Evaluation of interaction in online courses

in a college English language program

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Abstract

There are increasing demands for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in L2 language education as technological capabilities continue to expand. The English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawai‘i has recently brought CALL into their curriculum. Since 2002 they have provided online courses not only for distance language learners but also for on-campus students. Given its recent introduction, there are many concerns with maximizing the effectiveness of the online curriculum. The ELI recognized a need to enhance interaction in its online courses through ongoing program evaluation. The focus of this evaluation project is the role of interaction in an online course. As this evaluation was intended to improve the online curriculum in the ELI, I engaged in a formative and utilization-focused evaluation approach to emphasize meet the needs of the program. Specifically, I examined diverse perspectives on interaction and the extent to which it occurs in an online course. In this report, I will describe how the evaluation project was implemented to fulfill the stakeholders’ needs and enhance the utility of the evaluation. The evaluation revealed that interaction was hindered by varying amounts of student participation, despite efforts to enhance interaction in the curriculum itself. Based on data collected from multiple sources, I suggested several ways to improve interaction between students and teachers in online ELI courses.
Evaluation of interaction in online courses in a college English language program

Introduction

Language program evaluation has evolved over the last several decades. Because some people have developed negative perceptions of program evaluation, they have been misled and evaluation has sometimes been disregarded. The most common misconception is that program evaluation is designed and implemented exclusively by outside groups or individuals and that findings will inevitably threaten the programs and their participants. Mackay (1988) mentioned that this is an unfortunate and inaccurate perception of program evaluation. Program evaluation that is collaborative works with program stakeholders to answer the questions that they are asking to improve the program, and to meet other demands, rather than focusing only on individual performance outcomes. Thus, evaluation can play an active role in a variety of contexts by responding to different stakeholders’ interest and needs.

Another source of concern is that accountability has traditionally provided the primary motivation for language program evaluation (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998). This emphasis is reflected in early definitions where evaluation is presented as “a process of determining the merit, worth, and value of things” (Scriven, 1991, p.139). In language education, evaluation was initially used for attempting to prove the effectiveness of language programs (and ‘methods’) through measurable outcomes (Lynch, 1996). However, it has moved in recent years to a more holistic and broad-based approach which reflects all aspects of programs
Along with this evolution, new definitions of program evaluation suggest that it is primarily the systematic collection of information about various aspects of programs for the purpose of making decisions or providing opportunities for reflection and action (Patton, 1996; Lynch, 2003). In recent years evaluation has become a way to develop or enhance the effectiveness of programs more than just determining the programs’ worth.

**a. Utilization focused evaluation**

Patton (1996) suggested *utilization-focused evaluation* (UFE) as a way “to contribute to long-term program effectiveness and improve decision making” (p. 15). UFE emphasizes “utility and actual use of program evaluation” (p. 20). To enhance the utility and actual use, program evaluators need to design and implement evaluations based on intended uses of primary intended users (PIU), that is, individuals who have the power to use the results of evaluations. Thus, in UFE, intended users have a bigger role than in other evaluation methodologies. Furthermore, UFE envisions a different role for the evaluator, primarily as a guide who leads PIUs to engage in the evaluation processes actively. In a UFE approach, evaluators help PIUs find and apply “the most proper content, model, methods, theory, and uses” (p. 22). Patton also asserts that “there is no one best way to conduct an evaluation”, so evaluators need to implement “situational evaluation” (p. 126). UFE requires flexibility to deal with different programs, situations, stakeholders, and intended uses. Patton also emphasizes the importance of “act, react, and adapt” (p. 136) in making UFE happen in a
way that is maximally appropriate to the particular program context.

Although it has achieved considerable acclaim in mainstream evaluation contexts (Stufflebeam, 2000), there are few published program evaluations using UFE in language education. Yang (2008) implemented UFE to evaluate teacher induction practices in an English language program of an American university. She identified the specific intended uses of PIUs and designed the evaluation to reflect their needs. The result of the evaluation led the program to act to improve their new teacher induction program. In addition, the evaluation process helped intended users understand the importance of evaluation in the program. In another example, Norris (2008) applied UFE to understand, develop, and improve the assessment system in a U.S. university foreign language program. Through UFE methodology, he could reframe an approach to assessment validation based on evaluation findings regarding the roles played by assessment in the language program. He stated that UFE can be beneficial as a means for leading local educators to reflect on the program context and participate in the evaluation and related program decisions. These two previous evaluation projects showed that UFE can be applied to increase stakeholders’ participation in an evaluation process and improve program effectiveness in language education.

In this evaluation project, I also adopted utilization-focused evaluation in an attempt to illuminate the concept of interaction in online courses in the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). In particular, I implemented formative
evaluation methodologies to collect data for this ‘Improvement-oriented evaluation’ in a way that would lead to uses by the program decision makers. In the second part of this introduction, I will first explain online interaction as understood in relation to language-learning contexts. In the following section, I will then illustrate how utilization-focused evaluation of interaction elements in the online program was initiated and applied. Finally, I will report the findings of the evaluation along with some challenges that I faced during the process.

**b. Online interaction**

Interaction plays a vital role in helping L2 learners enhance their competency through communicative exchange. Interaction arises “as a social behavior when people communicate in face-to-face activity through oral medium or written medium” (Ziglari, 2008, p. 446). It provides an opportunity for L2 learners to understand comprehensible input through negotiating meaning. Negotiation of meaning, including clarification requests and comprehension checks, increases students’ awareness of the target language forms (Long, 1996). Moreover, L2 learners have the opportunity to self-correct after receiving negative feedback such as explicit correction and recast from interlocutors (Gass, 1997). Also, language learners may attain language competence by producing the language to communicate with other group members (Swain, 1985). From these premises, many researchers have argued for the importance of providing an environment and curriculum that
facilitates student interaction (Brown, 2000; Heins, Duensing & Stickler, 2007).

