



## **Social Learning Network as a Second Language Acquisition Tool for Adult English Language Learners**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Adult ELLs' perceived ease of use and usefulness of Edmodo and their intent to use the social learning network for language learning. The study also sought to examine how the Adult ELLs' perceptions of the ease of use and usefulness of Edmodo related to their language acquisition. The participants in this study consisted of 13 Hispanic adults who spoke Spanish as their primary language. Bivariate correlations were conducted to assess all relationships. The results revealed a correlation between many of the variables used to measure their perceived ease of use of Edmodo and their perceived usefulness of Edmodo and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning. A non-linear relationship was detected for their past experiences with SNSs and their intent to use Edmodo and actual usage. Results also revealed a need to evaluate Adult ELLs' willingness to continue using Edmodo based on three variables: the amount of pre-service and ongoing technology support that is received, the placement of the ELLs with those of similar ELP background and their perception of the time commitment for the course.*

**Keywords:** Composition, Bangladesh, literature, teaching, second language learning

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In 2010, approximately 37 million residents of the United States spoke Spanish as their primary home language; a growth of nearly 20 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau). The population of Hispanics living in the United States is expected to increase from 52 million to approximately 140 million by the year 2050 (2010, U.S. Census Bureau). These increases in immigrants have led to tremendous growths in the number of students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) in the U.S. These ELLs are often times placed into what Arias and Morillo-Campbell

(2008) referred to as ESL ghettos, explaining how the majority of ESL students are concentrated in 10% of the nation's schools.

The Latino population is the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in the state of Arkansas (the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). From 1990 to 2000, the state of Arkansas experienced a 243% growth in ELLs (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). In the State, the number of Latino students grew significantly between 2000 and 2010 while the non-Latino population decreased (Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). In a county of Arkansas State, six percent of residents are immigrants (Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). By 2010, nearly 50,000 Latino children with immigrant parents were enrolled in Arkansas school systems (Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). The Center on Education Policy (2010) published a report that revealed very large differences in the percentage of ELLs achieving proficiency on state assessments compared to their non-English speaking peers.

A lack of parental involvement may partly explain the underachievement of this minority group. Gil and Bardack (2010) debunked an important myth that educators tend to hold in regards to parents whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE): that the parents desire to be involved in their children's education. They point out that the Mexican culture does not perceive the role of the parent as educating children. Rather than focusing on what these linguistically and culturally diverse parents could do differently, schools should focus on attempts to increase their involvement by building on the cultural capital that they may bring to the school.

Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) identified a lack of English proficiency as one of the primary barriers to parental engagement for Adult ELs. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) encouraged schools to move away from unidirectional approaches to engaging these parents, calling them to focus more upon what the school could do to impact their success. ESL instruction is a valuable asset to use to empower parents to engage with the monolingual population. However, as Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) pointed out, logistics presents another barrier as Adult ELs are often times limited by their "labor-intensive work schedules" (p. 10).

New developments in the Internet, computer and cellular technologies provide new opportunities for reaching these Adult ELs. The Pew Hispanic Center (2010) revealed that nationally Hispanics are less likely to use the Internet and have access to the Internet at home. While only one-fourth of Spanish-dominant Latinos report having a home broadband or the Internet connection, 66% of English-dominant and 52% of bilingual Latinos report having a broadband connection in their home (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). In regards to demographics, the report claims that Hispanics are "equally likely to have broadband access whether they live in an urban, suburban or rural area" (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010, p. 15).

In terms of access to cell phone technology, roughly the same percentage of Hispanics report having a cell phone as blacks, reporting 76% and 79% respectively (*Pew Hispanic Center*, 2010). While the Spanish-dominant users do lag behind, nearly seven out of 10 report having a cell phone (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). In addition, the Pew Hispanic Center (2010) indicated that more Hispanics than Whites report a preference for using their cell phone for accessing the Internet.

As digital immigrants, Adult ELLs will need additional supports to apply technology to educational purposes for learning (MacLean & Elwood, 2009). However, if Adult ELs' experiences toward using technology for educational purposes could be better understood, then schools could empower these Adult ELLs to take on more meaningful roles using these

resources. For example, by learning to use online social learning networks (SLNs), a popular Web 2.0 tool, Adult ELLs may be able to provide Spanish instruction to teachers using a virtual platform as a form of professional development. The Adult ELs would also be able to create collaborative groups for other Adult ELLs to join to communicate in their native language about school issues (i.e. homework, school events, etc.) or to complete other school-related tasks (i.e. organize an international luncheon for the school, translate documents, serve as volunteer interpreters at parent teacher conferences (PTCs), etc.)

