

TEACHING SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

REPORT ONE

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Section One: Summary of Theoretical Assumptions

Part 1: Topic Description

This topic focuses on preparing content area teachers to teach simplified English to English Language Learners (ELLs), and in particular teachers how to simplify a math word problem for ELL learners. The topic is part of a larger 10-hour English as a Second Language (ESL) professional development course, which was developed by ELMS, the Educating Language Minority Students project at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The goal of this particular topic is to encourage and instruct content area teachers who are not ESL certified or trained to effectively deploy simplified English strategies in the classroom, thereby increasing comprehension for ELLs. This goal has several subparts, namely, communicating why these strategies are important, identifying examples of simple English, and demonstrating how to transform complex sentence structures into simplified English.

Part 2: Instructional Model

Selection of Instructional Model: Skill Development

The 10-hour ESL professional development course is an online, self-directed curriculum. I had to keep that learning environment in mind when deciding which instructional model to select for my topic. With the exception of the simulation and experiential models, all of the models have as their learning environment classrooms and teachers. While the simulation and experiential models support online learning, other components of those models are not a good fit for my topic. I considered using the direct instruction model because it supports the learning outcome of my module, namely, rule application. I decided against direct instruction, however, because this model appears to rely heavily on monitoring, probing, and corrective feedback, which are not (at the present time) heavily supported in an online environment.

I have decided to use the Skill Development model, a model I almost overlooked because I associate it with motor skills, such as piano practice or airplane flying. However, when I looked more closely at the model, I realized it was a broader model than I recognized at first. While it may not be a perfect fit, it is a good enough match that I decided to apply it to my topic.

The skill development model facilitates learning a variety of skills, abilities, and competencies. It can be executed in all learning environments, as long as there is sufficient space and opportunity for practice. It promotes a skill life cycle of interpreting a received signal, deciding which action to take, and taking the action. It is a very practical model, meaning that the methods used are based on identifying what works as a result of research, rather than relying on philosophy or ideology. The teacher decides the learning goals, instruction criteria, and instructional methods. The instructional strategy is to present basic knowledge content, impart a basic skill to be used with that content, and allow for practice to develop proficiency.

The model makes a clear distinction between knowledge and skills. For example, one may understand what simplified English is as a general concept but lack the experience to use it

correctly, to the right degree, in a particular situation. In other words, one may have knowledge of what simplified English is but lack the experience and skill to use it effectively in different situations with different students whose grasp of English may vary.

Another key distinction the skill development model makes is between reproductive knowledge and productive knowledge. Reproductive skills are activities that are repetitive and largely automatic, while productive skills are activities that involve planning a procedure to use that is relevant to the particular situation. Although the two kinds of skills can be clearly distinguished, they are also markers on a scale. The learning outcome for using simplified English is rule application. This requires more intellectual skill than simply repetitive knowledge (reproductive skills), so in that sense using simplified English falls more on the productive end of the scale. On the other hand, using simplified English does not reach the level of problem solving, so it is on the lower, rather than the higher, end of productive knowledge.

Application of Skill Development Model

The skill development model is appropriate for this topic for several reasons. First, it focuses not just on the acquisition of knowledge but the demonstrated ability to apply that knowledge in a variety of situations. For example, teachers have to interact with a variety of ELLs, whose grasp of English not only varies but is fluid and will ideally improve over time. That is, a teacher may not only have ELL students in her classroom with varying English abilities, but as individual students become more proficient with English, the teacher must also apply different simplified English strategies with the same student over time.

Second, the skill development model is elastic and fluid, rather than limited and static. It focuses not just on fine motor skills, but on cognitive skills, reactive skills, and interactive skills as well as psychomotor skills. A teacher with ELL students in his classroom must interact with a group of students who have a range of speaking and comprehension abilities; the teacher must not only assess what degree of scaffolding to provide for which students but also when to withdraw that scaffolding as the student's English skills improve. In other words, the teacher must be able to respond effectively to changing situations; the teacher is not dealing with a static situation.

Third, the skill development model provides a cycle of stimulus and response that dovetails well in a classroom with a variety of ELL students. For example, the teacher first perceives what level of English comprehension her ELL students possess (which may vary from student to student) and assess what level of support the EL learners need. The teacher must then decide which simplified English strategies to use with which students, and finally, the teacher must execute that decision by using simplified English structures with the students.