However, clearly, there are limits to facilitating interaction in online L2 learning because students in online courses are not able to engage in interaction in the same ways as in face-to-face classes. Nonetheless, computer-mediated interactions have been found to have some potentially positive effects on L2 learning (Salaberry, 1996; Black, 2000; Kitade, 2000). L2 learners can use the language interactively in authentic situations such as listening to and chatting with native speakers and each other (Abuseileek, 2007). In addition, online written interactions aid L2 learning by facilitating comprehensible and contextualized input and output, learner self-correction, and a collaborative learning environment (Kitade, 2000). It has been reported that computer-assisted language learning can lead students to produce an increased amount of discourse and to participate equally compared to a face-to-face classroom (Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996).

In spite of these potentially positive aspects of online interaction, it may also face challenges that delimit its success in reality. As the starting point for the current project, administrators at the UHM ELI noticed that students in online courses were not satisfied with opportunities for computer-mediated interaction, as expressed over several semesters in end-of-term course evaluations. Accordingly, they were in need of an evaluation that could help them to understand the challenges of interaction in online courses, and potentially point to enhancements, especially in online listening and speaking courses that seemed to call for
interactive elements the most.

**Program context**

The evaluation took place at the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). The ELI is housed under the Department of Second Language Studies, and its main purpose is to help international and immigrant UHM students, who do not meet language proficiency requirements, enhance their English skills and their capabilities to complete academic studies at UHM. The ELI provides academic listening and speaking, writing, and reading course at two different levels, intermediate and advanced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Offering</th>
<th>Listening/Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>ELI 70</td>
<td>ELI 72</td>
<td>ELI 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>ELI 80</td>
<td>ELI 82</td>
<td>ELI 83 (grads)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ELI 100 (Undergrads)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ELI offered only face-to-face courses before one department at UHM proposed to host a Master’s degree program entirely online in 2002. Along with the online Master’s degree program, the ELI began to offer online courses for distant students who needed to meet the university’s English proficiency requirement. As a first step, the ELI started with online courses of advanced reading (ELI 82) and advanced writing for graduate students (ELI 83), and these were developed and implemented by three ELI instructors. In the following
semester, the ELI expanded two online courses into six online courses including intermediate and advanced listening and speaking (ELI 70 and ELI 80), intermediate reading (ELI 72) and advanced writing for undergraduates (ELI 100). However, the ELI discontinued the intermediate level courses, as students and teachers in the intermediate online courses stated that it was a considerable challenge for intermediate students to benefit from instruction through online courses. Thus, currently, the ELI provides online courses only at the advanced level.

The online courses were originally developed to meet the needs of distance learners (i.e., learners not physically present at the UHM campus). However, they were also opened to on-campus students. Currently, online courses are gaining popularity among on-campus students, to the extent that the majority of students in online ELI courses are on-campus students who want the convenience of flexible course scheduling and participation. Thus, instructors must deal with two different types of students in online courses, both completely distance-based students and on-campus students.

The online courseware management system of UHM has also been changed several times because of university policy. At the beginning, a few instructors created the initial ELI online website by using ‘Dreamweaver’ (Dreamweaver MX, 2002). Later, UHM decided to require ‘Blackboard’ for the entire university. ELI needed to adjust to the new online management system and move their online materials into that. More recently, UHM has
shifted the courseware management system from ‘Blackboard’ (Blackboard Learning System, 2004) to ‘WebCT’ (Goldberg, 1995). Once again, the ELI had to adjust to a new version of ‘WebCT’ (Goldberg, 1995). Finally, most recently, UHM has opted for a freeware, ‘Laulima’ (2007), developed by Sakai and the University of Hawai‘i. Since UHM seems to plan to keep it for a while, the ELI has perhaps entered into a period of more consistency for the course management system (finally!).

Over the years, the ELI has tried to enhance the online curriculum in various ways. Initially, one instructor was assigned a section of the course with both face-to-face and distance students in the same course. The instructor taught the course to the face-to-face students in class several times each week, and also taught some distance students through the ELI online website. To alleviate the teachers’ burden, the ELI separated the online and face-to-face sections by creating entirely online courses. Moreover, the ELI minimized the number of students taking an online course from 20 to 12 to enhance the efficiency of online instruction. It also created a new position called ‘online lead teacher’ to facilitate online curriculum development and help online instructors. Beside these efforts, they also provide useful resources for online instructors such as online teaching guidelines and lists of helpful websites. Also, ELI offers students several resources on the ELI website which explain the characteristics of the ELI online courses and provide a checklist that students can use for self-evaluation to find whether online learning is suitable for them.
Although the ELI has made efforts such as these for the online curriculum, there are still several aspects necessary to improve the online courses. One of these has revolved around the role for and importance of interaction in the online courses. Through student course evaluations, administrators of the ELI noticed that there was a potential challenge in offering ideal interaction (such as that presumably found in face-to-face courses) within online courses. For this reason, the ELI questioned how well the online courses might function to enable useful interaction between students, and between teachers and students, and how interaction in online courses can be improved. Based on that initial impetus, the curriculum coordinator of the ELI issued a call for external evaluators with the specific following questions on interaction in online courses:

Given that most ELI students enroll in online courses because they are busy and have heavy schedules, how can we bring in more personal interaction (T-S, Ss-Ss) into our online courses? And in what ways are our online courses already doing a great job of providing opportunities for interaction?

As an evaluator I was interested in the evaluation and decided to work on it. The evaluation was initiated with great interest and support of the ELI.

**Evaluation commencement**

The ELI administrators were acquainted with utilization-focused evaluation as they had experienced several evaluation projects by using UFE in the program before. When they issued the call for evaluators, they clearly stated the purpose of evaluation, which was
improvement of online courses in the ELI. The purpose was clear and evaluation was to be used as an improvement-oriented endeavor. There were not any other demands by empowered stakeholders such as accreditors or program funders involved in this particular evaluation. To initiate the project, I had several meetings with the director and the curriculum coordinator of the ELI to discuss the evaluation project and the questions that were to be addressed. Early in our meetings, the director, who has the influence to make decisions based on outcomes of the evaluation, self-identified as the primary intended user and the main point of contact on the project. I collaboratively worked together with the PIU by sharing ideas and thoughts throughout the evaluation process. His participation was incredibly valuable for every part of the evaluation.

