AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ACADEMIC LITERACIES IN ONLINE BOOK CLUBS

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

English for academic purposes (EAP) students require opportunities to practice and develop their English computer mediated communication to interact effectively in university contexts where English is the medium of instruction (EMI). In 2014 a literacy activity that used Facebook Groups to host student online book clubs was introduced into the curriculum of a 24 week EAP program at a major Canadian university. Informed by sociocultural theory this thesis presents insights gained through a multi-method qualitative study of the book clubs and their participants over the course of the program.

The Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) was employed to conduct a content analysis of five Facebook book club groups. The content analysis data were then analyzed with the data collected from multiple interviews with three case study students who participated in the five book clubs, a student questionnaire (n=58), and interviews with four book club instructors. The COI framework was used to record and interpret how instructor choices, actions and interventions affected social and cognitive presence of the students’ participation and practices in the book clubs. The interview and questionnaire data enabled me to elucidate the content analysis data and gain insights into
how instructor online behaviour mediated student perceptions about their learning and participation in the activity.

The thesis findings indicate that instructor book selection, scaffolding, modelling, and manner significantly mediated student perceptions regarding their engagement, participation, and interaction in the activity, specifically, whether students thought that they: (1) read extensively, and practiced essential academic reading strategies; (2) demonstrated high cognitive presence in their written comments; (3) and interacted and scaffolded each other’s learning. This thesis contributes to the L2 online learning literature in significant ways. The multi-method approach over 24 weeks provides an in-depth understanding of teaching and learning processes in an EAP online learning context that is currently absent in the literature. The study also draws attention to a need to better understand the influence and impact of politeness and pragmatics in interactive online activities such as book clubs, both between students, and between instructors and students.
Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

ABP  Academic Bridging Program
COI  Community of Inquiry
COP  Community of Practice
CMC  Computer mediated Communication
EAP  English for Academic Purposes
ER   Extensive Reading
ESL  English as Second Language
L2   Second Language
RQ   Research Question
SAQ  Short Answer Question
ZPD  Zone of Proximal Development

Book Club Book Abbreviations

E&P  *Eleanor and Park*
O&C  *Oryx and Crake*
TWM  *Tuesdays with Morrie*
NS   *The Namesake*
CID  *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*
Chapter 1: Introduction

The near ubiquitous use of internet devices such as smart phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers in modern societies has resulted in communication being increasingly mediated through digital technologies. Consequently, understanding how computer mediated communication (CMC) affects human communication and literacy practices is crucial to understanding how languages can be learned online. Since 2005, social media such as blogs, Facebook Groups, and other interactive online spaces such as wikis have been identified as suitable platforms to manage and host language learning activities. Indeed, as an English language instructor, I have incorporated blogging and Facebook activities into English for academic purposes (EAP) curricula and found them beneficial for peer learning, sharing and discussing course related materials, as well as practicing English grammar and composition skills and encouraging learner autonomy (Harwood, 2010; Harwood & Blackstone, 2012).

In 2012, I began my graduate studies at the University of Toronto and experienced online learning from a student perspective. I realized that participating in online academic discussions requires students to communicate with peers and instructors in writing, and that this type of interactive writing is complex. As a native speaker of English and an experienced EAP instructor, I remember I had to think very carefully about what to write and why to communicate effectively. For instance, I had to appropriately acknowledge other students’ comments, and consider how I would phrase disagreement while keeping my written communication formal, open, and inclusive.

After a few weeks observing my peers’ and instructor’s online interactions, I began to understand that many aspects of online discussion student writing are formulaic.
In order to foster reciprocity and community online many students use discourse strategies that aim to seek common ground, or at least consensus building. For example, posts typically begin with introductory statements of agreement in reply to previous student posts (Clarke, 2009).

Modern university students are increasingly expected to participate in online discussions as part of their course work. Therefore, to communicate effectively in English medium of instruction (EMI) university contexts, English as a second language (L2) students studying in EAP courses require opportunities to develop and practice their academic English CMC skills. Students require opportunities to practice constructing answers to questions and commenting on other students’ posts, using appropriate discussion conventions and academic register. They also require opportunities to acknowledge (cite) information sources and one another, and hone their understanding of how to express themselves with their professors and classmates. This thesis investigates how teaching and learning was mediated in an online literacy activity introduced into an EAP context for the above-mentioned reasons.

1.1 The Context

The study was conducted in an Academic Bridging Program (ABP) at a large urban Canadian University. The ABP runs for 24 weeks between September and April and combines instruction in EAP with a credit bearing course for students who have been accepted to the university on the condition that they complete the program. The program is available to international students whose English fluency scores do not meet the university’s direct entrance requirements. The curriculum is specifically designed to
equip students with the necessary academic skills to prepare them for undergraduate study in English, and focuses on critical thinking as well as language and composition skills. This study uses data collected from instructors and students in the Critical Reading and Writing course in which students receive six hours of classroom-based academic reading and writing instruction each week.

1.2 Task Overview - Facebook Book Club

In 2013, a coursework activity that uses Facebook Groups to host student online book clubs was introduced into the ABP Critical Reading and Writing course curriculum. This entailed the Critical Reading and Writing course instructors identifying a book club book for the term, and students from different Critical Reading and Writing classes across the ABP cohort signing-up to read the book they were most interested in reading. Although the online book club activity compliments much of the classroom-based instruction it is conducted solely online. This is because the instructor that hosts each online book club is not necessarily the classroom instructor of the students in his or her book club. The book clubs are populated with students from different Critical Reading and Writing classes in the ABP based on their choice of book.

The initial purpose of the book clubs was to encourage extensive reading (ER) outside the classroom and beyond the usual academic texts. Research into the effects of ER on L2 learners has demonstrated significant benefits in student reading and writing ability, most notably speed and comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and affective gains such as increased student motivation to read, and increased enjoyment of reading (Hafiz & Tudor 1989; Cho & Krashen, 1994; Waring, 2009; Wang & Guthrie, 2004;
Within academia the reading to write process is especially important as reading for academic courses demands written responses in the form of note taking, paraphrasing, analyzing and synthesizing information from texts (Grabe, 2009).

Each book club runs for a term (12 weeks) and students participate in one book club in the fall term and one in the winter term. There are seven writing instructors and each instructor facilitates two book clubs, one in the fall term and one in the winter term. Each instructor usually asks students to read one to three chapters of a book each week, and posts questions related to the chapters for students to comment on and discuss in a Facebook Group page used for the book club. This thesis focuses on the online book clubs and asks the following questions.

1.3 Research Questions (RQ)

1. How is teaching and learning mediated in an online literacy activity?

2. How do instructors and students perceive and describe their instructional experiences in the online literacy activity?

1.4 Theoretical Orientations of the Researcher

This study is informed by socio-cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. I use the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, 2000) to consider how the critical elements of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence combine to support meaningful collaborative-constructivist learning experiences. The COI framework provides an organizational structure that allows me to analyze how the pedagogic decisions, choices, actions, and interventions of the ABP instructors affected the social and cognitive presence of the students.
Sociocultural theory (SCT) is employed to inform the analysis of the mediated nature of online learning and provides a nuanced and differentiated cultural dimension to the analysis of the COI. “A sociocultural perspective views education as taking place through dialogue, with the interactions between students and teachers reflecting the historical development, cultural values and social practices of the societies and communities in which educational institutions exist” (Open.edu., 2015). English as a second language (ESL) students studying in EMI university contexts come from different cultures and often have different perceptions toward teaching and learning. For instance, Baker and Clarke (2010) note, “previous educational experiences of Asian students in particular may have included little or no experience in being assessed for participating in group situations” (p. 258). The fact that approximately 90% of ABP students are from mainland China makes this point particularly salient; it also makes an enhanced cultural aspect to the analysis of international student perceptions of online learning at the Canadian University essential to the thesis. Therefore, contextual, social, and cultural variables need to be considered to interpret and explain online participation and interaction between students, and instructors and students.

In Chapter 2, the literature for the COI framework, sociocultural theory and Facebook groups in higher education and politeness theory is reviewed. According to Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), a sociocultural perspective requires a prolonged observation of human activity. They implore researchers to conduct in-depth case studies that document the activities of learners in linguistic communities of practice. Politeness theory uses discourse analysis to interpret interpersonal power dynamics within face-to-face communication. Over the last twenty years it has become a strand of CMC research,
and insights in how politeness works in CMC often provide an understanding of how we interact and consequently how meaning is constructed in CMC contexts. Therefore, I have selected an emergent multi-method approach that combines case study and content and discourse analysis for the organization and implementation of the study. My objective is to determine how teaching and learning is mediated in the book clubs by investigating the relationships between learners’ participation and perceptions of their online learning experience, and their instructors’ pedagogic decision making and teaching presence.

![Map of the research design.](image)

Figure 1.1 Map of the research design.

To increase this study’s validity and reliability, the multi-method qualitative research design uses a variety of qualitative measures (see Figure 1.1).

It should be noted that while reading is central to the book club activity, it is not the focus of the thesis. In order to answer the research questions, instructor and student behaviours, practices, and perceptions are analysed. Aspects of academic literacy are
identified through the COI analysis and discussed with the interview and document data through a sociocultural theoretical lens.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This thesis will contribute to the knowledge of the online literacy learning literature in a number of significant ways. After completing an extensive search with the assistance of university librarians, I found there to be few COI studies that analysed university students in academic bridging course contexts. Furthermore, COI studies in L2 contexts have focused predominantly on social presence, for example, reporting its effects on building a sense of community (Arnold & Ducate, 2006); examining how instructors need to establish social presence before shifting to academic subjects and fostering cognitive presence (Goda & Yamada, 2012); and the effects of different modes of communication on social presence (Ko, 2012; Lomicka & Lord, 2007; Yamada & Akahori, 2007).

In this study I not only consider all three COI presences and analyze how teaching presence affects social and cognitive presence, I employ a sociocultural analytic lens to do it. The sociocultural data collected from student case study interviews, instructor interviews, and a student questionnaire will enable me to ascertain the impact of a myriad of sociocultural factors that underlie the COI content analysis data. It is the synthesis of this data that makes this study unique. Understanding, for instance, how a student’s L2 learning history may impact how she reacts to an instructor’s attempts to mediate her online learning will add a layer of analysis lacking in the COI research literature. Furthermore, it will increase our awareness of the situated sociocultural factors that impact the nature and course of learning in a particular COI context. In short, this
multi-method study will enable thick descriptions and in-depth understanding that will inform pedagogical decision making for EAP educators in online EAP learning contexts.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework used to inform this study and a review of the literature relevant to student participation and learning in online higher education contexts. Examples of research from a range of disciplines including linguistics, CMC, and second language acquisition are presented. While the context of this study was related to second-language learning, namely an EAP course, my focus was on the sociocultural context and tracing the relationships among the pedagogical decision-making in the Facebook context and how that influenced students’ experience of English writing and reading. Thus I have drawn largely on the online learning literature and sociocultural theory rather than on the second language learning literature.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Community of Inquiry

Garrison et al. (2000) developed the COI framework to understand the teaching and learning issues within the computer mediated discussions of their online graduate program. Informed by social constructivist principles the framework is grounded in John Dewey’s (1933) ideas about practical inquiry and was designed to consider, understand, and explain the elements that support the development of online learning communities that emphasis critical thinking. The COI stipulates educational experience occurs within a community through the interaction of three key elements: social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. Amongst others, Biggs’ (1987) work on deep and surface approaches to learning and Henri’s (1992) model for the analysis of CMC also
contributed to the conceptualization of the COI framework, particularly cognitive presence. Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationships of these three forms of online presence (Garrison et al. 2000).

![Diagram of Community of Inquiry](image)

(Garrison et al. 2000)

**Figure 2.1** The relationships of the three forms of online presence.

### 2.1.1 Teaching presence

Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) state that teaching presence is “the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes”
A growing body of research has shown that teaching presence strongly influences learners’ perceptions of learning, satisfaction, and sense of community in online courses. Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme (2007) report that instructional methods influenced the quality of students’ online discussion. Debate activities that “provoke the students to explicitly confront others’ opinions” (p. 269) positively influenced cognitive presence, for example. Swan (2003) found that students’ perceived presence of their instructors is possibly more decisive in influencing student satisfaction than students’ perceived presence of their peers. Furthermore, instructors that spend time explaining the purpose and use of a learning tool/platform can enable students to achieve higher levels of task achievement. However, Torras and Mayordomo (2011) advise that “the tool must be presented and explained to the students as a means of communication” (p. 2290), and not become a dominant part of the learning process.

In their review of COI research, Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) outline key requirements of teaching presence that positively influence learning. They conclude that instructional design and organization needs to be explicit in online settings due to the absence of face-to-face social cues found in traditional classrooms. Online instructors should facilitate discourse by reviewing and commenting on student posts and comments. Instructors need to make observations and ask questions to keep discussions moving in a meaningful direction. They also need to ensure, to the best of their ability, that all students are active in discussions. Research indicates instructors still need to be experts in the subjects they teach and provide direct instruction in order to evaluate student comments for comprehension, keep discussions focussed, and scaffold student learning (Baker, 2004; Richardson & Swan, 2003). Furthermore, in a COI instructors need to
facilitate discourse and reflection by presenting course content in a variety of formats incorporating reflective learning tasks (Campos, Laferriere, & Lapoint, 2005).

**2.1.2 Social presence**

Garrison (2009) defines social presence as “the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities” (p. 352). Social presence has been shown to be an important element that influences learner perceptions of community online (Aragon, 2003; Rovai, 2002), to be a key element for understanding individual learner’s experiences in online contexts (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Jung, Choi, Lim, & Leem, 2002), and have a positive influence on students’ perception of their learning and satisfaction in an online environment (Oztok & Brett, 2011). Furthermore, research conducted with graduate students suggests that social presence plays an important role in developing group cohesion, interaction, and effectiveness online and that there is a significant link between social presence and positive learning outcomes (Arbaugh, 2005; Williams, Duray, & Ready, 2006).

**2.1.3 Cognitive presence**

This element of the COI refers to “the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001, p. 11). Cognitive presence has four phases:

1. A triggering event: a question or issue is selected for inquiry.
2. Exploration: the question/issue is explored by learners through discourse and critical reflection.

3. Integration: learners develop their understanding and construct meaning based on the exploration phase.

4. Resolution: the application of the learners recently constructed knowledge to education or workplace contexts.

The integration phase (see Figure 2.2) usually requires a heightened and critical teaching presence to evaluate learner ideas and guide students toward higher level thinking. In practice inquiry is often more variable and complex than the four phases described, and this should be considered when evaluating cognitive presence (Garrison & Anderson, 2003).

(Garrison et al, 2001)

Figure 2.2 An illustration of the phases of inquiry.
Research has found that a key concern regarding cognitive presence is that learners often do not progress beyond the exploration phase (Garrison et al. 2001; Meyer, 2003; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005). It is therefore necessary for instructors to provide explicit directives to learners at the exploration phase that guide them toward the resolution phase in order to complete the four phases of inquiry (Celentin, 2007).

2.1.4 The interrelationships between and among the presences

In their review of the COI research, Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) point to a need for more research into the relationships between the three COI presences. A few studies have focused on this issue, for instance, Akyol and Garrison (2008) found students believed that they learned more when they perceived sufficient levels of teaching presence and cognitive presence. They also found that social presence had no impact on perceived learning, but did have an impact on students’ perceived satisfaction of the course. Shea, Hayes, Vickers, Gozza-Cohen, Uzuner, et al. (2010) reported that, when teaching presence and social presence are high, they significantly and positively impact social presence in the latter stages of a course. Ke (2010) found that teaching presence plays a significant role in fostering social presence and cognitive presence, and learners that experience “a stronger sense of community tend to have a higher level of learning satisfaction” (p. 819).

Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010) reported significant effects of teaching presence and social presence on cognitive presence and argue that “teaching presence is essential in establishing a sense of social presence by engendering an atmosphere of trust, open communication and group cohesion. This sets the stage for
purposeful and collaborative learning processes” (p. 35). These uneven findings are explained by Kozan and Richardson (2014) who suggest that “the interdependence of the presences may change depending on the learner profile and learning context,” (p.72), and “that the interrelations may change and fluctuate over time in a given online learning environment.” The COI research indicates that the interrelationships between the three presences in COIs are contextually bound. Therefore, future research should address contextual factors to better understand how they affect the interrelations of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence.

In this study, the COI framework is used, with a number of other data sources, as an analytic tool because it is specifically designed to analyze online instructional interactions and is one of the most widely used framework for understanding teaching and learning in asynchronous computer mediated communication analysis.

2.2 COI and L2 Learning

The COI framework has begun to be used to research L2 online learning contexts and a small number of studies have been published. Arnold and Ducate (2006) examined the transcripts of the asynchronous discussions of 23 foreign language methodology students from Germany, France, Russia, Portugal, and Spain studying in two classes at two different universities in North America. The researchers conducted a content analysis of student comments and posts based on the COI categories and indicators for social presence and cognitive presence from the online discussions (see Table 2.1).

Their analysis revealed that there was a higher level of social activity than cognitive activity. The students also completed a Likert type survey with several open-ended questions related to their perceptions of their online learning experience. The
survey results showed 57% of students experienced a sense of community, and 65% preferred the discussions with students from a different university; however, some students felt the level of closeness and community more intensely than others. The majority of students reported that they enjoyed the informal nature of the discussions and they bonded with each other as they discussed their different university program expectations and lesson activities and ideas. Arnold and Ducate (2006) report the online discussions were successful because most students engaged in in-depth processing in an online environment with a sense of community. Many believed the discussions were of benefit to their training and over half said they would happily repeat the learning process.

**Table 2.1**

**COI Elements, Categories, and Indicators**

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<th>Elements</th>
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<td>Social Presence</td>
<td>Open Communication</td>
<td>Risk-free expression</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Group Cohesion</td>
<td>Encourage collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Affective Expression</td>
<td>Emoticons</td>
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<td>Cognitive Presence</td>
<td>Triggering event</td>
<td>Sense of puzzlement</td>
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<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
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<td>Integration</td>
<td>Connecting Ideas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Apply new Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Presence</td>
<td>Design and Organization</td>
<td>Setting curriculum &amp; methods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Facilitating Discourse</td>
<td>Sharing personal meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Instruction</td>
<td>Focusing discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007, p.158)

Lomicka and Lord (2007) used the COI framework to analyze changes in social presence in 14 trainee foreign language teachers from Algeria, America, France, Italy, Puerto Rico, Romania, and Spain, in two classes at two different universities in the
south-eastern United States. The students were divided into three groups and assigned an asynchronous reflective journaling activity. In group one, (n=4) students word processed weekly journal entries and sent them to their professor. In group 2 (n=4), each student was paired with another student and they emailed each other their journal entries. In group three (n=6), the students carried out the same activity using an electronic discussion board. The researchers analyzed the CMC using the affective, interactive, and cohesive indicators (described in Table 2.1). They found that the most frequent indicators were “expressing feeling, vulnerability, self-constructive comments, complements, encouragement, asking questions, advice/opinion, agreement, salutations, and the use of names” (Lomicka & Lord, 2007, p. 223).

Interestingly, group two was slightly more interactive than group three; however, the nature of their interaction was different. They were more likely to compliment, encourage and agree with one another, while the discussion board group were more focussed on asking questions or giving opinions, and advice. Regarding the quantity of written output, group one produced the least words on average while the paired students using email produced the most, almost doubling the output of group one. Group two used more inclusive pronouns and group three more vocatives, as they needed to reference who they were addressing in the discussion. In short, the study showed that social presence varied across the three different journaling groups.

Yamada and Akahori (2007) and Yamada (2009) used questionnaires and video recordings to examine possible designs in the usage of synchronous computer mediated communication for communicative language learning in learner centred communication. They studied 40 L2 learners in four groups: a video conferencing group, an audio
conferencing group, a text-chat with image group, and a text only group. The results indicated that the interlocutor’s image plays a key role in social presence and affects some aspects of productive performance. They also found that the use of voice had a significant influence on the students’ perceptions of language learning as well as their productive performance and awareness of learning objectives. Text based CMC was shown to increase learners’ awareness of grammatical and lexical accuracy. The authors note that it is essential for instructors to understand the affordances of the different features of the online environment and consider these features alongside L2 learners’ proficiency in their pedagogical decision making.

Ko’s (2012) case study investigated beginner L2 students in a Taiwanese university. Participant interview transcriptions, learning journals, and the instructor’s observation journal were used to understand social presence in three different language learning modes: video/audio, audio and face-to-face. Three groups conducted various tasks during an academic semester. The results of the study suggest that the differences in the environments are reflected in the learners’ perception of social presence. Social presence was reported as higher in the CMC with webcam and headset than the CMC with headset only. Unsurprisingly, face-to-face communication had the highest perceived immediacy due to the availability of nonverbal cues.

Goda and Yamada (2012) used the COI framework to investigate Japanese undergraduates’ computer-supported collaborative learning of English as a foreign language. The authors analyzed the discussion comments and a student questionnaire, and recommend that teaching and cognitive presence need to be evaluated in both the design and implementation of computer-supported collaborative learning activities, in
order to understand how teaching presence can affect social presence, and increase student participation. They also advise that instructors should facilitate social presence prior to shifting the “focus to academic topics to increase the quality of student interactions during the learning activities” (Goda & Yamada, 2012, p.311).

The pattern that emerges from the COI second language research to date is a focus on social presence. Research has found social presence to be important for community building, a necessary presence to be established prior to shifting to more cognitively demanding work, and a factor that alters depending on the mode of online communication.

Although there is no specific reference to culture in the COI framework, it compliments sociocultural theory as it works on the principle that communication is mediated, situated, and dependent on the interaction and the affordances of the context. The framework enables cultural factors to be discussed within its core elements. For example, L2 student perceptions of group cohesion and how instructors facilitate discourse in L2 contexts are integral to understanding the online context the framework is designed for. Online learning designers and instructors need to be aware of the impact of L2 learners’ cultural differences when selecting course content, setting the climate, and facilitating discourse because each of these aspects of course design and organization affect the communication, participation, and educational experience of L2 learners.

2.3 Sociocultural Theory

When applied to language learning, sociocultural theory has been used to understand the relationship between social contexts and cognition. Sociocultural
approaches to literacy have been developed from Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) work, which stipulates that culture is transmitted through the internalization of social signs and that learning has a fundamentally social nature which is mediated by social activity. Vygotsky argues that all higher mental functions have their source in the social domain. Learning occurs through interaction with others or with human artefacts initially on the social plane (interpsychological functioning). Thus, initially behaviour (including speaking and writing) is controlled by others or artefacts (e.g. text books) in the individual’s environment.

However, over time this control (regulation) is internalized to constitute higher mental processes (intrapsychological functioning). The process of moving “inwards” is mediated by artefacts, language being the most important one. In L2 learning terms this process might be represented by a Chinese student whose initial use of English articles is entirely controlled by his/her teacher and text-book rules; that is, the learner would be reliant on other people or human artefacts from the social (interpsychological) plane to regulate her/his use of definite and indefinite articles. Over time, the language used by others or the text book is internalized, mediated by the language of others and the textbook, such that it functions to regulate the learner’s higher mental processes (intrapsychological functioning). In so doing, the individual becomes self-regulating.

Lantolf and Thorne (2006) point out that this internalization process is determined by the past experiences of the learner and that these experiences give rise to particular learning outcomes. This, in turn, implies that a learner’s experience of the present strongly influences their future developmental trajectory. In short, the nature of a person’s past interaction shapes the development of their present interaction, and their
present interaction shapes their future development. Meskill and Anthony (2010, p.12) argue that from an instructional perspective,

these mediation and internalization (what Vygotsky termed *intermentation*) processes that lead to development of the new language are orchestrated by talented instructors who simultaneously assess where a learner’s development lies on the target trajectory and tailors instructional strategies in such a way to move the learner along their individual developmental pathway (p. 12).

In modern language education contexts instructors support their learners to complete tasks and activities using authentic language with peers through guided participation.

### 2.4 Sociocultural Theory and CMC

Wertsch (1991) suggests that the sociocultural theoretical perspective can be best understood through three key themes that run throughout Vygotsky’s work: social learning, mediation and genetic analysis. This section reviews these aspects of sociocultural theory and discusses how they are used to understand language use in CMC.

#### 2.4.1 Social learning and mediation

Vygotsky (1978) argues that development primarily occurs through a form of apprenticeship learning in what he refers to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), that is, the distance between what the learner could achieve alone and what they could achieve when assisted by others. While engaged in learning, the learner interacts with teachers or more skilful peers enabling them to progress through providing support within their ZPD. This support process is often referred to as scaffolding, an idea
developed separately from Vygotsky’s ZPD by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), who argue:

Scaffolding consists essentially of the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence. The task thus proceeds to a successful conclusion. We assume, however, that the process can potentially achieve much more for the learner than an assisted completion of the task. It may result, eventually, in development of task competence by the learner at a pace that would far outstrip his unassisted efforts (p. 90).

A typical example of this in modern education would be an online discussion component of a course. Indeed, in a recent study of L2 learners’ discourse socialization in academic online communities Yim (2011) concludes, “Vygotsky’s ZPD is of singular importance to the effective use of CMC” (p. 23). Yim reports that the support and modelling provided by one of the instructors in his case study clearly provided scaffolding that enabled learners to construct appropriate discourse conventions in an online forum. The nature of this scaffolding is explained further in this chapter under the heading ‘Bakhtin’s Dialogism and CMC’.

2.4.2 Extensive reading, book clubs, and the ZPD

Extensive reading programs are one of the most effective ways to promote not only reading speed and comprehension but also enjoyment, which positively correlates with a learner’s motivation to read and the quantity of books they will read (Nuttall, 1982). In their synthesis of ER research, Day and Bamford (1998) found that the benefits of ER include gains in all language skills, particularly reading and writing proficiency, gains in vocabulary and gains in positive affect. Day and Bamford (2002) outline ten principles for teaching extensive reading. These include a need to make a variety of
reading material available and providing opportunities for students to choose what they want to read. Day and Bamford also note that teachers need to learn to be quiet and not interfere with their students reading development by intervening too much.

Book clubs are learning communities that can encourage extensive reading. They enable L2 learners to interact with peers and instructors and maximize ZPD opportunities of learners. This occurs through students observing or collaborating with more knowledgeable others when discussing aspects and issues within literary texts. Jackson (2005) suggests that book clubs provide a space for learners to share thoughts, feelings, and opinions and in the process begin to develop an awareness of similarities among their peers and instructors, despite their different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, writing in a book club is an activity that supports both reading and discussion and is an effective way to encourage students to reflect on their reading and learning (McMahon & Raphael, 1997).

2.4.3 Situated learning and CMC

Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the ideas in Vygotsky’s ZPD while studying apprenticeship as a learning model, and they coined the term “community of practice” (COP) to describe learning through practice and participation, which they also referred to as situated learning. In a COP, people who share a common interest, profession or goal are bound by what they do together, whether that is a business meeting or discussing how to approach a college assignment. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group (or community) that the members learn from one another, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally.
The COP perspective offered a new framework for looking at L2 and literacy learning. Toohey (1996) suggested that, in a COP, “the L2 learner is seen not as internalizing the second language, but rather as a newcomer beginning to participate in the practices of a particular community” (p. 553). Within this framework, language learning is considered a process of increasing participation in the performance of community practices. It is viewed not simply as a matter of acquisition but of participating in the social world.

Subsequently, both COPs and learning are enhanced when community members have the opportunity to play various roles, engaging other members in practice based activities within related practice focused communities. In a language learning computer mediated COP, these roles might include information seeker, socializer, motivator, lexis expert, technology expert, and group facilitator. In interaction, be it one to one, in a small group or all together, the role each plays depends on the activity, the personalities involved, and the sociocultural relations within the community’s context.

Participation is considered critical to learning in COPs because it is only through participation that identity and practices can develop. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that initially people join a COP at the periphery. Participation at this stage may be less important to the community than that of other more central experienced members. Nevertheless, as members become more competent through the process of legitimate peripheral participation, they become more involved in the main processes of the community and move to full participation. Wenger (1998) claims that there may be several forms of participation, including ‘marginal’, and that not everyone can achieve or even aspire to full participation.
Educators draw on these principles in situated learning when designing collaborative CMC learning activities and use the affordances of wikis, discussion boards, and social media to support collaborative writing and learning. A major affordance of text-based CMC is that much of it is asynchronous. Although asynchronous CMC does not have the immediacy of face-to-face communication, it does provide other affordances useful for language learning as it enables thoughts, ideas, and subjects to be read and composed at different times. Warschauer (1997) argues that this computer based context differs greatly from previous human interactive behaviour where, aside from letter writing, synchronous face-to-face speech was the main method of interaction.

