Article

English Language Teaching and COVID-19: Combining Universal Design for Learning and Community of Inquiry

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Abstract
The COVID pandemic has forced English language teachers in the United States to adapt face-to-face courses to online learning interfaces. Since the March 2020 transition, teachers have struggled with a variety of elements of the process of converting courses. As instructors across all disciplines have learned, not all face-to-face lessons work in online classes. Additionally, teachers have discovered difficulties providing rich interactive experiences in a format that does not naturally foster social connections. Teachers also need to overcome elements of online learning that are particularly challenging for English language learners (ELLs). We propose that English teachers can benefit from models that already exist, one for online learning, the community of inquiry (CoI), and one for designing courses, universal design for learning (UDL), after using these models in our post-COVID-19 online classes at the University of Florida English Language Institute (UF ELI). This paper examines these models and shows their utility in the online English language classroom. We provide a practical list of eight design questions to help teachers needing a quick transition between traditional and online formats and examples for using the questions to plan lessons and activities.

1 Introduction

Intensive English Programs (IEPs) in the United States provide formal English language instruction for international students, and many IEPs are affiliated with a specific university in order to attract and acclimate top international students to the university. Our IEP, the University of Florida English Language Institute (UF ELI) is one such program. Our program focuses specifically on academic

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English skills and socialization skills related to university life. The academic program offers six levels of instruction (Beginning, High-beginning, Intermediate, High-intermediate, Low-advanced, and Advanced) for three basic classes - Reading/Writing, Listening/Speaking, and Grammar. Students may also take optional classes, such as Business English, Grammar for Writing, and TOEFL or IELTS preparation. Additionally, the ELI organizes social activities designed to immerse international students in the culture of the university and the community. International students choose this program for these rich opportunities to engage with instructors, UF students, the Gainesville community, and each other.

Our Spring 2020 (pre-COVID-19) schedule, which started entirely in-person, included 19 instructors teaching a total of 14 Listening/Speaking classes, 16 Grammar classes, 16 Reading/Writing classes, three electives, and two special program classes. Additionally, each week of the 14-week semester, the 216 students in the program had the opportunity to participate in game night, coffee hour, bowling, sports, a weekend activity, and opportunities to volunteer in the community. Volunteer activities involved students in the community by giving opportunities for caring for others, such as a visit to a retirement community, feeding the homeless, caring for shelter animals, and improving the environment. The pre-COVID-19 experience was active learning at its best; students used what they learned in the classroom as they moved through their social, community, and university activities.

The post-COVID-19 reality of social distancing meant that all of these opportunities came to a grinding halt across the country. This was a huge blow for international students who rely on this contact to substitute for the family and friends they leave behind in their home countries and to establish strong ties with their host community. Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) conducted a survey on the effects of the pandemic on international students in Utah. They document the difficulties of transitioning to remote learning and the stressors that affected the process. Their students reported that the act of practicing English had become very difficult with the transition to remote learning because there were limited opportunities to practice English outside of class.

The UF ELI dealt with the same issues. In the weeks that followed the transition in mid-March 2020, UF ELI students lamented, "if I had wanted online classes, I could have stayed at home in my country. I came here to meet people and talk, not to sit alone in my apartment." Our students, like those in Hartshorn and McMurry's study, began to worry about problems that simply did not exist before, such as the immediate health of family far away, students' own health, the implications of gathering socially, immediate educational concerns, and future educational concerns. English language instructors, many of whom had not engaged in online education before, now found themselves on the front lines of creating an online environment that attempted to provide instructional content and a rich socially interactive component, replicating as far as possible what had been happening in the face-to-face (f2f) classroom. This was not just limited to the seven weeks that constituted the second half of the Spring 2020 Semester. As the pandemic showed no signs of abating, instructors at the UF ELI were forced to continue their instruction online.

As we redesigned our own language classes into an online format, initially in response to the Stay-at-Home order, and subsequently for the summer and fall semesters, we drew on the research establishing best practices for online learning and course design, namely community of inquiry (CoI) and universal design for learning (UDL). The goal of this article is to discuss key elements of interaction in the online classroom from our experience, initially during the spring semester and then reinforced in the course of the summer and fall semesters, using these models to restructure our classes. For example, how can teachers provide meaningful interactive language instruction for the online classroom? What models are available to help us quickly meet the learning and cultural needs of online English language students? Then we present guidelines in the form of eight design questions that English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners can use to repurpose existing f2f lessons or create new lessons and activities for the online environment in a way that stimulates interactions between students, content, and the instructor and takes into account some of the special requirements of ELLs in the online setting.

2 Online Teaching vs. Emergency Remote Teaching

There are huge differences between online education and what Hodges et al. (2020) call emergency remote teaching, which is what most universities implemented for COVID-19. Online courses normally have a long development and testing stage. Course design options have already been adopted long before an online class is offered. Considerations concerning modality (online vs. blended), pacing, student-teacher ratio, didactics, the role of assessment, the role of the instructor, and the role of the student have already been decided long before the class begins. Content has been carefully considered and adapted to suit the online modes of presentation. Additionally, students have specifically signed up to take an online course. They fully understand what to expect in this modality. In contrast, the initial emergency and, indeed, the ongoing remote teaching for COVID-19 did not allow for course planning to the extent that online courses usually do and the only consideration for universities going forward was the question of access: how do universities provide access to courses during this ongoing emergency? The question was amplified for those of us working in IEPs.

When the Stay-at-Home order was issued in March 2020, language instructors were frantically trying to develop an online classroom skill set in a fully synchronous form, while still conducting f2f classes. Our preparation focused initially on immediate needs and the mechanics of remote learning. Questions that were foremost in our minds included whether teachers and the students would be able to manage the logistics of online learning. How would teachers and students communicate? Did all students have access to an internet enabled device? How would teachers manage our new learning environment? What would happen if the students were made to return to their country? Would they continue with classes from a different time-zone? What would happen if anyone needed to be fully isolated? What would we need to do to keep courses online beyond the spring semester if necessary?