This evaluation commenced with a meeting with the director and the curriculum coordinator of ELI to indicate evaluation purposes and intended uses of the evaluation and to decide on the details of the evaluation. As mentioned above, the situational needs revealed two purposes for the evaluation: (a) understand the present status of interaction in online courses, and (b) improve online program practices bettering terms of interaction components. Through the conversation with the intended users, I identified several intended uses of the evaluation. Among them, I prioritized the intended uses based on what the PIU highlighted in the meeting: (a) find how interaction functions in the online course, (b) modify online curriculum to enhance interaction, (c) support and provide training for teachers and students
of online courses, and (d) amend the online course evaluation. These intended uses served as
the background for determining evaluation questions and methodologies.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended uses of the evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Modify curriculum to enhance interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Provide support for online teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) Offer student training to get used to online interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Advertise online courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Check the reality of interaction in online courses:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Listen to students’ perception and needs on interaction through the online course)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Change course evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) Set up instructors’ office hours (online office hours &amp; offline office hours)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the period of evaluation would be relatively short, only four months, the PIU and I
agreed on focusing this evaluation project on the online advanced listening and speaking
course, online ELI 80, in which online interaction is particularly important. Therefore, the
evaluation only centered on interaction in the online ELI 80 course.

**Evaluation design and methods**

To collect data that would illuminate various perspectives on the nature of interaction in
online courses, the PIU and I identified four different groups of stakeholders in this
evaluation: ELI administrators, ELI lead teachers related to online ELI 80, the previous and
the current instructors of online ELI 80, and students in the online ELI 80 course. Based on
initial meetings, I summed up focal evaluation questions that would tap these different
perspectives, as listed in Table 3.
Table 3

Primary evaluation questions

(a) How does online ELI 80 function?
(b) What is the role of each stakeholder in the online program?
(c) What are stakeholders’ perceptions of interaction in a face-to-face course and in an online course?
(d) How does the ELI support the students and instructors in the online ELI 80 course?
(e) How do students participate in the online courses?
(f) What difficulties do instructors face when teaching the online course?
(g) What difficulties do students face in learning L2 in the online course?
(h) How does the curriculum of online ELI 80 function?
(i) Does the course evaluation gather information about interaction in the online course? If so, is the information useful?
(j) What are stakeholders’ suggestions to improve interaction in the online course?

Subsequently, I designed the evaluation procedures and data collection methodologies in order to provide accurate answers to the questions in Table 3. The PIU reviewed the evaluation methods with me while designing the evaluation. His knowledge of the program context helped them to be more functional. In the end, we decided to collect the evaluation data from ELI administrators and instructors, through interviews, and to develop a questionnaire for students.

Interview with the ELI administrators

Interviews with the director and the curriculum coordinator of the ELI aimed to identify the context of the ELI online program and support for the online ELI 80 course. The director and the curriculum coordinator of ELI participated in the interviews individually. In the interviews, they explained the program context briefly and listed the support that they provide for online instruction. They also reported several difficulties they had experienced in
operationalizing the online course from an administrative viewpoint. Additionally, they shared the information about software for online language learning. The questions of the interviews are provided in Appendix A.

Interview with the ELI lead teachers

The ELI has a lead teacher in each curriculum area who takes care of the curriculum. They work as a bridge between teachers and administrators. Whenever instructors need help, they support instructors in their curriculum area. Online ELI 80 gets support from an online lead teacher and a listening and speaking lead teacher since it shares two distinct curriculum areas. Clearly, then, it was also important to listen to their opinions as stakeholders of the program under evaluation. In the interviews, I mainly asked questions focusing on how they work with an online ELI 80 instructor and how they support the online course. Interviews also included their perceptions of online instruction and online interaction. Additionally, I asked them whether they have knowledge about or employ useful software applications for students’ online language learning. The interview questions with the lead teachers can be found in Appendix B.

Interview with the online ELI 80 instructors

As the main decision maker in the online ELI 80 course, the course instructors provided essential information in the evaluation. Participants included a previous teacher and a current teacher of online ELI 80, both of whom were on campus and available in the evaluation
Thus, I interviewed these two instructors. The interview with ELI 80 instructors mainly centered on their difficulties and needs for online instruction and particularly interaction in the online class. In the interview, they also illustrated the nature of online instruction and online interaction in the course. In addition, the interview sought their suggestions to improve online interaction including software applications and other support.

The interview questions of ELI 80 online instructors are shown in Appendix C.

**Questionnaire for online ELI 80 students**

The main point of the students’ questionnaire was finding out the difficulties and the needs of interaction in online courses from the students’ point of view and eliciting the students’ perceptions and attitudes on interaction. Also, the PIU wanted to see if there were any difference of students’ attitudes in the online course depending on their background, so it included students’ information such as their nationality, major, and academic year. The questionnaire consisted of four-likert scale and open-ended questions. The text version of the questionnaire is in Appendix D.

Initially, the PIU and I tried to collect students’ data through face-to-face methods such as interviews and focus group to listen to students’ insights. However, it was difficult to use these methods due to the reality that in online courses it is difficult to establish contact with others in person. Therefore, the PIU and I subsequently attempted to collect the students data through an online questionnaire and email. The questionnaire was provided to students
through the course management system, Laulima. The PIU actively facilitated the data collection by sending emails to students who had been in the course. However, there was virtually no response from students due to several reasons (such as graduating students and students’ busy schedules). In the end, I could gather only one current student’s data through the questionnaire, and I used only one student’s data in this report. Thus, it was difficult to observe students’ different opinions depending on their background and students’ deeper insights through the questionnaire.

**Documents analysis**

It was necessary to analyze several documents of the ELI for answering some of the evaluation questions. First of all, I reviewed course evaluations from fall 2006, fall 2008 and summaries of course evaluations from spring 2005 and spring 2006. Especially the fall 2008 course evaluation played a crucial role in gathering students’ opinions, as a number of students answered the course evaluation in that semester and it included some questions about interaction and communication in online courses (which course evaluations of other semesters did not contain). Hence, I utilized the fall 2008 course evaluation as a main resource on students’ perspectives. I also reviewed the questions of the course evaluation form because one of intended uses was altering the course evaluation itself. In addition, I analyzed the online ELI 80 syllabus with the electronic version of the course curriculum in Laulima (2007) to examine what kinds of interaction occur in the course. I also reviewed the
Evaluation of interaction 18

online instruction guidelines for online instructors provided by the ELI to see how they support online instruction. Additionally, I observed the ELI website to check the overall context of the ELI. Through these document analysis methodologies, I was able to enlarge the contextual coverage beyond that achieved in the interviews and the questionnaire.