These types of changes are possible due to the emerging technologies that are available to the district and its parents at no cost. Given that schools are given approximately \$300 per LEP student in the State of Arkansas (Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, 2013), it is important to consider how schools with small yet noticeable populations of language minorities provide similar resources to these families whose primary home language is not English. Guo (2006) has critiqued schools stating that educators often times point out what is lacking in ESL families rather than learning to build upon the resources that they bring to the school. Given that many Hispanics report owning a cell phone, schools may use web-based tools that allow for mobile access to further connect with these linguistically diverse families. In Wang and Vásquez's (2013) review of empirical research on Web 2.0 technologies in second language (L2) learning, they found that only nine percent of the studies they identified investigated social networking tools as a Web 2.0 technology. They pointed out that Web 2.0 tools have been used by millions of people for interacting, collaborating, networking and entertaining (Wang & Vasquez, 2013). These tools may best be defined as tools which enable users to collaboratively create content in asynchronous and synchronous contexts (Vallance, Vallance & Matsui, 2009), quite suitable for language learning.

The SLN that was used in this study is Edmodo, which is accessible by mobile devices (e.g. cell phones, the Internet-ready tablets, etc.) and desktop or portable computers. The participants in the study did not report having any prior exposure to Edmodo. By exploring the use of Edmodo as an acquisition tool in an online instructional setting, this study expounded upon extant research by relating it to the resources and technologies that are readily available to Hispanics while taking into consideration their unique logistical needs (i.e. busy schedules).

Edmodo's interface is similar to popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Ning. Once a teacher registers for an account, he or she is then able to create groups (e.g. classes, professional learning communities (PLCs), etc.). Edmodo generates a unique code for each of the groups. When a student creates an account, he or she is required to provide a group code. The student will appear on the teacher's roster unless the group's instructor changes the settings to require incoming members to request membership before joining the group. For students who are already registered with Edmodo and have an active account, they may add any additional group to their profile at any time.

To facilitate instruction, the teacher may use notes, alerts or post assignments, quizzes or polls. Notes are utilized to send detailed written information or to share files or links. An alert can be used to share written information with the group but must be contained to 140 characters or less. Assignments are most similar to notes but contain additional space for specifying a due date that will appear on each student's schedule and by his or her name in the online gradebook. Quizzes may be assigned to groups using various question types such as multiple choice, true false, short answer, fill in the blank and matching. Polls are used to collect information from the group when the teacher does not need to identify each member's unique response.

In addition to these features, group participants are able to receive text updates, feedback from teachers and peers and access an online planner to organize their online learning. If the teacher desires, he or she may also create small groups to use the aforementioned tools with a preselected set of group members.

Transformative learning (TL) is a topic of discussion among Adult Education researchers. It refers to the shifts in thinking and subsequent changes in one's belief system as a result of what he or she has learned. King (2000) found that more ELLs reported experiencing transformational learning than revealed by non-ELL adults in previous research studies. An online social learning supports a social-constructivist pedagogical approach that will assist Adult ELLs in developing the skills, knowledge and abilities they need to be independent, life-long learners (Vallance et al., 2009).

## **Method**

This study used a mixed-method design to examine the relationship between acceptance constructs as proposed by the TAM and Adult ELLs' intention to use Edmodo. The relationship between the participants' frequency of use of Edmodo and their anxiety for using it as a language learning tool was also explored through qualitative and quantitative measures.

A total of 13 Adult ELLs participated in this study. Of the thirteen participants, 10 were female and 3 were male. All of the members of the study were Spanish dominant speakers. Likewise, all of the participants were recruited from Pulaski County and resided in Central Arkansas.

This study relied on primary data methodology by administering a survey in face-to-face meetings with participants prior to the study. The first method of recruitment for participants was carried out by acquiring permission from the ESL Coordinator (a large school district in Central Arkansas) and providing the ESL teachers at the district with flyers to be distributed to the parents of ELLs. A digital copy of the flyer was emailed to the coordinator, who forwarded the flyer to the ESL teachers.

As a second method of recruitment, flyers were provided to secondary language minority student (LMS) at a secondary charter school in Central Arkansas. The ninth and tenth grade LMSs were provided with flyers that they were able to distribute to monolingual community members for the purpose of acquiring community service hours. A total of 25 persons returned interest forms for participating in the course.

Two meetings were scheduled to introduce the Adult ELLs interested in participating in the study to the investigation, Edmodo and to obtain necessary paperwork (e.g. consent form, pre-assessment and Edmodo survey). A total of nine individuals attended the meetings. Afterwards, meetings were held with four additional Adult ELLs, yielding a total of 13 participants in the study. Two data collection instruments were used throughout this study: an Edmodo survey that was completed before beginning the course and an exit interview that was conducted with each willing participant at the termination of the course.

The Edmodo survey measure the following constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (acceptance constructs), past experiences and intention to use. Thongmak (2013) related the acceptance constructs and the intention to use construct to a previous study conducted by Venkatesh and Bala (2008). Venkatesh and Bala (2008) found perceived usefulness to be the strongest predictor of the intention to use albeit perceived ease of use was somewhat significant as well. Based on Thongmak's (2013) question to measure past behavior

on a ratio scale, a similar question was employed for this study. Brown (2011) noted that Likert-scale items have been analyzed in data analyzes in second language research as interval scales. In this study, the nine Likert-scale items were treated as ordinal variables as non-parametric statistical tests were used based on a low sample size.