With time constraints loosened, CMC based language and literacy learning can be less pressured, especially for L2 learners. This is because CMC texts and interactions can be analyzed and reflected upon; thoughts can be composed and edited, and guidance can be sought from other people or knowledge artefacts such as books and websites. These affordances of asynchronous CMC can enhance critical thinking, reading, and writing. Indeed, research on CMC based COPs shows they can facilitate community relations, supporting student writing development as well as the socialization of learners into various academic discourse communities (see; Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2012; Blackstone & Wilkinson, 2011; Lundin, 2008; Parker & Chao, 2007; Yim, 2011). Furthermore, activities that involve the use of interactive CMC platforms, such as blogging, have proven attractive to language and communication skills educators and learners alike because they: encourage course content based discussions out of the physical classroom and beyond class time (Williams & Jacobs, 2004); support both individualized and
broadly interactive communication (Cottle, 2009; Shifflet, 2008); and motivate students to engage positively in the writing process (Barrios, 2003; Trammell & Ferdig, 2004).

However, these research findings and technological affordances have other, more complex, implications for teaching and literacy learning. For instance, Lave (1991) emphasizes that participation may involve learning which does not lead to full participation and socialization. Huzzard (2004) points out that the extent of participation is related to the dynamics of power within COPs and that full participation may be denied to novices or newcomers by more powerful practitioners. Consequently, community participants who have vested interests in maintaining certain practices may choose to protect existing knowledge and practices from newcomers, particularly if they are perceived as a threat to existing power relations (Carlile, 2004).

2.4.4 Bakhtin’s dialogism and CMC

Herring (2010a) notes that spoken interaction and text based CMC share many conventions such as: turn-taking and topic development (Sacks, 1972/1992); code-switching in conversation (Grumperz, 1982), as well as “typographic practices that imitate spoken prosody; and discourse produced in chunks that resemble intonation units” (Herring, 2010a, p. 2). The convention similarities of face-to-face and text based CMC are determined by whether the communication is synchronous or asynchronous. Herring observes that synchronous CMC is ‘closer’ to spoken conversation because it is more spontaneous, with shorter messages and less editing and reflection than asynchronous CMC, which is “closer to the written end of the written spoken continuum than synchronous CMC modes” (Herring, 2010a, p. 2). Whether utterances are written or
spoken, synchronous or asynchronous, they affect the nature of CMC. However, the time between messages is not the only factor that affects what is said and how it is said.

Bakhtin (1986) argues that the act of communicating involves a person addressing another person, with meaning established in the dialectical relationship between the speaker (or writer) and the listener (or reader). For Bakhtin, the role of the other person or interlocutor in communication is not passive; it is a “social event of verbal interaction performed through one or more speech acts” (Vološinov, 1976, p. 172). Bakhtin’s dialogism connects to situated learning in significant ways because it emphasizes the primary importance of the immediate social situation and wider context in determining the actual structuring of utterances within the mind. An integral part of the dialogic process is what Bakhtin refers to as ‘appropriation’, which, in simple terms, refers to the idea that a person has to understand, internalize, and reproduce the utterances of others. Bakhtin believes we need to appropriate language and then reinterpret it and use it in order to express ourselves.

This idea informs Swain’s (1995) output hypothesis, which suggests that, by noticing a gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say, learners notice what they do not know or only know partially in a language. Then, through hypothesizing and testing what could be lexically, grammatically or contextually possible, they might be able to modify their output so that they learn something new about the language. Consequently, learners reflect on the language they have learned and their output enables them to make sense of and internalize linguistic knowledge (Swain, 1995). Toohey (2000) discusses appropriation and argues that language learners “try on other people's utterances; they take words from other people's mouths; they appropriate
these utterances and gradually (but not without conflict) these utterances come to serve their needs and relay their meanings” (p. 13).

Bakhtin’s ideas have been developed by discourse theorists who argue that appropriation is not restricted to words and phrases but happens with genres and discourses of communication. Warschauer (1997) explains that these ideas expand how we frame learning from a sociocultural perspective and that learners in computer mediated COPs appropriate not only the lexis and syntax of the language, “but complex patterns of language use in social process” (p. 3). Viewed through a Bakhtinian lens, the language we use reflects our stance toward our interlocutors, our social position within the group, as well as the socio-political aspects of the context such as power relations, hierarchical structures, and dominant discourses.

Gee (1990) was influenced by Bakhtin’s work when he discussed the concept of capital D discourse. Gee uses discourse with a lower-case ‘d’ to refer to language in use. When discussing the combination of language with other social practices within a specific group or community he refers to it as Discourse with a capital ‘D’. He notes we are all part of different Discourse communities and we take on different roles and use different Discourses with, for example, family members, work colleagues, academic colleagues. Gee (2010) points out that to be recognized we have to act (and write) in ways that are deemed appropriate within whatever discourse community we are in. These roles are not fixed but fluid and, as Kerekes, Chow, Lemak and Perhan (2013) note, they are “embedded within larger ideological structures and discursive practices” (p. 271). As with face-to-face communication, the language used in online discourse communities is contextually bound and dependent upon the socio-political aspects of the context.
Zuengler and Miller (2006) note that language and literacy researchers tend to incorporate Bakhtin’s ideas into other complementary theories such as Vygotsky’s ZPD, and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Community of Practice (COP), where they are often used to support a critical theoretical perspective. Theorists have applied these ideas to inform their analyses of, amongst many other subjects: computer mediated politeness (Morand & Ocker, 2002; Locher & Watts, 2005); pragmatic competence (Abrams, 2008; Darhower, 2002); stance-taking (Myers, 2010); racialized discourse (Hodsdon-Champeon, 2010); and power inequality related to gender and identity (Herring, 2010b; Danet, 1998). Critical theorists give power relations within language analysis a central role as they believe that language use is determined by broader socio-political contexts as well as local social contexts.

While researchers such as Toohey (1999) believe that, in education contexts it is more helpful to see learners as integrated into COPs that maintain their peripheral participation, critical sociocultural theorists (Norton, 1997; Pennycook, 1999; Canagarajah, 2005) argue that the marginalized members of COPs need to be understood in relation to their access to their target language social practices. As Miller (2004) points out, in L2 contexts speakers need to negotiate and struggle for their right to be heard. This is equally true in CMC contexts where language learners need to be acknowledged and legitimized by users of the target language. In online contexts, differing power relations are apparent. Obviously, instructors usually hold the most power in educational contexts but other power dynamics are also at play in online communities. For instance, in their study of gender and power online, Selfe and Meyer (1991) found that men dominate online conference discussions because of their adversarial tone. Similarly,
Herring (1992) reports that the adversarial tone of the male members of an online community she analyzed reduced female participation. It is therefore essential that educators be aware of power relations online and ensure that learners are given the opportunity to participate equally in contexts that cultivate respect and consideration for others.

In order to foster academic socialization in online COPs, Palloff and Pratt (1999) assert that educators need to accommodate the social aspects of the community by helping learners foster their social agency. Yim (2011) explains that instructors play a crucial role in facilitating social agency in online learners and describes how one of the instructors he studied used pedagogical strategies that stifled social agency in her L2 learners. The instructor did this by insisting her students follow overly specific discourse conventions and rules and by repeatedly intervening in discussions and correcting learners until they became what the instructor considered to be ‘proficient’. This resulted in less participation, decreased motivation, and increased tension in the online academic community. In contrast, another instructor was less prescriptive, intervened less, and provided lots of positive appraisal and modelling of appropriate online interaction. This instructor had far more positive outcomes from her L2 learners. Yim (2011) reports how students interacted more and used a greater variety of utterance functions, “such as expressing knowledge/opinions, requesting assistance, and making use of social formulas – that correlate with the participant roles of information provider, information/help seeker, and motivator and socializer” (p. 20).

The amount of social agency, control and choice that a person can exercise through language when participating online determines how and if they participate. Ros i
Solé (2007) argues that, to exercise their social agency language learners make identity choices and position themselves in relation to their context and the other discourse participants. Consequently, the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own choices is determined by the sociocultural context and the people the online learner is in contact with. In short, learners co-construct their identities dialogically with their audience and the sociocultural and socio-historical context in which they are communicating.

Social interaction online may take a different form from face-to-face interaction but both modes of communication are bound by often similar social conventions and practices within the social context in which the communication takes place. To understand how educators can best support learners, education researchers need to examine and consider the social variables at play in CMC contexts. Vygotsky’s ZPD, Lave and Wenger’s COP, Bakhtin’s dialogism and critical theory all play important roles in our understanding of these social contexts.

2.4.5 Genetic analysis

While this thesis does not use genetic analysis, it is useful to outline the subject to deepen our understanding of the ideas embedded within sociocultural theory. Genetic analysis stems from Vygotsky's (1978) work on the developmental approach to cognition. Belz and Kinginger (2002) explain “microgenetic analysis traces the history of development during specific learning events” (p.195); for instance, the duration of a book club. When applied to language learning research methodology, genetic analysis suggests that we can understand aspects of mental functioning if we understand where it
originates and the changes it undergoes. Mitchell and Myles (2004) contend that aspects of the learning process can often be traced back to particular interactions between teachers and learners, or between learners and more able learners. In language learning terms this might involve the localized tracing of contextualized vocabulary, phrases or ideas in interaction between instructors and learners. Text-based CMC facilitates this kind of analysis because authentic data are captured and preserved in computer mediated environments.

For example, Belz and Vyatkina (2005) investigated the learning of German modal particles and applied microgenetic analysis to a corpus of CMC produced in an American-German telecollaboration. In combination with detailed ethnographic data collected through biographical and technological surveys, post-telecollaboration interviews, formative and summative individual learner portfolios, and field notes based on participant observation, they were able to observe, over eight weeks, the emergence of pragmatically appropriate modal particles by some of the German second language (L2) learners. Belz and Vyatkina (2005) note that the combination of microgenetic analysis of the corpus data and ethnography allowed them to analyze the second language acquisition process for any “searchable linguistic feature” as well as to “situate each micro-change in the developmental process within the cultural activity of its origin” (p. 33). As Warschauer (1997) notes, genetic analysis enables us to see that language learning does not happen in isolated events and that to gain an understanding of how it emerges we need to consider the broader social, cultural and historical context in which communication occurs.
2.5 Facebook Use in University and L2 Learning Contexts

Language educators are increasingly using Facebook to host language learning and literacy related activities outside the university classroom (Blake, 2013). However, the use of Facebook for educational purposes is controversial. Baran (2010) claims the student–student dimension in Facebook may be more important than the student–content and student–teacher dimensions and has concerns about the perceived formality of the social networking site; particularly within more traditional education cultures such as that in Turkey. Baran also argues that many students are not ready to embrace sites such as Facebook in formal education contexts. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found users of the social networking site have been found to have lower grade point averages and spend fewer hours a week studying.

These issues run contrary to other research findings. Ku, Ho and Lam (2012) found that course related Facebook use amongst Chinese undergraduate business students enhanced student perceptions of social presence and sense of community. Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) found that Thai undergraduates improved their English grammar knowledge through grammar related discussions in Facebook Groups. Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, and Liu (2012) note that students believe Facebook Groups have the necessary functions and affordances of a learning management system. Mazer, Murphy, and Simmonds (2009) report the social networking site can increase teacher credibility; Selwyn (2009) and Reid (2011) reason Facebook is a platform that can provide space for students to resolve university and learning related issues. Duncan and Barczyk (2013) argue the social networking site can be used as a tool to facilitate a sense of community through knowledge sharing and collaboration. O’Bannon, Beard,
and Britt (2013) found that a sense of community developed in Facebook Groups enhanced course communication, helped improve preparation for course assessments, and facilitated learning.

Promnitz-Hayashi (2011) notes that Facebook can encourage autonomous learning and facilitate participation in online discussions amongst low proficiency L2 learners because it provides a safe space for students to voice opinions and forge closer relationships with classmates. Indeed, as Lantz-Andersson, Vigno and Bowen (2013) note, Facebook can provide “extended spaces for collaborative language-learning activities in educational contexts where students combine their school subject of learning language and their communicative use of language in their everyday life” (p. 293). Blattner and Fiori (2011) explain the social networking site allows authentic language learning opportunities for students who can interact with other L2 speakers in meaningful communicative contexts, which can help develop their L2 pragmatic competence, and provide L2 practice and familiarity with discussion forum conventions. Pragmatic language skills are crucial to making connections with native speakers of the language the L2 student is learning, and as noted earlier they are becoming essential skills for L2 learners in English medium of instruction university contexts.

2.6 L2 Learner Pragmatic Competence in Written CMC

Online written interactions require students to demonstrate an understanding and awareness of written pragmatic competence in English to effectively manage their relationships and studies at EMI universities. It is therefore important for undergraduate ESL learners to develop their understanding of how politeness is expressed in online communication. However, politeness is a facet of language use which is often difficult to
master because it is dependent on the relationship between the interactants and is culturally and contextually bound (Haugh, 2007). Next, research on how politeness is expressed and interpreted in computer mediated communication (CMC) in English medium university contexts is reviewed.

### 2.6.1 Politeness theory

Politeness theory is derived from ‘dramaturgy’, a term Goffman (1967) adapted from the theatre to explain his observations about human interaction. Goffman’s key observation was the concept of ‘face’, which he defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 5). Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced a ‘universal’ theory of politeness, defining face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself,” and arguing that this includes, “the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of” (p. 61). Brown and Levinson reason that self-image has both a positive and a negative face. Positive face is the need to be desirable to others (approval). Negative face is the need to be unimpeded by others (autonomy). Brown and Levinson propose that in human interaction some communicative acts can threaten the hearer’s positive face, negative face, or both; these communicative acts are referred to as face threatening acts. Offers and requests are often face threatening acts, for example if a teacher says to a student, “You have not finished your homework! Please finish it now.” The criticism of the student’s action is a threat to her positive face (approval) and the request to please finish it now, is a threat to her negative face (autonomy).
Morand and Ocker (2002) interpret Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory for computer mediated communication (CMC), and note that it is a useful tool for CMC research because face threatening acts “occur with considerable frequency” (p. 4) in CMC contexts. They argue that two central aspects of communicative competence, making one’s self clear and being polite, are often in opposition as politeness usually entails ambiguity, while clarity can sometimes be too direct. Morand and Ocker (2002) also suggest that, in face-to-face communication, nonverbal cues play a crucial role in the contextualization of politeness and that the absence of such cues in CMC contexts could lead to more miscommunication than in face-to-face contexts.

Locher and Watts (2005) attempt to shift the approach taken when investigating politeness, arguing that polite behaviour is an element of relational work, which they describe as “the ‘work’ individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others” (p. 10). They challenge the concept of face and face threatening acts as too narrow and argue that polite behaviour is more complex than the mere mitigation of face threatening acts. Furthermore, they suggest relational work exists in all human social interaction and includes rudeness and impoliteness. Locher and Watts (2005) also argue that all relational work is relative to previously constructed appropriate behaviour and that what is considered (im)polite is related to “interactants’ assessments of social norms of appropriateness that have been previously acquired” (Locher, 2006, p. 250). In her work on rapport, Spencer-Oatey (2005) acknowledges Locher and Watts’ ideas and draws on ideas from social psychology to interpret (im)politeness as:

… an umbrella term that covers all kinds of evaluative meanings (e.g. warm, friendly, considerate, respectful, deferential, insolent, aggressive, rude). These meanings can have positive, negative or neutral connotations, and the judgments
can impact upon people’s perceptions of their social relations and the rapport or (dis)harmony that exists between them (p.97).

Haugh (2007) refers to this postmodern interpretation of politeness as the discursive approach and adds that politeness behaviour is evaluative and that politeness research needs to focus on the variability of interactants’ perceptions of politeness.

2.6.2 University student online politeness

Schallert et al. (2009) use Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory to investigate the computer mediated discussions (CMD) of a teacher and 24 graduate students at a large American University. They found synchronous discussions were characterized by more information seeking and sharing and more social comments. The asynchronous discussions were more ‘serious’ and showed more discussion generating, experience sharing, and idea explanation. More politeness strategies were used in messages with positive evaluation functions and group conversation management and fewer with social, discussion generation, negative evaluation functions. Negative politeness strategies arose when writers engaged in experience sharing, idea explaining, giving alternative views, previewing one’s message, and negative evaluating.

Schallert et al. (2009) suggest that these functions may be considered as face threatening because “they imply a request that the hearer/reader accept what is being stated” (p.720). In short, the writers were attending to the hearer’s negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Li (2012) draws on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory to investigate the wiki-mediated written English of Chinese undergraduates studying English at a university in China. She argues that clarity and politeness are often in contradiction in CMC contexts, since politeness is frequently ambiguous and indirect and
often needs to be subordinated to clarity. Li (2012) also notes that her findings did not support Brown and Levinson’s (1987) suggestion that people use negative politeness when they are distant in social relations. She also claims that positive face strategies are regularly used more often in CMC to foster reciprocity and community. Vinagre (2008) argues that successful computer supported collaborative learning is determined by the social interaction that takes place amongst participants because social interaction shapes the cognitive and socio-emotional processes that occur during learning.

Vinagre proposes that mutual friendship is a priority in collaborative CMC and notes that strategies linked with claiming common ground; showing interest and attending to others, exaggerating approval and sympathy, using in-group markers and avoiding disagreements are essential in CMC contexts. She suggests that the high use of positive politeness as a strategy in CMC fosters solidarity and promotes friendship and cooperation and that these attributes contribute to the success in computer supported collaborative learning communication.

Clarke (2009) investigated how Emerati undergraduates studying in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) interact online. He found that a typical discursive feature at the start of messages was the strategy of using an introductory statement of agreement in reply to a previous student post. Clarke notes this type of strategy is related to a mutual need to maintain face between interactants and suggests this kind of affirmative communication is an essential generic aspect of community building in CMC contexts, reporting that only 12 expressions of disagreement were registered. Other less direct strategies Clarke observed were the use of personal pronouns and hedges, such as I think, and the frequent use of inclusive pronouns, such as us, we and our, in phrases that
indicate that students were attending to and maintaining the online community, underlining the important role politeness has in the maintenance of online communities.

Adel (2011) examined the rapport building in the CMDs of a five-week online course conducted in English in a small Swedish university and found that that online rapport work is orientated more toward consensus building than offline rapport work, which was more concerned with comprehension and understanding. Another interesting observation was the use of ‘on task’ phatic communication identified in some of the online communication. Phrases such as; “it’s really hard to learn all grammatical words” and “I almost gave up when I first took a look inside the grammar book” (Adel, 2011, p. 2941) show commiseration, empathy, and agreement in a face-to-face phatic conversational style. Adel suggests that this is a new form of online written communication that fuses chat and more traditional written academic styles to build and maintain rapport.

Positive face strategies have been shown to dominate CMDs because they foster reciprocity and community. Moreover, mutual friendship is often seen as a priority in collaborative CMD and discourse strategies often aim to seek common ground or at consensus building. Our developing understanding of appropriate discussion forum conventions and behaviours are essential for international university students to master because CMD use is increasing rapidly in university contexts. An increased understanding of and competency in this developing academic genre, will enable international students to present a more positive self-image of themselves.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter details the research methodology employed in the study as well as the rationale behind the decisions about the investigation and the research instruments used.

3.1 Pilot Study

In order to confirm the appropriateness of the activity for EAP students and to expand and refine the study’s research methodology, I conducted a pilot study of the book club in the same context in 2013/14. The purpose of the study was to investigate instructor and student perceptions and use of Facebook Groups as an online space suitable for mediating learning in online book clubs.

3.2 Methodology: Participants and Data Sources

Data were collected from 57 students and two instructors from the ABP program. The female students (n=36) outnumbered the male students (n=21). The participants made up 40% of the cohort for the year, and as such were considered representative of the cohort as a whole. The student participants were aged between 18 and 19 years old. The majority were Chinese (46), with three Russians, three Ecuadorians, two Japanese, a Korean, a Ukrainian, and an Italian. All students were enrolled on the ABP program in the 2013/14, the year prior to the main thesis study. The writing instructors were both experienced EAP professionals with postgraduate qualifications related to L2 language and literacy learning.
At the time of interview, instructor one (Susan) was a social media novice with no previous experience of Facebook, and opened a Facebook account in the week prior to the start of her book club; instructor two (Paul) was an experienced social media user. In week 18 of the study the two instructors were interviewed about their experiences of administrating and moderating an online book club. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and the interview questions were designed to elicit instructor experiences of facilitating an online book club in Facebook Groups. A student questionnaire was administered in March 2014; participants (n=57) completed an electronic survey consisting of 12 Likert scale items, six multiple choice items, and three open ended questions. The Likert scale survey constructs were designed to collect data about learners’ perceptions of their reading, writing, and participation in the book clubs, with an emphasis on sharing, interaction and discussion, all key elements in understanding student behaviour. The multiple-choice items related to book choice and demographic information. The three open questions asked students: 1) What did you like about the book club activity? 2) What would you change about the activity? 3) Were there any benefits of the activity to your academic studies? The Facebook Group pages of the book clubs were treated as electronic documents and used to confirm and exemplify the interview and survey data.

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Perceptions of Facebook Groups as an online learning context

The two instructors, Susan and Paul, found the book clubs to be a very useful pedagogical activity. Susan believed that the book club enabled her to form a different
relationship with her students and thought that in Facebook students see her more as a fellow, “Facebook user than as an instructor”. She stated that interacting with students via Facebook was, “more democratic”, and that she thought that this, “reduced student anxiety” when compared to her face-to-face student interactions in the classroom. Paul also suggested that Facebook is likely to be attractive as a learning environment to students because it is already, “part of their lives”, and consequently more convenient. Indeed, 69.49% of student survey respondents indicated they had Facebook accounts before they joined the program. Also, two survey respondents agree with the instructors’ perceptions, with one student noting she felt the Facebook Group was a space where shy students could express themselves in public because it was, “less stressful” and another student writing that he thought that the book club, “narrowed the gap” between the instructor and student.

Paul shared Susan’s view and added that because the students were already using Facebook outside of their university studies they perceived it as a space that is less formal than Blackboard (the in-house learning management system), and he thought as a consequence students were more inclined to participate in activities hosted on it. He also noted that, “in some sense it [Facebook Groups] is a mini Blackboard, as it allows instructors to upload files, video, share hyperlinks and make announcements”.

3.3.2 Pedagogical and technological affordances of Facebook Groups

As Facebook Group administrators, instructors can pin one post to the top of their group page and that post will remain there until it is unpinned. Susan and Paul found this function very useful for managing book club communication. Paul pinned posts to
inform students how many questions he had posted in a particular week, as well as for administrative communication, informing students when discussion threads were exhausted and closed to further comments, for example. Susan explained that pinned posts gave her more control of the Facebook Group page, and that she used the function if there was a specific post or picture she wanted students to focus on.

An issue that both instructors encountered was that different question threads could sometimes be difficult to locate in the Facebook Group pages. This is because in a Facebook Group page posts that are most recently commented on automatically move to the top of the page. The instructors attempted to rectify this issue by writing a post with all the questions for that week, pinning it to the top of the page, and asking students to begin their comments by stating the question number. While this kept all questions and comments in a fixed place on the Group page it still resulted in unthreaded discussions which were difficult to follow, because replies to questions were often preceded by replies to different questions. However, the tagging feature in Facebook was used by the instructors and students and did help alleviate some of the threading issues. Tagging enables Facebook Group users to identify and reference people in comments and other media they share. Book club members type the name of the person from the group they want to be tagged; their name becomes hyperlinked and they receive a notification linking them to the post. Both Susan and Paul found this useful for notifying students they were giving feedback to and for connecting students whose ideas they were commenting on. Paul explained that he encouraged his students to refer to each other in their comments and that tagging facilitated communication between students. Susan also

1 Note: Since the data for both the pilot and thesis studies was collected Facebook has introduced threaded discussions.
highlighted the benefits of tagging for students, noting that tagged students do not have to read through all the comments and posts to check if someone has added to a conversation they have participated in. She explains:

If I ask a question back to a student after several posts that students have written I can tag the student in that question and they know my questions directly relates to them so they don’t skip over what I’ve said.

Although the tagging feature proved to be pedagogically useful, students took time to adopt it and it was not until the second book club in the winter term that it began to be used regularly.

The instructors repurposed the Facebook Like button to indicate to students that they had read their comments. Paul emphasised that he ensured students understood that liking their comments did not indicate he necessarily endorsed what they had written and that his use of the Like button was as a “check marker to indicate to students their work had been read”. He also noted that some students had asked why their work had not been liked and wanted him to use it to acknowledge their contributions. The students were informed that they should use the Like button to like the comments and posts they liked. Susan noted that liking comments or shared hyperlinks enabled, “students to participate in a minimal way”. Indeed, students often used the button to acknowledge positive feedback they had been given by instructors, or other book club members.

Another feature of Facebook Groups that Susan found beneficial for teaching was the Seen by function, which allows users to see which group members have viewed posts. When Seen by is clicked it shows the names of all the people that have viewed the post. Susan explained that this feature was useful because it enabled her to gauge which students were participating. She also noted that it helped inform her decision making
regarding the type of posts that engage students and whether to post a reminder to students regarding an administrative update. The instructors found the feature very useful and used it as a virtual register to inform themselves which students were visiting the Group page and reading the posts and comments.

### 3.3.3 Book choice, participation, and enjoyment

A key factor that influenced the way students participated was the perception that different books are conducive to different types of discussion subjects. For example, a memoir, *Just Kids* by Patti Smith (2010), was read in one of the book clubs. Susan noted that the book was appropriate for discussing metaphors, relationships, and life events, but that the subject matter was not appropriate for critical discussion about subjects such as politics or society. Book choice also affected student participation and motivation. Allowing students to sign-up for their preferred book on a first come, first choice basis inevitably led to several students reading their second or third choice book. This resulted in participation and motivation problems for Paul as a number of his students were asked to read books they were not necessarily interested in reading. Furthermore, Paul reported having difficulty identifying books students might find interesting and he found many of the students in his book club unmotivated and disengaged as a consequence.

Indeed, both of his books, *Misery* by Stephen King (1987) and *Rendezvous with Rama* by Arthur C. Clarke (1973), were unpopular and only 16, of a maximum of 25, students joined his winter term book club to read the Stephen King novel, with only eight of the 16 students participating in the book club. This lack of engagement is not restricted to Paul’s book clubs; it is also reflected in the student survey data. When asked whether
they enjoyed reading their book club books, 36.36% indicated they enjoyed reading the books in both terms, 34.55% enjoyed the book in the winter term, 14.55% in the fall term, and 14.55% indicated that they did not enjoy reading the book club books. A strategy Paul employed to engage and motivate students was to ask more questions about the characters’ emotions, discussing character traits and sharing hyperlinks about the book, which helped to some extent; however, he noted that “it became harder to find ways to engage the students each week due to their lack of interest.”

Although there were issues with participation, students were engaged in the book clubs and seemed to benefit from the activity. The majority of survey respondents reported spending between one and three hours a week reading for book club; 9.09% read for an hour or less per week; 58.18% read for one to two hours per week; 27.28% for two to three hours per week; and 5.45% more than three hours per week. Students spent less time writing posts than reading, with 81.81% of respondents spending an hour or less composing comments, 14.55% spending up to two hours writing, and 3.64% spending two or more hours. In the open response survey questions, 13 respondents simply stated the books were “interesting,” and two mentioned that they liked the book club because it motivated them to commit to reading a novel in English. One respondent stated that the activity had helped her develop a “reading habit”, and another wrote that participating in the book club had enabled her to complete her, “first ever English novel.”

3.3.4 Issues with instructor and student questions

The questions instructors asked to engage their students with the books can be categorized into four types of questions: 1) questions which enabled students to make
connections between the text and their personal experiences; 2) questions related to hyperlinks or links shared because they connected to the subject(s) in the book; 3) questions that incorporated language learning and encouraged students to make connections between the text and what they were learning in the course; and 4) questions that encouraged unique responses and collaboration. Instructors often asked questions that combined various elements of the different question types. The instructors’ weekly questions were another aspect of book club that students said they would like to change. Survey feedback included requests for more time to answer questions and fewer comprehension questions, as some students believed their answers tended to repeat those given by other students. One survey respondent requested more discussion questions and five others were keen to have more interaction between students and more opportunities for students to ask questions.

### 3.3.5 Learning and sharing in the book clubs

The instructors had similar perceptions about how student writing improved during the book club activity. Paul suggested that, in his book club’s students began to use writing skills learned in the classroom in their book club comments only after they were prompted through his questions. Moreover, Susan stated that modelling how book club questions could be answered in a “more formal and academic way,” and asking questions that make students think more critically about the text they have read as an effective way to prompt the students to recognize that the critical thinking and composition skills learned in the classroom can be transferred to their comments in the book club.
Table 3.1
**Student Perceptions of Their Participation and Practice in the Book Clubs (n=57)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read for pleasure in my first language.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>14.03%</td>
<td>57.90%</td>
<td>24.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading other people's comments helped me understand the book.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed discussing books with other students online.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>24.56%</td>
<td>57.90%</td>
<td>14.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My vocabulary knowledge improved.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>7.02%</td>
<td>75.44%</td>
<td>14.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book club is a good space to practice my writing.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>22.81%</td>
<td>61.40%</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used composition skills I learned in class when writing in book club.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
<td>70.18%</td>
<td>17.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used new vocabulary when writing comments in book club.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed writing for an audience when writing in book club.</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
<td>35.09%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book club helped me to improve my writing.</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td>35.09%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shared links and I clicked on other students' links.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read/viewed the materials (videos, photos, webpages) my instructor shared.</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td>75.44%</td>
<td>22.81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read/viewed the materials (videos, photos, webpages) students shared.</td>
<td>26.31%</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likert scale questionnaire data (see Table 3.1), revealed that a strong majority (87.72%) of student survey respondents indicated they used composition skills learned in class when writing in the book club. Three survey respondents mentioned how the activity made them feel more “comfortable” reading English and eight other respondents stated that they believed their grammar had improved and that they could work more efficiently. Most respondents (87.72%) agreed that reading other people’s comments helped them understand the book. In addition, students engaged and viewed other media related to the books they read, with 98.25% indicating they read or viewed hyperlinks to videos, images and webpages shared by the instructor. This number fell to 73.69 % when
other students shared hyperlinks; however, six students stated in the open answer questions that they enjoyed sharing ideas and understanding other students’ perspectives about the texts.