The PIU and I agreed that these evaluation methods would lead to the most useful data collection in the evaluation context. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in text. The quotes in the following reporting are exact extractions from the data. Fundamentally, the qualitative data collection approach adopted here helped me listen to stakeholders’ insights about the online program context and interaction in online courses. In the following section, I will describe evaluation findings based on the collected data.

**Evaluation Findings**

During the evaluation, many complexities arose with the evaluation questions, intended uses, and data collection. In this section, I will first describe the ELI 80 course, as observed during the evaluation period. Subsequently, I have created four sections of evaluation findings based on the intended uses as identified by the PIU: (a) find out how interaction functions in the online course, (b) modify online curriculum to enhance interaction, (c) support and provide training for teachers and students of online courses, and (d) amend the online course evaluation. I believe that these main themes will help the actual uses of the evaluation findings because they directly connect the evaluation questions with the intended
uses. This organization method helped me to manage and organize the data in order to keep
the purpose of the evaluation clear. Before I reported the evaluation findings, I confirmed
with the PIU that the format of reporting the findings would be suitable. A detailed report of
the evaluation findings was provided to the PIU along with an executive summary.

The overview of the online ELI 80 course

To get a better understanding of interaction in the online ELI 80 course, it is important
to be aware generally of how online ELI 80 facilitates students’ language learning. I will
explain the overall content covered in the course through reviewing the course evaluation and
the interviews with online instructors. This section addresses the first primary evaluation
question, as seen in Table 3.

Online ELI 80 basically functions the same as face-to-face ELI 80 to help students
enhance academic listening and speaking proficiency. As Table 4 shows, the goals of online
ELI 80 are exactly same as face-to-face ELI 80: it aims to improve students’ listening
comprehension and speaking proficiency to maximize students’ academic studies in college.
Specifically, the course focuses on academic listening materials, presentation, and discussion.
Students are also intended to improve their skills of presentation and discussion through the
course. However, online ELI 80 does not have any specific learning outcomes statements yet,
as the ELI is currently working on developing outcomes for every course.
To achieve the goals above, online ELI 80 applies various activities that students should participate in (see Table 5). According to the syllabus, students should complete weekly assignments, weekly readings, and special assignments related to academic listening and speaking. Besides that, students need to carry out a self-selective listening and speaking project that examines and evaluates their progress through the semester. Students are also required to participate in face-to-face group discussions and to reflect on the discussions. The present instructor of the online course mentioned that he gives an alternative assignment to true distance learners who cannot be involved in the discussions. Moreover, students should do an online textbook presentation in the middle of the semester and an online individual presentation at the end of the semester to develop their academic presentation skills. To do the presentations, students make a video file of their presentation by themselves or with instructors’ aid and upload it to the website. Students receive comments on their presentations from classmates and their instructor.
Table 5

*Activities of the online ELI 80 course*

1. Weekly assignments
2. Weekly readings
3. Special assignments
4. Self-selected listening and speaking project
5. Textbook presentations
6. Discussion group participation and reflections
7. Individual presentation and reflection

In the fall 2008 course evaluations, students commented on their improvement of English proficiency through the online course. Eight out of nine students reported that their English improved during the course, especially listening and speaking proficiency (see Table 6). They mentioned that they improved primarily through listening to various resources and discussing with classmates through online blog and face-to-face interactions. The other one student said that the online course was helpful to examine his or her speaking skill by recording and reviewing his or her speech, although the student thought he or she could not improve English overall in the course.

Table 6

*Students’ perception on improvement of listening and speaking proficiency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think my English listening and speaking improved compared to the day</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I began this course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the course evaluation, students also explained the reasons why they took online ELI 80. Almost all of the students mentioned that they took the online course because of their
tight schedule and online courses gave them freedom from time constraints. Similarly, online instructors also said that teaching online courses allows them to manage their time freely. Yet, both students and instructors agreed that online courses call for a lot of time and work. In the case of students, they reported quite different amounts of time management, ranging from 2 to 16 hours a week. Some students stated that the course required the same amount of time as regular courses and other students said that it was more than they imagined before taking the course. Also, some students mentioned that it is difficult but important to be self-disciplined in online courses. Note that self-discipline is a requirement for taking ELI online courses that the ELI states on their website.

How online ELI 80 functions for online interaction

In this section, I will address primary evaluation questions (e) How do students participate in the online courses? and (h) How does the curriculum of online ELI 80 function? I will also address question (c) What are stakeholders’ perceptions of interaction in a face-to-face course and in an online course? by first discussing the perceptions of the students and then discussing the perceptions of the instructors and administrators.

(a) The nature of interaction in online ELI 80

Approaches to interaction in the course were revealed by observing the online course curriculum and interviewing the instructors (see Table 7). Previous instructors have made considerable efforts to enhance interaction in the course. For interaction between students, various methods have been applied in the course, such as discussion boards in Laulima, email,
WAU (Web Audio Utility), the final presentation, and face-to-face group discussions. Also, several ways to interact between the instructors and students occurred into the course such as email, Skype, blog in Laulima, and face-to-face meeting. The instructors stated that students usually prefer to communicate to instructors through email and sometimes through face-to-face meetings. However, students rarely used Skype to communicate with their instructor.

Table 7
The methods used to facilitate interaction in the online ELI 80 course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between students</th>
<th>Between instructor and students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board in Laulima</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAU</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face group discussion</td>
<td>Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>Face-to-face meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students also expressed their opinions about the methods of interaction through course evaluations in Fall 2008. They commented that they usually communicate with classmates through the discussion board in Laulima. Moreover, students stated that WAU was helpful to improve their English speaking proficiency by practicing their speech and listening to others’ comments on it. The final presentation also provided an opportunity to interact with other students. Furthermore, they showed their preference for discussing face-to-face with group members. Through face-to-face meetings, they could have social interaction like in a face-to-face class. It seems these meetings bring positive effects on students’ language learning by providing social interaction in the course. Thus, it is recommended to keep having face-to-
face group discussion even though there are some time conflicts between students.