Some of these questions were answered by the university. UF had an existing e-learning platform using Canvas and unlimited Zoom for synchronous sessions, and the university offered training for new technological interfaces. Both teachers and students also had access to online tools - Microsoft Teams, Dropbox for Education, G suite for Education, and Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus for Education. While there was a requirement for mainstream students at the university to have a computer, our IEP students were not held to that same obligation. That being said, all of our students did have devices that could access the internet, such as smartphones, tablets, chromebooks, and/or laptops.

With this baseline of access, modes of communication, and support systems in place, teachers began to focus on the design of the lessons while simultaneously creating our online learning environment and teaching. We were applying classroom methodologies to this new environment, attempting to adapt activities, assignments, and assessments that we would normally use in a f2f setting for an online setting. At the same time, teachers were attempting to use f2f classroom management strategies for our new virtual environment. As if in one big forced experiment, emergency remote teaching necessitated instructors to discover that some of our f2f classroom management strategies, activities, assignments, and assessments worked in a remote environment while others did not. It was truly an exercise in trial and error. We began to test different online models, and, despite not having the luxury of time, our classes became less like emergency remote teaching and more based in sound educational research and policy. We explore some of the research that informed those changes in the following sections.

3 English Language Learning Online

English language learning has two divergent paths for online learning (Blake, 2011). One of these, Tutorial Computer Assisted Language Learning (Tutorial CALL), provides practice of a more mechanical nature. Typically, exercises do not emphasize interaction and negotiation of meaning, but rather provide

a means for repetitive learning. Many online apps today are 'smart' forms of CALL (e.g., Quizlet or Duolingo) that determine the student's course of learning by continuing to drill incorrect answers and advancing the student through correct answers. Tutorial CALL is viewed as helpful with grammar or rote memorization of vocabulary and standard phrases. Modern versions of Tutorial CALL employ elements of gaming technology to add an interactive component. While many IEP instructors might use this application of CALL for targeted memorization, it is not likely that the depth or breadth of academic English skills could be taught completely using Tutorial CALL methodology.

The second path for online English language learning, Computer-mediated communication (CMC), allows for a more interactive online environment. CMC can include both synchronous modes of communication (e.g., instant messaging, Skype, Zoom) and asynchronous modes of communication (e.g., YouTube, Blogs, Facebook). Each mode has advantages: synchronous modes allow for immediacy, f2f real-time discussion while asynchronous modes let students reply after taking their time to think. Asynchronous online learning, across disciplines, is thought to appeal to the autonomy of the busy student. Access and flexibility are key features, which give students more time for reading, writing, and responding. Especially for English language learning, asynchronous models have become popular because they reduce geographical and time zone boundaries.

However, online learning with an emphasis on asynchronous modes of communication and the autonomous student also has drawbacks (Reinders & White, 2011). For example, unrestricted access to authentic target language material on the internet can be overwhelming. A learner still needs guidance and interpretation of the vast amount of information they find. Without the teaching presence, online language learners will have difficulty processing the information they find. CMC technology should support a model of learning rather than dictate it.

The UF ELI opted to conduct synchronous Zoom classes, partly because attendance is required for visa validation and partly as a way to visually maintain community with existing students and establish community with new students. Synchronous instruction is necessary in the emergency language classroom simply to provide human contact and opportunities for interaction. It gives instructors a chance to directly and immediately communicate with students, and students a chance to meet and collaborate with each other in real time. The synchronous class both provides a way to interact and build a community of inquiry (CoI) and acts as a reinforcement for the three pillars of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Both of these models are discussed below.

3.1 Community of Inquiry (CoI)

Educators have already built models for effective instruction using CMC technology, that can be used to help create effective ELT online classes. Garrison et al. (1999) presented a constructivist framework for online learning balancing (1) social presence, (2) cognitive presence, and (3) teaching presence, called the community of inquiry (CoI) (see Figure 1). The CoI holds that online learning occurs at the intersection of the social presence, the cognitive presence, and the teaching presence. The social presence refers to the ways in which individuals interact socially within the online environment, such as the trust an individual feels for classmates and the instructor and personal relationships that develop. The cognitive presence requires the use of problem-solving and analytical skills through application of the course material and leads to the educational learning outcomes. Finally, the teaching presence provides the discourse structure and allows for the teacher to direct interactions towards the learning goals (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Garrison et al., 1999). Thus, students are encouraged to actively collaborate, synthesize, question, and analyze content material (cognitive presence) in an environment where their affective filters are low (social presence) with an instructor who guides them through the material (teaching presence). The key importance of the model is the emphasis on building relationships in the online