The exit interviews were conducted using a cellular phone with a call recording application that could only be accessed using a numerical password. The open-ended questionnaire was used to elicit responses that help to explain how the ELLs in the course experienced anxiety. However, additional probing questions were also asked depending on how individuals responded to the initial questions. These interviews were conducted during a two-week period following the completion of the course.

The following constructs, or independent variables, were evaluated using qualitative data analysis methods: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (acceptance constructs), past experiences and intention to use. These constructs are identified in the survey that was distributed to the participants at the beginning of the study. Survey data were collected using paper-based, hard-copied surveys. Then, the data were directly inputted into SPSS for further statistical analyses. Scatter plots and descriptive statistics were thoroughly examined for each of the variables to ensure that they meet the assumption for linearity. Given that a small sample size was utilized, non-parametric statistical tests were used if measures of kurtosis and skewness were outside the limits for normality.

To better understand the ways in which second language learners experience anxiety while using the SLN, qualitative data were collected through the exit interviews. They were summarized into short descriptions based on responses to each of the five questions. These descriptions were coded using descriptive and interpretive codes. They were counted and examined for existing patterns and linked to descriptive statistics generated from Edmodo to show the frequency of writing posts by participants throughout their duration in the course.

Other types of data include personal notes that were recorded throughout the course by the researcher and online discourse. The interview transcripts were translated from English to Spanish by the researcher. Although the researcher has taken the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and scored at the Advanced-mid level for the Spanish language, a Native speaker was consulted to conduct an accuracy check of transcribed texts and to assist with the transcription for parts of the conversation that may have been misunderstood by the researcher. Afterwards, the same Native speaker reviewed the Spanish to English translations that were completed by the researcher and noted any necessary changes to the researcher in a face-to-face meeting. Once the data were transcribed and coded, the data were displayed in two partially ordered formats: a contextual chart and a poem. This poem was written in Spanish and shared with participants as a means for collecting feedback before drawing conclusions in a descriptive analysis.

## **Results**

The first research question investigated the relationship between Adult ELLs' perceived ease of use of Edmodo and their intent to use it for language learning. Four variables related to this construct were measured on an ordinal scale. However, given that the study only yielded 13 participants, an insufficient sample size for a logistical regression analysis, bi-variate correlations between the variables of interest in this construct and the intent to use were computed using the Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient (Spearman's Rho).

The sample sizes, means and standard deviations pertaining to the variables of interest for the perceived ease of use construct are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Ease of Use Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	± SD
PERE1	13	3.46	1.12
PERE2	13	3.446	1.13
PERE3	13	3.54	1.20
PERE4	13	3.69	1.38

An examination of the scatterplots suggested the presence of linearity for all of the variables. The presence of linearity permitted the use of correlation coefficients. With respect to the distribution of scores underlying these measures, the skewness and kurtosis statistics, along with an analysis of box plots, revealed some departure from normality for all four variables. Specifically, for these perceived ease of use variables, the standardized skewness coefficients were -1.06, -4.89, -0.45 and -1.14 respectively. The standardized kurtosis coefficients were -1.30, -1.14, -1.25 and -0.59 respectively. Given that a small sample was used and that the variables were measured on an ordinal scale, the Spearman's Rho was used.

The Spearman's Rho revealed a non-statistically significant relationship between Adult ELL's perception that Edmodo will be easy to use and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .50$ ). The Adult ELLs' perception that creating a profile in Edmodo is easy was found to have a significant relationship with their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .60, p < 0.05$ ). The effect size of this relationship was strong. This indicates that 35.64% of the variance in the intent to use was explained by their perception that creating a profile in Edmodo was easy.

A statistically significant relationship was also revealed for the relationship between Adult ELLs' perception that Edmodo makes it easy to interact with other language learners and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .77, p < 0.01$ ). The effect size of the relationship was strong. Accordingly, the Adult ELLs' perception that Edmodo makes it easy to interact with other language learners explains 58.5% of the variance in their intent to use Edmodo for language learning.

An examination of the last variable used to measure the perceived ease of use construct revealed that a significant relationship exists between Adult ELLs' perception that they would be able to do what they are asked to do in Edmodo and their intent to use it for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .59, p < 0.05$ ). This revealed that 35% of the variance in the Adult ELLs' intent to use Edmodo for language learning could be explained by their perception that they would be able to do what they were asked to do in Edmodo.

Table 2

*Correlations Among Perceived Ease of Use Variables*

	PERE1	PERE2	PERE3	PERE4	INTU
PERE1					
PERE2					
PERE3					
PERE4					
INTU					

PERE1	—				
PERE2	.63*	—			
PERE3	.64*	.79**	—		
PERE4	.73**	.55*	.55*	—	
INTU	.50	.60*	.77**	.59*	—

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

Since the results across most of the variables, excluding the Adult ELLs’ perception that Edmodo will be easy to use, were consistent, revealing similar effect sizes and percents of variance, there is support of a relationship between Adult ELLs’ perceived ease of use of Edmodo and their intent to use it.