(b) ELI teachers’ and students’ perceptions of online course interaction

The interviews with the administrators, the lead teachers, and the online ELI instructors revealed a variety of perceptions of interaction in online courses. Table 8 shows that all the informants from the ELI agreed with the importance of interaction in online courses. They agreed that interaction plays an important role in language learning and it should have a role in online language learning. However, all expressed that it is difficult to bring interaction into an online course. Both the director and the curriculum coordinator mentioned that the interaction, including negotiation of meaning and receiving feedback in online courses, is a lot slower than in face-to-face courses. They also said that students in online courses have a misconception about online courses. Students often think that online courses might be easier and less time-consuming than face-to-face courses. Especially, the curriculum coordinator stated that students lack social interaction in online courses, reasoning that they do not have enough opportunities to get to know their teachers and classmates thoroughly. She also felt that students lack connection with the class because they only interact with their computers. The previous and present online ELI instructors mentioned that interaction in online courses is different and difficult because they cannot see students’ response and understanding immediately in online course like they can in face-to-face classes. Also, they reported that there are different amounts of students’ participation, from almost
zero participation to enthusiastic participation in online courses. This phenomenon sometimes
hinders student-student and student-teacher interaction. However, the listening
comprehension lead teacher and the online lead teacher were not able to describe in detail the
kings of interaction in the specific online course (ELI 80) since they do not have any
experience in teaching the online listening comprehension course.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELI faculty perceptions on interaction in online ELI 80 course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; speaking Lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous/present ELI 80 instructors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students offered some insights on interaction in online courses through comments in the
course evaluations for fall 2008. Since the regular course evaluation did not ask any questions
about interaction, one previous instructor added questions about interaction, such as “Over
the semester, what kinds of communication and interaction did you have with your instructor
and classmates?” and “Are you satisfied with the amount of communication and interaction
you had with your instructor and classmates?” The questions were open-ended response
format, but I divided students’ answers into five-point likert scale: great, good, fair, poor, and never based on their responses. I chose to code the data into quantifiable results because I felt that the PIU could understand and utilize the results more clearly. Since the questions asked about interaction in general, students responded about many types of interaction and communication that they experienced in the course. The data collected from these evaluations is very rich and students often identified similar aspects of interaction and communication, which I grouped together for interpretation. However, one limitation of the data is that sometimes students commented on interaction in general, and I could not identify the specific types of interaction to which they referred. Nine students completed the evaluation. For the first statement, I could not include two students’ answer since they did not express any opinion on interaction with other students.

Table 9

Students’ perception on interaction in online course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I communicate with my classmates in online course enough.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I communicate with my instructor in online course enough.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, unlike the ELI teachers’ concerns, it turned out that students seemed relatively satisfied with interaction in the online course. First of all, students thought that they communicated with classmates in the online course enough (Mean = 3.5). Among seven students, four answered that it was great and stated that they were actively involved not only
in discussions on Laulima but also in the face-to-face group sessions. And one student commented that the interaction was fine. However, two students who were not satisfied with the interaction commented that they communicated with other students only by email and they could not contact them well because of other students’ low participation. As with the instructors’ concerns, in the online course some students’ low participation seemed to interfere with other students’ interaction and online learning.

In addition, students seemed content about the degree of interaction with their instructor (Mean =4.3). Most of students appreciated the instructor’s effort to communicate with them. Students could visit the instructor whenever they had concerns or questions on learning in the online course. And they usually communicated with the instructor by email. Eight out of nine students stated that the instructor’s response was quick and clear. However, one student mentioned that the instructor’s response was too late. It seems that the student expected getting the instructor’s response promptly (perhaps as in a face-to-face course). Along these lines, it might be necessary to inform students how interaction in online courses is different from face-to-face courses and the ways to communicate with instructors in online courses.

**How to modify online ELI 80 curriculum to enhance interaction**

In this section, I will address the primary evaluation question (j) What are stakeholders’ suggestions to improve interaction in the online course? by providing suggestions to improve the interaction. Most of the information is based on instructors’ and students’ opinions
through the interviews and the course evaluations. In addition, I will illustrate recommendations of new applications to improve interaction in the course based on information gleaned from the interviews with the ELI administrators and instructors.

The curriculum of the course seems to offer substantial opportunities for interaction in the online course. However, as mentioned in the previous section, a challenge to having effective interaction in the course has been low participation by some students. Instructors mentioned that there is no clear policy in the ELI to handle the low participating students in online courses, and instructors had been worried about students’ learning and giving them grades every semester. They explained that there were one or two students who rarely participated in the online course. Sometimes they showed up at the end of semester and asked the instructors to give them a grade. The ELI director mentioned that there is a policy for dealing with students’ absence from class, but sometimes instructors seemed not to be aware of the policy. However, the policy generally applies for face-to-face courses, so it may be necessary to set a clear policy to take care of students’ low participation in online courses, such as minimum participation to pass the course and to announce it clearly to students taking the course.

To enhance interaction in online courses, ELI administrators and instructors suggested several applications. Interestingly, they recommended the use of different types of web conferencing software (see Table 10). They commented that it might provide more
classroom-like interaction in online courses. Again, these comments may reflect the perceived need of providing interaction more similar to that found in face-to-face courses.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended application</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Elluminate [a video conferencing tool]</td>
<td>Great features but non-affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Halawai [a video conferencing tool]</td>
<td>Some constraints that students use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Dimdim [a video conferencing tool]</td>
<td>Reasonable &amp; usable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Videoant [an online video annotation tool]</td>
<td>Good to give feedback on students’ video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, the online lead teacher, the curriculum coordinator, and the present online ELI 80 instructor suggested ‘Elluminate’ (2000) that the College of Education at UHM has used. They said that it has great functions for bringing classroom interaction into online courses by providing a large capacity so that users can participate in a video conference at the same time with the blackboard function to take notes. However, it is extremely expensive to purchase the software. Thus, it may not be feasible to use the application in the ELI. Secondly, the ELI director mentioned ‘Halawai’ (2007), a video conferencing tool managed by the University of Hawaii. However, there are some constraints for students to utilize it. For instance, only faculty can open the video conference, which means that students cannot use Halawai (2007) freely without faculty approval and help. In addition, it provides only a small capacity in terms of the number of participants who may use it at the same time. Therefore, it is also impractical to adopt the application in the ELI 80 online course. Fortunately, there is a video
conferencing application that may overcome the disadvantages mentioned above. The previous online ELI 80 instructor recommended ‘Dimdim’ (2009), a web conferencing freeware. It provides useful functions such as desktop sharing that allows people to show various types of files on the screen with the whiteboard function. It also provides sufficient capacity for up to 20 participants to use the web conference at the same time. In addition, it is user-friendly so that students can easily use the application without any restriction. With reasonable pricing and constructive features, ‘Dimdim’ (2009) is recommended to enhance interaction in online courses among other web conferencing applications.