The majority of respondents (71.93%) reported that they enjoyed discussing books with other students online and 14 survey respondents specifically stated how discussing the books with other students helped them understand the book. A key factor in this understanding could be the student perceptions about their vocabulary learning, as 89.47% perceive their vocabulary improved in the book clubs and 82.46% of respondents believe they used new vocabulary when writing comments in the book club.

3.4 Implications for Thesis Research

The pilot study enabled me to evaluate different data sources and determine how I should refine my thesis research methodology. The Facebook Group pages generally worked well as spaces for facilitating teaching and learning. The instructors (and students) found them easy to use and adopted or repurposed the functions for pedagogical purposes. The Like button, Pin Post, Seen by, tagging, and notification functions were all successfully adopted to facilitate teaching and learning. However, I have decided to look more closely at the instructors’ and students’ perceptions of their roles and participation in the book clubs to establish the factors that facilitated or impeded L2 students’ participation and practice in the online activity.

Many students clearly believe they improved their vocabulary and text comprehension in the book clubs. Survey respondents appear to have benefitted and learned through sharing and interacting with skilful peers in the book club. Furthermore,
the instructors reported that students were, with encouragement, transferring composition and language skills from the classroom to the online environment. This process seems to have fostered quite analytical interpretations of the books and a studious approach to book club participation with students spending up to two hours each week composing their book club comments.

My thesis research seeks to understand how instructors’ pedagogical decisions and actions prior to and over the course of the book club activity mediated learning. Informed by sociocultural theory, I will consider instructor decision making regarding the curriculum design, interventions, scaffolding, and instructor expectations of student participation. To do this, I will analyze how various contextual, social, and cultural factors affect the interplay between students and instructors, and the subsequent effects that these factors have on student participation and practice in the book clubs.

The COI framework will be used to categorise and analyze the online discourse. I will use the cognitive presence indicators in the COI framework to gauge what writing skills are being practiced in the book clubs. I have adapted an established COI student questionnaire for my thesis study. Due to the length of the COI questionnaire, I did not include open ended questions. Instead, I decided student case study would allow me to probe further at the issues raised through the answers to the open ended survey questions in the pilot study. These data sources and methodology issues are clarified next.

3.5 Overview of Thesis Research Design

To increase the study’s validity and reliability a qualitative multi-method research design was employed that considers a variety of data sources. As Barton and
Lee (2013) reason, without using mixed and multi-method approaches when researching CMC:

... we would not be able to understand the actual linguistic products of activities online; and without observing users’ lives and beliefs about what they do with their online writing, we would not be able to see the dynamics of language online (p.167).

A multi-method approach was considered preferable because no one single method can be used to answer the questions related to both texts and practices. Content analysis, student questionnaires, instructor and student interviews, and document analysis were employed to compare and contrast the perceptions and practices of both instructors and students in the online context.

These investigative devices also provide methodological triangulation; the use of “different methods on the same object of study, or different methods on the same object of study” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison. 2011, p. 196). Each method of investigation is presented with rationale about the decisions made regarding the sample, the type of instrument used, and how the data were collected.

### 3.6 Case Study

Merriam (1988) defines a case study as an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). Creswell (1994) sees a case study as an instance in a bounded system such as a community, a school, a clique or a learner. Merriam (1998) clarifies Creswell’s definition, and suggests that to be a case the phenomenon under study needs to be intrinsically bound. She reasons that to assess the boundedness of the topic the researcher should ask how finite the data collection would be. Merriam argues that, if there is no end time to the number of observations that
could be made or people that could be interviewed, “then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (Merriam, 1998, p. 28).

However, Yin (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) believes the boundary “between the phenomenon and its context is blurred” (p.289) because the detailed contextual analysis and descriptions, common to case studies, can result in there being either tightly or loosely bound systems. The complex nature of the boundedness of case studies makes an exact definition problematic.

Stenhouse (1985) provides four categories of case study research design: ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research. He points out that a range of data collection procedures can be utilized in each of the categories. Different research designs can be used: single and multiple case analyses, for instance, as well as differing levels of analysis such as exploratory, descriptive, critical, and explanatory. The methods most commonly used for collecting data in education contexts are observation, interview, and document and discourse analysis (Cohen et al. 2011). Case study, as with any research method design, has its strengths and limitations.

3.6.1 The strengths of case study

A key benefit of case study is that it is flexible because the multiple data collection techniques allow researchers to respond to the research context as it changes to enable the study to evolve naturally. This allows researchers to extend data collection periods, conduct follow-up interviews or observations, and even introduce new data collection methods as incoming data are being interpreted. This is particularly useful for
studies in education as they are often fraught with unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables (Nisbet & Watt, 1984).

Furthermore, case studies enable researchers to understand and explain real people in real contexts without necessarily referring to abstract theories. They can also facilitate the understanding of how abstract theories and principles are interpreted in the real world (Yin, 2009). For example, Li’s (2012) case study investigates the wiki-mediated written English discourse of one male and two female Chinese undergraduate students. Guided by Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, Li conducted a discourse analysis of the students’ wiki posts and was able to show that many student posts contained multiple politeness strategies. She was able to explain and describe the complexity of the students’ politeness strategies by understanding the power and gender interrelationships of the students using interview and focus group data.

Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (1976) note that case studies help us comprehend social behaviour, represent the viewpoints of participants, and allow us to infer generalizations about phenomena. They allow us to identify unique characteristics about learner language and communication that quantitative survey data might not capture. For instance, Chen’s (2006) longitudinal case study of the evolution of a Taiwanese graduate students’ email literacy over two years at a US university reports that the length of the students’ emails changed over two years, from being unnecessarily long and verbose to being more concise and purposeful. Chen’s interview data revealed that her case study student realized time was precious to professors and that brevity was, in fact, a sign of respect rather than of impoliteness. Although unique to Chen’s study, insights such as this can help inform the interpretation of other email literacy research. The multiple data
collection methods reduce the bias of relying on a single collection method, which may bias or distort the researcher’s interpretation of reality by providing only a restricted sample of a complex human phenomenon.

Furthermore, the multiple data collection methods of case study allow researchers to triangulate data. Cohen et al. (2011) define triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p. 195). Triangulation increases concurrent validity as well as the researcher’s confidence. For example, if data from classroom observations is confirmed by interview data and document analysis data, the researcher can be more confident about her findings (see Bruna, Vann, & Perales Escudero, 2007).

The flexibility of case study enables interdisciplinary research, which is essential in the study of language since it “can be seen to embody characteristics of psychology, linguistics, literature, sociology, anthropology, education, and the sciences” (Shuy, 1973, p.195). Indeed, Block (2003) argues that second language acquisition research should not be viewed as an individual and primarily cognitive process; it is interdisciplinary and needs to encompass sociological perspectives. Moreover, case study enables researchers to ensure research has cross-cultural validity, which “entails the appreciation of the cultural values of those being researched” (Cohen et al. 2011, p. 194).

The researcher should ensure that the theories the research is based on are culturally appropriate, that the research instruments are culturally appropriate, and that the documents are appropriately translated, and so forth. For instance, Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, and Ogino’s (1986) study shows that Brown and Levinson’s (1987) ‘universal’ politeness theory is not applicable to Japanese contexts. Case study
methodology not only helps identify cultural differences such as this, it is also flexible enough to enable researchers to tailor their data collection methods to ensure they are culturally appropriate. This, in turn, increases reliability of the data. A further strength of case study methodology is that it can increase ecological validity, which refers to the examination of specific characteristics of particular situations, such as how a language test affects a particular community. Ecological validity ensures that the data collection methods do not simply replicate the rhetoric of policy documents. Thick descriptions of phenomena, stakeholders, gatekeepers, and powerful vested interests provide crucial contextual data that ensure the data produced by experimentally controlled variables is understood in context (Brock-Utne, 2001).

Case study data are considered to be easily understood by academics and non-academics alike. Nisbet and Watt (1984) suggest that this is because case studies are often written in everyday language, describing real people in real contexts and situations. They argue that this accessibility frequently results in case study research reaching a wider audience and readership than jargon laden research using other methodologies.

3.6.2 The limitations of case study

Merriam (1998) discusses the weaknesses of case study research and points out that the case study method is limited by the subjectivity of the investigator. As the main instrument of data collection and analysis, the researcher has to rely on his own instincts and abilities to interpret the data. It is therefore difficult to establish if researchers have actually observed what they intended to observe and have critically reported all the salient data. Furthermore, if the researcher is not transparent about her methodology and its implementation or if she provides causal explanations/inferences unsupported by
evidence, then the internal validity will be an issue in her research. In case study research, however, the conscience and ethical principles of the researcher remain subjective and difficult to ‘validate’. For instance, Li (2012) writes in her article, “after ethical approval fifteen Chinese EFL college students at this university were recruited to participate in this study” (p. 6); this information tells us nothing about the relationship Li had with her subjects, before or after ethics approval. For example, we cannot know whether she primed the subjects before recording the interviews or not; we have to trust her integrity, as we do that of any other researcher.

Also, questioning the objectivity of case study research presupposes that objectivity is achievable or even appropriate for the method. Any research that involves human subjects is subjective. After all, quantitative researchers have to choose which methods to test particular phenomena, what the results mean, and how to write them up (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Nisbet and Watt (1984) note that case studies are difficult to cross-check and therefore can be biased and subjective. While triangulation is one way to cross-check whether the data from different sources correspond, findings may still be subject to investigator bias if the investigator is unaware of her bias or incompetence. The verification of data collection and interpretation by other researchers can add rigor to the method but also introduces issues such as the need for more personnel and time to complete the research project (Yin, 2009). Indeed, many case studies are very time consuming. Chen’s study, mentioned earlier, lasted two years while Economidou-Kogetsidis’ (2011) study of student emails lasted eighteen months and Clarke’s (2009)
study of online interpersonal relations was conducted over one year. This may restrict the use of case study for some research projects.

The generalizability of case study remains a controversial issue. The controversy centres on the sampling of individual case studies and the fact that the subjects in a single case study are selected based on the researcher’s questions and criteria. Thus, the findings of a single case study may be meaningful only to the subjects in that case, which are often small in number (Yin, 2009). For instance, Chen’s (2006) case study of a graduate students’ email literacy is an analysis of a single case, not a sample. The study has one subject in a very specific situation, that of email communication with her professors at a North American university. The communication that takes place depends explicitly on the language ability of the Taiwanese student, as well as the responses from particular professors and has too many unique factors to be generalizable. However, researchers defend this criticism of case study arguing that the degree to which one study situation matches another needs to be considered (Yin, 2009). Each case study adds to a pool of knowledge on a particular subject which results in the expansion of knowledge and generalizability about the subject (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, as Cohen et al. (2011) reason, the generalizability of a case study is extended as each case study becomes part of a growing library of research data that are analytically generalizable rather than statistically generalizable.

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

3.7.1 Context, participants, and consent

The study was carried out at a large urban university in Canada. The university attracts many international students and has a department that provides an academic
bridging program (ABP) for academically qualified international students whose English ability does not meet the direct entrance requirements. Table 3.2 shows the English language requirements for students entering the ABP. The ABP runs for 24 weeks and combines conditional acceptance to the University with intensive English language instruction and a credit bearing course. Successful completion of the program guarantees admission to the Faculty of Arts and Science. The curriculum is specifically designed to equip students with the necessary academic skills to prepare them for undergraduate study. The program focuses on critical thinking as well as language and composition skills. In recent years, instructors have recognized a need to provide students opportunities to learn and practice digital literacy skills. Library research skills, blogging activities and electronic listening journals have been introduced to the different skills based courses within the program.

**Table 3.2**

*Minimum English Level Entrance Requirements for ABP Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Grade or score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL iBT</td>
<td>63-99 (minimum 16 on writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL PBT</td>
<td>523-599 (minimum 4.0 on TWE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>5.0-6.5 (minimum writing band at 5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE/IGCSE/ GCE English</td>
<td>C Grade Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>5 or 6 in English B HL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample populations used in this study were chosen using convenience sampling (Cohen et al. 2011). In September 2014, the program’s cohort consisted of 162 students: 130 Chinese; 20 Ecuadorians; 5 Russians; 3 Ukrainians; 1 Moroccan; 1 Kuwaiti; 1 Korean, and 1 Spaniard. All students were recent high school graduates aged between 18 and 20 years old. Female students outnumbered male students 92 (57.4%) to 70 (42.6%). In September 2014, all six ABP instructors consented to their book club
comments, posts, as well as their assessment rubrics (see Appendix A and B) and grade records being used in the study. In October 2014, the consent process was administered with strict adherence to university ethical protocol and guidelines. The student consent was for three methods of data collection and students checked the stages to which they gave consent: 1) to allow me to analyze student book club comments. 2) to complete two student questionnaires. 3) to invite individual students to multiple semi-structured interviews.

A total of 151 students consented to their book club comments being used for the study. The book clubs chosen for analysis were those that the case study students participated in: three book clubs from the fall term and two from the winter term (see Table 3.3). The classroom teachers were consulted about which of the consenting students they considered would be reliable case study students, who would commit to attending multiple interviews. Three students were chosen for case study, to provide methodological triangulation and ensure that data collection and analysis were manageable. Two female Chinese students and one male Ecuadorian student were selected as typical case samples (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

**Table 3.3**

*Number of Participants, Methods and Dates of Data Collection for the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means of data collection</th>
<th>Time of collection</th>
<th>No of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COI analysis of 5 x book club text</td>
<td>Sept 2014 to April 2015</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall term student questionnaire</td>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter term student questionnaire</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study interviews</td>
<td>Sept 2014 to April 2015</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Interviews</td>
<td>Oct 2014 to April 2015</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7.2 Researcher’s role

As a writing instructor on the ABP, I was also an instructor for two book clubs, and, as such, aware of the advantages and disadvantages of my insider perspective toward the data. Regarding the advantages, I think the research process was facilitated by my greater understanding of the study’s context. Two key reasons for this are that I was aware of the internal politics of the writing team and had an established intimacy with the individual instructors. I was also able to establish a good rapport with the case study students as I was aware of the stages of their program and the related pressures they were experiencing, as well as the social, academic, and cultural issues they were facing. This knowledge was instrumental to promoting a research environment where participants were comfortable sharing their true perceptions of their participation and practice in the book clubs (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Indeed, it may well have taken an outsider far longer to establish the same level of knowledge and intimacy with the informants and the context.

Nevertheless, it was important to mitigate the potential loss of objectivity often associated with an insider’s perspective. Therefore, I did not research my own book clubs and the case study informants were not students I taught. Furthermore, although I could access everything that was happening in the book clubs in real time and freely move around the online space in the book clubs, I never made myself visible to the participants through commenting or posting a message during the book clubs. I consciously adopted the role of quiet observer so as not to influence the online behaviour of the students, which afforded me a great deal of anonymity.
Indeed, I noticed the case study students often shared information with me about what was happening in their book clubs, seemingly unaware that I had already observed it. I also endeavoured to maintain a high level of self-awareness throughout the research process and checked my assumptions and potential bias from my prior knowledge of the research context. This was achieved, in part, through discreet conversations with other graduate student researchers and my thesis supervisor.

### 3.7.3 COI content analysis of book club page data

Five book clubs, three from the fall term and two from the winter term, were selected for analysis. The book clubs chosen were those that the case study students joined and participated in. To make the study manageable, three weeks of comments and posts from each book club were used in the COI analysis. Posts from a week at the start of the book club and a week towards the end of the book club were collected to enable me to identify any changes in teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence toward the beginning and end of each book club.

In addition, each book club had a student-led week where students asked and answered all the questions related to the chapters that were read that week. This week was analyzed to provide an opportunity for further contrastive analysis. The COI framework uses content analysis, which “takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.564). The book club page data were coded for teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence using the categories, indicators, and definitions discussed in chapter two.
3.7.4 Teaching presence

Anderson et al. (2001) divide teaching presence into three categories: (1) design and organization; (2) facilitating discourse; and (3) direct instruction, providing a coding scheme for the category indicators (Appendix D details and numbers the coding scheme indicators for these categories with examples from the book club data set). A number of decisions about the coding of teaching presence were made when applying the indicators to the book club context as some of the messages displayed characteristics of one or more categories. However, the first decision I made was to include the number of instructors’ weekly questions about the book in the first instructional design and organization indicator setting curriculum (1). The reason I did this is that the number and type of instructor questions are a fundamental aspect of the design of the book club. They frame how the students read the book, what they focus on, and what elements of the story are deemed important or worthy of discussion.

Furthermore, the questions are an aspect of the book club over which individual instructors have complete autonomy and, as such, they are instrumental to understanding teaching presence and its effect on social presence and cognitive presence. In addition, when an instructor tagged a student, uploaded a document or used an emoticon this action was counted as utilizing medium effectively (4), as it modelled to students how to use the medium. Also, on the occasions that an instructor shared knowledge with a hyperlink this was recorded as both utilizing medium effectively (4), and the direct instruction indicator inject knowledge from diverse sources (17). Also, to help distinguish between the facilitating discourse indicator drawing in participants, prompting discussion (10) and direct instruction indicator present content/questions (12),
only messages that were specifically related to the book were included in the present content/questions (12) sub category. Lastly, whenever an instructor commented about the grammatical or lexical issues in a student’s comment, I coded it as diagnose misconception (16).

### 3.7.5 Social presence

Rourke, Anderson, Garrison and Archer (2007) state that, in a COI, social presence is classified using affective, interactive, and cohesive communication categories. During online discussions participants employ a variety of these elements of communication to establish varying degrees of social presence. Appendix C shows the social presence categories, indicators, and definitions of social presence from Rourke et al. (2007), and provides examples of each of them from the current data set. The proportionate presence of these indicators determines the level of social presence in an online COI. Therefore, low frequencies may suggest that the online context is unfriendly, impersonal, and that participants are using the online space to exchange information in a pragmatic and terse manner, while higher frequencies of the indicators suggest that the online environment is friendly, collegial, and that the members of the community have a sense of affiliation. Rourke et al. (2007) argue:

Social presence encourages the students to regard the conference and their interactions as intrinsically valuable and educationally profitable. This in turn supports students in the otherwise risky act of posting their tentative ideas and also in offering critiques of others’ hypotheses (para 33).

A small number of reinterpretations of the categories were required to make the COI model fit the book club task and context. For example, the tagging function has a dual purpose. It is interactive because it notifies a previous commenter that they have been
mentioned in a new comment by another participant. It is cohesive so, in order to use the function, the commenter has to type in the name of the person. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the interactive social presence indicator (4) continuing a thread was changed to tagging, due to the fact that Facebook Groups does not afford threaded discussions. Also, tagged names were included in cohesive social presence indicator (10) addressing participants by name. It should also be noted that no quoting from others’ messages was recorded. This was due to the fact that the cutting and pasting of texts is discouraged and paraphrasing is encouraged in the book clubs. The rationale for this is to encourage students to practice their paraphrasing skills as well as to prevent students from cutting and pasting large chunks of text into their answers, as had happened in previous book clubs.

3.7.6 Cognitive presence

Garrison et al. (2001) assert that cognitive presence has four phases (Appendix E details the indicators for these categories with examples from the book club data set). The first phase is referred to as a triggering event, where “an issue, dilemma, or problem that emerges from experience is identified or recognized” (p. 10). The second phase is exploration where “participants shift between the private, reflective world of the individual and the social exploration of ideas” (p. 10). The third phase, integration, is where students construct meaning based on the ideas that emerged in the exploratory phase. Garrison et al. (2001) claim this phase is complex as inferences have to be made about student communication in a COI. They argue that teaching presence in the form of questions and feedback that facilitate continuing cognitive development can help
researchers pinpoint evidence of integration within the data. Resolution, the last cognitive presence phase, requires the expectation and opportunity for learners to apply their newly constructed knowledge through summarizing, thought experiments, testing, defending or applying.

A message level unit of analysis, i.e. “what one participant posted into one thread of the conference on one occasion” (Garrison et al, 2001, p. 16), was used for the coding of cognitive presence. Furthermore, the fact that message length units may contain multiple phases of cognitive presence I coded down to the earlier phase if I was unsure of what phase was being reflected, and coded up to a later phase if I was sure that multiple phases of cognitive presence were present. Garrison et al. (2001) argue that this procedure is justified as “higher levels of critical thinking, such as integration and resolution, borrow characteristics and process from previous phases” (p. 16).

Understanding this particularly helped in the coding of the integration data where it was occasionally unclear if the student comment was Integration 9, building on – augmenting a point made by self/other, or Integration 11, a justified hypothesis.

3.7.7 Interrater reliability

Although I was the only coder, I administered an interrater reliability check to ensure that my coding was as consistent as it could be. This was done with a fellow graduate student at the end of the winter term using three weeks of comments and posts from one book club. We discussed the indicators of coding the three presences at length and using a Holsti interrater reliability equation “2m/n 1+n 2, where m is the number of coding decisions on which the two coders agree, and n 1 and n 2 refer to the number of
coding decisions made by raters 1 and 2 respectively” (Rourke et al, 2007). An interrater reliability measure of .88 was achieved for social presence \((2m= 32/ n1=36 + n2=37)\) and for teaching presence .93 \((2m= 26/ n1=27 + n2=29)\). After clarifying an interpretation issue regarding the need for student comments categorised as Integration 11 (Justified hypothesis) to have transition markers, such as \textit{therefore} and \textit{as a consequence}, to describe relationships between ideas, an interrater reliability score of .81 \((2m= 44/ n1=53 + n2=55)\) was achieved for cognitive presence. I then discussed my decision making with a colleague who helped me check the consistency and reliability of my coding. Three one-week exchanges from two book clubs were compiled to conduct the interrater reliability.

### 3.7.8 COI questionnaires

Consenting students in each book club were sent an electronic COI survey to complete at the end of each book club. The 37-item survey contained 28 Likert scale items designed to specifically address the three indicators of teaching, social, and cognitive presence. The survey instrument was adapted from the COI survey instrument validated by Arbaugh et al. (2008). The adaptation was minimal and involved simplifying some of the language in statements to make them easier to comprehend for second language learners. I replaced the phrase “through the online medium” with the phrase “in the book club”, for example. I also decided to omit the neutral category as I believed the ABP students would have or should have an opinion on the matters being surveyed (Cohen et al, 2011). The students all participated in the book clubs and the survey items were not ambiguous; they were directly related to their recent experience.
Furthermore, as Nemoto and Beglar (2014) note regarding the use of Likert scale surveys with language learners, 4-point Likert scales are preferable for younger respondents that may have low motivation to complete the survey as they are “easy to understand and they require less effort to answer” (p.5). Additional questions were added to the survey to retrieve demographic data and basic information about social media use and reading habits (see all 37 survey items in Appendix F).

### 3.7.9 Document analysis

Pedagogic documents from the ABP, such as the book club participation guidelines and grading rubric and writing composition skills materials used in face-to-face classes, were analyzed to establish evidential links between what was being taught to the students and the composition of their comments and posts in their book clubs. As Bowen (2009) notes, document analysis is particularly useful for case study research and “is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation” (p. 28). The documents accessed and analyzed in this study were collaboratively produced by the book club instructors that participated in the study.

### 3.7.10 Case study interviews

To answer the second research question, three case study students, Miguel, Liling and Xiulan (pseudonyms), were interviewed on five separate occasions; three times each in the fall term and twice each in the winter term. The purpose of the interviews was to explore their perceptions of their participation and practice in their book clubs. All participants appeared relaxed and comfortable during the interviews,
which were conducted in English in quiet rooms at the university. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to enable me to compare, as accurately as possible, informants’ perceptions and accounts of their experiences as well as identify patterns in the data that could be organized into interpretive categories (Kohler Riessman, 2002).

Both qualitative and ethnographic interview approaches were employed, as Warren (2002) advises “Where both settings and individuals are available, and are mutually pertinent, researchers often combine ethnographic data with interview data, illuminating both the culture and the biographical particulars of members’ worlds” (p. 85). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using predominantly open ended questions with prepared follow-up questions (see Appendix G). The question constructs were designed to focus on the informants’ perceptions and interpretation of the book club activity and their participation and practice in it. Therefore, questions related to cognitive, teaching, and social presence were informed through reference to the different category indicators of the COI framework.

Sociocultural perspectives were addressed through questions that explored students learning histories, as well as their social and emotional experiences within the ABP cultural context. Each interview built on the previous interview with questions based on the analysis of previous interview transcripts. Data gleaned from instructor interviews and other student interviews as well as observations of behaviour in the book clubs also informed the interview questions. Also, in the fourth and fifth interviews, enough time had elapsed for me to ask the informants to make comparisons between the two book clubs they had participated in. This process of examining, comparing, and categorizing data enabled me to clarify my understanding of informants’ responses and
issues identified in the previous interviews, and made the process ethnographic as it was responsive to the lived experiences of the students’ participation and practice in the online activity.

**3.7.11 Instructor interviews**

The book club instructors were an important source of data. The instructors were interviewed toward the end of each term. As with the case study interviews, qualitative interview approaches were employed. The interview questions were designed for the following purposes: (a) to explore the instructors’ epistemological beliefs and teaching histories; (b) to explore their perceptions of their teaching presence; and (c) to record their observations and perceptions of student participation in their book clubs (see Appendix H). Prior to interview, each instructor was emailed the following questions: 1) What is your teaching philosophy? 2) How do you think your students learn best? This was done to provide an understanding of the epistemological beliefs of the instructors. Individual teacher’s epistemological beliefs are important as they have been found to be a key predictor in determining the methods of instruction a teacher employs, more influential than in either subject knowledge or instructional strategy (Phipps & Borg, 2009; Jones & Carter, 2007; Tsai, 2006).

In interview the one instructional approach that all four teachers recalled from their teacher training was Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT is an approach to language instruction that has become one of the most effective and established in English language teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Canale and Swain (1980) claim the purpose of CLT is to increase learners’ communicative
competence. Research holds that teacher perceptions regarding CLT influence their instructional practices (Feryok, 2008). Therefore, we can inform our understanding of instructor perceptions and beliefs through analyzing the instructional choices and practices they employ (Tobin, 1993). Understanding the instructors’ epistemology was considered essential to interpreting their online behaviour, as their spoken beliefs and perceptions could be compared with their actual written practices in the book clubs. As with the student interviews, the instructor interviews were transcribed into text so that I could ensure the accuracy of the data as well as compare the different instructor responses.

Before the data are presented, it is necessary to recognize that each book club is different, and that the differences affect who reads which books and how they participate in the book club. As identified in the pilot study (chapter three), the fact that the instructors select the books to read and that each book club is capped at 25 students inevitably leads to some books being more popular than others. It also results in some students not reading their first-choice book, which can impact how motivated they are to read the book and participate in the activity. Also, it could be argued that, if a student is motivated to promptly sign-up for the book, they want to read then they are likely more engaged with the task before the online activity starts. The five books in this study can be divided into popular and unpopular books. Diana’s Eleanor & Park (Rowell, 2013) and Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time (Haddon, 2003) book clubs, and Marks Tuesdays with Morrie (Albom, 1997) book club were popular and students signed-up quickly. Paul’s Oryx & Crake (Atwood, 2003) and Sally’s The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003) book clubs were both unpopular and students signed-up slowly; neither was fully
populated. The Oryx & Crake book club had only 11 students and *The Namesake* book club 20 students. It is important to acknowledge and consider these contextual factors when interpreting the data that follows.

As stated earlier, three weeks of discussion transcripts from the five book clubs were used for the qualitative analysis. Abbreviations of the books read in the book clubs are used when referring to the different book clubs in Tables and Figures, and to avoid repetition in the text: (1) *Eleanor and Park* (E&P); (2) *Oryx and Crake* (O&C); (3) *Tuesdays with Morrie* (TWM); (4) *The Namesake* (NS); and (5) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (CID).

The length of individual student messages varied from one to two words of “thanks” to over five hundred and forty words of detailed and considered answers. The total student output varied in the book clubs.

**Data presentation**

Although much of interview data is ethnographic I have chosen to present the data according to categories that reflect the theoretical perspectives I have employed. This is intended to tie the lived experiences of the book club participants to the COI analysis, and steer the sociocultural discussion through the complex multi-method data.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the main study. The first section presents the data related to research question one (RQ1): How is teaching and learning mediated in an online literacy activity? Here instances of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence data from the COI content analysis of the transcripts of online comments and posts is presented alongside the related data from the student questionnaires. This data provides a macro level understanding of the instructor and student activity in the book clubs and the interrelationships of the presences.