environment, whether it be relationships between students as represented by the social presence, the student and the course content that constitutes the cognitive presence, or the student and the instructor in the teaching presence.
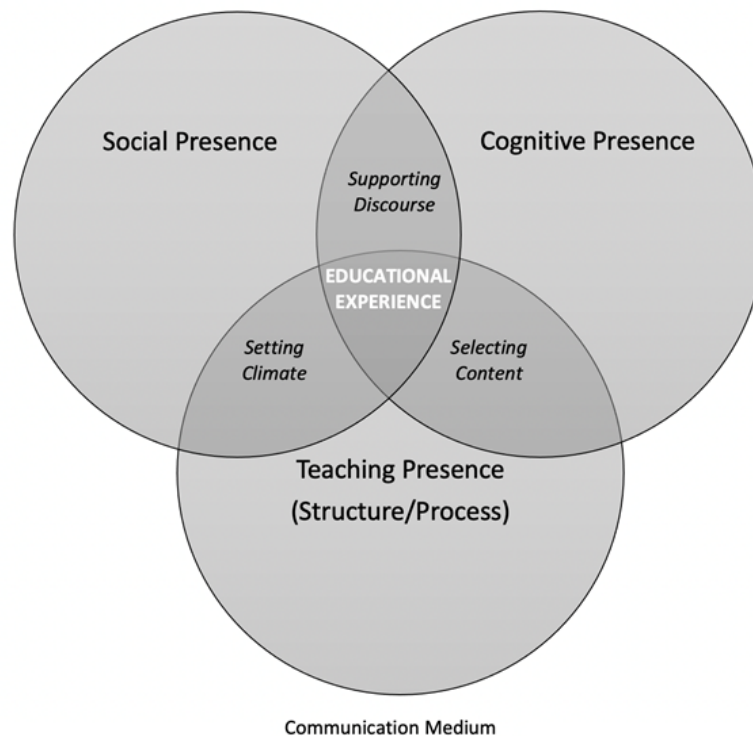

Figure 1. Communities of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999)

Delello et al. (2019) examined the possibilities for an online CoI in both synchronous and asynchronous settings and found that CoI can be used in both settings. They compared four distinct disciplines: English as a Second Language (ESL), Teacher Education, Industrial Technology, and Human Resource Development. Their goal was to understand the benefits and limitations of nine asynchronous and seven synchronous applications in developing a CoI. They found that asynchronous platforms were more beneficial for reflection by allowing students time with the material, supporting the cognitive presence. However, the asynchronous platforms generally suffered from lack of discourse and connection, and they excluded social presence and teaching presence. Synchronous platforms seem to allow for real-time meaningful interactions capable of enhancing social, cognitive, and teaching presence. However, synchronous platforms are problematic in terms of malfunctioning technology and different time zones. Delello et al. (2019) thus recommended using both synchronous and asynchronous platforms together to foster a CoI. They also recommended that students receive training in using technology for educational purposes.

While the CoI model gives ELT instructors a basis for establishing community in an online remote format, it does not address some of the specific problems related to the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of English language learners. Zhang and Kenny (2010) addressed these issues in a case study of international graduate students in an online environment in Canada. They focused on international student perceptions of the online class and identified the challenges that international students faced in this setting. They outlined four broad themes that were most closely linked to the students' perceptions of the online learning situation: students' previous educational experiences, their English language proficiency, their previous life experiences, and socializing online. In their discussion, Zhang and Kenny (2010) focused on three students who represented the breadth of international students'

problems. One international graduate student in the study commented on the curriculum differences between his native country, Japan, and Canada. Since his education in Japan focused on memorizing information, he was unequipped for the Canadian expectation for students to participate in discussion in class, even in the online setting. Another student from Iran had never taken an online course and found the lack of nonverbal cues in the online setting difficult to navigate. A Chinese student reported having difficulty understanding her Canadian peers' writing, especially if they used informal language. The result was that she did not reply to posts or emails. While this study focused on international students in mainstream Canadian classes where the language of instruction was English, these are also typical problems in IEP classes as classes were moved online.

As the UF ELI moved online, teachers noticed that these types of problems became increasingly common. Shortly after the move to remote learning in March 2020, one student in advanced Reading/ Writing reported that they could not understand their classmates online, yet they had had no trouble during f2f classes. Another student felt they could not understand their instructor in the online classes, again with no problems previously. Students at the lower end of the proficiency spectrum said that the new vocabulary of instruction (phrases like "navigate to the course home page" and "opening breakout rooms") was confusing and stressful because the technological idioms were outside of their realm of experience. Discussion board assignments used to support the instruction in Reading/Writing and Grammar classes were described by students at the intermediate proficiency levels as frustrating because there was no immediate feedback. They had to wait for other students to post and reply online. Students were not accustomed to the time lag, which was not so obviously present in the f2f class. Students who had had no problem reading and giving feedback on each other's hardcopy assignments in the f2f classroom were suddenly unable to understand each other's written work online. Other students were simply struggling with the technological problems that made seeing or hearing material and instructions difficult. While these observations are anecdotal, Zhang and Kenny's (2010) research highlights the same types of problems for international students in their study.

As English language instructors, we have to ask ourselves how we can compensate for some of the unusual problems that language learners face in an online classroom. Can instructors compensate for missing body language and non-verbal cues? Can course design compensate for a difference in educational systems? Can online assignments provide meaningful connections between students? While a community of inquiry (CoI) can provide the online English language class with a balance between the social, cognitive, and teaching presence, there are still problems that are not addressed by the CoI framework. We propose that by using CoI in combination with universal design for learning (UDL), teachers are able to design activities that compensate for missing verbal and nonverbal cues and better manage cultural considerations in this new remote education environment.

3.2 Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework of learning that is particularly compelling for the remote teaching of international English language students because it takes into account the flexibility of online platforms, research in education, and research in neuroscience to provide a design framework for teaching a diverse group of students (Meyer et al, 2014). The prerequisite for using the UDL framework is an awareness on the part of the teacher of differences between students in terms of abilities, learning strategies, language, and culture. To better meet the needs of all students, teachers need to provide multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action/expression. Table 1 illustrates how each of these categories may be understood in terms of three overlapping and non-linear phases: access to, building of, and internalization of target knowledge and skills. In theory, guiding students through the three principles of engagement, representation, and action/expression, should empower students to be purposeful, motivated, resourceful, strategic, and goal-directed.