Furthermore, I had the chance to attend a face-to-face ELI 80 course unexpectedly. The instructor showed me the curriculum of his class and recommended an online video annotation tool, ‘Videoant’ (2008). Through the software, not only instructors but also students can provide feedback on students’ video presentations. It may encourage peer review and promote students’ interaction as well. Since online ELI 80 includes a final presentation project in the curriculum, the application might be useful to increase interaction in the course. This unexpected occasion to listen to other instructor’s opinion suggests extending communication between ELI administrators and online instructors to face-to-face instructors. Furthermore, it may be useful to provide an environment for sharing information between online instructors and face-to-face instructors. The instructor also recommended subscribing to newsletters of online language learning that introduce the latest software developments.
With updated information about such applications, the ELI might encounter more opportunities to enhance interaction in online courses.

**How to provide support for instructors and students in online ELI 80**

This section will address the needs of students and instructors in the online course and suggest ways in which the administration can support them. I will first discuss the primary evaluation questions (a) How does the ELI support the students and instructors in the online ELI 80 course? and (b) What is the role of each stakeholder in the online program? Then I will answer the questions (f) What difficulties do instructors face when teaching the online course? and (g) What difficulties do students face in learning L2 English in the online course?

The interviews with the previous and the present online ELI 80 instructors illustrated the ways they support students’ language learning and interaction in the course. First of all, instructors provide students an orientation in a pc lab at the beginning of each semester. In the orientation, they explain class requirements, the syllabus, and the features of Laulima. They mentioned that it is important to help students understand online learning and ensure their understanding before initiating the online course. For students who could not attend the orientation, they provide the information through email or individual meetings. Likewise, instructors clearly explain the required software, hardware, and computer skills that are needed to take the online course in the syllabus. The instructors said that they tried to explain every aspect of coursework in the course very clearly since online communication is different.
from face-to-face communication and it is mainly conducted in written form. Furthermore, whenever students have any questions, they can ask instructors through face-to-face meetings, email, or Skype. Through the course evaluation of fall 2008, one student said “I got an email announcement, feedback, encourage my study, answer my problems, discuss, and advise from the instructor.” Also, a student in spring 2009 commented on the questionnaire “The instructor provided me with very clear detailed instructions.” Such comments indicate the instructors’ efforts to help students’ online learning.

| Table 11 |
| The ways to support students’ online language learning and interaction |
| a. Orientation |
| b. Clear explanation of course management system and coursework |
| c. Face-to-face meeting with the instructor |
| d. Skype office hours |

Moreover, the interviews with the ELI administrators, the lead teachers, and the ELI 80 instructors illustrate the kinds of support for online ELI 80 instructors. The main support for them is a monthly teachers’ meeting. Online ELI 80 instructors can get help by attending two different teachers’ meetings of listening and speaking and online courses. Both instructors mentioned that the online teachers’ monthly meeting is useful since they can share their concerns about online teaching with the online lead teacher and other online instructors. In addition, the online lead teacher helps them be familiar with the course management system, Laulima. He also keeps consulting with online instructors and trying to provide them support
through contacting ELI administrators. However, he showed less confidence on online ELI 80 because he did not have teaching experience in the content area. It would seem, then, that online ELI 80 instructors need to acquire the support of online teaching in the content area from the listening and speaking lead teacher. However, the online ELI 80 instructors also expressed some dissatisfaction with monthly listening and speaking teachers’ meetings. The instructors commented that they have had little help in online teaching related to the area of content. In the process of the evaluation, it seemed that even experienced teachers expressed decreased confidence in online teaching if they had not had online teaching experience. The present instructor who was the previous listening and speaking lead teacher said:

“To be honest, before I was listening and speaking lead teacher for two semesters. The thing is that you don’t really understand what online class is unless you at least teach one. So I think that next lead teacher should probably teach at least one semester online and go back to the curriculum.”

Based on these findings, it is recommended to have at least one semester online teaching experience before working as a listening comprehension lead teacher. Also, the instructors suggest discussing online teaching and sharing ideas about it with other teachers in the monthly curriculum area meeting.

In addition, the ELI provides an online resource room for all ELI teachers to share the ELI materials together. The previous instructor mentioned that when online teachers prepared the online course, the online resource room was very helpful. She said:
“That’s one thing I think we are really lucky in ELI is that the whole atmosphere. Teachers um.. it’s like ‘Of course, we are going to share the materials. It’s a part of our jobs. It is a part of probably philosophy of ELI.’ We are all really busy like studying and the director and the curriculum coordinator know that. And they have the lead teacher. They have released their time. A part of their job is to gather the materials and pass them on to the new instructors and they have the online resource room and they often burn DVD for new materials to have digital files… We are really lucky. It’s so supportive and collaborative in the ELI. It just makes the classes better and better.”

In the interview, she showed her appreciation to the ELI’s support for collecting the materials and sharing them.

The ELI also shares documents related to online teaching with online instructors. The documents include information about the course management system, past online course evaluations, and previous online teachers’ suggestions. However, the documents might need to be updated because some of the documents still deal with previous course management systems, ‘WebCT’ and ‘Blackboard’.

**How to amend the course evaluation**

While I collected the data, it was also revealed that the primary intended user wanted to revise the course evaluation for the ELI, not only for online courses but also face-to-face courses. By and large, they want to shorten the online course evaluation and make it specific and clear, since the course evaluation consists of a lot of questions (26 open-ended and 5 likert scale). Among the questions, there are several related to getting responses from instructors and classmates (i.e., related to interaction); however, such questions might not address the aspects of interaction called for in the ELI 80 online course. Thus, the PIU
wanted to add questions about interaction to see how students feel about the interaction in online course. The course evaluation includes a likert scale question about interaction with an instructor, “the instructor was easy to communicate with and available for consultation”.