The second section presents the instructor and student interview data connected with research question two (RQ2): How do instructors and students perceive and describe their instructional experiences in the online book clubs? In combination with the COI data, the interview data focuses on pedagogic sociocultural factors that impacted and mediated the activity in the book clubs but cannot be understood from the online data alone. These multiple data sources provide a micro level understanding of the factors that facilitated or impeded student participation in the activity along with insights into how teaching and learning was mediated in the book clubs.

Each of the book clubs generated a varying number of words and comments (see Table 4.1). As noted in chapter three, to enable a more meaningful comparison of the book club transcripts the density figures for each discussion were calculated. In this instance the density figure for each discussion shows the number of occurrences of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence events per 1,000 words. Again, density is calculated by dividing the number of observed events by the total number of words in the book club and multiplying by 1,000 (Rourke et al., 2007).
Table 4.1

*Number of Comments and Words for Instructors and Students in Each Book Club*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Book Club</th>
<th>Fall Term 2014</th>
<th>Winter Term 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Club</td>
<td><em>Eleanor and Park</em></td>
<td><em>Oryx and Crake</em></td>
<td><em>Tuesdays with Morrie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Xiulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers of student comments</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of instructor comments</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total student words</td>
<td>12,861</td>
<td>4,174</td>
<td>10,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total instructor words</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
<td>10,951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout this chapter, the data are presented in tables using the density figures; the number of observed events (or raw numbers) are shown in parenthesis. The student questionnaire items applicable to each presence are also presented.

4.0 RQ1: How is Teaching and Learning Mediated in an Online Literacy Activity?

Prior to looking at the individual indicators for teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence it is useful to consider the aggregate data for the presences to inform our understanding of the book club contexts and to establish if any patterns between the presences exist. The aggregate data shows that the levels teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence fluctuate amongst the book clubs (Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3).
Figure 4.1. Total density for teaching presence.

Figure 4.2. Total density for social presence.

Figure 4.3. Total density for cognitive presence.
Teaching presence varied considerably across the five book clubs. It is noteworthy that Paul and Sally, the instructors of the two unpopular book clubs, had the highest teaching presence. This is because they had to direct and elicit comments from a smaller group of students, controlling the timing more than in some of the other groups, where more students resulted in more participation and interaction and required less intervention and prompting.

Furthermore, the aggregate data shows that Paul’s and Sally’s students had the highest cognitive presence, which suggests that their teaching presence impacted and mediated the level of cognitive presence in their book clubs. However, it is important to note that the cognitive presence density data shown by Paul’s O&C students is deceptively high because it was achieved with a considerably smaller number of students than the cognitive presence data in the other book clubs.

The density of social presence varied considerably across the five book clubs (see Figure 4.2) but there is no obvious relationship between teaching presence and social presence. For instance, in Paul’s O&C book club teaching presence is high and social presence is low but in Mark’s TWM book club teaching presence is low and social presence is high. There also seems to be no clear relationship between social presence and cognitive presence. For instance, in Sally’s NS book club social presence is high and cognitive presence is also high but, in Mark’s TWM book club, social presence is high and cognitive presence is relatively low. To understand the COIs further, it is necessary to focus on the individual indicators for the presences.
4.1. RQ1: Teaching Presence

Although the student participation guidelines and assessment rubric was the same for all five book clubs (see Appendix A), the pedagogic choices instructors made to mediate their book club students learning differed for a variety of reasons. Paul displayed the most teaching presence in four of the five instructional design and organization sub-categories (see Table 4.2). Each week, he was specific with his directions about what the students should read and how they should answer his questions or complete tasks, firmly established time parameters, and provided his students regular reminders of what was due by the student and when.

Table 4.2
Density of Indicators for Instructional Design and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting curriculum</td>
<td>0.69 (10)</td>
<td>0.98 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing methods</td>
<td>0.27 (4)</td>
<td>0.78 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing time parameters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.59 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing medium effectively</td>
<td>0.21 (3)</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing netiquette</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.17 (17)</td>
<td>2.74 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, Sally registered the second highest density score for designing methods because she repeatedly explained what the students should be doing and why.

Diana, the E&P and CID book club instructor, scored more instructional design and organization in her fall term E&P book club than in her winter term CID book club. Her

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2 Density is calculated by dividing the number of observed events by the total number of words in the book club and multiplying by 1,000 (Rourke et al. 2007)
setting the curriculum density was relatively high as she repeatedly defined what students should do and how they should do it, which included utilizing the medium effectively.

For example:

For this week, please answer TWO of the questions below... I would like you to choose one of the references listed and explain/describe the person/place/thing it refers to AND explain why knowing more about this person/place/things contributes to your understanding of the story. Please include visuals, examples, etc. of the reference you have chosen.

(Diana, E&P book club)

In her CID book club, Diana’s density figure for setting the curriculum dropped and her utilizing the medium density almost halved. This is noteworthy as her CID book club had the highest student word output. Mark, the TWM instructor, recorded the second highest density for instructional design and organization. He asked only four questions in the three weeks analyzed; however, he did experiment with posting questions as separate posts rather than including all questions in one post. Mark did this in an attempt to focus the discussions on one question, due to the absence of the threading function in Facebook Groups. Communicating this change in how students should respond to his questions increased his utilizing the medium density making it the highest among the instructors. All instructors had a higher percentage of instructional design and organization in the week at the start of their book clubs than they did in the week toward the end, which indicates that the students became accustomed to the online context and their instructors’ expectations and routines. Approximately 70% of Paul’s, and 38% of Sally’s instructional design and organization occurred in the student-led week. This is because both instructors provided detailed guidelines and explanations
about how the week would be organized and explained how processes such as time parameters and tagging would remain unchanged.

The COI student survey (n=58) carried three questions related to instructional design and organization in teaching presence. The E&P, TWM and CID book club students were in 100% agreement with the statement: *The instructor clearly communicated important book club information*, and a very small percentage, 11.11% of respondents in O&C book club and 12.5% of respondents in NS book club disagreed with the statement. Similarly, only 11.11% of respondents from the O&C book club disagreed with the statement *The instructor clearly communicated the purpose of the book club*, while all other respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 100% of students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in book club*. Evidently, the survey respondents believe that their instructors communicated the purpose, participation guidelines, and important book club information clearly in the five book clubs.

Diana used the same participation guidelines and rubric as the other instructors; however, it is not clear how she achieved such positive student feedback about her instructional design and organization. Her E&P book club has less density for this category than the other book club instructors and her CID book club has significantly less than the four other book club instructors. One reason for her high positive feedback could lie in how Diana explains and contextualizes questions for her students, for example:

The above references are not the only contextual references in Chapters 611 but they are perhaps some of the more important ones. Each of these references tells the reader something about the characters or themes of the story. Think about this when you try to explain why knowing more about these things can help you understand the story more deeply. I have added a question to each reference to help you!
Moreover, Diana provided several alternative questions (14 in total) for students to answer and offered choice within questions, for instance “Choose one other contextual reference that YOU decided to look up to help your understanding of the book.” A variety of questions framed in this way enables students to be active agents in their own learning. This is possibly why the majority of Diana’s students strongly agreed the statement *The instructor questions helped me clarify my thinking about the book* (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4.** Student responses to survey item: The instructors’ questions helped me clarify my thinking about the book.

Sally’s approach to questioning was similar to Diana’s. She posed seven questions in her NS book club, provided contextual references, and encouraged students to connect the text to their experiences in Canada. In contrast, Mark asked five questions in total, three of which were short open questions without explanation or contextualisation. For example: “How does Morrie believe a person gets meaning in his
or her life?” Similarly, Paul asked five questions and provided little explanation or contextualization. Instead, he typically added a secondary question Why? to the initial question, for instance: “It's Jimmy vs the artists. Whose side do you find yourself on? Why?” None of the instructors were recorded as identifying areas of agreement or disagreement. The most frequent technique the book club instructors employed to facilitate discourse was to encourage, acknowledge, or reinforce student contributions (see Table 4.3).

### Table 4.3

#### Density of Indicators for Facilitating Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to reach consensus/understanding</td>
<td>0.14 (2)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging/acknowledging/reinforcing students</td>
<td>1.23 (18)</td>
<td>1.96 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting climate for learning</td>
<td>0.14 (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing in participants, prompting discussion</td>
<td>0.48 (7)</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess the efficacy of the process</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.06 (30)</td>
<td>2.94 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paul did this the most with short positive exclamations such as, “I’m impressed”, and “Love both your answers!”; however, many of Paul’s comments and interventions were untagged. He simply typed a comment directly under the student comment, for instance, “I don't see how the idea of Stockholm syndrome is connected to Jimmy and his mother in your answer. Can you explain?”, and, “Try reading [Sawako’s] description and then think about it again.” He did this because there was little student
activity in his O&C book club. Furthermore, many of Paul’s comments were not mitigated by hedges or politeness markers, such as please and thank you, and could have been perceived as terse.

Sally also used positive exclamations to encourage her students and 50% of the time followed them with probing questions. She did this to draw students in to the discussion: “Thanks for your comment. I was wondering when Ashima wore a bathrobe instead of a sari. Doesn't she generally wear a sari all the time?” Focus the discussion on specific issues, “great answer and explanation for both questions! But can you clarify ethnic culture?” Assess the efficacy of the process: “Thanks for your answer...but you are missing a question! Please pose one for us!”, or seek to reach a consensus: “Thanks for your comments! So why do you think the school took the kids on the trip to the graveyard - what was the purpose of that trip?”

Mark also attended to drawing students into the discussion, but primarily facilitated discourse through encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions. However, he did not use the opportunity to assess the efficacy of the process. Instead he concentrated on setting the climate for learning with comments such as, “Happy Friday (and extra-long weekend) everyone!!! Hope you are all excited and looking forward to your Fall Student Break.” Diana also focused on encouraging, acknowledging and reinforcing student contributions. However, she did this far less frequently in the winter term. It is remarkable that Diana did not facilitate discourse at all in the weeks analyzed in her CID book club and at the same time recorded the highest student word output of all five book clubs. In her E&P book club, Diana often accompanied encouragement with direct instruction.
Despite the fact that no incidences were recorded of the instructor identifying areas of agreement and disagreement within the student discussions, the large majority of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the instructor helped identify areas of agreement and disagreement about the book (see Figure 4.5).

![Figure 4.5. Student responses to survey item: The instructor helped identify areas of agreement and disagreement about the book.](image)

It is possible that this aspect of teaching presence occurred in the weeks not analyzed, or that students gained insights and understanding from reading each other’s comments and teachers’ summaries and that this enabled them to avoid disagreements. Similarly, the large majority of students strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *The instructor helped keep the book club students engaged and interacting with each other.* This is not surprising considering the COI indicator drawing in participants, prompting discussion shows that the instructors facilitated discourse in this way most frequently after encouraging, acknowledging and reinforcing student contributions.
From the facilitating discourse data, it is unclear why 93.75% of Diana’s students in her CID book club agreed with this statement when she had no recorded activity for this category over the three weeks analyzed. Across the five book clubs, the amount of direct instruction differed greatly (see Table 4.4). The most common form of direct instruction was to focus the discussion on specific issues. Paul did this the most with questions such as: “Can you find the quote from the text where Jimmy's mother thinks people would become stupider?”

**Table 4.4**

*Density of Indicators for Direct Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present content/questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus the discussion on specific issues</td>
<td>0.34 (5)</td>
<td>1.17 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize the discussion</td>
<td>0.48 (7)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm understanding via assessment/ feedback</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnose misconceptions</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inject knowledge from diverse sources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to technical concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.89 (13)</td>
<td>1.96 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sally focused the discussion on specific issues in the same way she facilitated discourse: by politely acknowledging student participation, before focusing the discussion on specific issues. For example, “Thanks for your comments! So why do you think the school took the kids on the trip to the graveyard -- what was the purpose of that trip?” Diana focused the discussion in a similar way to Sally but her most frequently used direct instruction technique was to provide short summaries for the students. She often did this to underscore important information in the text, for instance, “Again, thank you
for your answers. I think we can see from these chapters that Eleanor has a very good reason to avoid her stepfather! We find out that he physically abuses her mother!”

![Graph showing student responses to survey item: The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.]

**Figure 4.6. Student responses to survey item: The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.**

All respondents from the five book clubs either strongly agreed or agreed that the instructor questions helped focus the discussion on the book in a way that helped them to learn. A third of the survey respondents from the E&P book club disagreed with the survey item *The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weakness.* 23.08% of the TWM respondents and 12.50% of the NS and CID book club respondents also disagreed with this survey item (see Figure 4.6).

### 4.1.2 Summary of teaching presence

Paul and Sally, the instructors from the unpopular book clubs, demonstrated the highest density of teaching presence as both instructors reiterated basic aspects of their
book club organization, such as when posts should be posted by, and attended to the efficacy of the process more than Diana and Mark. The way in which instructors worded questions and tasks may have affected how students perceived the design and organization of the book clubs. Diana and Sally had the lowest density figures of the five book clubs for this category but this is not reflected in the student feedback. Both instructors provided a variety of detailed questions for their students in their respective book clubs that explained what was required of the students to answer the questions. The most frequent method instructors used to facilitate discourse was encouraging, acknowledging, and reinforcing student comments. All four instructors drew students in to discussion using prompts, although Paul’s lack of politeness markers and hedging is a potential issue. The majority of survey respondents believed their instructors helped keep them engaged in the activity.

The most common form of direct instruction was to focus the discussion on specific issues. All instructors did this but they varied in the frequency and how they combined other indicators of direct instruction within their attempts to focus the discussion. Aside from Paul, instructors usually combined positive appraisals and appreciation of students’ contributions prior to confirming understanding or giving feedback. Diana frequently combined summaries. Paul and Sally also did this but also frequently confirmed understanding via assessment and feedback. The student survey data indicates that both Paul’s and Sally’s students believed that this helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses. Mark’s density for focussing the discussion on specific issues was relatively low, and he was the only instructor that presented content questions. He had no other indicators for direct instruction. This is likely why
almost a quarter of his survey students disagreed that he helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Diana recorded no direct instruction in the weeks analyzed for her CID book club but 87.50% of her student survey respondents agreed with the statement *My instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.* However, a third of her E&P student survey respondents disagreed with this statement, which may indicate that her time spent composing summaries for her E&P students was not as effective as the confirmation of understanding via assessment and feedback practiced by Paul and Sally.

There were inconsistencies between instructor’s online discourse and student perceptions of it. Although instructors did not explicitly identify areas of agreement and disagreement most student survey respondents believed they did. Similarly, no instances were recorded of Diana facilitating discourse in her CID book club yet the great majority of her students believe she did. It is possible that these teaching presence indicators were present in the weeks not analyzed in this study. Despite these inconsistencies, student perceptions of teaching presence in the book clubs were very positive. The findings also show that while the instructors used the same rubric for their book clubs they varied in how they combined the different aspects of teaching presence. These subtly different combinations and practices were, to some degree, reflected in how students perceived the effectiveness of their instructors.
4.2 RQ1: Social Presence

Social presence varied significantly amongst the book clubs because of how the book club instructors mediated student discourse. Affective social presence occurred very infrequently in all five book clubs (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Density of Indicators for Affective Social Presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un/conventional expressions of emotion, includes repetitious punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons.</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.78 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm</td>
<td>0.34 (5)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.48 (7)</td>
<td>1.37 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent form of affective social presence was that of students presenting details of life outside of class. Students in the two winter term book clubs NS and CID presented the most details of life outside of class. These comments were all explicitly tied to the instructor’s questions. For example, Sally in the NS book club asked her students to share, “one aspect of Canadian culture that you grew to accept after living here that you initially did not?” One of Sally’s NS students responded:

As for me, after living in Canada for some time I started to pay more attention to unfamiliar or just less familiar people, began to welcome them. Generally, I became more polite to them. I don't know if it is possible to name this “Canadian culture”.

---

3 Density is calculated by dividing the number of observed events by the total number of words in the book club and multiplying by 1,000 (Rourke et al. 2007)
Mark, in his TWM book club, asked his student to “Compare Mitch’s culture with Morrie’s culture. Explain which culture is more similar to your own.” One of Mark’s TWM students responded,

Though I am not as crazy as Mitch immersing myself in work, I easily forget the importance of communicating with others especially my family and ignore the benefits that doing activities like sports, dancing, or being a volunteer can bring to me.

One student survey item is indirectly linked to affective social presence: I was able to get to know some of the other students through book club (see Figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7.** Student responses to survey item: I was able to get to know some of the other students through book club.

This statement is linked to affective social presence because the social presence indicators assume closeness with others. While the majority of students agreed with this statement, in three book clubs over 20% of respondents disagreed with it; in the CID book club 31.25%, in the NS book club 25% and in the TWM 23.07%. Interestingly,
these are the book clubs where students were most likely to present details of life outside of class or expressed vulnerability.

With an average density of 5.19 across the five book clubs, interactive social presence was considerably higher than affective social presence. A key reason for this was the use of tagging, which was defined as: using a reply feature of the software, rather than starting a new thread (see Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6**

*Density of Indicators for Interactive Social Presence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using reply feature of software, rather than starting a new thread</td>
<td>2.61 (38)</td>
<td>2.35 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using software features to quote others entire message or cutting and pasting selections of others' messages.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct references to contents of others' posts.</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students ask questions of other students or the moderator.</td>
<td>1.92 (28)</td>
<td>0.59 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimenting others or contents of others' messages.</td>
<td>0.34 (5)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing agreement with others or content of others' messages.</td>
<td>0.62 (9)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.56 (81)</td>
<td>2.94 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the absence of a threaded discussion feature in Facebook Groups, at the time of this study, the tagging feature was used (and thus modelled) frequently by the instructors and students were encouraged to use it.

Furthermore, in the participation guidelines document students were advised that, in weeks 8 to 12 of the book club, that they should respond to a previous club member’s answer to receive maximum credit for their comment. The tagging feature
enabled students to clearly demonstrate they were doing this. The students in the NS book club used tagging the most and CID book club students the least.

In three of the book clubs, the student-led weeks saw a considerable increase in tagging. In the E&P book club, 71% of all tagging occurred in the student-led week. In the CID book club, 56.5% and in the NS book club 55.5% of all tagging occurred in the student-led week. It is reasonable to infer that a major reason for this is that the instructors in these book clubs stipulated students ask each other questions and answer each other’s questions. Paul, the O&C instructor, also asked his students to do this but only two of his students participated in the student-led week. Prior to the student-led week, Mark did not explicitly instruct his students to ask each other questions and answer each other’s questions; however, 28.12% of his students’ total tagging occurred in the student-led week. A week later, when Mark did explicitly ask his students to ask each other questions and answer each other’s questions, 50% of the total tagging for his book club occurred.

Students did not directly cut and paste quotes from other students’ messages as cutting and pasting is a behaviour that is prohibited on the program to discourage/prevent plagiarism. However, NS and CID book club students did make direct references to each other’s posts, and almost all students tagged the student that they were referencing when they did this. Students across the five book clubs did not use the tagging feature when asking questions to the group or to the instructor. Except for the NS book club, most of the tagging was one way, which means a student tagged another student but did not receive a reply (see Figure 4.8).
Figure 4.8. Percentage of one and two way tags across the five book clubs.

Instead of replying with a comment when their name was tagged in a comment by another student, book club students often acknowledged the tagged comment by liking it (see Table 4.7). This happened more in the book clubs in the winter term than the fall term and did not happen at all in the O&C book club (see example Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9  Example of an unacknowledged tagged student comment.

Students liked two way tagged comments more often than one way comments. Over 55% of one way tagged comments went completely unacknowledged. Students principally used tagging for replying to each other’s questions and often included
compliments or expressions of agreement when they did. For example, a student from the TWM book club wrote: “Good post! Andy Chen. I agree with your opinion. I also want to add …” The lowest density of compliments occurred in the O&C book club and the highest in the CID book club.

Table 4.7
Percentages of Liked Tagged Student Comments in the Book Clubs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liked student tags</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student → student (one way)</td>
<td>17.86%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ↔ student (two-way)</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NS and CID book club students complimented most in the student-led weeks, complimenting each other’s questions and answers. TWM students agreed with each other most and no agreement was recorded in the O&C book club. Expressions of agreement varied but usually included phrases, such as: “I partly agree with your answer”; “I agree that Morrie…”; “that’s right”; “I totally agree with your idea”, and, “I absolutely agree with your opinion.”

Three survey items relate to interactive social presence. A large majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with survey item 22: *I felt comfortable participating in the book club discussions*. It is unclear why TWM had the highest disagreement for this statement and yet recorded the highest frequency of agreement with others or the content of others’ messages (see Table 4.5). Survey item 23: *I felt comfortable interacting with other book club students* was more discordant: 37.50% of NS respondents; 22.22% of O&C respondents; 15.38% of TWM; and 6.67% CID respondents disagreed with this statement. Comparing these responses with the
interactive density data (Table 4.6) does not reveal any obvious relationships between online behaviour and student perceptions of interactive social presence.

While it could be argued that the O&C students did not express any agreement and expressed the least compliments and that this indicates why they did not feel comfortable interacting with each other, the TWM and NS survey responses had relatively high instances of these indicators and respondents from these book clubs also disagreed with the statement. However, the responses to survey item: *I felt that my opinion was acknowledged by other book club students* indicated more issues with interactive social presence (see Figure 4.10) and does suggest a possible reason. In the O&C book club 44.44% disagreed with this statement; it is possible that the use of the *Like* button in this book club influenced how students in this book club were perceived.

*Figure 4.10. Student responses to survey item: I felt that my opinion was acknowledged by other book club students.*
As shown in Table 4.7, neither one way or two way tagged comments were *liked* by the O&C book club students in the weeks analyzed. This coupled with the fact that no expressions of agreement were recorded in the O&C book club, and the lowest frequency of compliments were recorded in the O&C book club indicates that, tagging aside, the O&C book club had very little interactive social presence and that this negatively impacted the O&C students’ perceptions of their interaction in the book club.

The density for cohesive social presence was significantly increased across the five book clubs because the tagging feature requires users to type the names of other participants to create a tag. Consequently, this indicator accounted for between 24% and 66% of all cohesive presence in the book clubs. The use of pronouns *we, us* and *our* to address the group occurred most frequently in the CID book club followed by the TWM and E&P book clubs respectively (see Table 4.8). The use of the three inclusive pronouns, *us, we* and *our*, reflects the fact that students were attending to the task of maintaining the community.

**Table 4.8**

*Density for Indicators of Cohesive Social Presence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing or referring to participants by name.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>2.61 (38)</td>
<td>2.35 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
<td>2.65 (29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWM Mark</td>
<td>3.62 (54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Sally</td>
<td>1.32 (23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CID Diana</td>
<td>3.52 (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses the group as we, us, our group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>2.74 (40)</td>
<td>1.17 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
<td>1.17 (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWM Mark</td>
<td>5.84 (64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Sally</td>
<td>1.34 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CID Diana</td>
<td>4.02 (70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication that serves a purely social function, greetings, closures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.09 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.47 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWM Mark</td>
<td>8.58 (94)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Sally</td>
<td>6.43 (96)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CID Diana</td>
<td>5.34 (93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.35 (78)</td>
<td>3.52 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,951</td>
<td>14,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17,431</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This finding is strengthened by student survey item 26: *The online discussions made me feel like I am working with others to understand the book* (see Figure 4.11).

It is noteworthy that the TWM book club had the second highest density of inclusive pronouns but the TWM survey respondents registered the least agreement (76.93%) with this statement. The other book club respondents all registered over 80% agreement with the statement and, at 88.9%, the O&C book club survey respondents agreed most with the statement. This is remarkable given that the O&C book club had the lowest density for inclusive pronouns. Social cohesion is aimed at building a rapport with the group and includes communication that serves a purely social function. No communication of this kind was recorded in the O&C and CID book clubs and very little of it occurred in the TWM and E&P book clubs.

![Figure 4.11. Student responses to survey item: The online book club made me feel like I am working with others to understand the book.](image-url)
The most frequent communication of this kind occurred in the NS book club in the form of salutations to the group, such as, “Hi everyone”, and, “Hello everyone”, and comments showing appreciation for answering a question posed by another student; “Thanks for your comment!” , for example. This data conflicts with the student survey data for survey item 23 which, as stated earlier, shows that 37.50% of NS book club students disagreed with statement: *I felt comfortable interacting with other book club students.*

4.2.1 Summary of social presence

The pattern that emerges from the social presence findings is how instrumental the instructors were in mediating how students participated and interacted in the different book clubs. Overall, the density of social presence varied considerably between the book clubs, with O&C book club displaying the lowest and TWM and NS book clubs the highest. Affective social presence was low throughout the book clubs and was usually elicited through instructors’ questions, which required students to share details of their lives from outside of class. Interactive social presence was more prevalent than affective social presence.

The fact that students should tag each other and ask each other questions was stipulated in the assessment rubric and participation guidelines, was a key reason for a higher density of interactive social presence. The majority of tagging was one way. Although students often used the *Like* button to acknowledge comments they were tagged in over half of tagged comments were unacknowledged. When students did reply, they often included agreement or compliments in their comments. Although survey
respondents felt comfortable participating in the book club, throughout the book clubs, interactive exchanges were very short. A number of students felt uncomfortable interacting with other book club students, particularly in the unpopular NS and O&C book clubs. Communication that serves a purely social function was only recorded in the NS, E&P and TWM book clubs. This occurred most in the NS book club, where over a third of survey respondents felt uncomfortable interacting with one another.

4.3 RQ1: Cognitive Presence

As outlined in chapter two, Garrison et al. (2001) state that cognitive presence is a four-phase process involving (1) a triggering event; (2) the exploration of ideas; (3) the integration of those ideas where learners construct meaning from the ideas; and (4) a resolution phase where learners apply the new knowledge to educational or workplace contexts. Garrison et al. (2001) also advise “that the four phases are defined in the interests of parsimony, but in practice, inquiry is not so discretely defined nor is it immutable” (p. 161). It is with this caveat that cognitive presence is presented next. As with teaching presence and social presence, student survey data are synthesized with the content analysis data to provide broader and deeper insights into the nature and type of cognitive presence produced by the students in the book clubs.

Cognitive presence varied considerably in the book clubs (see Figure 4.3). Although the instructor weekly questions made up the majority of triggering events in the book clubs, they were not included in the cognitive presence analysis. However, student questions that were related to the book and book club were included and added as a new triggering event indicator alongside clarification and restating (see Table 4.9). Even
though students were encouraged to ask their own questions in the other weeks, almost all student questions were asked in the student-led weeks where they were instructed to ask a question.

Table 4.9

*Density* of Indicators for Triggering Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student questions asked</td>
<td>1.51 (22)</td>
<td>0.98 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>related to the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.78 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.58 (23)</td>
<td>1.96 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The E&P and NS book clubs recorded the highest density of student questions. In her student-led week Diana asked her CID students to, “discuss one instance where Christopher's unique way of looking at things has caused you to gain new perspective or has challenged your way of thinking.” As a result of not being specifically instructed to ask questions, CID students asked the fewest questions related to the book. No student survey questions are directly connected to triggering events; however, the triggering events did directly affect the exploration phase discussed next. The cognitive presence exploration data shows that unsubstantiated agreement occurred very infrequently, as did illogical leaps to conclusions (Table 4.10). Divergence of opinion also occurred infrequently across the book clubs and not at all in the TWM book club.

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4 Density is calculated by dividing the number of observed events by the total number of words in the book club and multiplying by 1,000 (Rourke et al. 2007)
Table 4.10

Density of Indicators for Cognitive Presence Exploration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement - to concur in (as an opinion) plain yes or I agree without substantiation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing - stating a fact, policy or rule - giving information from reputable source, lit, website etc.</td>
<td>0.69 (10)</td>
<td>1.57 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergence - to differ in opinion divergent opinion on any point presented by another</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.39 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leap to conclusion - no relationship to previous discussion, not logical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.59 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal narration - story, relating an incident. Describing instance/experience from &quot;their&quot; life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion - belief or judgment, personal view, attitude based on grounds insufficient to conclude factual</td>
<td>2.81 (41)</td>
<td>6.07 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.57 (52)</td>
<td>8.81 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five survey items are connected to the exploration phase. Overall, the majority of survey respondents agreed with the statement: The weekly questions increased my interest in the book. However, 33.33% of O&C respondents disagreed with this statement and 25% of the NS and E&P book club respondents also disagreed with the statement. Diana’s CID book club recorded the highest agreement, with 50% of students strongly agreeing with the statement and 43.75% agreeing with the statement. The great majority of survey respondents agreed with the statement: Hyperlinks and activities kept me interested in the book. Indeed, 100% of E&P and TWM respondents and 93.75% of CID respondents agreed with this statement.
These numbers make sense for the E&P and CID book clubs because Diana regularly shared hyperlinks and gave her students activities that involved internet search activities and posting images to the book club. Activities such as this not only encourage students to research the themes and topics from the text, they also seem to facilitate their interest in the book (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12. A student comment illustrating cognitive presence exploration.
Mark did not ask his students to do activities of this sort in his TWM book club. While he did share hyperlinks related to the text, he did not require students to comment on or discuss them. This is likely why 30.77% of TWM survey respondents disagreed with the statement: *I felt motivated to explore ideas and information related to the questions*. The other book clubs recorded between 75% and 100% agreement for this survey item. Both Mark (TWM) and Sally (NS) did not ask their book club members to do internet searches or other activities where they share hyperlinks with the group. This is reflected in their students’ responses to the survey item: *I used a variety of information sources to explore the questions in my book club*. 38.46% of the TWM respondents and 37.50% of the NS respondents disagreed with this statement. Also, 16.67% of the TWM book club respondents disagreed with the statement: *Finding relevant information helped me understand the book club questions*. While this figure is low it is still the most disagreement for this item across the five book clubs.