The skill development model identifies five stages for teaching skills, which can be applied to using simplified English. Each stage has three steps: imparting basic knowledge content, imparting the basic skill, and developing proficiency.

Stages in Skill Development Model

STAGE	STRATEGY
Stage One: <i>Acquire knowledge of what should be done</i>	Define simplified English. Present contextual information about the need for using simplified English. Emphasize that using simplified English significantly improves comprehension for ELL learners, which should motivate teachers to use simplified English.
Stage Two: <i>Execute the action in a step by step manner.</i>	Present several examples of transforming complex math word problems into simplified English, as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify whether the word problem is complex or simple. 2. If complex, identify the particular areas of the sentence that can be simplified. 3. Rewrite the sentence in simplified format, using specific simplification rules, for example, changing passive voice to active voice.
Stage Three: <i>Transfer control from the eyes to other senses.</i>	Transform learner from an observer to a doer by presenting practice opportunities. Present a complex word problem to learners and ask them to identify the structural parts of the sentences and draft a simplified sentence. Provide a model for them to compare their sentence to.
Stage Four: <i>Automate the skill.</i>	Provide different examples of word problems for the learner to practice with so that the learner develops proficiency in simplifying word problems.
Step Five: <i>Generalize the skill.</i>	Provide examples of word problems that have more than one kind of linguistic complexity that the learner must simplify.

To summarize, the skill development model borrows from several other learning models; for example, true reproductive knowledge is perhaps best suited to direct instruction, while true productive knowledge is perhaps best suited to problem solving instruction. Using simplified English falls in the middle of reproductive and productive knowledge, rather than aligning purely with one or the other. The fluidity, or hybrid nature, of the skill development model can accommodate an equally fluid topic such as using simplified English, where teachers interact with ELL students of differing English abilities at any given time, and where ELL students' proficiency with English will also change over time.

Section Two: Instructional Goal

Overview

Teaching simplified English is a topic in the curriculum module of the 10-hour, ESL professional development course, a component of the ELMS project. As stated in the ELMS proposal, the ELMS project “focuses on providing professional development for inservice and preservice content area teachers so that they will be better prepared to improve academic outcomes for ELLs in their classes.” Teaching simplified English is one of several strategies that content area teachers can use to improve academic outcomes for ELLs. This project focuses on a particular area of simplified English, namely, instructing content area teachers how to simplify complex math word problems.

Responses to the pre-course survey by teachers who have taken the 10-hour ESL course reflect genuine concern by teachers to support their ELLs in the classroom. The data shows the teachers are motivated to help ELL students; what they need—by their own reporting—are the knowledge and strategies that will allow them to best serve the ELLs in their classrooms. So, while teachers have a general understanding of why it is important to help ELLs succeed, they lack the concrete information to accomplish that goal. It is the gap between desired knowledge of effective simplified English strategies and actual knowledge of effective simplified English strategies that this project seeks to bridge.

