participation • Keep strict control of self-assessment process/negotiate marks with students
Ziyad	<i>“For it to be blended, I think you should do something else”: Coming to terms with blended learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap between goals and structure of the course and beliefs • Limited options for students to choose resources and content • Writing viewed as a product and not as a process • Inappropriate uses of technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt instruction and CALL design to teaching goals and students’ needs • Implementation of new tasks, resources and tools • Relinquish control over the content of learning/resources
	<i>“I don’t want to be reprimanded for doing differently”: Diverting from established practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tensions with colleagues • Lack of confidence in teaching knowledge and skills • Lack of time to pursue pedagogical goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid openly voice strong objections • Use technology in the classroom in ways that aligned with personal beliefs • Design and assign fewer online tasks
	<i>“If the student does not find it useful, he won’t make an effort”: The question of learner interest and autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited teacher presence • Limited assessment methods to assess online learning practices and products • Unclear self-assessment practices • Students not interested in using technology for learning purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt evaluation criteria • Generate awareness of the importance of active participation

*Factors and strategies highlighted by more than one teacher

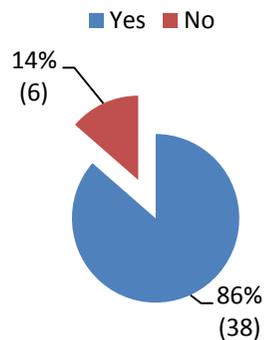
Appendix L: 2nd Questionnaire Results Summary (open-ended items)

Q. 19. Do you feel satisfied with the learning activities (independent and collaborative) you have carried out through e-Riverview?



Q. 19. Do you feel satisfied with the learning activities (independent and collaborative) you have carried out through e-Riverview? Why?			
<i>I feel satisfied because...</i>	<i>Frequency (N= 44)</i>	<i>However...</i>	<i>Frequency (N= 44)</i>
I can review and practice what I have studied in class.	23	Instructions/activities are confusing.	6
I can learn in a dynamic and fun way.	3	e-Riverview is difficult to manage.	4
I can continue learning outside the classroom.	2	Activities are too easy/boring.	2
I can learn new things.	2	There is too much work/little time.	2
I can become more independent.	2	There is little support.	1
		Collaborative tasks are not useful.	1

Q. 20. Have these activities helped you become a more autonomous learner?



Q. 20. Have these activities helped you become a more autonomous learner? Why?	
<i>I believe I am more autonomous because...</i>	<i>Frequency (N= 44)</i>
I have learned to solve doubts and figure things out independently.	15
My language performance has improved by working continuously outside the classroom.	8
I am less teacher-dependent.	6
I have learned to identify my weaknesses and strengths.	3
I have become more responsible.	3
I have learned to work with and learn from others.	2
I feel more motivated to learn.	1