Table 1

Universal Design Guidelines (CAST, 2018)

Provide multiple means of **Engagement** Affective Networks The "WHY" of Learning	Provide multiple means of **Representation** Recognition Networks The "WHAT" of Learning	Provide multiple means of **Action & Expression** Strategic Networks The "HOW" of Learning
Access Provide options for Recruiting Interest - Optimize individual choice and autonomy - Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity Minimize threats and distractions	Provide options for Perception - Offer ways of customizing the display of information - Offer alternatives for auditory information - Offer alternatives for visual information	Provide options for Physical Action - Vary the methods for response and navigation - Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
Build Provide options for Sustaining Effort & Persistence - Heighten salience of goals and objectives - Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge - Foster collaboration and community - Increase mastery-oriented feedback	Provide options for Language & Symbols - Clarify vocabulary and symbols - Clarify syntax and structure - Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols - Promote understanding across languages	Provide options for Expression & Communication - Use multiple media for communication - Use multiple tools for construction and composition - Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance
Internalize Provide options for Self-Regulation - Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation - Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies - Develop self-assessment and reflection - Illustrate through multiple media	Provide options for Comprehension - Activate or supply background knowledge - Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships - Guide information processing and visualization - Maximize transfer and generalization	Provide options for Executive Functions - Guide appropriate goal setting - Support planning and strategy development - Facilitate managing information and resources - Enhance capacity for monitoring progress
Goal Expert learners who are…		
Purposeful & Motivated	Resourceful & Knowledgeable	Strategic & Goal-Directed

3.2.1 Multiple means of engagement

The guidelines for multiple means of engagement encourage teachers to pay attention to students' motivation and self-regulation. Teachers should consider the question, why are we doing this assignment, and put the answer in context for students. Picking relevant and authentic material and minimizing distractions and threats provides a beginning platform for engaging students. Once the basics are established, fostering collaboration, providing appropriate feedback, facilitating student coping strategies, and reinforcing goals and objectives can help maintain and build interest. To help students internalize and self-regulate their own engagement, teachers can promote expectations that aim to motivate students, encourage student reflection, and help students develop individual coping skills.

3.2.2 Multiple means of representation

The guidelines for multiple means of representation focus on the teacher's presentation of the material and how students perceive and comprehend the presentation: What are students learning? UDL holds the representation of course material is best when presented in a variety of ways, such as with written words, spoken by the teacher, and with a video because these multiple means of representation will increase the likelihood of student comprehension. Language elements, such as symbols, vocabulary, and syntax, need to be clearly explained. Decoding strategies that allow students to build language skills should be encouraged. Comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, highlighting patterns, and maximizing transfer will help students internalize the class material.

3.2.3 Multiple means of action/expression

The final category of UDL, multiple means of action/expression, focuses on the question of how students learn. By providing multiple means of action/expression, such as audio/visual, written, or picture-based, teachers can allow for student-centered active learning by increasing student access to tools and technology for communication, construction, and composition. This student-centered approach is critical in building students' fluency and providing practice and performance activities. The student is encouraged to engage in goal setting and develop strategies for self-monitoring.

UDL course design has three overarching ideas that are appealing in an English language class. First, it seeks to redefine how teachers view student challenges. Instead of assuming that a deficit is the student's failing as traditional non-UDL course designs might, UDL suggests the course design plays a role in student failures. If students do not understand the directions of an assignment, for example, this could be the failing of the course design, not the student. Additionally, UDL provides comprehensive design suggestions to meet the needs of a diverse student population. The comprehensive student-centered approach takes into account differences in mental processing, language, and culture, as discussed in the universal design for learning guidelines (CAST, 2018). Also, from a practical standpoint, the UDL guidelines are easily accessible to teachers. For example, the vertical flow, from access to build to internalize, mirrors the three phases of standard ELT lesson plans (teacher presentation, guided practice, individual practice).

4 Implementation of CoI and UDL in the English Language Classroom

In this section, we look at how we implemented CoI and UDL in our classrooms to foster a better environment for learning in an ELT environment. We have organized the section by each row of the UDL concept (i.e., the three phases--access, build, internalize; see Table 1) and addressed how we added engagement, representation, and action/expression in each category. Although we have used UDL as the basic framework, we have highlighted CoI in the areas where we engaged those concepts.

4.1 UDL access phase

The immediate need when moving into the remote emergency learning situation was to provide a sense of contact and connection between students and instructors and reduce stressors. We needed to reestablish the social dimension of the CoI and provide a new set of motivational factors suggested by UDL access. Students suddenly felt isolated in their apartments, not only far away from their families, but also isolated from their UF ELI friends. The new situation required us as teachers to respond to a new and different level of distraction and threat in the new online classroom and find ways to set students at ease. In order to address these new issues, we allowed students the online space to talk freely to each other about non-class related topics. In the synchronous environment, this was achieved by giving students five minutes to chat or be in breakout rooms to speak about a topic of their choice, in the same way that they used to in the f2f classroom. In the asynchronous environment, the discussion board was also useful to allow students a free space to talk. The only requirement for such tasks was that students use English. Allowing the free use of these technological features also allowed students to explore and learn the new classroom technology in the synchronous and asynchronous environment. In subsequent semesters, students still needed to learn the features of the technology, and minimally structured conversation time allowed students a chance to chat to replace some of the f2f opportunities they no longer had.

The student-instructor bond is critical for developing the social and teaching dimensions of the CoI and for establishing engagement access in UDL. We found it more difficult to establish and maintain a positive student-instructor bond in the online environment. We have learned that instructors need to take the initiative in fostering the bond by scheduling mini-meetings with each student individually. Ask the student a question, like, "how do you feel about the lesson today?" After an initial question, allow the student to direct the conversation. This has been an important way to learn about the significant problems that students were facing at home while trying to navigate five online hours of class per day. Students have been surprised by the five-minute meetings, and they have then expressed gratitude that an instructor was willing to take the time to establish and build connections with them.