Integration in cognitive presence is where learners move into a more structured and focused phase of constructing meaning as they make decisions about the integration of ideas or how issues can be resolved. This can involve reference to a previous message; substantiated agreement or disagreement; building onto others’ ideas, developing a justified tentative hypothesis, as well as integrating information from other sources. This phase of the cognitive process is illustrated in the student comment (see Figure 4.13); here the student agrees and builds on the ideas of another student and provides support for her justified hypothesis with references to the text. Comments such as these were categorized as justified hypothesis and made up the majority of the analyzed integration cognitive presence indicators (see Table 4.11).
Table 4.11

Density of Indicators for Cognitive Presence Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P Diana</td>
<td>O&amp;C Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building on - augmenting a point made by self-earlier, or by another</td>
<td>0.96 (14)</td>
<td>0.78 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating solution - novel conclusion</td>
<td>0.07 (1)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justified hypothesis - a tentative assumption made to draw out and test its logical consequence to prove or show to be just, right, or reasonable…</td>
<td>2.81 (41)</td>
<td>1.37 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported divergence - disagree &quot;because&quot; - disagree with proof or cause</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported agreement - to hold up or serve as a foundation or prop for; agree &quot;because&quot; - agree with proof or cause</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.84 (56)</td>
<td>2.55 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.13. A student comment illustrating cognitive presence integration.

The majority of survey respondents across the five book clubs believed the discussions in the book club helped them understand other readers’ perspectives. Diana’s E&P and CID survey respondents agreed 100% with this item while the other three book clubs all registered over 87% agreement with the statement.

Resolution occurred very infrequently across the five book clubs (see table 4.12).
Table 4.12

Density of Indicators for Cognitive Presence Resolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>O&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-up - concluding, summarizing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought experiment - questioning in a &quot;What if?&quot; or &quot;What do you think about?&quot;</td>
<td>0.14 (2)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply, test, defend - any one of three but not retrospective narrative. Must be an application of new thought initiated by the discussion present.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.14 (2)</td>
<td>0.20 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total book club words</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the lack of cognitive presence resolution in the book clubs, survey students agreed 100% that the questions and activities in the book club helped develop their explanations and that reflecting on the book and discussing it helped them understand the ideas and concepts in it.

4.3.1 Summary of cognitive presence

Cognitive presence was high throughout the book clubs and individual instructor pedagogy significantly influenced how it was mediated. Students asked questions about the books mostly in the student-led weeks where they were specifically instructed to ask questions. The O&C book club recorded the most cognitive presence density and CID the least. The E&P and NS students asked the most questions to the book club about the book. The exploration phase of cognitive presence was dominated by students expressing opinions, beliefs, or judgements. This occurred most in the O&C...
book club and least in the TWM book club. The next highest exploration indicator was information sharing, which occurred most in the O&C, E&P, and NS book clubs.

However, over a quarter of the students surveyed in these book clubs felt the weekly questions did not increase their interest in the book. The great majority of students across the five book clubs believe that hyperlinks and activities kept them interested in the books they read. There was little unsubstantiated agreement in any of the book clubs and students rarely leaped to conclusions in their written comments. Students in the book clubs did build on or augment points made in earlier comments but the integration stage of cognitive presence was dominated by justified hypothesis comments, particularly in the TWM, E&P and NS book clubs. The great majority of survey respondents believed the discussion in the book clubs helped them understand other readers’ perspectives. Although resolution hardly occurred in the book clubs, students believed that participating in the activity and reflecting on the questions, enabled them to develop their explanations, and comprehend the texts.

4.4 RQ2: How Do Instructors Perceive and Describe Their Instructional Experiences in the Online Book Clubs?

4.4.1 RQ2: Instructor interviews

Before considering the findings of the instructor interviews it is useful to highlight important contextual factors. First, Diana was the lead instructor in the critical reading and writing team and proposed the book club activity and identified its (initial) purpose as an activity to encourage extensive reading. Second, Paul was the academic coordinator of the ABP when the data for this study were collected. It is essential to
recognize these factors and hierarchal relationships when evaluating how the instructors perceive the activity. It is also necessary to acknowledge that Diana and Paul had greater experience and influence over the perceived purpose and processes of the activity than those instructors further down the writing instructor hierarchy.

As stated in the in chapter three, the instructors were interviewed once each. On the next page Table 4.13 provides an overview of the instructors’ background information and perceptions of online learning and book club purpose. The synthesized interview data that follows is organized under four sub-headings: 1) rationale for book selection; 2) facilitating student-student interaction; 3) building a sense of community; and 4) perceptions of student participation and learning. The instructors’ interview data are presented with quotes from the transcripts of the recorded interviews.

4.4.2 RQ2: Rationale for book selection

The primary mediating artifacts in the book clubs were the books the instructors selected for the activity. Diana, Sally, and Mark each chose books for their respective book clubs with their students in mind. They tailored their choices by considering questions such as: How might my students benefit from reading this book? What might my students find interesting, or enjoyable about this book? These questions led Diana to choose *Eleanor and Park* because she thought the characters intercultural high school romance would not only be a story her students would be able to identify with but also a story that would enable her to facilitate discussions about intercultural relations. Sally chose *The Namesake* for similar reasons. Mark also focused on the student experience. He chose *Tuesdays with Morrie* because of its universal theme of how to live a good life,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor/Role</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Teaching philosophy influences</th>
<th>Online learning experience and perceptions</th>
<th>Perceived primary purpose of the book club activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Paul:** Assistant Program Director | MA TESOL & Educational Technology. TEFL Certificate. | EAP/ESL/TEFL 17 years: Canada, Asia. | Communicative language teaching (CLT); Guided discovery learning. | Entire Graduate Course: No negative or positive perceptions expressed about online teaching and learning. Perceives most his MA learning was “through individual essay assignments, not online learning activities”. | To enable students “to read in English for entertainment/leisure, and to provide students with a platform “to express themselves using things that we have done in class”.

**Diana:** Lead Instructor | MA Second Language Education. TEFL Certificate. | EAP/ESL/TEFL 17 years: Canada, Asia. | CLT; Content-based Instruction. Authentic learning materials. | Two graduate courses: “time consuming” “constrained by weekly comment deadlines” “perfunctorily answering other peoples’ comments”. | “Getting students to read large amounts of material, in a timely manner and that they enjoy reading… I really wanted them to enjoy, and get into the habit of reading.”

**Sally:** New Instructor | MA TEFL. TEFL Certificate. | EAP/ESL/TEFL 10 years: Canada, Middle East. | CLT; Student-centered learning; scaffolding; cultural sensitivity. | Graduate courses: students in online courses “are a little more responsive in terms of what they are going to say, because it’s an online course they don’t… actually see each other”. | To encourage “extensive reading…a love of reading or a love of reading English books”.

**Mark** New Instructor | Bachelor of Education. TEFL Certificate. | 6 years High School/ EAP/ESL/TEFL Canada. | CLT; Humanistic learning; Multi-modal literacy learning. | Undergraduate courses: “I thought it was fantastic mainly because as an autonomous learner… I had the freedom to just do it from home… I did spend more time than I imagined… and I did feel like I need to constantly be connected”. | An activity that enables “students to not only have an opportunity to read a great book but also to discuss it in several ways… through… simple comprehension questions or adding opinions and comments based on topics from the book”.

*Note: No instructor had received any training to teach online.*
and thought that the short philosophical chapters written in plain English would be accessible for his students. However, Paul had further rationale for his book choice, *Oryx and Crake*, namely, that the book had to be a book he enjoyed, or always wanted to read because he “was going to spend so much time with it.” Reflecting on his book choices for the book clubs he had conducted he noted “I do end up buying/choosing a book because I want to read it.”

**4.4.3 RQ2: Facilitating student-student interaction**

**Diana**

Diana used several strategies to facilitate student interaction. For example, she identified and tagged and *liked* exemplary student comments, comments that she believed were, “well thought out and insightful.” She also provided specific encouragement and praise, which was often suffixed with personalized follow up questions. She believes that her *likes* are reciprocated by students because they often *like* her comments and weekly question posts as well as other students’ comments. Diana thinks questions that ask students how they feel about what they have read, rather than specific questions about meaning, are more likely to take the pressure off students, who might otherwise become anxious when trying to find a “correct” answer.

Another strategy Diana used to facilitate student interaction was asking her book club participants to share web links, images, and video clips when explaining contextual references in her book club books. She argues that one of the objectives of extensive reading, in this context, is to expose her students to Western culture, and that having her students share information and helping each other to understand cultural references in the
story will increase their enjoyment of the book. Reflecting on this, Diana suggests that the book choice dictates how much of this kind of sharing can be done. *Eleanor and Park*, for example, due to the frequency and nature of 1980s popular culture references in the story, lends itself more to this kind of sharing than *Tuesdays with Morrie*, a philosophical dialogue between a teacher and student.

**Sally**

Sally stated that she supports and scaffolds learning by introducing ideas and concepts that are new and familiar to her students. She identifies learning opportunities in the books and exploits them irrespective of their importance to the main storyline. She provides an example from her book club:

Bengali American immigrants, they travel to India and there’s a part [in the story] where the character cannot speak to other Indians in the country because of the language diversity and, and that was something that I want them to talk about even though it wasn’t a major point in the book. So, we talked about that in depth...my main question was...So they travel to India why couldn’t they communicate with other people, why did they resort to English if Gogal himself is Indian?

Sally thought that her students did not interact enough, and was working out how to facilitate interaction in her book club. She perceives the other instructors have more student-student interaction and thinks the way she manages the conversation may be a factor:

I am wondering if I am more micromanaging than I should be, maybe I should like step back and let them do it; but then there’s this fear that they won’t do anything if I, if I don’t spur them on. So, I guess maybe that’s something I am trying to figure out right now...because it does kind of feel like it is instructor-student, instructor-student, instructor-student; I don’t want that.
Reflecting on her perceived micromanagement of the conversation, Sally observed that she is present in her book club more than other instructors, and that she thought that she needed to let the student comments go un.responded to for longer. She also thinks that she might be giving feedback to too many students and that this could be affecting peer interaction.

Paul

Paul was interviewed in the winter term and had completed his O&C book club. His book club at the time of interview was, for the first time, very popular and most of the students were engaged and participating in it regularly. Paul believes that the way he intervenes and facilitates learning in his book clubs is evolving. He reflected that in previous book clubs that he:

...would read what a student wrote and then sometimes quote what they wrote back to them and asked them directly to clarify what it is that they meant and I occasionally do that now, too. But I think I have tried more to let go of the, the reins more this time than in previous book clubs and just let them think whatever it is that they want to think, write whatever it is that they want to write, as long as it does address the questions that I am asking. So I do interject now too, but I don’t think I interject in quite the same way as I use to, right? I am not so demanding as I believe I was before. Now I would probably, I think I would comment more on what they are saying as opposed to ask them to explain better what they are saying.

Paul cites several possible reasons for these changes. He believes that because two of his previous book clubs were unpopular and had low student participation that he became less critical. He reflects that he did not want to “stifle” students who “put the effort into write a substantial amount of text” because he did not want “to scare them off from actually participating”. Paul also identifies observing how his colleagues interacted with their students in their book clubs as a factor that shaped his change in behaviour:
I noticed how different the way you and Diana approached talking to the students and I thought some of those are good things. Like you know, I, it softened me a tiny bit I think so, I, I wanted to be more social with the students because I was really much more teacher - yeah.

Paul’s awareness and concern regarding the lack of participation by his students in his book clubs greatly influenced his thinking about his online interventions. His expectations regarding student participation and how he facilitates learning were influenced by his observations of other instructors’ pedagogy in their book clubs.

Mark

Mark considers he facilitates student interaction and understanding through the use of comprehension questions, for example, asking his students to ask comprehension questions to each other, and encouragement. He notes:

I can’t provide it for everybody but the, the times that I have provided that encouragement to students they really... embrace it very well and, and, and it almost seems like they’re happy to be recognized out of a group.

Mark found it challenging to involve students in activities that were not question based. He explained that he had posted video clips and his students often liked the clips, but did not comment on them. He provided another example and described a week when he used an activity idea several of the instructors had used, whereby the students are asked to imagine the book as a film and asked to cast different actors to play the roles of the characters in the book, upload a photo of their chosen actor and explain their choices. However, again, he was unsure how to scaffold the activity and said that it did not produce the participation he had anticipated.
4.4.4 RQ2: Building a sense of community

Diana

Diana postulates that asking her students to like each other’s comments, to share multi-media web links, to comment on each other’s posts, and to take responsibility for identifying and explaining contextual references important to understanding the book are community building activities. She reasons that this is because students have to work together to increase their understanding of the text, and that in doing so appreciate and, come to rely on one another. Diana explains her thinking further:

I think there’s no one way to read a novel. I think that, everyone’s interpretation, to a greater or lesser extent, is valid. So, I think that they are going to get a much richer experience, reading experience with those other viewpoints...So, that’s why it’s important that this community be created where they can share ideas and hopefully get something from the book.

Sally

Due to her perceived lack of student-student interaction, Sally did not think she was building a sense of community in her book club. She notes that she wants to change this and that she, “will have to try different things” because she thinks that her “students want to talk to each other and like each other.”

Paul

Paul sees his participation in his book club, the fact that he is present and interacting and responding to his students, as part of his community building. He notes for instance that he is engaged when he reads student responses and often replies to student comments more as a fellow reader than as an instructor. He believes these
interactions, in which he writes comments such as “That’s a really good point” or “I hadn’t really thought of that”, help him be part of the online community and help build that community. Paul observes that he often has to prevent himself from participating too early so that his students can participate first. He reflects, “sometimes the book is really interesting right, and I want to say my opinion as well.” Paul states that he has noticed in other book clubs that instructors behave differently to him:

The instructor when they post a new question often say something complimentary to the students in general, based on the previous week, for example. I, I really never do that...I can see that as a way of trying to build everybody to feel good about themselves, but I prefer to do it individually, I think, inside a particular post.

He provides the following rationale for his preference:

I am hypersensitive to the fact that sometimes participation can be low and can taper off too, especially when you have very few people to begin with. So, my one way to deal with that was to try to talk directly to those students and, and whether or not it built a community in, in a certain sense, it built an obligation almost I think with that student to feel like they had to continue participating...I think is that I want the students to leave the book club thinking somebody you know, the instructor paid attention to them...I think that builds a community of sorts.

Paul was aware his book club had low engagement and participation, and thus observed the pedagogy of his colleagues in their book clubs and thought about practices that he can appropriate.

Mark

Mark tries to build a sense of community with his learners for two connected reasons. Firstly, he considers, whether in the classroom or online, learners need to feel comfortable learning and that if they do not feel comfortable learning will not happen. He uses off topic comments and jokes to build a sense of community:
For example, this week it’s the fall break so I said enjoy your long weekend and, and while you are enjoying it keep these ideas in mind. When it was Halloween, I also made similar comments about their trick or treating, and so on and so forth. So, I do like students to feel as if it’s, it’s not just a book club but also a place for them to come and communicate as the, as, as a group like a, a small community.

Mark reasons that, if students feel comfortable, they will be more engaged. He considers that this engagement is related to motivation: “If a student doesn’t feel comfortable then they hesitate a lot and, and probably [will] not post anything.” He adds that his opinion based questions allow students to connect the text to their personal lives and enable them to share personal ideas and stories and that this too helps to build a sense of community.

4.4.5 RQ2: Perceptions of student participation and learning

Diana

Diana considers that the composition of her students’ comments improves in the book clubs and that her students are learning more from one another than from her in the book club:

I think that at the beginning they tended to gauge what each other was doing and maybe expand so there was a new standard going forward right? So, I think when I had all let’s say twelve people answer the question, three people gave longer answers, those longer answers became the new standard. I think there has been some of that, I think they have been learning from each other and increasing the length and the complexity of their answers.

She believes that she has facilitated this process through highlighting and praising individual comments. The key skills Diana considers her students are practicing are explaining and supporting their opinions, either with supporting information from the text or from their life experiences. She also thinks that her students are learning important online academic pragmatic skills. She notes that as the book club progresses
the frequency of interactional phrases such as “I really liked your answer, but I disagree with you,” and “but it’s only my opinion, right?” increases. Diana perceives this as a positive effect of the book club and that the students are transferring these pragmatic skills from their spoken English classes where they learn academic discussion skills.

Diana considers her book club pedagogy to be more flexible and “freer” than Paul’s. She encourages student interaction through the use of student-led weeks, media sharing and encouragement, and highlights exemplary student comments to clarify her expectations of her students. Although Diana conceived book clubs as an activity to encourage extensive reading, her perception of the purpose of the activity is changing and she thinks it is useful for practicing writing short answer question (SAQ) answers (see Appendix A for an explanation of SAQ).

Sally

Sally believes that students respond well to her questions and that they have learned to understand what she expects from their answers. She explains that she is very specific with her questions and what she wants her students to explore, and that her students are producing well thought out and comprehensive answers as a result. Sally perceives that the book itself plays a key role in student participation and that approximately midway through the book students became more interested in it and wanted to talk about it more. She also speculates that another factor that leads to increased participation is that her students grow more comfortable with her as the term progresses. Sally suggests that a “confluence of these different factors lead to better responses towards the end of the book club.”
Paul

Paul also thinks that the students are socialized into appropriate behaviour in his book club. He provides an example from his current book club of a student that initially posted “outrageous” comments but “really tamed” over the course of the book club. Paul believes that this “taming” was due to the student “seeing what other people had posted” and a response to what Paul, “felt was a reasonable thing to, to say or what elicited a response from me in some way.”

Mark

Mark strongly believes that his students have increased their understanding of what is expected of them in his book club and as a consequence improved their written composition as the club progresses:

I think a lot of students have now understood that they are required not to just post an answer but also add a comment, a question...a separate opinion, perhaps, even using names, tagging people’s names from previous comments and...adding to that.

He estimates it took his students approximately four weeks to begin to change their book club participation behaviour, applying the SAQ format to their comments and answers in the book club. He also believes that students are improving their reading and writing skills through their participation in his book club but perceives critical thinking skills as the most important academic skill his students are improving. He notes that this is because, “a book like Tuesdays with Morrie...requires the student to, to not just answer...on the surface but really dig a bit deeper.”
4.5 RQ2: How Do Students Perceive and Describe their Instructional Experiences in the Online Book Clubs?

4.5.1 RQ2: Student case studies

As stated in chapter three, three case study students were interviewed five times each over the course of the two book clubs. Their demographic data, EFL learning histories, and online learning experiences are displayed in Table 4.14 on the following page. The synthesized interview data that follows are organized under four sub-headings: 1) Student perceptions of their book club instructors; 2) Book choice and participation strategies; 3) Communication issues and perceptions of others; and 4) Perceptions about learning. Xiulan, Liling and Miguel’s perceptions of their book clubs are recorded with quotes and illustrated with screenshots from the book club Facebook Group pages.

4.5.2 RQ2: Student perceptions of their book club instructors

Xiulan “In my village I am the first one to ever go abroad to study”

Reflecting on both book clubs, Xiulan stated that reading was more “enjoyable” in Mark’s book club, and that she “prefer[ed]” Sally’s book club for learning how to write appropriate answers. She linked her enjoyment of the reading in Mark’s book club to his encouragement and positive feedback which helped her become “more confident.” She also claimed that the hyperlinks and media that Mark shared about the book helped create a sense of community in the book club because they connected her to “real world” news events.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liling Paul</td>
<td>Book club (O&amp;C)</td>
<td>18 years old, Female, Chinese, Mandarin.</td>
<td>English classes and homework for approximately 12 hours per week for 14 years’ Chinese state schools in Beijing, Grammar translation method. Little or no speaking/composition writing. Minimal interactive English use. No English use beyond formal studies, or at home.</td>
<td>Facebook user for 1 month. Opened an account to follow ABP Facebook Group which publicise events and activities for students on the program. Uses Wechat a Chinese application to chat with friends and family in Chinese.</td>
<td>None.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally (NS)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Experimented learning English online using shanbay.com but found it difficult to navigate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xiulan Mark</td>
<td>Book club (TWM)</td>
<td>18 years old, Female, Chinese, Mandarin.</td>
<td>English classes and homework for approximately 12 hours per week for 13 years Chinese Boarding School in North Eastern China. Grammar translation method. Little or no speaking/composition writing. No interaction. Grade 12 (I year) Canadian International school. Minimal English use beyond formal studies, or at home.</td>
<td>Facebook user for 2 years. Use increased greatly since starting University. Uses Wechat a Chinese application to chat with friends and family in Chinese.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally (NS)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>In high school English class participated in online discussions based on TED talks. He had difficulty expressing himself as there were many strong disagreements about politics. Has used Google translate for several years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>Book club (E&amp;P and CID)</td>
<td>19 years old, Male, Ecuadorian, Spanish.</td>
<td>English classes and homework for approximately 12 hours per week for 14 years. Communicative, interactive, group work. Focus on speaking and writing in interaction. Watches English language films, listens to English language lyrics/music. Often spoke in English with his mother (a graduate student from US University) at home.</td>
<td>Facebook user in Spanish and English for 4 years. Follows science related Facebook Group pages: Does not comment “because you don’t even know who you…interact with. So… the answers… are not reliable.” Used Instagram and Twitter, Snapchat and Viber for 2-3 years in English.</td>
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Regarding Sally, Xiulan stated that she appreciated her feedback and found it useful but was also a little embarrassed by it because she thought it showed her lack of understanding about the book. An example of a feedback exchanged between Sally and Xiulan is provided below:

Sally – Xiulan - I'm not sure, but is your Q5 a question or just a statement?  
Xiulan – Sally - It is a statement towards my opinion about superheroes.  
Sally – Xiulan - You were supposed to pose a question about something that puzzled you and you couldn't figure out. Your statement does not do that.

Xiulan thought Mark and Sally asked questions that guided her understanding of the book by asking her to empathize with the central characters of the books and to consider what she would do if she was in the same situation as them. She noted that she preferred these kinds of questions because they enabled her to integrate her experience or opinions into her answers.

Liling “English here is totally different from what we learn in China”

Liling viewed her book club instructors, Paul and Sally, quite differently. She feels that she did not get to, “know about” Paul because he “seldom talk[ed] about himself” or what he thought about the questions he asked. She found Paul’s lack of self-disclosure disconcerting, and suggested that he appeared to be indifferent toward the students and that he did not seem satisfied with her answers. In addition, Liling thought that she and the other O&C book club students would have benefited from further clarification from Paul about key events in complex chapters in the book that link to previous chapters; however, she did not feel comfortable enough to ask him questions:

One thing I am not...feel very good is the instructors tell [us]...talk about...opinion about the novel and I think maybe I should have told him that I don’t quite understand...the connection between the, the chapters or something like that.
Liling thought that the book was too difficult to understand. She repeatedly referred to her perception that Paul’s feedback was focussed solely on the student answers to the questions he posed and rarely offered his own opinion. She also thought that Paul did not always explain his questions clearly and provided an example from the previous week’s questions:

Last week.... he ask us to pose the question...before Monday and answer them before Friday, but he didn’t explain how many questions [we] need to ask. So, I asked two questions but actually he just preferred one. So, I need to...delete one question...you know...it took me a longer time for me...to create more questions.

In this instance, Paul had clearly written that students should only ask one question and answer one of the other student’s questions. Nevertheless, Liling stated that the weekly questions in both book clubs increased her interest in the books she read. She noted Paul’s questions helped keep her engaged with the complex O&C story:

After I read those questions when I read the book I may consider about the...questions...so it keep me to read the book and...keep me...thinking about both the question and the content of the, the novel...also I think...those questions may...help us to...think more critically...because it’s related to a lot of subjects...not only...the comprehension questions.

Liling preferred questions that asked her to connect an idea or theme from the text to the “real world.” This was, in part, because she did not fully understand the book but also because she considered that these kinds of questions helped her develop her “critical thinking skills”, as well as “find some information about the whole world, about other subjects. I think it’s more interesting than the, the book itself.” She explained further:

The instructors usually ask us to …make connections between the, the content and...some social topics. So, I usually write it in a short answer form and the instructor may gave me some comment about like which part I explain good, which part is unclear so I may further explain it, so it’s a good for me...my critical thinking skills...because...I know how...express my like argument or opinion towards some questions and I know how to organize my thoughts and explain in a clearly way.
Liling believes the feedback Paul gave her has helped her improve the reasoning in her answers and that she now writes more logically, explains her thoughts more clearly, and provides evidence to support her arguments. She also believes she benefitted greatly from the opinions and advice given by Sally, her instructor in the NS book club:

One thing I really appreciate...is sometimes because of the culture difference I don’t quite understand why the...character made [a] decision. So, the instructor...talks about her experience or her opinion to help me understand it. I even think that...she doesn’t think...she is right but she give me some opinion. And because the instructor has more knowledge so I...got some more opinion or like what western people think about...questions.

Liling appreciated Sally’s comments and liked them because Sally ensured she framed her comments as her opinions, rather than as hard facts. However, she considered the cultural theme of *The Namesake* as “not academic” and interaction in the book club as “sometimes a little casual” because the instructor often talked about her own experiences adjusting to new cultures. Liling considered there to be “a lot of difference” between the instructors’ questions in her two book clubs. She perceives Paul asked more “critical thinking questions” than Sally, who asked more questions that asked students to share details about their own lives. Liling also considered Sally’s questions “easier to answer” and that more students participated in the book club as a consequence, although she was sceptical about the merits of this kind of participation:

So...we might have a lot of things to, to say...but...I think at the same time...many questions are just like description questions where you tell your own stories in...Canada so it’s not really help us in critical thinking, but they are much easier to, to answer.

Liling viewed her instructors’ participation and feedback in the book clubs as community building and considered their questions to be “very open” compared to the reading comprehension questions her teachers gave her in China.
**Miguel** “This is the first time to interact with people from a totally different culture”

Miguel considered Diana’s comments to be “clear”, and, “specific.” He stated that he had received, “useful” feedback in the first few weeks of the *Eleanor and Park* book club regarding the organization of his answers and improved the clarity of his writing. Furthermore, he thought Diana helped clarify difficult to understand aspects of the book and identify language that was used inappropriately. Miguel believed Diana was flexible with some aspects of her questions, inflexible with others, but consistent overall. For example, in a typical question he was given the freedom to select an aspect of the story, such as a cultural reference, he wanted to talk about but then had to explain it using the criteria Diana provided. Miguel considered that the weekly questions required a deep understanding of the text and increased his interest and critical thinking. However, he preferred to respond to questions that enabled him to state his opinion, rather than to comprehension questions.

4.5.3 RQ2: Book choice and participation strategies

**Xiulan**

Xiulan “enjoyed” reading both her book club books, and both books were her first-choice books. She found *Tuesdays with Morrie* inspirational and easy to read and understand. She chose *The Namesake* because she thought she would find the cross-cultural experiences of the main character interesting, and that she could, “get some advice from the book” that she could apply to her own experiences moving from China to Canada. She found *The Namesake* a more challenging read than *Tuesdays with Morrie* because she was not familiar with several cultural references, and read *Wikipedia* to further her understanding of the text. Xiulan thought she should participate in both book clubs in the following way:
I think first thing you should actually read the book and you know what a writer is talking about and...you need to use your brain not just read it and forget everything. And think about some questions...the instructor gives...and share your ideas, your arguments, even your questions to each other.

She understood that questions should be answered in one sentence and supporting information should be given depending on the question, and stressed that she thought interaction with the instructor and other students was very important in the book club, explaining:

Sometimes you cannot actually understand what the author want to tell you. Maybe you have some misunderstanding or, or confuse things so it’s important that you talk to the, the other students, they might have different opinions so you can understand it better or keep it in the right track.

Xiulan reads other students answers regularly for two reasons. She is often curious to read, “if others have the same or [if] they have different opinions” to her own and if she is not sure about how to answer a question she will read other students answers because it helps her think about her own answer.