Interestingly, while I reviewed previous course evaluations, it became clear that a recent instructor added several questions about online learning, including interaction in course evaluation.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added questions in course evaluation of fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Over the semester, what kinds of communication and interaction did you have with your instructor and classmates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Are you satisfied with the amount of communication and interaction you had with the instructor and your classmates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) What were your reasons for taking this course online?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Were your reasons fulfilled?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 12, (a) and (b) are about interaction. By these essay questions, I could observe students’ opinion on interaction in online courses. I therefore asked the PIU’s opinion about including such questions. He mentioned that they might be too vague to result in specific answers that help to improve interaction in online courses. Thus, the PIU and I looked for questions that can elicit students’ opinions specifically. We developed the following questions from the students’ questionnaire that I created for this evaluation project:

(a) What forms of interaction with classmates are used in this online class? What do you think of them? (b) What forms of interaction with the instructor are used in this online class?
What do you think of them? (c) Do you have any suggestions to improve interaction with other students and the instructor in this online class? (e.g., types of activities, software or applications, meeting in person, etc.) We believe that these questions can elicit students’ deeper insights on interaction in online courses. However, there are several steps to add the questions into the online course evaluation. It is suggested first that the questions be reviewed with other ELI teachers such as the curriculum coordinator, the online lead teacher, the listening and speaking lead teacher, and the upcoming online ELI 80 instructor. With their agreement, it is also necessary to seek departmental approval to actually put the questions into the evaluation.

Furthermore, one of the potential problems of online course evaluations is low response rates. Compared to face-to-face courses, the online ELI 80 course typically has much lower response rates. Since it does not occur in class, it is difficult to collect course evaluations from students. There seemed no way to control students’ responding since it is not required and anonymous.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>The number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006 Fall</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Fall</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Spring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I reviewed the course evaluations of online ELI 80, I could look at actual course evaluations from fall 2006, fall 2008, and spring 2009. The number of students’ responding was different in each semester. Also, I noticed that the instructor of fall 2008 remarkably gathered the larger number of students’ course evaluation compared to the other two semesters. I asked the instructor who taught in spring and fall 2008 about collecting the course evaluation. The instructor noted:

“The first semester, I don't think so many students did the evaluation, but the second semester, a lot more did. The second semester, I told students it was worth 25 points to do it (see the announcement below). I did not tell them that actually, they would be like bonus points. In my class, I took the grade out of 1000, but there were more than 1000 possible points because such things like this "bonus" opportunity. I also think more students submitted them because I made the announcement on Dec 5 and the deadline Dec 15. My instructions were very clear. Then on Dec 16 I sent another reminder (you can see below). I don't know when students submitted them, but probably mostly before Dec 15.”

From her experience, it is suggested to give the course evaluation as an assignment on which students can get points. However, it still needs to be anonymous. So, for example, this instructor asked students to hand in the course evaluation without their name in the word file to the curriculum coordinator. Later, she was informed the list of students who handed in the course evaluation from the curriculum coordinator and added the assignment score to students’ grades. Moreover, it is essential to motivate students by letting them know how much the course evaluation is important to improve the course. This instructor added that while she asked students to do the evaluation, she emphasized that it is anonymous and
students’ feedback is very crucial to improve the course. In addition, it is vital to give online course students enough time to do course evaluations. She gave clear instructions on how to do the course evaluation in the online course. She also provided students a longer period of time than face-to-face courses, about a week, to hand in the evaluation. It is also suggested to remind students to hand in the evaluation. Since online courses entail different traits from face-to-face courses, it is necessary to have different methods to collect students’ course evaluations. With the ways suggested above, I believe that ELI can collect students’ feedback in a way that will contribute more comprehensively to improving the online courses.

**Reporting of evaluation findings**

After collecting and analyzing the data, I gave the PIU a presentation about the evaluation findings. I prepared a presentation file about the overall evaluation with the findings, and this provided a good opportunity to review the whole evaluation project. I presented the findings divided into the main themes based on intended uses in a way that I believe would encourage actual uses of the evaluation findings. When I reported them, I explained the methods to collect data and where the data is from. While the PIU listened to the presentation, the PIU could ask questions for elucidation. After the presentation, he gave me several comments on the evaluation finding that were necessary to clarify my understandings. Based on his comments, I could complete the evaluation findings. After finishing the evaluation project, I provided the PIU a full evaluation report and an executive
summary. Whenever it is necessary to clarify the evaluation report, the PIU could ask for clarification at any time. While we read the executive summary together, we discussed future actions to enhance interaction in online courses based on the evaluation findings.

**Uses of the evaluation findings**

The evaluation findings suggested several changes that the program can employ to improve interaction in online courses. The discussion about these uses happened while the PIU and I reviewed the evaluation findings.

(a) Create a clear policy about students’ participation in online course  
(b) Inform students how to contact to instructors in online course evidently  
(c) Try to use the video conferencing software, ‘Dimdim’ from the next semester  
(d) Recommend the listening and speaking teachers’ meeting to discuss and share the idea about online teaching  
(e) Enhance the listening lead teacher’s role in online course  
(f) Update documents about online teaching and management systems in ELI  
(g) Add the suggested evaluation questions in the online course evaluation through discussing with other ELI administrators and instructors  
(h) Make the online evaluation as a part of assignments in the curriculum  

According to the PIU, uses (b), (c), (d), (g), and (h) mentioned above will happen in the semester following the evaluation. Also, the other suggestions will be reviewed with other ELI administrators and instructors, and then implemented as appropriate.

**Conclusion**

This evaluation project was initiated with the desire of ELI to improve their online curriculum. To fulfill their need I employed ‘utilization focused evaluation’ in this evaluation
project, and I conducted the project based on the intended uses of evaluation by the particular
decision makers in the program. Through focusing on the intended uses, I could find valuable
data for the improvement of interaction in online courses. Thus, I believe it is important to
find intended uses of evaluations and design the evaluations based according to uses.