The second research examined the relationship between Adult ELLs’ perceived usefulness of Edmodo and their intent to use it for language learning. Four variables were used to measure this construct. Similar to the previous research question, Spearman’s correlation coefficients were computed to understand the relationship between the variables of interest.

The sample sizes, means and standard deviations pertaining to the variables of interest for the perceived ease of use construct are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Usefulness Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	± SD
PERU1	13	4.00	1.47
PERU2	13	3.69	1.49
PERU3	13	4.00	1.47
PERU4	13	3.54	1.56

An examination of the scatterplots suggested the presence of linearity for all of the variables. The presence of linearity permitted the use of correlation coefficients. With respect to the distribution of scores underlying these measures, the skewness and kurtosis statistics, along with an analysis of box plots, revealed some departure from normality for all four variables. Specifically, for these perceived ease of use variables, the standardized skewness coefficients were -2.41, -1.58, -1.77 and -3.88 respectively. The standardized kurtosis coefficients were 0.90, -0.32, 0.90 and -1.01 respectively. Given that a small sample was used and that the variables were measured on an ordinal scale, the Spearman’s Rho was used.

The Adult ELLs’ perception that Edmodo will be useful for language learning was found to have a significant relationship with their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .71, p < 0.01$ ). The effect size of this relationship was strong. This indicates that 50.84% of the variance in the intent to use Edmodo for language learning was explained by their perception that Edmodo will be useful for language learning.

The Adult ELLs' perception that Edmodo would be useful for helping them to build relationships with other language learners was significantly related to their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .74, p < 0.05$ ). The effect size of this relationship was strong. These findings indicate that 54% of the variance in the intent to use Edmodo for language learning was explained by their perception that Edmodo would be useful for building relationships with other language users.

Another significant relationship was found between the Adult ELLs' perception that Edmodo would be useful for practicing writing and reading in English and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s[13] = .90, p < 0.01$ ). The effect size was very strong. Therefore, it may be stated that 82% of the variance in the intent to use Edmodo for language learning was explained by their perceptions that Edmodo would be useful for practicing writing and reading in English.

The last variable to be examined under this construct seeks to better understand how Adult ELLs perceive Edmodo in terms of helping them to gain technology skills. A statistically significant relationship was found between Adult ELLs' perceptions that Edmodo would increase their knowledge of technologies for language learning and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning ( $r_s [13] = .72, p < 0.05$ ). The effect size was strong. Therefore, it may be stated that 51.84% of the variance in the intent to use Edmodo for language learning was explained by their perceptions that Edmodo would be useful for practicing writing and reading in English.

Table 4

*Correlations Among Perceived Usefulness Variables*

	PERU1	PERU2	PERU3	PERU4	INTU
PERU1	—				
PERU2	.89**	—			
PERU3	.82**	.74**	—		
PERU4	.85**	.83*	.83**	—	
INTU	.71**	.74*	.90**	.72*	—

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Since the results across most of the variables were consistent, revealing similar effect sizes and percents of variance, there is support of a relationship between Adult ELLs' perceived usefulness of Edmodo and their intent to use it for language learning.

The last research question to be answered using quantitative data was to determine what the relationship is between Adult ELLs' intent to use Edmodo for language learning and their actual usage during an online course. This figure illustrates the relationship between the intent to use variable and the participant's frequency of use as measured by quantity of posts.

*Past Experiences with SNSs and Intent to Use Edmodo for Language Learning*



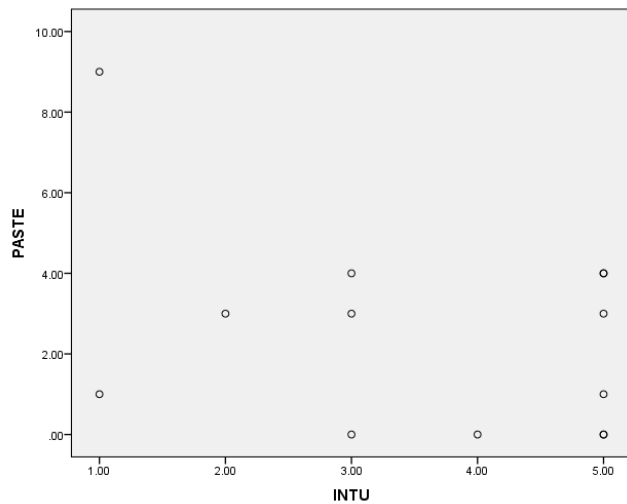


Figure 1. Scatterplot. This figure illustrates the relationship between the participants' past experiences with social networking sites and their intent to use Edmodo for language learning.