Students in the online classroom need a higher level of UDL representational access. As discussed earlier, Zhang and Kenny (2010) noted the problems of international students in online classes taught in English: difficulties in comprehending peers and instructors, navigating communication without nonverbal cues, and navigating cultural differences. We found that some of these problems can be minimized by providing access to multiple ways of representing the material. For higher level students, we have been successful by combining written and verbal representations. For example, all instructions were given in writing and also read aloud. Pacing was slow and students had extra time to ask questions about the instructions. For lower levels, we gave students the written instructions with pictures/video and verbal instructions. Pacing was slow and students had sufficient time to ask questions. Another example of providing representational access in an online synchronous class was during the note-taking portion of class. In a f2f class, students expected to take notes with the help of either PowerPoint slides or the use of the whiteboard. Again, we found that in the online setting, students were having difficulty understanding the information and taking notes. We found that by providing guiding questions (such as "What are the four types of vocabulary in context?"; "How do we use vocabulary in context?"; "Why is vocabulary in context important?"), students were better able to process specific information. Additionally, typing answers on the screen along with students while talking also helped with an increased level of understanding and an increased level of discussion about the topic from students.

Providing access to physical response can actually be easier in the online format than in a physical classroom since the internet offers a wide variety of applications for interacting, collaborating, and testing. In a study of the perceptions and experiences of undergraduate students in an international program studying English online during the pandemic, Lehman (2020) identifies the variety of synchronous and asynchronous activities used by the instructor as contributing to a more positive overall experience than the students had expected. The instructor utilized a combination of asynchronous

assignments on an e-learning platform and synchronous activities in Zoom to elicit active responses. Overall, this study found that 64.2% of participants would take another similarly structured English language development course online.

In our IEP classes, we also incorporated a variety of ways to encourage students to actively respond, meeting the UDL requirement for access to action and expression. Zoom Polls offer quick interactions and comprehension checks designed for immediate feedback. Students can give their answer in a non-threatening environment, with the anonymous answer feature. We used Zoom Polls to ask formative assessment questions. The results were compiled by the application, and we showed the answers with the percentage of correct and incorrect answers to the students to stimulate discussion. Students reported liking the combination of low-stakes non-threatening quiz and immediate feedback, and response rates to these polls were high in our classes. Another example of providing access to physical response in the synchronous Zoom classroom is the use of the chat feature for responses. When we asked for a verbal response in a f2f class, we expected to have one person respond. However, when we asked students to respond in Zoom Chat, then every student had a chance to respond. Once again, response rates were much higher online than in the f2f classroom. Outside of Zoom, we used mentimeter.com for an eye-catching way for students to present ideas. Mentimeter.com provides opportunities for anonymous responses which the application uses to create word clouds. We asked students to answer a question such as "What was your favorite vocabulary word this week?" The application created and showed a word cloud of all the responses. The word cloud was then used as a prompt for discussion. An asynchronous example of eliciting action from students is the online discussion board. We controlled the settings such that students could not see other students' responses until after they had written and submitted their own post. This allowed students to think about their own response without relying on their peers to give them the answer. UDL would have the instructor use all of these during a course to provide the variety necessary to engage all students.

4.2 UDL build phase

Once the access issues were addressed, we were able to conduct class in a sustained manner. Many online tools also allow ways to build engagement skills for the purpose of creating social presence (student/teacher dimension), as prescribed by the CoI. One such tool is the chat feature of Zoom, which offers a synchronous approach to build this bond. During our lessons, students reported being very comfortable using chat to ask questions in real time that did not interfere with the flow of the spoken conversation. Students appreciated the option to ask questions publicly in front of the entire class or privately for only the teacher to see. They used both settings equally, so clearly students were using the private setting when they were uncomfortable. Thus, they exerted control over the classroom environment and mitigated perceived threats. Of course, email functions well as an asynchronous mode of communication between student and instructor. Email allowed the student more time to think about and phrase their responses. Some students felt more comfortable with this option, and students and instructors found email useful as a permanent record of the interaction.

Collaboration between students is an important component of UDL building engagement and the CoI social presence (student/student dimension). Zoom breakout rooms provided a synchronous collaborative space for students. Activities like reading circles, in which each student has an individual task that builds the group project, were successful. Google Docs functions as both a synchronous and asynchronous tool for collaboration. We used Google Docs for group activities in which each student in the group worked together during class time, but individually on the same document as homework.

Building representations focuses mainly on providing accessible explanations of vocabulary, symbols, syntax, and structure either through pop-up boxes or video links. However, in the language learning context, always providing definitions or explanations can defeat the purpose of the activity. When our

aim is to have students learn how to guess the meaning of previously unknown vocabulary from context, for example, inserting pop-up boxes for unknown vocabulary is counterproductive. Nevertheless, we found instances where it was necessary to explain vocabulary and structure. For example, during a lesson about using sources to write an essay, we introduced authentic, unaltered, texts. Students needed to easily and quickly understand unfamiliar vocabulary and idiomatic language; therefore, we created definition boxes that appeared when the student hovered over the word with their mouse.

Another way in which the building representations element of the UDL framework has proven useful in ELT has been in providing a richer cultural experience within the online classroom. Students are no longer in the immersive American cultural environment. The reality is that, when they are not online, the majority of the students are living within their home culture. For example, young Venezuelans come in groups and tend to share apartments; mature Middle Eastern students are usually accompanied by family members; and there are also students who continue their studies online from their home country. Our students no longer show up for f2f class carrying the ubiquitous Starbucks cup or breakfast McMuffin; instead, they were eating their more traditional food. In one lower-intermediate class in the summer semester, one of the Saudi students was sitting with what looked like an espresso cup when he logged onto Zoom. This gave us all an opportunity to ask questions about the contents of the cup. Many of the students had never tried Turkish coffee and had no idea how it was made, so he took us into his kitchen and proceeded to talk us through the process. This became the norm in the class, with each student taking turns to describe whatever they had eaten, or were eating, that morning. These interactions not only reinforced the descriptive and process writing skills we had been working on, but also served to encourage understanding across cultures. The introduction of the individual cultures in this class was less abstract than it would have been in the f2f classroom. Cultural sharing was also present across the levels. In a high-intermediate class this fall, the sole Vietnamese student, who was in Gainesville with her family, mentioned preparing rice for her younger brother for breakfast. What started off as a simple warm-up activity morphed into a compare/contrast essay on cultures of our class, and included interviews with available roommates and family members.