However, this evaluation also revealed the difficulty of data collection in online courses.
Even though the PIU and I attempted several ways to collect students’ data, our efforts at
getting input from current students were unsuccessful. Thus, it is suggested to find alternative
methods to approach students in online courses, like the suggestion to collect online course
evaluations that requires collaboration of instructors of online courses. Hopefully, the ELI
will be able to gather students’ opinions in the following semester to extend the current
evaluation findings.

This evaluation also provided an opportunity to ELI administrators and teachers to
consider the importance of evaluating interaction in online courses. In particular, the PIU’s
energetic participation in the evaluation process helped him understand the evaluation
findings better and employ the findings more actively. The evaluation also gave stakeholders
an opportunity to review their roles and duties. Through this experience, they potentially
came to realize more explicitly the importance of each of their jobs. Also, the strong
reflection of stakeholders’ voices in the evaluation findings might allow enhanced
stakeholder empowerment as changes ensue in light of their needs. In this project, I believe
that I found many positive aspects of utilization-focused evaluation. I consider UFE to be a constructive evaluation method, especially if the evaluation targets program improvement.

References


Appendix A: Questions for the director and curriculum coordinator of ELI

1. Could you explain the background of ELI online courses?

2. What are the learning outcomes of this online course (or the ELI 80 online course)?

3. Are there significant differences between online courses and face-to-face courses?

4. What is the role of the curriculum coordinator in the ELI 80 online courses?

5. What kinds of support does ELI provide for ELI80 online course (teachers or students)?

6. In what ways do you work with the instructor?

7. How familiar are you with the ELI 80 online course?

8. How important is the interaction between ‘teachers and students’ and ‘students and students’ in online courses?

9. What types of students take online courses? Why do they take them?

10. To what extent does the ELI ensure the teachers are prepared to teach online courses?

11. What kinds of criteria does ELI have when assigning online instructors?

12. What technology and/or software are you familiar with that is useful for promoting interaction in ELI listening/speaking classes (either in-class or online)? How are teachers incorporating technology to help students use the target language and interact with the teacher or other classmates?
Appendix B: Questions for the lead teachers of ELI

1. What are the expected student learning outcomes for online courses [or the ELI 80 online course]? = What are students supposed to learn in the ELI 80 online course?

2. Are there any important differences between online ELI 80 and face-to-face ELI 80?

3. What is the role of the listening comprehension or online lead teacher?

4. How familiar are you with the online ELI 80 course and how it is taught?

5. In what ways do you work with the instructor?

6. Generally speaking, in online courses, how important is it that there is interaction between ‘teachers and students’ and ‘students and students’? = What does that interaction look like?

7. What kinds of students take online courses and why do they take them?

8. To what extent does the ELI make sure the teachers are prepared to teach online courses?

9. What technology software are you familiar with that is useful for promote interaction in online classes (either with the teacher or with other classmates)?
Appendix C: Questions for the online ELI 80 instructors of ELI

1. What do you think are the expected learning outcomes of the ELI 80 online course?

2. Are there important differences between online courses and face-to-face courses based on your teaching experience in the ELI 80 online course?

3. How important are the interaction between ‘teachers and students’ and ‘students and students’ in online courses?

4. In your opinion, what types of students take online courses? Why do they take them?

5. What kinds of challenges do you face when you teach online ELI 80 course?

6. What kinds of support do you receive as a teacher of the ELI 80 online course?
   A. What would have been helpful?

7. How do you interact with your students in the online course? (Did you meet with your students face-to-face? Did you have office hours?)

8. Based on your teaching experience in the ELI 80 online course, do you have any suggestions to improve the ELI 80 online course?

9. What technology and/or software are you familiar with that is useful for promoting interaction in ELI listening/speaking classes (either in-class or online)? How are teachers incorporating technology to help students use the target language and interact with the teacher or other classmates?
Appendix D: Students’ online questionnaire

Students’ online questionnaire

Online learning is still a very new concept, and is constantly changing and being updated. There are very few academic English programs anywhere in the world that are offering courses in online format, especially listening/speaking courses; the ELI is one of the few that is trying this. By filling in this questionnaire honestly and fully, you are helping the ELI to enhance the online portion of its program. Thank you.

I. Background information

1. Major:

2. What is your current student classification at the University of Hawai`i at Manoa?
   - ☐ 1st year (Freshman)
   - ☐ 2nd year (Sophomore)
   - ☐ 3rd year (Junior)
   - ☐ 4th year (Senior)
   - ☐ M.A.
   - ☐ Ph.D.
   - ☐ Other: ____________________

3. Gender(male or female):

4. Native language(s):

5. What other ELI classes have you taken or are you currently taking?

6. Have you ever taken any online language courses before you studied in the ELI program?

7. If so, please briefly describe the course topic or content.

8. What are your reasons for choosing the online ELI course instead of the face-to-face course?
II. Please rate each of the following statements by typing an ‘X’ in the box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So far, I am satisfied with the online listening comprehension class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put a lot of effort into learning English through online courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received enough instruction to do class activities in this online class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find studying English online difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily access the instructor whenever I need help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel uneasy when I do class activities through an online course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to learn English through online courses again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have sufficient opportunities to use English in the online course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have sufficient opportunities to communicate with my classmates in the online course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have sufficient opportunities to communicate with the instructor in the online course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Please, answer the following questions:
Q1. What are the advantages of the online course?

Q2. What are the disadvantages of taking this ELI course in online format?

Q3. If you have taken a face-to-face ELI course, please comment on any differences with the online ELI course, especially in terms of your interactions with students and the instructor.

Q4. What do you expect to learn in/through this online course?

Q5. What forms of interaction with classmates are used in this online class? What do you think of them?

Q6. What forms of interaction with the instructor are used in this online class? What do you think of them?

Q7. Do you have any suggestions to improve interaction with other students and the instructor in this online class? (e.g., Types of activities, software or applications, meeting in person, etc.)

Q8. What are the difficulties to study in online course? What would you suggest to solve the difficulties?

Q9. For students here on campus, what is the right number of times to meet face-to-face with classmates? With the instructor?

Q10. Do you have any suggestions to improve this online course?