A key difference between the two book clubs that affected Xiulan was her perception that her peers in The Namesake book club write longer answers than those in the Tuesdays with Morrie book club. This seems to have affected Xiulan’s perceptions regarding her own ability: “So I think it’s...necessary that I also answer a lot...but sometimes I...just feel...I can’t, I don’t have the ability to answer too much because my thought is...limited.” Xiulan remained positive about her interpretation of the book club, noting that “most” students in her two book clubs shared their opinions and commented on each other’s answers. She considers that this interaction enabled her to make several friends with her fellow book club students; however, she liked only three fellow student comments in the Tuesdays with Morrie book club and none in the NS book club.
Liling

When asked to compare the two novels she read in her book clubs Liling focused on her reading comprehension and whether she could relate to the characters in the books:

So, last semester I choose *Oryx and Crake* as my book. I thought this book is a science fiction...I can’t understand what happened in the novel...it’s difficult for me to find connections between different chapters and...I don’t quite understand the, the purpose of the novel. This semester I choose *The Namesake*, and this book is about culture difference, it’s about a family emigrate from India to America and it talks about like India American boy and how his life experience and because it’s about culture conflict. So, I can find some connections between the novel and my own life. So...in this way it could be easier for me to understand.

The online resource Liling accessed throughout both her book clubs was Wikipedia, which she used for accessing specific information about the books and for background information to support her arguments for her answers to questions not specifically related to the books.

Miguel

Despite the fact that it was not his first choice book, Miguel thought E&P was an interesting book as he was able to “identify” with aspects of the love story and found the themes interesting to explore. In the winter term, he read his first choice book CID and preferred it to E&P because he thought the story was “closer to real life” and “more complex.” He found the main character, a fifteen-year-old autistic savant narrating in the first person, very interesting because of the, “biological and psychological aspects” of his character. Miguel posted the required amount comments each week, “no more, no less,” however, he spent “considerable time trying to answer” questions because he felt highly engaged with the story. Another factor that appears to have heightened his engagement in the
winter term CID book club was that he knew several the other participants from his face-to-face classes in the ABP and he perceived them to be more competent English users:

I know they are...very hard working people they really like to write a lot...I know them because they are in my tutorial class...I am pretty sure they know more English than me. They are better at speaking and writing.

Miguel perceives the CID book club was “tougher” than the E&P book club because there was more engagement and participation by the students in it. He also believes that sometimes the participation of other students was perfunctory:

They just write and write...without any point. So, it became much more tougher in the sense that, people get involved, they write a lot, they not just answer the questions but also participate, interact with other...you can see...they are taking this very seriously.

He also found the increased participation in his winter term CID book club frustrating and explained that:

Sometimes you don’t have room to express...what you think because other people have already said [it]; because there is just one answer...So what else are you going to say? Because it’s, it’s pointless to be redundant, right? If you, if somebody has already said what you think, it’s not worth writing this again.

Miguel pointed out that this problem was often compounded by tagging, which he feels can inhibit participation. He explained that four or five students “monopolize[d] the participation”, writing very long answers to the questions and tagging one another. He believes this kind of participation deters others from participating because students either feel excluded because they were not tagged or cannot contribute further because an eager minority of students have already exhausted the discussion.

Miguel recalled a disagreement with a Chinese student (Polly Ding) in his E&P book club. Although he initiated the disagreement (see figure 4.14) he did not respond to her rebuttal. Note the like for both comments is the instructor’s. Miguel thinks that not
responding to another student’s reply to his disagreeing comment is a strategy for managing disagreement.

Furthermore, not replying does not make him feel uncomfortable. He believes that because students are not physically “facing each other” some students “write whatever they want.” However, a more likely reason for his behaviour could be that it is difficult to express disagreements in his second language. Miguel explained that persuading a person he is correct is frustrating and that he sometimes does not prolong disagreements because he feels he cannot express himself as well as he would like.

Figure 4.14 Miguel’s disagreement with a book club student.

However, Miguel believes he writes in a “scholarly” way in book club and is irritated by students that answer his comments in a different register to his own. He states that he does not like answering comments that are not of a similar register to his own. Nevertheless, Miguel “feels comfortable” interacting in the book clubs and “enjoys” the weekly questions,
particularly student questions, which he sees as community building. Miguel notes that he usually interacts in the CID book club with two other students, a Chinese student that is his face-to-face classmate and a Russian student. He thinks that this interaction pattern evolved because they found each other’s questions interesting. However, he does have a strategy of avoiding his fellow Ecuadorian student’s questions. This is because he believes their questions to be more, “reflexive” and therefore more difficult to answer than those composed by the Chinese and Russian students in the book club.

4.5.4 RQ2: Student perceptions about their learning

Xiulan

Xiulan perceives the book club as a comfortable writing space, where she can share her thoughts:

In Facebook book club...you can give examples or support from your own experience and you can...express what you feel; what’s your idea about that?...so I like to talk about those kind of things...I can explain my idea to others and I can also see...what other people think about...our thoughts and ideas.

When asked if she was enjoying reading *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Xiulan exclaimed that she “love[d] it!” She noted that she had practiced different reading strategies and explained that she has speeded up her reading because when she reads now she tries to guess the meaning of the words she is uncertain about, considers the words position in the sentence and in the context of the story. Xiulan links her enjoyment of the book to her instructor’s praise and encouragement as well as her perception that the book club is an authentic activity: “It’s not like its homework project you have to do; it’s…a real book club, not just…online homework.” Evidence of this perception is provided by 11 of her comments that provided a
purely social function, usually in the form of greetings such as, “Hello, everyone. This is [Xiulan] sending my love to you guys,” which accompanied many of her comments in the NS book club.

While Xiulan does not perceive the activity as homework, she does perceive it as beneficial to her reading and writing. This is because as well as reading the book she reads the instructors questions and the questions and answers of other students in the book club. Xiulan finds that this supports her learning because sometimes she does not understand what the question is asking for; she notes, “I need to read other students answer to help me get organized with my, with my thoughts of the answer.” Also, she tends to read the answers to questions that she wants to answer or has answered to see if she has similar or different points to other students but also reads answers to other questions, especially if the instructor has given the student feedback. She sees this as an opportunity to “learn by others mistake[s].”

Regarding her writing skills, Xiulan believes that writing in the book club activity has helped her improve how she organizes her thoughts in writing. She notes that she consciously integrated classroom instruction on how to use transition words and connectors to express her ideas, and believes that practicing the use of them in the book club has enabled her to express herself more clearly.

Liling

Liling believes she learned from reading other students answers in the book clubs through sharing opinions, knowledge, and being asked to clarify her comments by the
instructor and other students. She also considers that reading other students comments helped her learn how to compose her own answers. She gives an example:

The boy...I discuss with usually organize his ideas very much I think it’s better than me sometimes...he just follows the logic, and...I think he [is]... much familiar to those kinds of questions: how to maybe at first give the, the opinion and then how to support it...how to say point by point so much clearly. For me...there are some ideas in my mind but I don’t know how to organize so I can learn from...their answers.

Furthermore, she found her instructors’ comprehension questions helped her understand the book and the questions that asked students to connect issues or ideas in the book were challenging. Liling explained what she did when she read a question in the book club:

First, I may read the, the questions and then I may think what it’s related to - I mean may be a subject or something. I may try to find some information from my, my mind...If I learn something before related to the same question I think sometimes I...find such as wellness related to a biology I, I think I can have a lot of things to write…but sometimes when it’s related to politics I am not really familiar with the topic and I need to Google it a lot, to, to find some evidence to support my argument.

Liling found this process useful because she claimed that at school in China, “they don’t encourage us to think about opinion like opinions...towards the society or the politics because they just want us to, to obey”. She connected the process to what she will be required to do when she starts her undergraduate courses:

In university, we are supposed...explain our own argument and for point by point and use some evidence to support it. I think the book club [is]...a really good chance for us to think one question critically yeah, because I think in, in the other course we don’t have...the chance...to think about, to answer such questions.

Liling perceives the questions Paul asked in the Oryx and Crake book club required her to think critically and therefore kept the questions at the forefront of her mind as she read the book. She considers the questions in The Namesake book club as descriptive because Sally often asked her to connect the intercultural experiences of the characters in the book to
her experiences as a newcomer in Canada. Liling explained, “they...just require us to
describe...not think...very deeply so I may read the content first and then read the questions.”
She preferred Paul’s questions “because we are now in university so I think we, we not only
say what happened but we need to try to explore...the deep meaning we need to
think...and...we need to have our own thoughts.” A reason Liling perceived this was because
Paul, due to the low number of students in the book club, regularly asked her to clarify her
comments further.

However, she repeatedly stated that *Oryx and Crake* was a difficult book to
understand and that only three students participated toward the end of the book. She
explained that the reasons for her lack of understanding were related fact that the book’s
author invented new words, and that the story was not chronological and moved between the
past, present and future. Consequently, she found it difficult to make connections between
the chapters. Although frustrated by her lack of reading comprehension in the *Oryx and
Crake* book club, Liling decided that it was still a useful learning opportunity, reasoning with
herself that:

It’s a good way of write good, short answer for me so maybe I can...learn from in this
way like how to express my opinion, but...I don’t understand...better by reading their
comments.

She also viewed her learning in *The Namesake* book club positively, stating that because it
was about “culture difference so from other comments I can know some different cultures.”

Liling explained further:

Also for...some questions sometimes I got confused but...after I read other students
comments I can have idea. Maybe I still don’t agree with them but at least...I
can...learn something I even didn’t know before, so I think...that’s really cool.
Liling noted that she does not read other student answers before composing her own because, “I need to think in my own way, if I read others answers I may change my mind, or it may affect my...thoughts so usually...I don’t read it before but I will read after I post it.”

She provided the following rationale for this strategy:

For most of those questions I haven’t think about it before. In China, we seldom think about such things so for me it’s like the first time...I think about such questions. So at first I need to...be...with my own thoughts or...own opinion, I...may sometimes even think in Mandarin...to say what I really thought about this question, because I...seldom think about those before. So...I don’t prefer to read others opinions before I post.

Furthermore, Liling usually read other students’ comments only after the instructor had given feedback about the comment and identified it as a good answer. She would then read it, “very carefully” to identify content in the comment that she may have missed in her own comment. Liling did not address misunderstandings and repetition she noticed in other students’ work as she views this as the instructor’s job. She provided an example of learning from other students in *The Namesake* book club. The story contrasts different experiences of hospitality between the main character’s Indian parents and those of the American parents of his girlfriend. Liling initially did not understand why the main character felt so comfortable with his girlfriend’s American parents. It was only after reading the comment of a Russian student she began to understand the cultural differences further (see Figure 4.15).

Liling considers the writing in the book clubs to be “very serious” as she has to organize her answer as an SAQ and that:

Because the, the question is about...our own experience...or some comprehension about a novel...I try to make it more...deep and, and I try to like I will express, not only tell...what...happened in...my life but also maybe...about my...thoughts, about those culture difference like what I think.
Sharing her own intercultural experiences in the book club in this way seemed to have a noticeable effect on Liling. She talked about how she was now questioning stereotypes and cultural differences for the first time in her life.

(Q2) At some point, Gogol states that “[it is a different brand of hospitality from what he is used to… [they are] assured…that their life will appeal to him.” What does he mean by this? Explain.

**Liling**

Q2: I can understand Gogol’s feeling but I disagree with him. Gogol’s parents just talk about everyday life or keep silence in dinner, while the Ratliffs talk about art. I can understand that Gogol finds it easy to communicate with the Ratliffs and feels they aspire something in spirit instead of in material. Later, the Ratliffs ask Gogol about Calcutta. But they ask if it’s beautiful instead of the poverty. Maybe it is a new point in Gogol’s opinion. However, I think they don’t really want to know the country, they just want to know if it is a good place to travel to. Also, the Ratliffs are “vociferous” and “opinionated”. They just want to express their opinion and they don’t care other’s feeling. While Gogol’s parents respect their guests and consider their son’s own feeling. When Gogol said he want to change his name during dinner, their parents think about it carefully. His father finally agreed because he wants his son be happy, no matter how important that name is to him.

**Elizaveta Kartasheva** Question 2:

From my point of view, Gogol noticed that Maxine’s parents had absolutely different lifestyle comparing with his own parents. Firstly, he did like how Lydia and Gerald welcomed him. They were very nice with him, asking questions about Gogol’s experience in India. They spent a wonderful evening together. At the same time after the dinner Maxine’s parents left Maxine and Gogol to give them time to be alone. It means that they easily accepted Gogol. Secondly, Gogol liked that Gerald and Lydia “kept out of their own way” and Gogol with Maxine were able to enjoy each other’s company. Thirdly, he felt comfortable staying with Maxine’s parents. However, when he stayed with his own parents he felt limited, dependent from his parents and obliged to do something for them.

**Figure 4.15. The example Liling gave of her learning from another student.**

Questioning whether anecdotal evidence offered by some students who suggested all Canadians are kind was representative of the whole of Canada, and whether the density of population in the larger cities in China might affect why some Chinese people do not queue,
Liling concludes “So, I, I begin to, to think about like what happened under the, the surface?”

**Miguel**

Miguel considers the learning in the book clubs to be interactive and enjoys the fact the instructor asks students to post digital media such as images, videos, and song lyrics to help the students to understand the book. He considers that good questions are questions that require the reader to read an entire chapter to understand how to answer, rather than sentence level comprehension questions, which he claims are, “pointless.” He also believes answers should be reflective, supported by pictures and sometimes hyperlinks, and show what the student thinks the authors’ intention might have been.

Miguel believes the purpose of the book club is reading comprehension and that understanding of the text cannot be achieved without fully understanding all the vocabulary and the various cultural references; he claims that this is necessary for “deep understanding” in order to write “good answers.” The reading that Miguel did in his book clubs was not restricted to the book club books because he also closely read instructor questions and other students’ comments. Indeed, he noted that, on several occasions, he initially misunderstood the instructor’s questions and comprehended them fully only when he had read other student answers. He also read other students’ answers before answering to avoid redundancy and repetition in his answers. This, he claims, made answering the questions more challenging because he had to think critically about what other students had written to write a “good” comment.

To manage the amount of reading in the book clubs, Miguel usually only read other student comments on the subject he had written about. He enjoys reading student comments
that include personal experiences but does not read all comments because he thinks that some students write, “unrelated comments” to “impress the instructor.” Miguel thinks Eastern European students can sound old fashioned, that they skip prepositions and articles, and that they write for their instructors rather than for themselves. Reflecting on how reading other students comments helped him understand the texts, Miguel says “It’s like this, movie that [is] happening in your mind”, a movie in which his thoughts “get combined with, what other students’ think.” He believes this process to be, “interactive” and “multifaceted” because “the views of students are very different especially from students that come from a very different culture.”

Moreover, he believes the amount of reading, and weekly deadlines of the book clubs has compelled him to speed up his reading for time management purposes. He thinks this has helped him improve his comprehension and skim reading skills:

I was able to skim a whole page or a whole chapter and I would [not] only get...like a lot the chapter...but also the, a lot of details...just...looking over it without being like very specific and read sentence by sentence...and spend a lot of time looking for, for vocabulary.

He also notes how he began to read the instructors questions more closely, prior to reading the text:

The question sometimes were...like very specific...so when we, were reading book at the same time we have to look for that details...so one of my strategies...was to first read the questions and see what they are talking about, what they are focusing on so then I can come up with a good answer based on what I read.

Miguel acknowledges that these reading skills and strategies were sometimes mediated through online translation tools and dictionaries. However, he believes he is now better able to recall what he has just read in English and identify salient passages of text related to the questions he answers: “I really get the, the question, the, the gist of the question so I am able to, answer it in a way that my instructor wants me to.”
Miguel considers the “accuracy” of his grammar and organization and transition of ideas has improved through writing in the book clubs. He adds that he is now able to provide “specific examples” from the text to support his claims and that his answers now “directly respond to the question[s]”, using both academic and informal language. Miguel also considers his composition process is more efficient: “I feel like...now it’s easier for me to write, it doesn’t take long...to think what I think, know it and more...accurately”. While he acknowledges that he has learned to write SAQs on the course and practiced writing SAQs in the book clubs, he suggests that it was his interest in the books, particularly in the winter term, that facilitated his development of these skills:

I think now I am a little bit more effective and efficient in my answers because I know how to answers [the questions] and also this book drew my attention a lot. I am kind of very engaged with the book and...what the authors have...written. So, I feel that I am much more able to answers these kind of questions.

Despite these positive perceptions about his writing skill development in the book club Miguel does not think these writing skills can be transferred to other subjects. He bases this opinion on his final essay and final exam scores in which he was marked down for incoherence caused, in part, by grammatical errors. He believes that his writing in the book club was too relaxed and that because grades were, according to him, based on good answers and not grammar his grammar learning did not improve. Consequently, he believes the book club does not prepare students for writing at university. He notes: “I didn’t improve my...writing skills because...I wasn’t used to the system...of the university. So, at the end I was kind of in a rush and that’s why I didn’t have a very good grade.”

The conflicting perceptions Miguel has about his writing skills improving in numerous academic ways and yet not sufficiently preparing him for writing at university, are
quite possibly more to do with his time management, mediating tools, and preparation than with the book club being too relaxed and not focussing on grammar enough. Indeed, Miguel noted that he was highly engaged in the winter book club and found it a relaxing environment in which he could draw on several internet tools including, translators, dictionaries, and Wikipedia, to mediate his written compositions. The time he had to write as well as the access he had to various tools in the book club contrasts greatly with test conditions, where the stakes are high, time is short, and internet tools are prohibited.

Miguel said he rushed the final essay; thus it is likely he did not research and read sufficiently prior to composing it. As with reading other students’ answers in the book club, research is an essential scaffold for student essays. If his research was rushed, it is not surprising that his essay was found lacking.

4.5.5 RQ2: Communication issues and cultural perceptions of others

Xiulan

Xiulan explained that the varied vocabulary of non-Chinese English speakers in the book clubs affected her comprehension:

For example, the Ecuadorian students they might use some words I don’t know, so sometimes I don’t know what they are talking about so I need to check the word and to reread it, but for the Chinese students we got learn quite similar so their English writing is, is easy to read. I think if a Chinese student talk to an Ecuadorian student they are going to find out words they don’t know, because they have the different English education in, in different countries.

Asked whether she communicated with certain students more than others, Xiulan started to talk about how she sees herself and compared herself to the character in The Namesake:
I think that personally I am kind of like the boy...in *The Namesake* who can see...himself as American not Indian, or Indian. Right now, I am still so young and my mind is half Chinese and half western.

Xiulan believes she is western because her “mind is pretty open”, more open than her parents. She explains, “I can accept different cultures, different values...and I think people...don’t need to be divided into white people, Chinese people, or Canadians.”

**Liling**

Liling also understood non-Chinese student comments less clearly than the comments of her fellow Chinese students. She reasoned that she could understand Chinese students’ comments, even if they were disorganized or ungrammatical, because she thinks that Chinese students think in the same way and have had very similar English learning experiences in China. However, she struggled to understand Ecuadorean students’ comments because she believes Ecuadoreans’ learn English, “in the different way.” Liling makes similar observations about a Russian student in her book club:

[Vladamir] thinks in a different way...I think maybe...the education is different so he may be...a little more creative or think...on more things related to the question...In my opinion, if I thought about that thing I may[be] don’t think there is a connection between two things, but after he explain it...I think those two things kind of have a connection, so I think that...we think in a different way.

Liling showed an astute awareness of the influence of Chinese students’ first language on English: “Our first language are all Mandarin so when we translate in our Mandarin...because we...think in the same way...maybe affected by our mother tongue.” She understands Russian students but thinks their answers are sometimes very long and she sometimes needed a dictionary to interpret unfamiliar phrases. Liling had similar difficulties comprehending Ecuadorean students’ comments and identified other differences between Chinese educational culture and what she had experienced on the ABP program. She noted
that Chinese teachers are strict, serious, focussed on marks, and seldom talked to students, while in the ABP:

Instructors and students behaved casually in...class or out of class, and those teachers are, are willing to talk with us...I may have some problems or I may think about the...like meaning of the life or what’s my...goal...of the life or something. And...sometimes...I got confused, I have...some problems...and book office hour...and talk to my instructor. And they may, I think they...helped me in psychological...and helped me to adjust my mood or...feeling...to become more calm...to life in here; but for those topics I, I never talk about is my Chinese teacher.

Miguel

Miguel finds it difficult to read Chinese students’ comments because he believes many Chinese students “invert the order of the words” and that their over reliance on translation dictionaries often results in them choosing “odd sounding” words when they write. However, over the course of the program, he has become used to reading Chinese students’ writing, and thinks that Chinese students understand the books very well and communicate this understanding in their book club comments. Moreover, Miguel enjoys reading Chinese students comments in book club because “it’s interesting to see what they know about it and...what they are just...realizing now.” He has been trying to understand Chinese students’ perspectives and now thinks:

Sometimes what they want to...show [is] very similar to what I want to show in Spanish. So, I think there are some connections even from Spanish...to Mandarin. Nonetheless, he considers Ecuadorian students’ written English easier to read because he believes the Spanish language and Ecuadorian mind-set is closer to European countries than Chinese language and mind-set. Furthermore, he perceives Chinese students to have less knowledge of western media figures than Ecuadorian students and that Ecuadorians are culturally closer to the west than Chinese. This assumption is based on his observations of a book club task. The instructor asked the students who they would choose to play the different
character roles in a film of the book, and upload and image of the film star and explain their choice. Miguel was surprised that many of the Chinese students uploaded images of Asian film stars and “not Hollywood actors”.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the implications of the data for each of the research questions and is organized as follows. The discussion of RQ1, How is teaching and learning mediated in an online literacy activity?, is examined under the headings of teaching, social and cognitive presence. This is followed by the discussion of RQ2, How do instructors and students perceive and describe their instructional experiences in the online book clubs?

The primary artifacts that mediated learning within each of the book clubs were the books selected for the students to read, the instructors’ questions and interventions, the student participation rubric, student comments, and the Facebook Group pages in which the book clubs were hosted. Indeed, the selected books and related weekly questions and activities formed the book club curricula and subsequently informed and shaped most the communication in the book clubs. The functionality and affordances of Facebook Groups discussed in the pilot study are not the central focus of this discussion; however, the instructors and students use of tagging, liking and emoticon functions mediated learning and impacted social presence, and thus influenced participation in the book clubs.

5.1 RQ1: How is Teaching and Learning Mediated in an Online Literacy Activity?

An initial interpretation of the aggregate COI data suggests that, although the book clubs were part of the same course within the same program, they were, like classrooms, individual teaching and learning contexts, with different kinds of teaching and learning occurring in each book club. This supports Kozan and Richardson’s (2014) conclusion that the interdependence of the presences may fluctuate and is dependent on the learner profile.
and education context. The book club data suggests that the role of different instructor approaches in the activity strongly mediated learning and subsequently the relationships between and among the presences.

5.1.1 Teaching presence

A reoccurring theme in the data was the strong impact instructor decision making and actions had on student participation in the book clubs. The type and number of instructors’ questions, the frequency and manner of instructors’ interventions, and the comments instructors selected as exemplary all shaped how learning was mediated in the activity. The most important single decision the instructor made was the choice of book he or she chose for the book club. The book determined which students signed up for the book club, the types of questions and activities the instructor could engage students in, and how invested students were in the activity. While it is not always possible for an instructor to anticipate what kind of reading students might enjoy, it is the instructor’s responsibility to choose a text that students can comprehend.

Two book club books, Paul’s *Oryx and Crake* and Sally’s *The Namesake*, were unpopular at the sign-up stage and many of the students in these book clubs found themselves reading books they were not particularly interested in, nor motivated to read. However, as did Diana and Mark, Sally chose her book club book with her students’ current capabilities and knowledge in mind. She was aware *The Namesake* was an appropriate level text for her students, and was confident she would be able to engage her learners in the subject matter (intercultural differences). By contrast, Paul’s rationale for choosing *Oryx and Crake* did not prioritize his students’ needs. He chose the book because he himself had read and enjoyed it, and because it was a book he was going to spend a lot of time with. The fact
that *Oryx and Crake* is a very complex story, with confusing shifts in time between chapters and with invented vocabulary, resulted in many students finding the book too difficult to read. Incomprehension of the book initiated the disengagement shown by students from the *Oryx and Crake* book club. It also created conditions not conducive to language learning for the students that persevered with the book because, as Krashen (2003) notes, a primary condition for extensive reading is comprehensible input. By contrast, *The Namesake* was an appropriate level text for ABP students. Even though it was an initially unpopular choice when students signed up to read it, Sally was, with sound pedagogy, able to engage her students with the text and facilitate an active and engaged book club over the course of the term.

The ABP instructors used the same book club rubric and guidelines to regulate student participation. However, beyond the rubric document the teaching presence in each book club varied considerably. A key variation was the number and type of questions the instructors used to mediate learning. Guldberg and Pilkington (2007) argue that it is important for instructors to ask a range of different question types and consider the kinds of questions that need to be posed in terms of meeting the relevant learning outcomes. Diana and Sally both asked a range of different questions in their book clubs and scaffolded learning within their questions by explaining how they expected their students to approach the questions. Scaffolding of this kind removes ambiguity from the question task and helps students understand the type of answer the instructor expects (Bruner, 1983). Moreover, questions that are precisely expressed, that provide clues to appropriate strategy, and focus students on relevant aspects of text they are reading are consistent with research on effective L2 literature teaching (Nance, 2010).
Sally scaffolded learning further as she often asked her students to relate the experiences of the characters in *The Namesake* to their own experiences, which enabled her learners to personalize their ideas and language thus making it more meaningful (Tomlinson, 2012). Miguel, Xiulan and Liling noted that students preferred answering questions where they could relate their own experiences and perceived that such questions helped develop their critical thinking more than comprehension questions.

While Paul and Mark asked some questions that encouraged their students to personalize ideas and language from their books, they asked fewer questions than Diana and Sally, and those that they did ask contained little other scaffolding. Furthermore, Paul’s repeated use of the question tag *Why?* did not support his learners or focus questions for them. On the contrary, it is likely that the question tag made his questions appear too broad and open, more intimidating to students, and, as a result, caused them to disengage from the discussion for fear of getting answers wrong (Fung, 2004). These findings underscore the argument that it is not solely the model, rubric or assessment tool that supports student participation and writing. Rather, it is the particular way in which an instructor uses the tool that makes the scaffolding effective or ineffective (Benko, 2012) and mediates subsequent learning.

According to Garrison and Arbaugh, (2007), in order to facilitate discourse in a COI instructors should review and comment on students’ comments to keep discussions moving in an appropriate direction. Instructors should also raise questions and try to engage participants in the subject activity. As established in the findings, the book club instructors primarily facilitated discourse through encouraging, acknowledging or reinforcing student contributions. A reason why Paul and Sally did this more than Diana and Mark is that it is
more difficult to engage students in texts that they are not intrinsically motivated to read (Reed, 2005). Similarly, Paul and Sally also chose to use direct instruction to diagnose student misconceptions and mediate understanding via assessment and feedback in their book club comments. However, how each instructor framed their feedback was quite different.

Paul encouraged individual students but never addressed the book club as a whole. Also, he did not consistently model interaction as he often did not tag those students he commented to. Instead he wrote comments directly under the student comments, often without any linguistic softeners or politeness markers. Indeed, Liling interpreted this as an indicator of instructor indifference and dissatisfaction and found Paul’s manner disconcerting, which made him seem more unapproachable to her.

As discussed in Chapter 2, positive face strategies dominate computer mediated discussions because their use fosters community, as participants seek to establish common ground and build consensus. Paul’s discourse strategies often did little to mitigate the threat to students’ positive face and therefore may have been perceived as abrupt or impolite, thus closing down communication rather than fostering open communication, as effective teaching presence should do (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes & Fung, 2010). This point is further illustrated by Paul’s request to Liling to delete one of the two questions she had composed in the student-led week because he had asked students to ask one question and answer another student’s question. In a book club with so few students participating it seems counter-productive for an instructor to ask a student to delete work that she has thought about and composed simply because the student did not follow instructions exactly.

By contrast with Paul’s approach, Diana, Mark, and Sally used more student sensitive
strategies. Sally, for example, regularly addressed her book club students as a group and consistently tagged the individual students she commented to. Further, her strategy of combining encouragement with probing questions and politeness markers such as *please* and *thank you* could explain the markedly different levels of social presence between the students in Sally and Paul’s book clubs.

**An instructors’ community of practice**

Each instructor noted that they were working out best practices for the activity and observing how other instructors facilitated their book clubs. This was made possible because each instructor joined the other book clubs and was therefore able to read all the questions, comments, and interactions in those book clubs. For several reasons, these transparencies of teaching practice lead to the emergence of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) among the instructors. Firstly, in the absence of any training in how to teach online, the instructors looked to one another for guidance and pedagogical practices and ideas. Secondly, Mark and Sally were new to the ABP (novices), and actively sought guidance. Thirdly, Diana, the lead instructor who introduced the book clubs into the curriculum, became the proxy master practitioner because she ran popular and engaged book clubs, while Paul, the assistant program director, had unpopular and disengaged book clubs, which led to him looking for pedagogic guidance and practices from the instructors in the other book clubs.

While further discussion of this COP is beyond the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that through observation, self-reflection, dialogue, and experimentation the instructors experienced extensive professional development regarding their understanding of online teaching and learning while facilitating the book clubs. They were, as Daniels (2012) writes
about Vygotskian pedagogy, instructors aware that some of their interventions and practices “may lead to inappropriate understanding on the part of the learners” and “trying to understand the consequences of the teaching they practice” (p.77). This dynamic developmental process occurred throughout the data collection period.