Building action/expression in the online classroom can really make spectacular use of the rich multimedia environment. Here is an example from a class using a simple vocabulary review. The assignment was to collaboratively create an adventure story using the words from the unit in the textbook. In the online setting, students could submit a written version, an audio recording, or a video recording. While students were meeting the basic objective of learning and using vocabulary, the different modalities were used to emphasize different types of vocabulary weaknesses, such as the audio/visual recording for more work on pronunciation, or the written version for emphasizing spelling. However, while multimedia functions of the internet and the computer seem logical for building action/expression, instructors should keep in mind Delello et al.'s (2019) recommendation that students receive training in using the applications for educational purposes. Part of building action/expression is training students how to use the applications. Instructors need to be prepared to incorporate technology orientation and support into their approach.

4.3 UDL internalize phase

When we look at this phase of UDL, where the emphasis is on the individual student, we begin to see a conflict between the medium for learning (online remote computer access) and language learning (communicating between people). While remote learning promotes individualized student learning, it can only reinforce communicative skill learning if there is easy access to other speakers. In our f2f classroom, part of the expectation is that the ELL takes the classroom lessons and internalizes them as they move through their social and university circles outside the classroom. However, this expectation has proven almost impossible to meet since March 2020. This is where we notice a shift back to the

importance of teaching presence and social presence as envisioned in the CoI model. It is here that we again needed to use the breakout rooms. For individual student-teacher time, we used them to explain grading and reflection rubrics, to perform individual checks for understanding, and to answer questions. For student-student socialization and collaboration as a means to internalize the language, we used them for discussion and peer feedback sessions.

In the lower-intermediate class, this took the form of individual meetings, scheduled while the rest of the students were engaged in small group activities focused on reinforcing the social presence. By planning for the individual meetings in advance, students were better able to prepare questions and focus on teacher input. At the higher levels, opportunities for reinforcement of teacher presence were more spontaneous. We used the Zoom breakout room function in a different way to achieve the private space. By allocating one student to each breakout room, individual student-teacher engagement could occur during extended periods of writing and reading, and disruptions to other students were minimized. Being able to tailor each individual interaction to the student involved meant that we were able to give each student the tools they needed to perform the skill independently and unprompted. In comparison to the f2f classroom, where having one-to-one time with each student is dependent on the other students' patience and willingness to engage with each other in the absence of the instructor, the synchronous online environment provides private space for more open and frank reflection and discussion. In end-of-semester reflections, students highlighted the individual attention as something they appreciated, and expressed an interest in having more individualized feedback built into future classes.

5 Online Transition: Merging CoI and UDL

By using concepts gleaned from CoI and UDL, we can provide rich interactive classes for international students in any situation. By reflecting on what worked well in two and a half semesters of online emergency instruction, we can be better prepared for online teaching. Our goal is to improve our students' academic English through reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking. The classroom activities that best translate to the synchronous online format are those that give the students multiple means of expression, recognition, and engagement and provide a community of inquiry. It is our contention that, to quickly and effectively make that transition, we should remake our online lessons by looking at the strengths of UDL and CoI. Table 2 presents eight design questions for transition to online courses and their relationship with the UDL and CoI framework.

The guidelines in Table 2 extrapolate from the problems we faced in the online environment and the solutions that we developed to overcome those difficulties. Combining UDL and CoI provided the best coverage for the problems because each model meets slightly different needs. CoI provides a model for rich interactions between students, teacher, and course content while UDL gives course design guidelines to account for variability in learners that can be used to mitigate problems in the online environment specifically relating to ELLs. We envision teachers using the guiding questions in Table 2 for quick online transition for emergency online teaching to ensure a better online lesson design for ELT without the extensive planning process usually given to regular online courses. As seen in Table 2, engagement is a key element of the strategy. Students in the online course need to engage with the course content, with each other, and with the instructor. First, the course content needs to be clearly presented and understood. In the online environment teachers need to focus on clarity by presenting the material in different ways (written, verbal, pictures, etc.) since ELLs might have more difficulty understanding without body language or other cues normally present in a f2f class. We call for clearly presented objectives and directions (see Table 2; question1 (q1)) and closer attention from the teacher to how the material will be presented in the remote environment (q3). Additionally, collaborating (q4) and other student-student interactions provide a motivational way to build skill and are especially relevant

in the ELT context where language is the content. The relationship between the ELL and the instructor is of particular importance because of the social distance created in the online setting. We address this problem by calling for students' access to the instructor (q5) and establishing feedback structures (q8) to be put in place within an activity or lesson so that students clearly understand the criteria for the grade on the assignment.

When drawing more from the UDL model, it is clear that the online courses can draw more from the cultural experiences of ELLs who are in their own environment rather than a f2f classroom as well as relying on shared online experiences (q2). Additionally, scaffolding the lesson becomes more important in the online classroom. Course content scaffolding (q6) and technological application scaffolding (q7) should both be in place. Content scaffolding would make secondary resources, such as extra readings or vocabulary glosses, accessible to all students when appropriate. Technological scaffolding would provide training to students in how to use applications such as Zoom, Canvas, and VoiceThread, etc. that they are using to complete assignments.