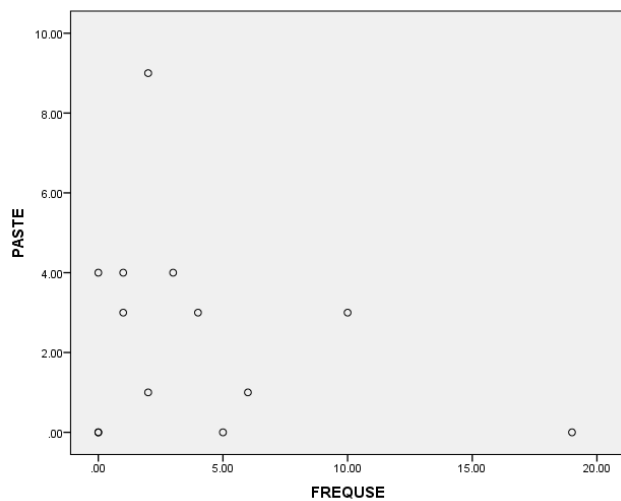


Figure 2. Scatterplot. This figure illustrates the relationship between the participants' past experiences with social networking sites and their frequency of use as measured by quantity of posts.

A lack of participation throughout the course did not support the use of the post-assessment as a language acquisition measure. Not only was the duration of the course too short to indicate great measures in their language growth, but given the frequency of posts submitted by the participants, the post-assessment would not have been a valid measurement tool for language acquisition.

A review of participant profiles showed that seven of the 13 participants used their cell phone to access their Edmodo accounts. This signifies that seven persons were relying on mobile technology to receive and respond to posts: Natalie, Beatriz, Paloma, Tatiana, Pedro, Stella and Isa. Raquel, Andrea, Carla, Blanca, Marcos and Silvia did not access Edmodo through a cell phone; they relied on computer-based access. The profiles also reveal the total quantity of posts that were written by each person. They are displayed in Figure 4 below.

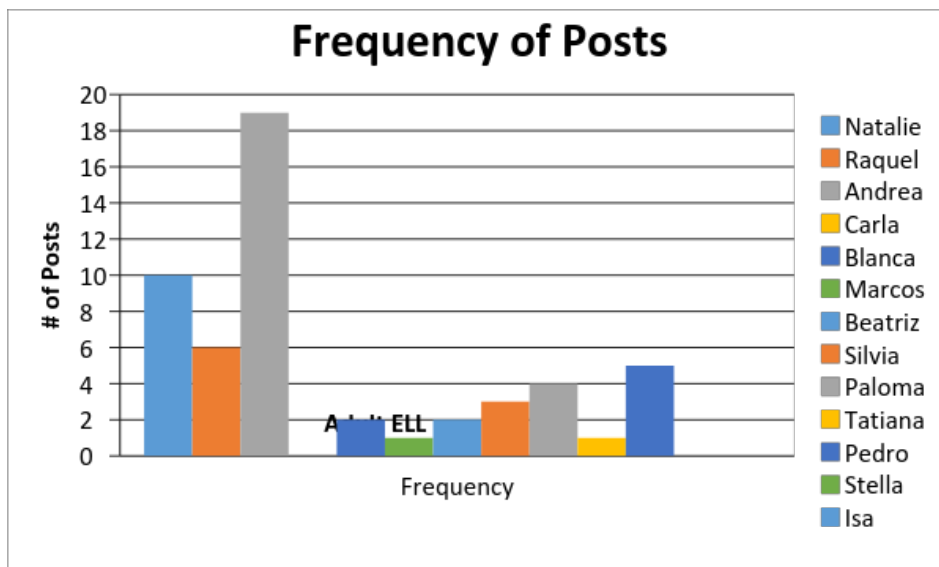


Figure 3. Frequency Chart. This figure illustrates the frequency of posts written by all of the study participants.

### Online Sessions

Week 1: Financial Goals. The students were provided with written instructions in their L1 (Spanish). To begin, they were required to make a list of three items that they wished to buy in the upcoming months. Then, they were to publish the list to the group using an Edmodo note. After reading at least three notes (lists) from other classmates, they were required to research the prices of two of three items the classmate wished to purchase, either online or in a brick-and-mortar store. Using the phrases below, the students were to respond to another classmate's note: I found (a thing/una cosa) that you were looking for at (name of the store/nombre de tienda). It costs (amount of money/cantidad de dinero). I found (second item/segunda cosa) that you were looking for at (name of the store/nombre de tienda). It costs (amount of money/cantidad de dinero). I suggest you buy (the thing/la cosa).

Each student was then responsible for writing three financial goals using the following cloze sentences:

1. I plan to buy a (the thing/la cosa) from (name of the store/nombre de tienda) in (amount of time/cantidad de tiempo).
2. I will spend (amount of money/cantidad de dinero) to buy the item.
3. I will (take out loan/save money/borrow) (amount of money/cantidad de dinero) in (amount of time/cantidad de tiempo).

For the first set of activities, Natalia, Andrea, Paloma, Raquel, Silvia and Pedro completed the activities with some success. Tatiana and Beatriz provided a posting but they were not consistent with the expectations for the activities.