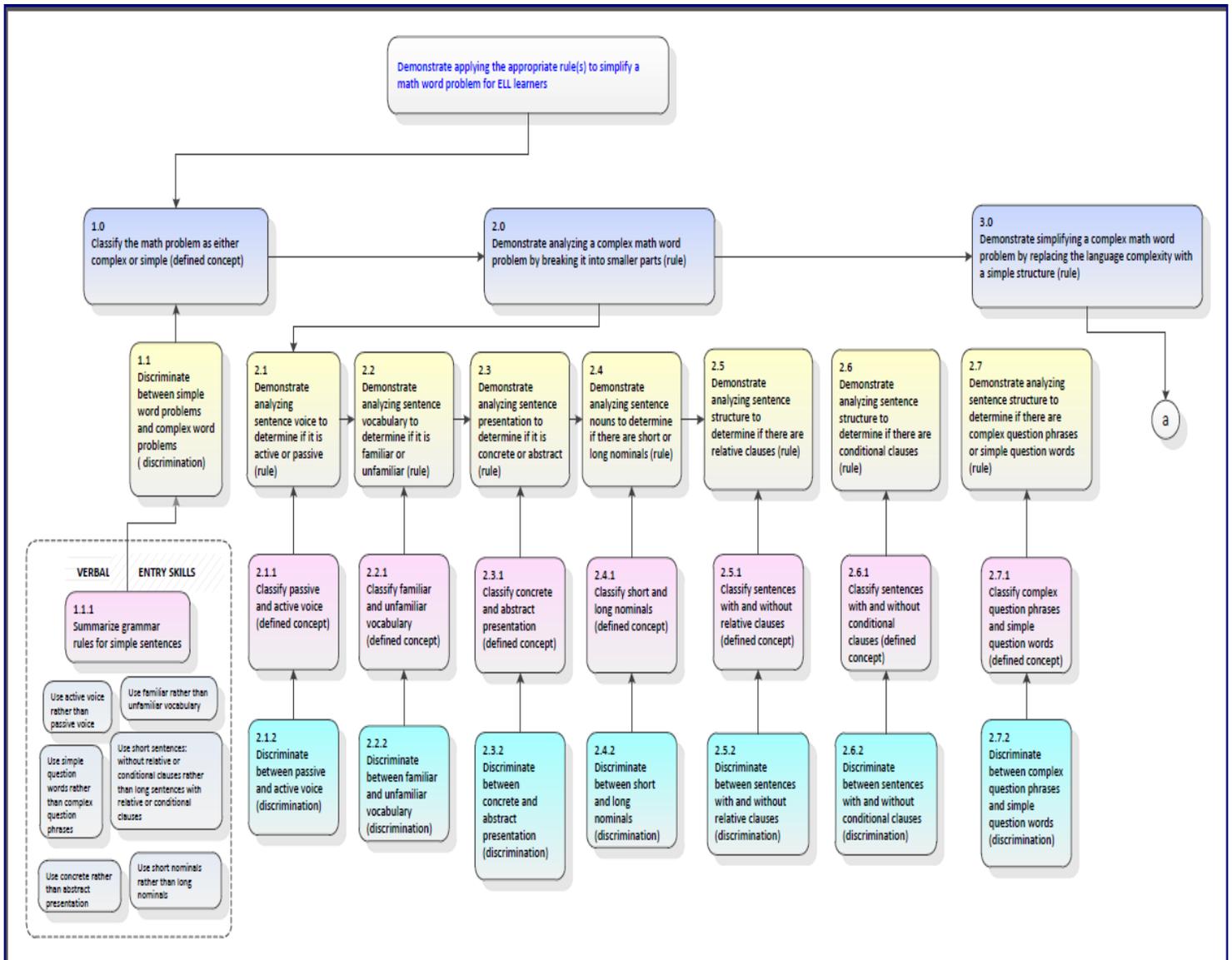
Summary of Needs Analysis and Instructional Goal

<i>Actual Performance</i>	Mainstream teachers do not have the training or experience to select simplified English strategies to improve comprehension for English Language Learners (ELL) students. Even when mainstream teachers are aware of available strategies, they may not know why a particular strategy is a good choice for ELL students.
<i>Optimal Performance</i>	Mainstream teachers will select, from a range of simplified English strategies, the optimal approach to use in a given situation to improve comprehension for EL students.
<i>Needs</i>	Mainstream teachers need to acquire and select ideal strategies for using simplified English to improve ELL comprehension.
<i>Solutions</i>	Design a self-directed module for mainstream teachers that identifies 1) concrete rules for teachers to use to simplify word problems, and 2) which rule to use in a given situation to improve comprehension for ELL students.
<i>Instructional Goal</i>	Mainstream teachers will determine how to use simplified English to improve comprehension for ELL students by selecting the appropriate rule to simplify a complex math word problem.