5.1.2 Social presence

Social presence was generally a little awkward in the book clubs as many students grappled with how to interact in English appropriately in a formal online educational activity. There were issues with politeness and self-disclosure, and interaction was often stilted. The main factors influencing the occurrences of social presence in the book clubs was the use of the tagging function and the student participation in the student-led weeks. Again, the instructors’ actions were instrumental in how the students behaved. Sally, Diana (in her E&P book club) and Mark consistently modelled the use of the tagging function when commenting on students’ comments and their students participated and interacted (tagged) with one another in the student-led weeks. Only two students participated in the Paul’s Oryx and Crake book club student-led week and, as previously noted, Paul did not consistently model the use of the tagging function. Whether it is used as a scaffolding technique or to model task behaviour, modelling is a quintessential pedagogic tool in the teaching and learning process (Bandura, 1986).

In order to provide a supportive learning environment for ABP students, instructors should model online tasks and behaviours consistently, as consistent and clear modelling not only reduces ambiguity about instructor expectations for learners, it reduces learner anxiety in the process. The net result of these instructor activities is the fostering of supportive learning environments in which students are more likely to engage and participate.
Another issue identified regarding tagging was Miguel’s perception that it can inhibit participation because students that are highly engaged in a discussion topic frequently tag one another in their comments. This can exhaust the subject being discussed and exclude other potential participators in the process. Miguel experienced this in the CID book club in which Diana’s teaching presence was minimal. This is noteworthy because perceived tensions of this kind (i.e. tagging being inclusive and interactive as well exclusive and a possible barrier to interaction) can be mitigated by an instructor who is cognizant of which students may be dominating discussions (Xin & Feenberg, 2006). For instance, Diana could have intervened in the discussion, asked further questions to open the topic up for the rest of the students, and restore learner agency for students such as Miguel who felt excluded.

Another finding of potential concern regarding student tagging behaviour in the book clubs was the number of tagged comments not responded to or even acknowledged with the Like button. Clicking the Like button in social media contexts is loaded with various socio-pragmatic functions and meanings (Barton & Lee, 2013); however, the act of liking comments and posts in online academic discussions has recently started to be understood more clearly. Makos, Lee and Zingaro (2015) found university students value receiving likes from their peers because the act is perceived as a form of appreciation and acknowledgement of their ideas. Consequently, students feel more positive toward those classmates and social presence is enhanced. The fact that over half of all one-way tagged comments across all five book clubs were completely unacknowledged has negative implications for developing cohesive social presence because many students appear to be ignoring each other in front of their peers.

Furthermore, if a student does not acknowledge a classmate who has addressed him
in a comment, it could be interpreted as disapproval by the classmate and, as such, be considered a face threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In computer mediated discussion, discourse strategies often aim to seek common ground or at consensus building. The presence of so many face threatening acts in the book clubs adversely affected online reciprocity and community building. In short, comments that were not responded to inhibited student participation in online discussions (Hewings, Coffin and North, 2009). This certainly seems to be the case in the *Oryx and Crake* book club, in which none of the one-way (or two-way) tagged comments were acknowledged or liked. Also, *Oryx and Crake* students did not agree with one another at all and complimented each other the least of all five book clubs. It is unsurprising then that 44.44% of the *Oryx and Crake* survey respondents disagreed with the statement: *I felt my opinion was acknowledged by other book club students*. The lack of acknowledgement by *Oryx and Crake* students would have contributed to their dwindling participation in the activity, which resulted in only three students participating in the latter weeks of the book club.

Although students did interact in the book clubs, the interactions were not extended. Dialogues consisting of more than a question and answer followed by an acknowledgment or clarification of the answer were very infrequent. Only three were recorded in total, one each in the E&P, O&C, and NS book clubs. This finding underscores research that online discussion participants seldom elaborate on their comments and posts or challenge one another’s opinions (Kanuka & Anderson, 1996), and that many messages are often one-way interactions (Pawan, Paulus, Yalcin & Chang, 2003). However, it also runs contrary to the suggestion made by Pawan et al, (2003) that, without detailed guidance, students tend to produce monologues rather than engage actively online. The book club students were
provided with detailed rubrics and participation guidelines and reminded of how they should participate throughout the course of the book clubs yet still predominantly engaged in monologues.

The fact that most ABP students were, for the first time, writing online for an audience in English is a factor that contributed to their apprehension regarding interaction. As noted by Miguel, writing a persuasive argument to support a stance about a subject can be a frustrating process for L2 learners, because they often cannot express themselves as well as they would like to. Indeed, Miguel found this so frustrating that he decided not responding to a comment was an acceptable strategy for managing disagreement in the book club. His decision to not respond to another student in one of the few disagreements in the book club was another lost teaching moment. An intervention by the instructor could have drawn attention to the fact that not responding to someone is impolite, and inappropriate behaviour in the book club and that disagreement is useful and positive when framed in particular ways.

Other pedagogical factors also impacted affective social presence. Despite the fact the activity is hosted in Facebook Groups, it is an assessed activity in a high stakes context. The instructors do not advocate “texting” acronyms such as “LOL” or “OMG” often associated with the medium. Furthermore, while students are not explicitly told they cannot use emoticons, their use is not encouraged and instructors used them sparingly, usually to soften feedback. In combination with assessment and participation guidelines that clearly show the link between the quality of discussion comments and grades, the students appear to have perceived the context to be formal and consequently adopted an appropriate English academic discussion register in the book clubs. This suggests that with suitable organization, modelling, and guidelines, Facebook Groups can be used as a formal instructional
environment. However, affective social presence might be diminished as instructors try to alter the perceptions and use of the platform away from informal chat for it to be exploited for educational purposes.

The lack of acknowledgement between students may have negatively impacted the levels of affective social presence, which was relatively low throughout the book clubs. Although most survey respondents agreed, they were able to get to know other students through the book club, 23.07% of TWM students, 25% of NS book club students, and 31.25% of CID book club students believed that they did not get to know other students. Also, some book club students that self-disclosed may have over shared and made other students feel uncomfortable (see Figure 5.1).

![Figure 5.1. A student self-disclosing and over sharing in a comment.](image)

Interestingly, these were the book clubs in which students presented details of life outside of class or expressed vulnerability the most. This is puzzling because we usually share humour with likeminded others and share details of life outside of class or express
vulnerability with people we are comfortable with and think we know. Li-Barber (2012) provides a possible reason for the finding. She suggests that although self-disclosure is common in social media such as Facebook, users that self-disclose have different motivations for doing so, and may in fact be dissatisfied if other people do not self-disclose. Students that self-disclosed in this way may have felt that other students did not self-disclose or did not self-disclose enough. Thus, they may have perceived they did not get to know other people. This could be one reason why a significant minority of survey students in the TWM, NS and CID book clubs disagreed that they felt comfortable interacting with other book club students.

5.1.3 Cognitive presence

The student comments were quite complex and the majority were categorized under cognitive presence. As with previous COI research (Kanuka, Rourke, & Laflamme, 2007; Pawan et al., 2003, and Garrison et al., 2001), the student comments in the discussions centered on integration (justified hypothesis) and exploration (opinion). However, for several pedagogical reasons, the density of the various cognitive presence indicators varied considerably between the five book clubs. Students in Sally’s The Namesake book club and Diana’s Eleanor and Park book club recorded the highest density of student questions (triggering events). The way in which Diana and Sally set up the student-led week in their book clubs could explain this. Both instructors provided scaffolding about the type of questions their students should ask:

Make your questions as challenging as possible. When I make questions for the group, I try to model them on the discussion question model used in our reading circles. (Diana, E&P book club)
If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. Ensure you ask questions that require extended answers and not simple comprehension questions. You may also ask questions about previously read chapter if you want to. Also, if someone answers your question, comment on their answer. (Sally, NS book club)

Subsequently, the students in their book clubs asked (and answered) complex questions that not only guided the reader to a specific part of the text and provided contextual information but also demonstrated they had read and thought about the text (see Figure 5.2). Mark, in his TWM book club, did not offer advice but “challenge[d]” his students to “ask at least one question in addition to posting their response to [his] question.” This resulted two thirds of the book club participants in his student-led week asking questions such as, “Why do you think Morrie admitted talking to God?”; “My question is what did Mitch learned in first Tuesday?” and “Why do you think Morrie wanted to meet Mitch’s wife so eagerly?” Mark’s questions also generated discussion and engagement with the text. However, in his O&C book club, Paul did not offer advice or guidance about the type of questions his students should ask.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gene Zu</th>
<th>In chapter 32, the stepfather of Eleanor gives her fifty dollars as a Christmas present. However, in previous chapters we have read about events that described him as someone who does not care about Eleanor. Then, why did he do that? Find information in the chapter that could support your answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 November 2014 at 23:45 · Like: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liz Rado</th>
<th>chapter 31, Eleanor’s mother takes out an “incredibly ugly hat” and put it on Eleanor’s head. According to the description of writer, we could know that Eleanor does not like this hat at all. But why does she not refuse to wear it if she does not like the hat? Furthermore, what do you think the meaning of “I have lice now” said by Eleanor?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 November 2014 at 06:37 · Like: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.2. Example of student questions from the E&P book club.*
Instead he provided “a couple of rules” related to the number of questions students should ask, the chapter they should ask them about, when they should post their questions, to only answer questions that have not been answered, and the dates questions and answers should be posted by. In combination with previously discussed issues connected with Paul’s question forms, scaffolding techniques, and perceived politeness, his focus on rules in the student-led week suggests why only two students participated.

Nevertheless, the O&C book club recorded the highest density of information sharing because, in the other weeks analyzed, Paul asked his students to share information and the few students that participated shared a great deal. The students in the E&P and NS book clubs also shared a lot of information. In each instance the sharing was a direct response to the instructor’s questions. For example, Diana asked her students:

What does Eleanor mean when she says "Desperate was white noise, as far as Eleanor was concerned it was the hope that pulled at her heart with dirty little fingers." (more metaphor!) Look up the term ‘white noise.’

And Sally asked her students to:

Pick one word or phrase from the chapter that you have never heard of or seen before until now. Describe what the word means, its part of speech and other word forms of the word, if it applies (i.e. the noun of it, the verb of it, etc.).

The most densely weighted exploration indicator across all five book clubs was opinion: belief or judgment, personal view, attitude based on grounds insufficient to conclude factual. The O&C book club students recorded the highest density for this indicator. Again, the few O&C students that participated explored Paul’s question thoroughly. What happened in Paul’s book club is that few students signed up to read the book and many of those that did sign-up to read the book did not participate or disengaged from the activity over the course of the book club. Students such as Liling that remained were frustrated by the difficulty of the
book but diligently answered the questions posed by the Paul who, due to the low number of students, had time to focus the discussion on specific issues and confirmed their understanding through feedback.

In the CID book club, the way that questions were asked was a significant factor in students producing opinions without a sufficient factual base to justify them. Diana asked her book club to, “Discuss one instance where Christopher's unique way of looking at things has caused you to gain new perspective or has challenged your way of thinking” and “Well we are quickly nearing the end of the book, so this week I would like your predictions for how the book will end.”

![Figure 5.3](image-url)  

**Figure 5.3. A student response to a student question.**

In the NS book club 60% of the opinion based comments were produced in the student week and were related to how students asked their questions. A typical example of an NS book club student question was: “In your opinion, what are the reasons that make...
Moushumi unfaithful to Gogol (affair with Dimitri)?” This question produced the response shown in Figure 5.3 from an NS book club student.

According to Garrison et al. (2001), in the exploration phase, interlocutors engage in information sharing, offering opinions, and leaping to conclusions. These types of explorative cognitive activities are reflected in the example student answer.

Integrative cognitive presence, whereby learners develop their understanding and construct meaning based on the exploration phase, was the most cognitively dense aspect of cognitive presence across all book clubs. The justified hypothesis indicator was most prevalent and highest in Mark’s TWM book club followed by Diana’s E&P and Sally’s NS book clubs. Once again, the type of cognitive activity at the integration level can be linked with the questions and the topics of discussion in the weeks analyzed. Instructing students how to compose their own questions about a text is an important factor in developing reading skills because the questions asked form the base on which responses are constructed and subsequently how the text is comprehended (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011).

Because the Oryx and Crake students were disengaged in their book, Paul tried to engage them by asking questions that were only tenuously related to the story, such as, “What's a company slogan or logo you think is clever? Post an image of it here and explain your choice.” Questions and tasks such as this encourage the sharing of beliefs and opinions, not the integration of ideas from the text or the creation of solutions. In contrast, Mark in the TWM book club, asked students to, “Describe how Mitch is changing through these Tuesday meetings.” This task is tightly tied to the text and requires students to formulate a hypothesis, integrate ideas and information from the text, and provide logical reasoning to describe how Mitch’s emotional state changes. It enabled a deeper understanding of the text
and produced cognitively more complex responses as a consequence.

The finding that students rarely move to a resolution phase in their inquiry is an issue consistently reported in the literature. In their review of COI research, Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) observe that students in COIs rarely move beyond the information exchange and exploration phase. The research suggests that reasons for this are strongly linked to question types (Meyer, 2004), specifically collaborative task designs, where shared goals requiring a collaborative solution or artifact enable students to move to the resolution stage (Murphy, 2004; Arnold & Ducate, 2006). The online book clubs do not lend themselves to this kind of question or task design. In general, book club participants explore books with their peers and integrate the ideas in the texts with their own thinking. This was achieved in all the online book clubs, with second language learners who demonstrated their understanding in written English. Furthermore, the fact that cognitive presence integration was so high suggests that book club is a very useful activity for the ABP students on the critical reading and writing course.

It is evident that the decisions an instructor makes regarding book choice, question composition and scaffolding, the number and frequency of questions, the reasons for and manner of interventions as well as the modelling of expected behaviours, significantly mediated the social and cognitive presence of students in the book clubs. However, the content analysis and survey findings do not explain the effects of Diana’s lack of teaching presence in her CID book club. Diana recorded the lowest density for instructional design and organization and facilitating discourse, and no direct instruction was recorded in the weeks analyzed. Remarkably, this absence of teaching presence did not negatively impact the perceptions of her survey students.
Although CID students’ cognitive presence was the lowest of the book clubs, aside from one instance in the TWM book club, CID book club participants were the only students to disagree with proof or a cause (supported divergence) in the integration phase of cognitive presence. Furthermore, CID students produced the most words of any of the book clubs with the least amount of instructor words (see Table 7). Given the fact that Diana provided no direct instruction and only had minimal presence for facilitating discourse in her CID book club, this data suggests that CID participants were diligent students engaged in the book and working autonomously.

A review of student grades from the fall term book clubs adds weight to this suggestion. The average grade for students across all book clubs in the fall term was 3.96 out of 5. The average grade (in the fall term) of all the students that joined the CID book club in the winter term was 4.48 out of 5. In contrast, the average grade (in the fall term) of students that joined Sally’s (unpopular) NS book club in the winter term was 3.52 out of 5. Whether it was through book choice, chance or both, it is likely that Diana’s students were more conscientious, motivated, and engaged from the start of her book club than Sally’s.

However, the fact that cognitive (and social presence) was significantly higher in Sally’s book club than in Diana’s suggests the Sally’s higher teaching presence led to her students becoming more socially and cognitively engaged in the activity. It also suggests that Diana’s minimal teaching presence led to her students not being as socially and cognitively engaged as they might have been.
5.2 RQ2: How Do Instructors and Students Perceive and Describe Their Instructional Experiences in the Online Book Clubs?

This section discusses instructor and student perceptions and descriptions of their instructional experiences in the book clubs in relation to the academic benefits of the activity for the students. It considers the perceived academic reading and writing benefits of the book clubs as well as how participation in the activity helped increase student awareness of cultural differences between students and different education cultures.

**Figure 5.4. I enjoyed reading my book club book.**

The objective of the ABP is to equip students with the necessary academic skills to prepare them for undergraduate study in English in Canada. As part of the critical reading and writing curriculum on the program, the book clubs support this objective in a number of ways. The initial purpose for the introduction of the book clubs was to encourage extensive reading, a key tenet of which is that students should read for pleasure. While this did not happen to a large extent in the NS and O&C book clubs because many students in those book
clubs read books they did not want to read, the majority of survey respondents in all five book clubs reported that they enjoyed reading their book club books (see figure 5.4). Furthermore, to participate in the activity, students read beyond the book chapters they were assigned to read each week. They read the instructor’s questions and comments and each other’s questions and comments, as well as outside information sources such as Wikipedia and other websites to access information related to the weekly questions about the texts.

5.2.1 Perceptions about reading strategies and mediated learning

Undergraduates are expected to read extensively at university. They are required to read and comprehend multiple texts and determine the writer's intended meaning. This process is made more challenging as students are required to interact with texts and integrate information between different texts. This is because undergraduates need to be able to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize the texts for note-taking and paraphrasing purposes, in order to compose their own texts for the courses they study. Although L2 learners such as the ABP students are fluent readers in their L1, they are often unable to transfer reading strategies from their L1 to their L2 to comprehend challenging texts (Sterzik & Fraser, 2012). It is for this reason ABP students receive explicit reading strategy training during the program. Students are introduced to strategies such as identifying key vocabulary, skimming and scanning, schema activation through vocabulary and content prediction, note taking, annotation and summarizing. These strategies are intended to enable students to become more autonomous academic readers (Oxford, 2011).

The book club activity appears to provide numerous opportunities for instructors to reinforce reading strategies and for students to practice them. The case study students all
noted that they adopted skim and gist reading strategies to manage the increase in required reading on the course. The weekly questions the instructors asked about the texts often required students to predict storylines or explain key vocabulary and phrases. The instructor and student questions (see Figure 5.2) also frequently required summaries of different events or characters actions or feelings to provide comprehensive answers. The content analysis of cognitive presence confirms students practiced these academic literacy skills when giving opinions (exploration) and justifying hypothesis (integration), see Figure 5.3. The case study students perceived that they developed other useful academic reading strategies in the book club activity, notably:

- Reading other students’ answers in order to comprehend instructor’s questions.
- Closely reading instructor questions and feedback to other students to learn from the questions and mistakes of others.
- Reading other students’ answers in order to add to them or to avoid repetition or redundancy in their own answers.
- Analyzing how other student answers differed from their own to understand what they did not consider in their answer.

The fact that there were very few student answers that displayed a misunderstanding of instructors’ questions suggests that students across the book clubs read other students’ answers in order to comprehend instructor questions. Although repetition of thoughts and ideas did occur in student comments it was rarely verbatim and actually provided opportunities for students to practice their paraphrasing skills, an essential academic skill taught in the program. The strategy Miguel, Xiulan, and Liling employed of only reading answers to the questions they were thinking about answering or had already answered is
useful for undergraduates because it helps students focus on and develop a deeper understanding of answers to specific questions.

The adoption of this strategy also suggests those students self-regulated within the task and devised strategies to manage the reading load as well as their time. Moreover, the case study students all reflected that they analyzed other students’ answers to understand what they did not consider in their answers. This suggests that students employed metacognitive strategies (Kuhn & Dean, 2004; Martinez, 2006) to increase their awareness of their own thinking, to monitor their thoughts so that they could begin to manage their future thinking and participation in the activity.

In Vygotskian terms, these strategies illustrate how ABP students perceive they moved away from relying solely on the instructor to regulate their learning via questions, interventions, and classroom based instruction, and toward self-regulation through reading the comments of other students (i.e. human artifacts) and observing their interactions with the instructor and other students in the book clubs. Moreover, students not only believe they practiced (i.e. internalized) the reading strategies taught to them in face-to-face classes on the course, they also perceive they developed their own strategies to mediate their learning, becoming more autonomous learners in the process. This perceived shift from being regulated by the instructor toward self-regulation was also apparent in instructor and student views about the student writing in the activity.

5.2.2 Perceptions of the writing in the book clubs

In their critical reading and writing classes, ABP students are taught how to write answers to short answer questions (SAQs). They are provided with a rubric (see Appendix A)
and model answers to scaffold their understanding of how to answer SAQs at university. Students are taught to answer an SAQ in the first two sentences and provide four to five sentences of support for their answer. In the process, they should refer to the text from which the question is derived, use the author’s name, and when appropriate, use transition phrases, connectors, and reporting verbs. The case study students all stated that they practiced writing SAQ type answers. All four instructors noted that their book club students appeared to apply SAQ answer composition skills taught in class to their book club comments and answers. The cognitive presence data also suggests that students were practicing writing SAQs when they composed comments.

In the exploration and integration phases of cognitive presence students expressed opinions, shared information, and connected ideas. In many instances, they supported their thinking logically with references to the text and used cohesive devices and reporting verbs to do so. Figure 5.5 is a student answer to one of Diana’s questions. She asks her students to predict how the CID story will end. The answer illustrates various aspects of an SAQ answer. The student answers the question in the first two sentences, refers to the text, and identifies one of the key themes of the story, i.e. how Christopher copes with disorder in his life, before stating her prediction. As stipulated in the SAQ rubric, the student uses transition words, such as however, therefore, besides, to organize her ideas.

Practice in the use of transition words is beneficial for EAP students, particularly Chinese learners, because they find using cohesive devices confusing (Wang & Sui, 2006; Lake, 2004, Ong 2011). Book club students also integrated reporting verbs such as explained, considered, and recognized into their comments. In Figure 4.12, we can see the student has used the reporting verb proposed, for example.
Figure 5.5. A student comment illustrating aspects of an SAQ answer.

Encouraging students to answer book club questions in this way has a number of benefits as it enables learners to be socialized into the use and practice of academic writing conventions. Indeed, Miguel, Liling, and Xiulan reported how analyzing other students’ answers mediated the composition of their own writing and helped them to improve how they organize their answers, and how they provide support from the text in their answers. Requiring students to refer to the text they are reading and build on other students’ answers about the texts not only raises their awareness of the dialogic nature academic texts, it also reinforces classroom instruction regarding the necessity of acknowledging other people’s work in their writing. This is important because often EAP students are unaware of what constitutes plagiarism and when and how they should reference sources (Chanock, 2008; McCulloch, 2012; Shi, 2010). These beliefs have been linked to cultural differences related to notions of authority and different perspectives regarding the ownership of ideas (Currie, 1998; Pennycook, 1996).
5.2.3 Cultural perceptions: bridging the transition from school to university

An overarching theme that emerged from the interviews with the case study students was that the book club activity appeared to provide several supports for ABP students as they transitioned from the high school in their respective countries to undergraduate studies in Canada. The book club activity afforded time and space for ABP students to develop and practice their online English academic discussion skills in preparation for undergraduate study. Liling found this particularly beneficial because in China she was never encouraged to voice her opinions about society or politics, nor support her opinions with reasons and evidence. Having students write their own questions related to the text and question ideas within texts developed this quintessential academic skill further.

Although answers to instructor and student questions did not require academic citation, the activity did require the acknowledgment of other people’s thoughts and ideas in answers and provided a space which enabled students to experiment with how to phrase their acknowledgement in online discussions. In figure 5.5, for example, the student seems to have appropriated a discussion phrase I partly agree, taught to her in her academic listening speaking class and applied it to her book club comment. Figures 4.13 and 4.14 also show agreement and disagreement phrases appropriated from the academic speaking and listening course. Similarly, as illustrated by Xiulan (see Figure 5.6), students experimented with other online discussion language such as greeting the group.

Figure 5.6. Xiulan experimenting with greeting students in her book club.
Enabling students to develop and practice interactive online phrases such as these was especially useful for students such as Liling and Xiulan as it was the first time they had written in English in an online education context. The activity also provided Miguel, who gained valuable experience of educational online English discussions at his high school in Ecuador, an opportunity to hone his online discussion skills for undergraduate study.

Moreover, reading the comments of their peers mediated the case study students’ awareness and understanding of students from other countries and cultures. Liling, Xiulan, and Miguel all expressed difficulties in comprehending the vocabulary and ideas in the comments of students with different L1s to their own. For instance, Liling and Xiulan explained that they frequently did not know the vocabulary and phrases used by Russian and Ecuadorian students and often needed to refer to their dictionaries to try and clarify their understanding of the comments and answers of these students. Liling also perceived that Russian and Ecuadorian students thought differently to Chinese students, believing they connected ideas in the text differently than Chinese students. Miguel also thought this to be true but over the course of the book club he came to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of his Chinese peers on the program. Liling also became more culturally aware and began to question cultural stereotypes of different countries and look at Canadian and Chinese stereotypes more critically.

What these perceptions, beliefs, and experiences suggest is that the students were consciously negotiating their understanding of themselves and others while engaged in the book club activity. This process is exemplified by Miguel’s observation that the book club plays out like a movie in his mind where his thoughts “get combined with what other student’s think.” In so doing, students such as Miguel drew on and questioned other aspects
of their lives, such as comparing their high school teacher’s expectations and practices with those of their ABP instructors. According to Bakhtin, it is through such a dynamic dialogical process of struggling with difference and misunderstanding that learning happens (Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999). The value of such intercultural experiences for ABP students participating in the book club is significant. Not only does the book club help familiarize students for group work, an aspect of undergraduate study that requires an awareness that students from different cultures and educational backgrounds often think in different ways and have different ways of working, it also appears to help students better understand themselves in the process.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Methodological and Theoretical Implications

This study has explored how teaching and learning was mediated in online book clubs in an academic bridging program and how the activity prepares L2 students for undergraduate study in Canada. The principal data collection method and analytical framework I used to do this was Garrison, Anderson and Archer’s (2000) COI framework, which I employed to conduct a content analysis of the instructors’ and students’ online discourse to capture and analyze the teaching, social, and cognitive presence in the activity. The COI framework proved to be a useful tool for organizing the online discourse into categories and indicators of the presences as it enabled me to consider the density of the different presences and establish whether any patterns could be identified as to how or if they impacted one another. While this process allowed me to confirm that the different book clubs had different levels of the three presences, the content analysis and COI survey did not adequately explain the reasons for the different levels or how they impacted one another and subsequently mediated teaching and learning in the activity.

A major reason for this is that the framework does not fully account for the influence of core contextual factors, such as the instructor’s materials selection (i.e. book selection), on student engagement, interaction, and participation. For instance, Paul’s book choice of Oryx & Crake was a pedagogic decision that negatively impacted learner participation from the start of the activity and negatively impacted how social presence and cognitive presence was mediated throughout the book club. Diana’s CID book club is another example of how specific contextual factors impacted how learning was mediated throughout her book club. The COI analysis alone did not explain why Diana’s minimal teaching presence did not
negatively impact her CID students’ perceptions about her teaching presence. It was the document analysis of student grades from their previous book clubs that provided the evidence and reasons for her students’ perceptions and self-regulating behaviour.

Indeed, prior learning emerged as a factor that mediated the instructors’ behaviour in all the book clubs. This was because none of the instructors had received any formal training in how to teach online, a factor that significantly impacted the teaching presence and the subsequent teaching and learning throughout the book clubs. Although, the book club instructors intuitively looked to one another and developed a community of practice to increase their understanding about how best to manage and facilitate their book clubs, this was not captured by the COI content analysis data. Instead, it was revealed through the instructor interviews. The student interview data also provided valuable insights into how learners read and understood their peers’ comments and answers. The interview data not only complimented the broader student COI survey data and confirmed many of the observations the instructors made about their students, it provided evidence and a further layer of understanding about how the activity supports the development of academic literacy practices for L2 learners in undergraduate EMI contexts.

Moreover, Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung, (2010) argue that we need to understand “the dynamic relationships among the presences as… well as understand the existence and role of the specific sub-elements (categories) of each presence” (p. 31) to understand how teaching and learning is mediated in a COI. Although this thesis has achieved this goal, it has only done so by using multiple sources of data collection including, student case study, instructor interviews, and employing sociocultural (and politeness) theory to understand the data. The content analysis and COI survey alone would not have been
sufficient to identify the politeness issues within Paul’s teaching presence and how politeness, in combination with book choice and question scaffolding, impacted the social presence in the O&C book club, and subsequently how this effected how teaching and learning was mediated. In summary, the COI framework is a useful tool to organize the analysis of online discussion communities but needs to be used with multiple other data collection methods in order to fully understand what is happening in a given community of inquiry.

6.2 Pedagogic Implications

Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung, (2010) argue that teaching presence is “core to establishing and maintaining social and cognitive presence” (p.35). My research has shown how instrumental the decisions and actions of the instructors were in the establishment and maintenance of social presence and cognitive presence. As professional as the book club instructors were, it was a far from an optimal circumstance that none had received any formal training to teach online. Indeed, this circumstance resulted in Diana (the proxy master practitioner of the community of practice) relying solely on her professional classroom based teaching experience to inform her online teaching.

It is, therefore, essential that educators receive training to teach online. Online teaching is a specialised skill, with its own research literature, theories, and established and developing best practices. It is not a skill that (even experienced) educators can simply fashion from their existing face-to-face teaching experiences and practices. All educators, whether they are teachers, instructors, lecturers or professors, should be given guidance and training that connects research and practice regarding online curriculum design and related
pedagogy.