Week 2: A budget. The students were asked to make a list of incomes and expenses they have and to share the lists with their classmates through a post. The students were told that the items listed did not have to be true reports of their finances. By reading another classmate's post, the

student would be able to review his or her list from the previous week and recommend an item that he or she could purchase with the net difference. For the second week of activities, Juan, Alex and Leticia were somewhat successful in completing them.

**Week 3: Expenses & Opening Bank Accounts.** Since the students were asked to create a budget during the previous week, they were asked to categorize them by three types: weekly, monthly and annual. They were asked to post a note that contained one weekly expense, two monthly expenses and three annual expenses. For this activity, Alex, Flor and Leticia had some success in completing the activity. They were asked to provide false information (for the following information) that may be collected when opening a bank account: a valid driver's license, a social security number, a proof of address, a date of birth and a telephone number or email address. None of the students provided the requested information.

**Week 4: Bank Services.** The activity for this week could be completed virtually or by visiting a live bank. The students were asked to obtain a pamphlet or pamphlets that describe the feature of basic bank accounts. They were asked to list the following: monthly fees, low-minimum balance fees, balance inquiries, ATM fees, insufficient fund fees, online banking fees, fees for printing checks and fees per check written. Pedro was the only student who completed the task.

**Week 5: Interest.** Using an amount of money, a %age and an amount of days, the students were asked to calculate the interest that they would earn on an account using a completed problem containing a formula provided through an uploaded image. Andrea was the only student to complete the task successfully.

**Week 6: Credit and Loan Applications.** The students had to complete two activities for this week: listen to phases spoken in English by using Google Translate and the Google Text-to-Speech application for the purpose of establishing credit and provide an English to Spanish translation of five words contained in a sample loan application uploaded to Edmodo. None of the students completed these activities.

**Week 7: Checks, Registers and Advantages and Disadvantages of Accounts.** The students were provided with a link to a digital check completion activity online that they were to use to practice filling out a check. Then, after reading an article in English about how to balance a checking account, they were asked to describe the process in a note in Spanish. Andrea attempted the exercise but with little success.

Exit interviews were conducted during a two-week period following the completion of the six-week online course. Qualitative data were collected from nine of the 13 participants in the course.

All of the participants in the study were selected for their willingness to participate. Of the nine participants interviewed, three were male and ten were female. While the original research question for the study was to describe in what ways second language learners experience anxiety while using the SLN for learning English, the respondents focused their responses on describing their personal experiences through events rather than emotions. Although additional probing was used to reveal specific anxieties that they were experiencing throughout the course, ultimately the following research questions emerged:

1. In what ways is using Edmodo for language learning a positive experience?
2. In what ways is using Edmodo for language learning a negative experience?

3. What empathic responses do the participants develop toward others throughout the course?
4. How does the language proficiency of the participants affect their self-efficacy for completing the tasks of the course?
5. What are the major barriers that an Adult ELL will face when learning English as a second language online?

The remainder of this chapter is organized into five sections based around the research questions that emerged during the study. The first section describes the ways in which some participants described learning English as a second language through Edmodo positively. Conversely, the second section describes the ways in which some participants described learning English as a second language through Edmodo negatively. The third section describes the concern that the participants showed toward the instructor and other learners. The fourth section describes how the ELP of the participants affected their being able to contribute to the class. The last section describes the barriers that were identified by the participants that prevent Adult ELLs from participating in online courses.

At the initial stages of the course, the participants were provided with a pre-assessment. This self-assessment was a self-reporting form that contained ten Likert-scale items related to the objectives and tasks for the course. This pre-assessment was scored, using a one to five scale for each item. The calculated score for each participant was then qualified using another five-point Likert scale, ranging from one to five, including 1 (major affect), 2 (moderate affect), 3 (neutral), 4 (minor affect) and 5 (no affect) respectively. These data were analyzed to determine what affect the participants ELP had on their participation in the course.

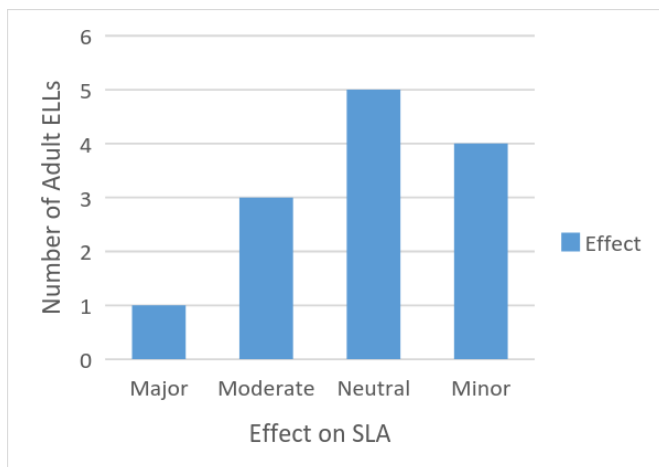


Figure 4. Simple Bar graph. This figure illustrates the frequencies of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels of the participants.