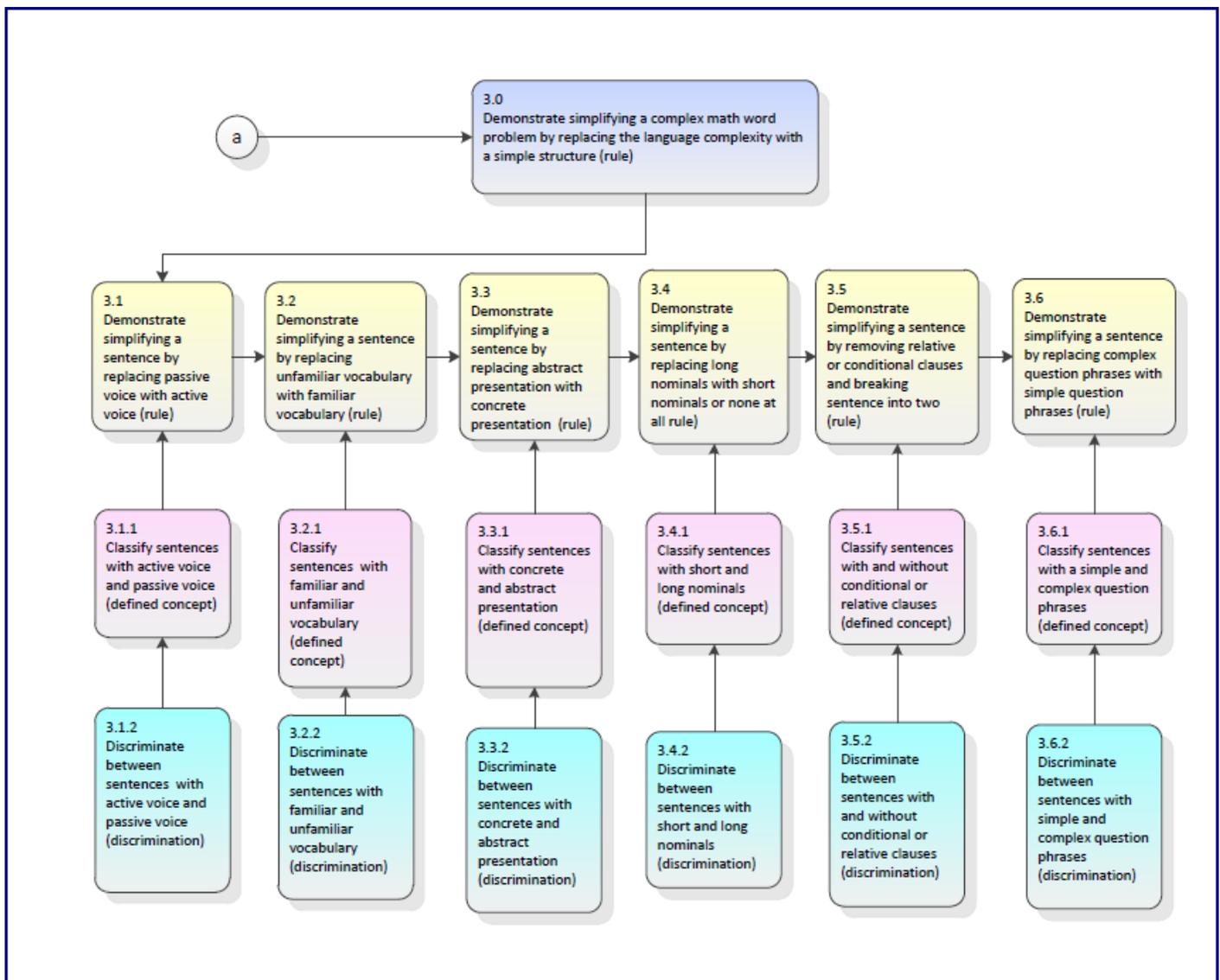
Section Three: Task Analysis

Note: if you would like to view a larger version of the Task Analysis, please see the PDF file, Task Analysis, that accompanies these reports.

Task Analysis 1 of 2



Task Analysis 2 of 2



Section Four: Analysis of Learners and Learning Context

NOTE: Some of the learner characteristics are based on teacher demographics across the state of North Carolina, which is the eligible pool to take the 10-hour online course, while other learner characteristics were captured through pre- and post-survey data, compiled by ELMS personnel, about learners who have already taken the online course. **The survey data in this table pertains to the 10-hour course as a whole, *not* to the particular topic Using Simplified English. Data collected about Using Simplified English will be discussed in the third report.**

General / Demographic Information

Information Categories	Learner Characteristics	Data Resources
Age	Age range 22-75	<p>Teacher Demographics presented at the Personnel Administrators' of North Carolina (PANC), Fall Conference, 2001</p> <p>http://www.nrms.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-534/pancTD111601.pdf</p>

Gender	80% - women 20% - men	Teacher Demographics presented at the Personnel Administrators' of North Carolina (PANC), Fall Conference, 2001 http://www.nrms.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-534/pancTD111601.pdf
Health or Special Needs	Not available	
Ethnic/Cultural Background	84% - White 16% - Minority	Teacher Demographics presented at the Personnel Administrators' of North Carolina (PANC), Fall Conference, 2001 http://www.nrms.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-534/pancTD111601.pdf
Language	Not available	