Table 2

Guidelines for Transferring Classes to an Online Format

Design questions to ask:		**If the answer is yes, the lesson/ activity achieves the following:**	
1	Is the relationship between the lesson/activity and the language learning objectives of the course clearly articulated and presented in different ways (such as by the instructor orally, in writing, and as a clickable link)?	**UDL**	Engagement
		CoI	Teaching presence
2	Does the lesson/activity respect and activate previous knowledge either learned as part of the course or carried with the learner from their life experience (such as cultural, linguistic, religious, and educational background)?	**UDL**	Engagement Representation
		CoI	Supporting discourse Cognitive presence
3	Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to access and engage with course content and relevant resources?	**UDL**	Representation Action/Expression
		CoI	Cognitive presence
4	Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with other learners?	**UDL**	Engagement Action/Expression
		CoI	Social presence
5	Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with the instructor?	**UDL**	Engagement
		CoI	Teaching presence
6	Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of instructional support for grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, academic approaches, and cultural norms, etc.?	**UDL**	Representation Action/Expression
		CoI	Setting climate Teaching presence
7	Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of technological support for using and producing documents, audio and video recordings, and other applications?	**UDL**	Representation Action/Expression
		CoI	Selecting content Setting climate
8	Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity for synchronous and/or asynchronous feedback from the teacher and peers?	**UDL**	Engagement
		CoI	Supporting discourse Teaching presence

6 Using the Guidelines to Incorporate UDL and CoI into Online Lessons

In this section, we show the use of the guidelines from Table 2 for transitioning a f2f lesson to online application and planning a new lesson with the design questions in mind.

6.1 Transitioning an English language lesson activity from f2f to online use

One example of an online activity in which we used the guidelines from Table 2 was a collaborative writing assignment for low intermediate language learners in a Reading/Writing class. The class met every day for two hours each day. The major writing objective for the class was to be able to compose cohesive paragraphs unified by a central topic and a controlling idea, with appropriate topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the class had engaged in collaborative paragraph writing in the f2f classroom. Students were divided into groups of three or four and presented with a paragraph prompt. The class reviewed orally and used the board to list the elements of a paragraph (topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, all color-coded), the language of the task (cause/effect or compare/contrast phrases), and the process (brainstorming ideas, planning, writing, and editing). The groups would then work together using these resources to write a group paragraph and present it on a whiteboard or flipchart. Feedback was given by the other groups and by the teacher and, time permitting, a class paragraph was written using the best pieces from each of the group submissions.

When the class moved to the remote synchronous setting, students lost easy access to their peers and teacher. They were writing more on their own because it was much easier to set up individual assignments on the e-learning platform. This created a less collaborative, more isolated and thus more stressful environment for the learner. In this environment, students were not producing the same quality of work. To inspire a more active and collaborative learning environment, we created a collaborative writing activity using Zoom and Google Docs and incorporating UDL and CoI through the guidelines. In this activity, the instructor gave instructions on a PowerPoint slide, as well as verbally explaining the entire process. Students were given the link to a Google Doc with the elements of a paragraph in a text box at the top of the page, and a three-column table. The students watched a short video the instructor had prepared describing the functions of each of the components of the paragraph. Students could click on a link that would take them to a list of language elements they might use to complete the task, such as grammar, transition phrases, and punctuation examples. Then the class was divided into breakout rooms, and each breakout room group was responsible for writing their compare/contrast paragraph about Gainesville and a city of their choice on the Google Doc. The role of the instructor was as a source of information and feedback. The instructor could move between groups to guide students as necessary and answer questions, or step back and just watch the writing on the Google Doc.

Reflecting on the success of the online lesson (students were engaged in the writing process and successfully met the objective for the day by producing high quality paragraphs), the reason that the lesson worked well was that we had considered the design questions when we transitioned the activity online, and used those questions to help us fill gaps. When we asked ourselves the design questions, we were able to answer "yes" to all eight, as follows.

Is the relationship between the lesson/activity and the language learning objectives of the course clearly articulated and presented in different ways (such as by the instructor orally, in writing, and as a clickable link)? Yes: The instructor had the directions and objectives on a PowerPoint slide, reinforced the slide verbally, and discussed any questions students had about the activity.

Does the lesson/activity respect and activate previous knowledge either learned as part of the course or carried with the learner from their life experience (such as cultural, linguistic, religious, and educational background)? Yes: In this case, the instructor referenced material from previous

lessons and made it available to students in the form of clickable links. The content of the paragraphs (cities) was drawn from the students' personal life and background.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to access and engage with course content and relevant resources? Yes: New material was presented via video while students had access to material from other relevant lessons. That material could be viewed as many times as an individual student needed. Students were actively producing the written paragraph and sentence forms while discussing the process. The finished product was a written paragraph.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with other learners? Yes: The students produced paragraphs through writing collaboratively in Zoom and Google Docs. The group format allowed students to find their own function in the group: scribe, editor, idea generator, and spell checker. There were also multiple options for engagement. They could choose to engage verbally or in the chat box through the Zoom interface or in writing through Google Docs.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with the instructor? Yes: The instructor moved from group to group to answer questions and provide feedback as needed. The instructor could also keep an eye on the entire group by monitoring all the groups' progress on Google Docs. In this manner, they could remain aware of any potential issues in other groups.

Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of instructional support for grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, academic approaches, and cultural norms, etc.? Yes: Content scaffolding in this collaborative lesson encompassed cultural aspects of being polite in group work, the grammar of comparatives and the verb 'to be', and the vocabulary of paragraph terminology (topic sentence, supporting sentence, and concluding sentence). Instruction on to how to be polite in English was achieved by modeling group behavior in the online setting. Vocabulary lists and grammar scaffolding lessons were accessible by students during the writing process.

Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of technological support for using and producing documents, audio and video recordings, and other applications? Yes: Online, the instructor discovered that students had varying degrees of technology skills. Initially, the instructor placed students who were familiar with Google Docs in groups with students who were unfamiliar with it and guided students through the technology on an as-needed basis. By the end of the lesson, all students were able to submit their writing using Google Docs or Word.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity for synchronous and/or asynchronous feedback from the teacher and peers? Yes: Group work built in the opportunity for peer editing and feedback in the writing process. Students were negotiating meaning as they worked through the writing process. The teacher gave synchronous feedback verbally when visiting the groups in progress. At the end of the lesson, the instructor reinforced the proper forms by combining pieces of writing from different groups to model the perfect paragraph.

6.2 Creating a new lesson using the guiding questions for UDL and CoI

In this section, we look at the considerations when planning new lessons with the guiding questions. For this purpose, we have chosen a low-advanced reading objective which would be taught in a Reading/ Writing class. The vocabulary objective focuses on how to infer the meaning of a word from the context of the reading passage. The lesson will be delivered synchronously using Zoom. If we use the questions to guide the planning process, the online lesson will use UDL and CoI to mitigate the issues that occur when English language classes are moved to online learning interfaces, such as lack of visual cues and social interactions. The instructor already has examples and exercises for the lesson, including pictorial, sentence, and paragraph examples and exercises. The instructor wants students to take notes on the process of determining the vocabulary in context. Students will have guiding questions to answer as they take notes.

Is the relationship between the lesson/activity and the language learning objectives of the course clearly articulated and presented in different ways (such as by the instructor orally, in writing, and as a clickable link)?

- The instructor plans to have a "white board" with written directions and notes.
- The instructor plans to explain the process verbally while using the white board explanations.
- The instructor plans to include questions in the note taking, such as "why is this skill important?" to reinforce the learning objective.

Does the lesson/activity respect and activate previous knowledge either learned as part of the course or carried with the learner from their life experience (such as cultural, linguistic, religious, and educational background)?

- Students will need to make inferences from what they know about English. For example, students can use the parts of speech (which they already know at this level) to guide the process for determining vocabulary in context. If their original word is a noun, they will look at other nouns for vocabulary in context.
- Students will have picture examples, which will allow them to put themselves in the situation that the cartoon depicts, thus allowing them to formulate their own responses to the situation.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to access and engage with course content and relevant resources?

- The instructor provides practice exercises that include a range of different lengths of text from mainly pictorial to sentence length to paragraph length. Students are using the context to determine the definition of an unknown word.
- The lesson will be reinforced by looking at unknown vocabulary in regular reading material and determining the meaning by using the context. Basically, the strategy can be used whenever the student sees unknown vocabulary.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with other learners?

- The instructor has divided the lesson into three parts. First, the instructor will give the mini-lecture and students will take notes and ask questions. Next, the entire class will look at pictorial and sentence examples to illustrate the process. Then students will divide into groups to work with each other to answer the vocabulary in context exercises. The third step allows students access to each other and the time to negotiate meaning together with the exercises.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity to regularly access and engage with the instructor?

- In the note-taking stage of the lesson, the entire class is together, and the instructor has built in time for student questions. Students can ask questions verbally or type them in the chat.
- In the group-work stage of the lesson, the instructor plans to visit the groups and answer questions. Students in the breakout Zoom rooms can also use the call button if they have an immediate question.

Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of instructional support for grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, academic approaches, and cultural norms, etc.?

- The lesson is scaffolded in the presentation by beginning with the simplest examples of finding vocabulary in context with pictures and progressing to more difficult examples in sentences and then paragraphs. The end goal is that students will be able to use vocabulary in context as a reading strategy in their general reading when they do not explicitly know the words.
- All notes and examples are available on the e-learning platform with explanations so that students can refer to the explanatory material if necessary.

- Since students will be working at the vocabulary level, no glossaries or dictionaries should be used.

Is the lesson/activity scaffolded in terms of technological support for using and producing documents, audio and video recordings, and other applications?

- The lesson requires students to use Zoom audio, video, breakout rooms, screen share, and chat features, as well as access the assignment online. If these features have not been explicitly taught, the teacher can require that everyone use them. For example, the teacher can require everyone to make a chat comment and to share a screen. In this way, the teacher can check who does not know the application and give direct instructions on how to use each feature.

Does the lesson/activity offer the learner the opportunity for synchronous and/or asynchronous feedback from the teacher and peers?

- The lesson allows for instructor feedback during the group sessions in the breakout rooms.
- The teacher can require students to complete the exercises as homework. Asynchronous feedback can be given to students individually when grading the homework assignment.

By using the guiding questions in this manner when planning new lessons for remote classes, we believe teachers can use the strengths of UDL and CoI to provide active and engaging lessons that minimize the problems that ELLs have in the online setting.

7 Conclusion

At the time of writing (December, 2020), we are able to reflect on our experiences converting classes online in response initially to an emergency situation in the spring semester, and for the summer and fall semesters because of ongoing COVID-19 concerns. When IEPs moved international students into online classes, there were problems that had to be addressed. Students suffered motivational problems and stress, and these problems needed to be addressed before learning could take place. Teachers needed to address the types of problems that ELLs have in the online environment and better incorporate students' own cultural and background experiences. We have addressed these online problems by using CoI and UDL in the course and lesson planning process.

Through combining the social, cognitive and teaching presence elements of CoI with the design principles of engagement, representation and action/expression found in UDL, we have developed the list of guidelines found in Table 2 and put them into a practical form for teachers to use. Using the eight design questions, English language teachers can create lessons and activities that will provide a rich interactive experience with meaningful language learning instruction that takes into account some of the unique requirements of English language learners, no matter the format.

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