The lack of limited English proficiency emerged as a dominant theme during coding. Some of the subtopics that were discussed as part of this theme were a preference towards speaking tasks, a lack of L2 literacy, references to a lack of ELP, low self-efficacy for completing the tasks and a need for a more basic instruction.

Several participants directed attention to their ELP levels. Stella, whose pre-assessment showed her ELP to have a major effect on her ability to participate in the course, described her

experience as “Yo no supe cómo explicarme yo en la clase porque la verdad yo no sé nada.” “I did not know how to explain myself in the class because the truth is I don’t know anything.” For Carla, whose score fell within the moderate affect range, she felt that it was better that she didn’t participate since she did not understand. Describing the time restraints that she was dealing with while participating in the course, Andrea went on to say that even so, “porque a veces la verdad no entendía.” “at times...the truth is that I didn’t understand.” Her pre-assessment placed her at the neutral affect level. Paloma said, “...Creo que no es difícil sólo que yo no entendía, la verdad es que yo no entendía mucho ni sé nada.” “...I think that it’s not difficult...just that I didn’t understand it...the truth is that I didn’t understand much and I don’t know anything.” Her ELP was expected to have a moderate affect.

A lack of literacy in their L2 was also pointed out by some as a cause for their lack of ability to participate. Carla explained that she cannot write in English. Stella, expressing her desire to participate, added, “Miraba los mensajes pero no participe...no sé escribir nada...no sé leer.” “I looked at the messages but I didn’t participate...I don’t know how to write...how to read...nothing...” In an interview with Carla’s husband, Pedro, he also discussed his wife’s inability to read and write in English as a barrier to her participating in the course.

Some of the participants revealed that the course needed to accommodate those who needed a more basic level of English instruction. Carla agreed that the class would have been better if it had begun with instruction for basic words, such as numbers and colors. She felt that it would be better to learn to speak English first. Beatriz, who had spoken to other participants about their satisfaction with the course stated, “Lo que la gente ocupa es un inglés más básico.” “What the people worry most about is a basic English.” She went on to say that “we lack something that could be purely writing,” discussing the need for explicit grammar instruction in ESL classes.

While some pointed to ELP levels to explain their experiences, others discussed technological difficulties that affected their ability to participate. The subtopics that emerged through the coding analysis were general technology difficulties and a lack of experience with SLNs.

Raquel stated that technology made the class much more difficult to complete. Stella, who had already expressed difficulty she was experiencing due to her limited English proficiency, said, “Yo de computadoras no sé...pues la verdad no sé.” “I don’t know much about computers, well the truth is, I don’t know.” Andrea, who participated in the course regularly, expressed frustration over the technology, explaining that she knew what to do after reading the instructions but did not know how to complete the task using the technology. During one activity in which the participants were asked to respond to questions about a bank loan application, Andrea knew what the questions were asking but did not understand how to open an attachment using her cell phone. She later expressed a lack of understanding of how social networks function, stating “Lo que pasa en el mundo en Facebook...todo eso tal vez no lo entiendo todavía todo eso.” “What happens in the world of Facebook...all that maybe I still don’t understand.” Andrea was not alone, as Tatiana was not able to participate in the course because she could not download the Edmodo application to her cell phone.

Not all of the participants perceived Edmodo positively. The coding analysis revealed that some felt under-challenged and preferred a face-to-face class setup. At least one student noted a preference for self-directed learning using paper-based materials.

Stella provided one possible advantage of meeting face-to-face rather than online, discussing how students are able to write and review their work easier. Silvia supported this idea

when she said, “Para mí es un poco más fácil tener una clase cara a cara siente uno también más compromiso.” “For me it is a little easier to have a class face-to-face...one feels more committed.” Andrea expressed a lack of time for self-directed learning.

Silvia described her experience of self-directed learning, describing how she prefers to learn by reading books which allow her to pick up new words that she can practice using in sentences with her husband and child, who are both fluent English speakers. By using the words in a meaningful context, she feels that she is able to recall them easier.

Other members of the class expressed their satisfaction with the online ESL course. Several general, positive remarks will be included in the discussion that follows; however, two outliers that appeared in the data analysis were a self-indicated language growth and a proactive effort for seeking additional learning opportunities.

In Silvia’s exit interview, she immediately stated that she liked Edmodo because it is not difficult to use and because it is practical. Later, she stated that she did not feel anything needed to be changed to make the class more interesting. To her, “...que así como está la clase era interesante.” “It was interesting the way it was.” This type of class also increased peer-to-peer support, according to Silvia: “Me gustó porque la gente participaba y si tiene unas dudas ellos se ayudan y apoyan para que se puedan resolver.” “I liked it because the people participated and if you have a doubt they can help and support you so that they can be resolved.” This belief was shared with Andrea who said, that learning through Edmodo is “...una forma de estar así como ay voy a chequear...así como si estuviera platicando con alguien pero a la vez aprendiendo” “as if you were talking to someone but at the same time learning.” Similarly, she said, “Creo que el curso está perfecto...la verdad...no tendrían que cambiar nada.” “I think the course is perfect. Honestly, nothing would have to be changed.”