Despite the fact the book clubs were initially introduced to encourage extensive reading, this thesis has shown the activity has numerous literacy learning benefits. The book clubs were conducted solely online; however, the activity was part of a larger program with face-to-face classes. Subsequently, with the encouragement and guidance of instructors, a form of blended learning developed within each book club whereby the students practiced classroom based learning in their online interactions. The students employed various (classroom taught) reading strategies and developed their own reading strategies in the activity. Students also appropriated academic composition and discussion skills taught in their face-to-face classes in their book club comments and interactions. These learning processes demonstrate that online discussion forums, such as book clubs, are multifaceted integrated skills activities that expose L2 learners to “authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in language” (Oxford, 2001, p.19).

It is therefore essential that learning designers of online literacy activities acknowledge the benefits and task complexities of these kinds of activities for EAP students. When planning, and assessing online learning in EAP curricula, instructors should be aware that much of the activity and learning is receptive and/or passive and can be underappreciated or overlooked. Particularly if instructors do not fully understand the pedagogic processes of online learning. Accordingly, instructors in EAP programs such as the ABP, as well as educators in further education online learning contexts more generally, should refine and redefine the purpose of online activities to ensure they can fully exploit them for learning benefits. Only then will online educators fully understand and appreciate their intricacies and benefits of such activities for online learning. The following
recommendations are derived from the study findings and my observations as a book club instructor.

6.2.1 Syllabus and assessment

The book the instructor chooses for the book club greatly influences the type of questions and activities that can be used to engage students. Therefore, when deciding which book to read in their book club, instructors should consider whether there is enough plot development in the novel to keep 25 students engaged in the story over 12 weeks. Instructors should also think carefully about using books with too many characters, and complex plot developments as they can be difficult for students to comprehend. Equally, novels with too few characters and a slow plot development may limit ideas for instructor and student question composition, as well as the variety of other activities that can be used to engage students.

In addition, instructors need to clarify and agree upon the purpose of the book club activity. Is its purpose to encourage extensive reading? to practice academic writing? to expose students to different non-academic texts and genres? or to allow students to practice their online English? If it is meant to serve all these purposes it should be established whether some purposes are more important than others. The answers to these questions inform book choice and the student participation guidelines and assessment rubric, and help clarify instructor and student expectations about the activity. For instance, the instructors in the study all commented on the importance of student interaction in the book clubs. The student participation guidelines stipulate interaction as a requirement in weeks 8 to 12 of the book club. This could be changed to weeks 4 to 12 and guidance and rationale provided
regarding the importance of students responding and acknowledging posts that they are
tagged in. In addition, if a second student-led week was introduced the instructors would
have an opportunity to reiterate the importance of students acknowledging one another’s
comments as students would be required to interact earlier in the activity. These syllabus
changes may address some of the (un)acknowledgement issues in the book clubs identified in
the thesis.

6.2.2 Questions and interventions

Instructors that successfully engaged their students in their book clubs provided
several different questions and activities for the students and were explicit with how their
students should answer questions. Scaffolding of this kind facilitates student understanding
of what is required to answer a question and will likely lead to more comprehensive answers.
Furthermore, when composing questions instructors should, where appropriate, consider
focusing the discussion on larger issues (e.g. cultural, economic, race, gender, the
environment etc.) in the text, as these larger issues provide potential routes for students to
personalize and connect with the content of the book. Also, educators should encourage the
sharing of images and web links to content related to the novel as this adds task variety and
helps keep students engaged in the book and book club.

The study revealed that students pay close attention to instructor feedback on their
comments and to the feedback on other student comments. Highlighting and praising
exemplary student comments is good practice as it enables other students to clarify their
understanding of instructor expectations without threatening their positive or negative face. It
is also good practice to praise and support students that answer questions first, as these
students initiate the weekly activity and enable other students to learn from instructor feedback about possible misinterpretations of questions or misunderstanding of the text.

To help maintain student interest and engagement, instructors should consider providing short summaries of complex aspects of the novel to scaffold student understanding of the story. Short summaries not only help clarify misconceptions about texts for students, they also reduce the requirement for the instructor to comment directly to different students. This is an efficient use of instructor time and should reduce the incidences of face threatening acts in the activity, as students will not be singled out for constructive feedback in front of their peers. Summaries ought to model the language and tone of the answers instructors expect of their students as well as book club participation practices such as tagging, and referring to the author of the book and other students’ comments.

However, instructors should consider carefully how and when to intervene in online discussions and be cautious of intervening too much. Students need time to respond to questions and one of the key benefits of asynchronous environments is that they provide time for students to think and compose their answers. The instructors that were interviewed in this study agreed that the book club is not an appropriate space for correcting grammatical mistakes in student writing. Indeed, doing this would take a great deal of time and be embarrassing for students and thus inhibit participation. Therefore, when instructors do intervene, to foster engagement they ought to focus more on what the student is saying and less on how they are saying it. If necessary, student mistakes can be recast by the instructor through paraphrasing more clearly what the student has written. Then the instructor can

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5 Recast is a language teaching technique where an instructor corrects a learner error in a way that communication is not obstructed. To recast an error, an instructor will repeat the error back to the learner in a corrected form.
prompt the student to explain further or offer their opinion about another aspect of the answer. Again, this may help reduce the incidences of face threatening acts in the book club and keep the student engaged as a consequence.

6.2.3 Instructor tone and group management

As with a face-to-face class, the instructor sets the tone of the group. A friendly but formal tone can be cultivated in a book club quite simply by using inclusive pronouns and adding please and thank you to requests and thanking students for questions about the activity. The case study students in this study noted that they like to know what the instructor thinks about the novel. This an opportunity for instructors to set the climate for learning. For example, instructors might consider referring to a plot development that was unexpected, interesting or exciting before they ask questions and occasionally share their opinions about characters and storylines. This is a good opportunity to address the book club students as a group in a positive and friendly manner, and reminds the students that their instructor is engaged with the novel too.

Instructors should be cognizant that students may transfer online habits and behaviour from other social media contexts to the book club context - over sharing, for instance. This needs to be monitored and managed (if necessary) on a case by case basis. Also, educators may want to consider including explanations of in/appropriate participation behaviour in the student participation guidelines.

It is possible for highly engaged or high performing students to dominate discussions and intimidate other students, and consequently discourage other students from participating in the activity. This may be particularly problematic if two or three students form a clique
and exhaust answers to questions before other students have had a chance to participate. Therefore, instructors need to be sensitive to the possible detrimental effects of high performers and think of ways to make the learning context more inclusive. Providing a range of different questions and activities is likely to mitigate this issue.

### 6.3 Limitations of this Study and Directions for Further Research

It is important to acknowledge a number of limitations of the findings of this thesis study. First, the data were collected from a single ABP program and although many of the insights add to a growing body of literature on the subject caution is advised regarding the generalizability of the findings. Second, while the data in this study is representative of the instructors’ and students’ participation and activity in the book club, to make the study manageable the COI content analysis focussed on three of a possible 12 weeks of online data from each book club. This restricted the number of incidences of different COI indicators that could be counted and analyzed for each book club, which possibly resulted in certain findings being only partially explained. For instance, the large majority of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement the instructor helped identify areas of agreement and disagreement about the book, even though there were no recorded incidences of the instructor identifying areas of agreement and disagreement within the student discussions. Whether the analyses of more weeks of the activity would have clarified this finding further is uncertain but researchers in all fields necessarily have to contain their studies to make them manageable.

Third, although the survey was a useful indicator of how the students that participated in the in the book clubs perceived experiences and activity it was limited by the fact 58 of a
possible 106 students completed it. This could explain the generally positive findings of the survey as students that were disengaged or unenthusiastic about the book clubs may have simply decided not to complete the survey. While it might have been useful to interview students that did not participate or participated infrequently to provide further insights about how teaching and learning was mediated in the activity, this limitation is mitigated to some extent by the information obtained from the student interview data and the COI content analysis of the online data.

A further possible limitation of the study is a lack of emphasis on L2 theory. For instance, I could have employed Cummins’ (1981) Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) framework, to discuss whether the students drew upon the implicit metalinguistic knowledge from their L1 when working in English, as they transitioned from learning to read in English to reading to learn. However, although the Critical Reading and Writing instructors introduced the book clubs to encourage extensive reading, I chose to focus on how learning was mediated in the online activity. If had chosen to focus on reading, it is likely many of the other numerous academic benefits the activity supports may not have been identified and discussed.

This study provides a number of insights about the powerful impact of teaching presence in online learning contexts. It has drawn attention to how instructor decision making regarding the curriculum (reading materials and questions) prior to the activity can positively or negatively impact the social and cognitive presence of students in different book clubs. In doing this, it has shown the crucial role instructors’ scaffolding techniques and modelling play in fostering productive and beneficial online learning experiences.
Future research should focus more closely on the connection between online materials selection and the role instructors’ manner/politeness plays in mediating the learning process in other L2 online education contexts, in particular how instructor choice of questions and use of encouragement with formative assessment and feedback affects social presence and cognitive presence. This shift in the focus of online politeness research in online academic discussion contexts toward the part instructor language plays in mediating learning could provide further insights as to why online discussion threads do not develop.

As Hewitt (2005) suggests, if students feel threatened or the tone of the discussion becomes too emotional students will often abandon discussions. Another significant finding of this thesis is how politeness impacts participation in online academic discussion contexts, specifically the understudied behaviour of (un)acknowledgement in EAP contexts. This is an aspect of online learning in academic discussion contexts that requires further study.

This thesis has also drawn attention to the possible transfer of self-disclosure behaviour from personal or informal social networking site use to online academic discussion contexts. Future studies might also consider more closely the role self-disclosure has in online academic discussions to better understand how instructors can manage, exploit or suppress self-disclosure depending on the purpose of the discussion.

Online communication and learning is a rapidly evolving subject and social media such as Facebook Groups evolve accordingly. A few months after I collected the Facebook Group page data, a threaded comments function was added to Facebook, which reduced the need for students to use the tagging function when responding to each other’s questions and comments. This new feature is likely to significantly impact aspects of interactive social presence in future studies of how teaching and learning is mediated in Facebook Groups.
Facebook has recently introduced a reactions feature that enables students to use five emoticons to show love, laughter, anger, sadness and surprise as well as like comments and links shared by instructors and peers. These emoticons will no doubt impact the social presence in future studies and subsequently effect how learning is mediated in the book club and other online literacy activities hosted in Facebook Groups. Nevertheless, this thesis study remains, in my opinion, relevant and contemporary as it weaves a unique and detailed analysis of an online literacy activity in an EAP context.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

Through the lens of sociocultural theory and the concept of mediation, this thesis has provided a number of insights into the pedagogy and learning processes and practices of instructors and students in an online academic literacy activity. In so doing, it contributes a comprehensive understanding of the micro level influences of teaching, social, and cognitive presence in COIs and adds to the growing body of literature that has examined the macro level influences of these presences. The cross disciplinary analysis has also utilized theories from general education, second language education, applied linguistics, and psychology to paint an intricate picture of the dynamic and numerous impacts of human actions and decisions in the mediation of teaching and learning online.

This thesis study also contributes to understanding of L2 learners’ experiences of an online literacy activity. Through the triangulation of data from a variety of sources, evidential links to numerous educational benefits, of often hidden or difficult to uncover learning processes, have been identified which provide insights into the vast and dynamic range of academic skills and practices such activity engages learners in. The analysis of the
online comments and interactions of the APB students and interview data collected over 24 weeks provide a deep understanding of how perceptions, behaviours, and processes emerge in an online literacy activity. The thesis shows that the instructors and students perceive the activity has several academic (and cultural awareness-raising) benefits and challenges for ABP students. How these benefits are cultivated and challenges are scaffolded requires continued research to ensure best pedagogic practices can be implemented.
References


Appendices

Appendix A

ABP Short Answer Questions (SAQ) Rubric

Answers to these types of questions are structured much like a well-developed paragraph. The first sentence or two acts like the topic sentence which is then followed by support. Note, however, that unlike some stand-alone paragraphs you should NOT write a concluding sentence. Always pay attention to instructions which may restrict the number of sentence used to answer these types of questions.

**Characteristics of a strong 10-point short answer:**

- Roughly 5-7 sentences in length (~100-200 words). Too few can result in underdeveloped ideas. Too many can be wordy.
- One to two sentence answers to the question at the beginning. **(3 points)**
- Support - correct explanations and examples from the text that refer to the answer (or useful background info about the contextual reference). **(5 points)**
- Mechanics – cohesion (e.g. transition phrases/connectors), usage (e.g. reference to author surname, reporting verbs in present tense, etc.), punctuation, spelling **(2 points)**
Appendix B

Facebook Book Club Student Participation and Assessment Guidelines

Assessment: Participation is the key to success in the book club. You will be expected to actively discuss the weekly prompts and questions your instructor posts with your fellow book club members. Assessment is based on volume and quality of discussion. The Book Club is worth 5% of the grade for this term. You will not be evaluated on grammar, as long as you are understood.

Type and quality of interactions required: Your interactions on the Facebook discussion posts are evaluated in three different ways depending on the section of the term:

| Weeks 2 – 3 | If you simply participate in the question post, you are given credit for doing so. |
| Weeks 4 – 7 | If you answer the discussion question by referring to the text or with reasonable explanation for your answer, you are given credit for doing so. |
| Weeks 8 – 12 | If you answer the discussion question by referring to the text, responding to a previous club member’s answer (unless you are the first to answer) and adding a unique idea to the discussion, you are given credit for doing so. |

By “given credit for doing so”, I mean your answer will be included in the amount of interaction required category. Please note that my “likes” do not equal credits.

Official grades: All book club members need to have quality interactions of at least 80% of the discussion posts on the Facebook group during the term in order to initially qualify for the 5% term grade. Fewer interactions than this will proportionally be deducted from this 5% in increments of 0%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0%</th>
<th>1%</th>
<th>2%</th>
<th>3%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No interaction s credited</td>
<td>1 - 19% of total interaction s credited</td>
<td>20 - 39% of total interaction s credited</td>
<td>40 - 59% of total interaction s credited</td>
<td>60 - 79% of total interaction s credited</td>
<td>80%+ of total interaction s credited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shortly after Week 13, credit grades will be posted on your Grade Centre in Blackboard according to the following scale.
Appendix C

Social Presence Categories, Indicators, Definitions with Examples from Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Social Presence</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Expression of emotions</td>
<td>Conventional expressions of emotion, or unconventional expressions of emotion, includes repetitious punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons.</td>
<td>“It's so awful”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use of humor</td>
<td>Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatement, sarcasm.</td>
<td>“She is probably going to become a designer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-disclosure</td>
<td>Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability.</td>
<td>“… when I was 15 years old… I went to Korea”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactive Social Presence</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tagging</td>
<td>Using the tagging function to acknowledge or reply to a comment</td>
<td>“Miguel Ramos, I see, Jixi Chin, but”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Quoting from others’ messages</td>
<td>Using software features to quote others’ entire message or cut-and-paste selections of others’ messages.</td>
<td>None recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Referring explicitly to others’ messages</td>
<td>Direct references to contents of others’ posts.</td>
<td>“My understanding of Morrie’s special talent, regarding to Mitch, is similar to Dennis Tan’s…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>Students ask questions of other students or moderator</td>
<td>“How was his attitude had been changed?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Complimenting, expressing appreciation</td>
<td>Complimenting others or contents of others’ messages.</td>
<td>“Rita Chen’s question is very interesting”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Expressing agreement</td>
<td>Expressing agreement with others or content of others’ messages.</td>
<td>“I agree to your answer of Morrie’s special talent”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohesive Social Presence</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vocatives</td>
<td>Addresses participant by name</td>
<td>“Alex Chan Why do you think that all artists are geniuses?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Addresses/ refers to group using inclusive pronouns</td>
<td>Addressing the group as we, us, our group.</td>
<td>“We can see that Eleanor had already…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Phatics, salutations</td>
<td>Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures.</td>
<td>“How’s the preparation about the mid-terms…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix D

Teaching Presence Design and Organization Categories and Indicators with Examples from the Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Setting curriculum</td>
<td>“For this week's post, there will only be one question.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Designing methods</td>
<td>“I would like you to come up with one question for the group and answer or comment on one question.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Establishing time parameters</td>
<td>“Please remember that all discussions are open for 2 weeks....”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Utilizing medium effectively</td>
<td>“Post an image of it here and explain your choice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Establishing netiquette</td>
<td>“Thank you for sharing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Great work at tagging/interacting with other group members”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement</td>
<td>“All valid points, (3 x student names) - Could we all agree that change is good in this case?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Seeking to reach consensus/understanding</td>
<td>“Try reading Sawako's description and then think about it again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions</td>
<td>“thanks for the contextual references Alice Paredes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Setting climate for learning</td>
<td>“Happy reading!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- About the book club atmosphere</td>
<td>“You are gradually becoming more Canadian!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Through related personal experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Drawing in participants, prompting discussion</td>
<td>“I don't see how the idea of Stockholm Syndrome is connected to Jimmy and his mother in your answer. Can you explain?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Assess the efficacy of the process</td>
<td>“I'm sorry Sawako and Danny. This question actually relates more to Chapter 10, not 11.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Present content/questions</td>
<td>“I was wondering when Ashima wore a bathrobe instead of a sari. Doesn’t she generally wear a sari all the time??”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Focus the discussion on specific issues</td>
<td>“I am also looking for a description of Maisie and Eleanor’s relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Summarize the discussion</td>
<td>“Actually…From &quot;dirty little fingers&quot;, I can know that Eleanor did not like her sisters. Eleanor thought her sister used her secret to meet their needs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback</td>
<td>“It is a derogatory phrase, so please do not use it in your own speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Diagnose misconceptions</td>
<td>“Stockholm Syndrome is more than simply growing accustomed to your situation as a victim…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Inject knowledge from diverse sources</td>
<td>“<a href="http://abcnews.go.com/2020/">http://abcnews.go.com/2020/</a> ABC's 20/20 is the prime time news magazine program featuring…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Responding to technical concerns</td>
<td>“Victor, please use the comment box below the questions to respond and continue the discussion”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix E

Cognitive Presence Triggering Event Indicators with Examples from the Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Actions items falling into this sub-category with definition</th>
<th>Example from data set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Triggering event</strong></td>
<td>= state of dissonance/feeling of unease resulting from an experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Clarification</td>
<td>(To the instructor) “I like art, but I don't like the behavior of some artists.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Restating</td>
<td>“Those pigeons may suffered a lot, but later they began to get used to it and soon at ease.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploration</strong></td>
<td>= search for information/knowledge/alternatives that might help make sense of the situation/problem; search for clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agreement – to concur in (as an opinion) plain yes or I agree without substantiation.</td>
<td>“I absolutely agree with you regarding you answer to question 5”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information sharing - stating a fact, a policy or a rule. - giving information from a reputable source, literature, association website etc.</td>
<td>“White noise” refers to a statistical model for signals and signal sources, rather than to any specific signal.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Divergence – to differ in opinion divergent opinion on any point presented by another</td>
<td>“He made friend with a lot of Americans and fell in love with Maxine. But after his father died, Gogol realized the Bengali part of himself and began to accept it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Leap to Conclusion – No relationship to previous discussion, not logical</td>
<td>“And this people usually don't have a skill to look for a job.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Personal Narration – story, relating an incident, describing instance/experience from “their” life</td>
<td>“Actually, I learned saying thank you when getting off the bus in Vancouver and I did not hear people saying thank you to the driver when taking TTC in Toronto”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Opinion – belief or judgment, Personal view, attitude based on grounds insufficient to conclude factual</td>
<td>“I think the reason why the school took the kids to graveyard because they would like to let the students have a closer contact with authors…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration</strong></td>
<td>= integrating information into a concept/idea; looking for insights/gaining some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Building on – augmenting a point made by self-earlier, or by another</td>
<td>“I agree to your answer of Morrie's special talent…what I want to add is that Morrie has the talent of observing people and cultures.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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understanding of acquired information/knowledge

10. Creating Solution – novel conclusion
“We also should not care about other's opinion and do our best to chase our dreams!”

11. Justified hypothesis - a tentative assumption made to draw out and test its logical consequence to prove or show to be just, right, or reasonable - the necessary consequence of two or more propositions taken as premises; coming to conclusion predicted by ongoing discussion but supporting with relevant reason. “therefore”
“This sentence shows that nobody could “punish” them for their words because nobody understood Bengali language.”

12. Supported divergence – disagree “because”- disagree with proof or cause
“I have to disagree with you... all people, who are participating in the experiments, are volunteers and that is their choice to help the scientific research.”

13. Supported agreement - to hold up or serve as a foundation or prop for; agree “because”-agree with proof or cause
“They send Gogol to cram school for learning Bengali and their culture, because they do not want to their children completely same as an American.”

Resolution

14. Wrap-up – concluding, summarizing
“We can use his method to make things simple, to save time and do more valuable things. Finally, we could feel the wonderful sides of our lives.”

15. Thought experiment – Questioning in a “what if?” fashion or “What do you think about?”
“What’s wrong with being number two?”

16. Apply, test, defend – any one of three but not retrospective narrative. Must be an application of new thought initiated by the discussion present
None found
Appendix F

Student COI Survey Questions

1. Please enter the name you use in Facebook (Book Club)
2. What is your first language? e.g. Spanish
3. What is your gender? Female/Male
4. How long have you lived in Canada?  6 to 12 months 1 to 2 years 2 years or more
5. Did you have a Facebook account before you joined a Facebook book club? Yes/ No
6. How often do you chat online with friends in English? Never/ Not very often/ Often/Always

Note: Questions 7 to 37 were Likert type questions strongly disagree/ disagree/ agree/ strongly agree. Students could only select one answer.

7. I read for pleasure in my first language.
9. The instructor clearly communicated important book club information.
10. The instructor clearly communicated the purpose of the book club.
11. The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in book club.
12. The instructor helped identify areas of agreement and disagreement about the book.
13. The instructor questions helped me clarify my thinking about the book.
14. The instructor helped to keep book club students engaged and interacting with each other.
15. The instructor helped keep book club students focused on the book.
16. The instructor encouraged book club students to explore new ideas.
17. Instructor actions helped to create a sense of community among book club students.
18. The instructor questions helped to focus discussion on the book in a way that helped me to learn.
19. The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.
20. I was able to get to know some of the other students through book club.
21. Online communication is great for social interaction.
22. I felt comfortable participating in the book club discussions.
23. I felt comfortable interacting with other book club students.
24. I felt comfortable politely disagreeing with other book club students.
25. I felt that my opinion was acknowledged by other book club students.
26. The online discussions made me feel like I am working with others to understand the book.
27. The weekly questions increased my interest in the book.
28. Hyperlinks and activities kept me interested in the book.
29. I felt motivated to explore ideas and information related to the questions.
30. I used a variety of information sources to explore the questions in my book club.
31. Finding relevant information helped me understand the book club questions.
32. The discussions in book club helped me understand other readers perspectives.
33. The questions and activities in the book club helped me develop my explanations.
34. Reflecting on the book and discussing it helped me understand concepts and ideas in the book.
35. I have developed writing skills in book club that can be applied to other subjects.
36. I have developed critical thinking skills in book club that can be applied to other subjects.
37. I have developed critical reading skills in book club that can be applied to other subjects.
Appendix G

Student Case Study Interview Questions

Interview One: Background Information /sociocultural:

1. What is your age; nationality; first language? Do you use any other languages?
2. Tell me about your family; Brothers or sisters? Hometown, fathers/mothers job?
3. How long have you lived in Toronto? Do you live in New College or in a homestay or elsewhere? How is your new home?

Adjusting to Canada/Culture shock:

4. Do you feel lonely or homesick? Do you feel social isolation?
5. Do you experience cultural difficulties in Canada? If so, what do you do to how do you handle this kind of issue?

Education culture shock/Language barriers:

6. Do you feel language barriers in your daily communication or your study?
7. Do you feel language barriers related to book club? If so, how do you manage/handle the language barrier?
8. How many years have you been learning English (SCT). Where? School? Online learning experiences/courses? Any travel abroad?
9. What English assessments/exams have you had in English? Have any of these assessments been for group work? Have any of them required you to interact with others? If so how did this make you feel? (SCT)
10. Do you use Social media twitter, Facebook blogging (any in English?). What do you use them for? Do you use any for learning?
11. What do you think of your online book club?


Interview Two: Social Cultural Theory (SCT) & Social Presence (SP) Teaching Presence (TP)

1. Are you enjoying the book are you reading? Was it your first-choice book? Are you reading it as an E-book or a paper book? (SCT) Why did you select that format?
2. Do you read the comments of other students? Why? Why not? Does this help you? How? SCT/SP CP
3. Are you getting to know other students through the book club? Other than those you share your class with. SCT/SP
4. What do you know about your BOOK CLUB instructor? Do you know this from the book club? Is he/she different from your class room instructor? SCT/TP
5. How do you find the format of the online discussions in book club? Is it easy or difficult to follow? SCT/TP
6. Do you feel comfortable interacting with other students in the book club? SCT/SP
7. What do think is needed to successfully participate in BOOK CLUB? SCT
8. Have you noticed anything that makes it difficult or uncomfortable to participate in BOOK CLUB online discussions? SCT - agency
9. Have you formed an understanding of what other students are like on the course? SCT/SP
10. Do you have a feeling of belonging or community from your book club? SCT/SP
11. Do you think Facebook Groups are a good place for social interaction online? SCT
12. Do you feel comfortable writing online? Writing for an audience? SCT
13. Do you notice anything different in how non-Chinese/Ecuadorian students communicate online?
14. Do you feel comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust? Group Cohesion COI
15. Do you feel that your point of view is acknowledged by other course participants? Why/How not SCT/SP
16. Do the online discussions help you to develop a sense of collaboration? SP Group Cohesion COI

**Student Interview Three: Community of Inquiry Focus**

The instructor

1. What feedback have you got from your instructor? Was it useful? Why/not?
2. Did the instructor help to create a sense of community among book club students? How?
3. Do you feel clear about what the instructor expects of you in book club?
4. Did the instructor help identify areas of agreement and disagreement on book related topics that helped you understand the book? How did they do this?
5. Did the instructor guide the book club toward understanding the book in a way that helped you clarify your thinking? How did they do this?
6. Did the instructor help to keep book club students engaged and interacting with each other? How did they do this?
7. What do you think of the weekly questions in your book club? Do they increase your interest in the book – how? Do they motivate you to explore ideas in the book?
8. How do you decide which questions to respond to? Is there a type of question you prefer? Why?
9. Is there anything you would change about the weekly question format of the book club?
10. Do you read other people’s answers to the questions before you answer them? Why, why not?
11. Do you read information about the book in your first language when trying to understand the questions and the book?
12. Are there particular websites you visit to get information to clarify your thinking to understand the questions and the book? How many? Just Google it?
13. Can you remember a time in book club when you read other students comment and realized that you had misunderstood a question? How did this make you feel?
14. Can you remember a time that you read another student comment and thought they had misunderstood the question? If so what did you do? Why?
15. Did you combine information from the book, another source or a student comment to answer questions in book club?
16. How did the questions and activities in the book club help you develop your explanation and understanding of the book?
17. Did reflecting on the book and discussing it help you understand concepts and ideas in the book? How?
18. Do you think you have developed writing skills in the book club that can be applied to other subjects? Which ones? How?
19. Do you think you have developed critical thinking skills in the book club? Do you think you can apply them to other subjects or other non-class related activities? Which ones? How?
20. Do you think you have developed reading skills in the book club that can be applied to other subjects? Which ones? How?

**Student Interview Four:** Individual Student Follow-up Questions Related to Previous Three Interviews

**Student Interview Five:** Comparison of Book Clubs

I would like you to compare the two book clubs you have been in.

1. Can you talk about the...Books/Instructors/ Other students? How/if your writing/communication has changed
2. Can you compare your Chinese/Ecuadorian teachers with your ABP teachers?
Appendix H

Instructor Interview Questions

1. What is your teaching philosophy? How do you think your students learn best? (Given prior to interview)

2. What do you think of as the purpose of your book club?

3. How long have you been teaching? What qualifications have you got? In your teacher training, what principles about teaching and learning were taught? (SCT) (TP)

4. Have you had any training in online teaching; have you ever taken an online course of any kind? (TP & SCT)

5. Can you tell me about the instructions you provide and the documents you share with your book club students related to how the book club is organized and assessed? Follow ups - What are your expectations regarding student participation? What criteria do you have when you select a book for book club? (TP)

6. How do you facilitate student discourse and text understanding in your book club? (TP & SP)

7. Do you ask students to reflect on their learning? What do you see as the value of this activity? (if you do it) (CP)

8. Do you scaffold/support learning? If so how? If not, how do you monitor student learning? (TP & CP)

9. Do you diagnose student comments for accuracy and understanding? Do you give feedback? How do you give feedback? (TP & SP)

10. Do you build a sense of community in your book club? If so, why do you do that and what do you do? (SCT)

11. Do you accommodate cultural differences? If so how? (SCT) Gender differences?

12. Do you see changes in the composition of your student’s posts as the book club progresses? Follow up – what skills do you think the students are learning? (SCT) (CP)