Focusing more on the functions of Edmodo, Beatriz also spoke positively of Edmodo, saying that it is fine because it allows them to write sentences. She countered this, however, by expressing concern for a delay in feedback through an online course.

The outliers were identified through comments made by Raquel and Tatiana during exit interviews. Raquel admitted that he had learned some things in the course. Tatiana assured me that she, along with many others whom she had identified as interested candidates for the course, looked forward to additional opportunities that I would be able to offer to them for learning English.

During these conversations, many of the participants were quick to remind the instructor that they were concerned about him, showing respect for his time and commitment to their learning. Some revealed concern for the other students as well. As part of their concern, a subtheme that emerged was their taking personal responsibility for their own learning in the course.

Stella offered an explanation for not coming forward with her difficulties, confessing that she did not know how she could tell the instructor that she would not be able to participate. To her, it was easier to let the class go on without saying anything about it. She even showed hesitation in a follow-up statement to comments about her preferring face-to-face learning, stating “si tiene la oportunidad de esa paciencia hacia nosotros” “if you have that kind of patience for us.”

In her discussion of logistical conflicts that Hispanics face, Beatriz continued, “...pero igual está más difícil que la gente encuentre el tiempo disponible tal día y para no hacer perder el tiempo a Ud. tampoco.” “...but equally it is as difficult that people find the time on a day to not waste your time either.” She later reflected how she thought “poor guy...we should go....we

look bad...because he is trying to help us...and we don't respond." "...y yo decía pues pobre...que no vayamos... quedamos mal, porque nos está tratando de ayudar y no correspondemos." Tatiana acknowledged me in a reference to logistical concerns as well, stating "but it's going to depend on what day works for you."

It seemed that there were also students who wanted me to know that they were taking personal responsibility for their personal language growth in the course. Silvia argued that face-to-face courses are more suitable for her, because "Es más uh más compromiso de ir a un lugar y tomar la clase y que me expliquen y eso así." "It's more of a commitment of going to a place and taking a class and that they explain to me this and that." Andrea took the conversation deeper, even discussing their intelligence levels, before concluding "no le echamos la ganas...la verdad...verdad no tuve el tiempo para dedicarlo a lo que estábamos haciendo" "we don't put forth the effort ...honestly...for real I did not have the time to dedicate to what we were doing."

A more narrative account was offered by Paloma, as she speculated that many Hispanics are careless and that it depends on each person as to whether or not he or she will be able to dedicate time to being on the computer. She explained that oftentimes parents will sit down to complete the language tasks, but are quickly interrupted by children or become distracted about doing something else in the house. She believes this differs in a traditional, face-to-face class: "Entonces si yo voy a una clase sé que voy a ir a la clase y ahí nadie me va a molestar porque voy a tener mi hora o dos horas de tiempo." "If I am going to a class I know that I am going to the class and there nobody is going to bother me and I am going to have my hour or two hours of time."

Apparent throughout many of the interviews was a logistical challenge that was faced by Adult ELLs due to their restricted schedules. Silvia affirmed this, saying "El horario es muy variado. Es que por el trabajo más de nada...no tuve tiempo...de poder participar mucho." "My schedule varies a lot. It's because of the job more than anything else. I didn't have time to be able to participate much." Although Andrea participated regularly in the online course, she was unable to come to the weekly face-to-face meetings because she had to work every Saturday and Sunday. Tatiana also thought Saturday was a challenging day to find the time to meet, pointing out that many parents are busy on that day. Beatriz agreed.

Beatriz did not focus her attention on the difficulty with Saturday but rather turned her attention to time available for these activities at home: "...ya en la tarde que yo podía usar el teléfono ya yo ocupo nada más dormir." "...the time in the afternoon when I could use the telephone, I don't think about anything else but getting to sleep." She related her personal experience to others, stating "...a lo más el trabajo no nos dan muchas veces la oportunidad el teléfono y luego cuando lo hacemos por el Internet." "Mostly our jobs don't give us many opportunities to use the telephone and then when we do it through the Internet...we don't see it as something important."

## Conclusions

The learning experiences of Adult ELLs could be improved if instructors were able to differentiate the task-based activities according to each individual's ELP, while providing them with hard-copied supplemental materials and a varied face-to-face (F2F) class schedule that supports a hybrid-class model for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The *National Center for ESL Literacy Education* identified "hybrid models that combine technology components with elements such as accompanying print materials, traditional classroom

instruction, and face-to-face meetings” as a best practice for addressing the digital divide (NCLE, 2002). While the Adult ELLs in the study had the intent to use Edmodo for language learning, a lack of language proficiency and a restricted schedule impeded their overall participation in the course. The perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness of Edmodo may affect their willingness to use Edmodo for language learning. However, their willingness will be subject to influence by three variables: their ELP level (ability to interact with content and learners of similar levels), their technology pre-training (and ongoing support with technology) and their perception of time commitment (perception of time needed to complete course successfully).

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