Academic / Educational Information

Education completed	<p>Requirements for NC licensure (Standard Professional 1 (SP1) Professional Educator's Licenses, those with 0-2 years of teaching experience)</p> <p>completed a state approved teacher education program from a regionally accredited college or university, or</p> <p>completed another state's approved alternative route to licensure, met the federal requirements to be designated as "Highly Qualified," and earned a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college. NC teachers, therefore, have at least a bachelors' degree.</p>	<p>North Carolina State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</p> <p>http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/licensure/steps/</p>
Previous Related Training completed	Teachers starting out with the 10 hour ELMS professional development course presumably do not have ESL certification	
Standardized test scores related to topic of this training	Not applicable for 10 hour professional development course	
Reading Levels	Threshold reading level is college degree (see Education Completed)	<p>North Carolina State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</p> <p>http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/licensure/steps/</p>
GPA	Not available	

Specific Characteristics

Entry Skills	In-service teachers across North Carolina. Because the 10-hour professional development course provides participants with an introductory level of ESL preparation, I am not assuming any ESL preparation or training. However, some of the teachers may already work with ELLs in the classroom and thus may have some background information.	Educating Language Minority Students (ELMS) website and ELMS grant proposal supplied by SME
Previous or current knowledge / experience of / with topic area	According to the pre-survey information submitted by those who took the 10-hour professional development course, 73 percent (27 respondents) had EL learners in their class, while 5 percent (two respondents) did not. So, while I am not assuming any ESL preparation or training on the part of those who take the 10-hour professional development course, some of the teachers who already work with ELLs in the classroom may have some background information.	Pre-survey data supplied by SME associated with ELMs project
Attitudes toward content	In the pre-survey results, almost all the learners stated their reasons for taking the course was to support or help EL students. Therefore, most learners seem to have a very positive attitude toward the content and are motivated to learn the content. The course is also voluntary, so I am presuming learners have at least a baseline interest in this topic, given that they have to take some initiative to complete the course.	Pre-survey data supplied by SME associated with ELMs project
Attitudes toward organization and training Division	Based on the post-survey data, many respondents had a favorable impression of the course (and to the extent they share their impressions with others through social media, for example, learners who have not yet taken the course may adopt similar attitudes). For example, 80 percent (8 respondents) found the electronic presentations very engaging, and 80 percent (8 respondents) felt their expectations for the course were met.	Post-survey data supplied by SME associated with ELMs project

<p>Motivation for Instruction (ARCS)</p>	<p>Pre- and post-survey data show the following:</p> <p>Attention: Almost all learners stated in a pre-course survey that they were taking the course because it would train them to support their ELLs in the classroom, which indicates a level of interest and concern for the topic. Because the course is voluntary, it can also be reasonably inferred that learners have some degree of interest, initiative and self-discipline.</p> <p>Relevance Because of the growing number of EL students in North Carolina in many classrooms, the topic is highly relevant for teachers who seek to become more effective with EL students</p> <p>Confidence Cannot be measured at this point</p> <p>Satisfaction 80 percent of survey respondents (8 respondents) stated their expectations for the course had been met</p>	<p>Educating Language Minority Students (ELMS) website, ELMS grant proposal supplied by SME, and pre- and post-survey data supplied by SME associated with ELMs project</p>
<p>Attitudes Towards potential delivery system</p>	<p>According to post-survey data, learners had a generally positive response to the online delivery system. They cited convenience, ease of scheduling, and flexibility as favorable factors. At the same time, some learners expressed the challenges of being self-disciplined to make the time, as well as missing the interaction that face-to-face instruction can provide.</p>	<p>Post-survey data compiled from first group of learners who have taken the 10-hour professional development course, which was supplied by SME associated with ELMs project</p>

Learning Styles & Group Characteristics

Visual / auditory preference	Not available	
Sensory / intuitive	Not available	
Actively / reflectively	Not available	
Sequentially / globally	Not available	
General group characteristics Heterogeneity Size Overall impression	Based on the demographics provided at the beginning of this table, the learners come from a pool that is predominately white, female, and with a median age of 48.5.	<p>Teacher Demographics presented at the Personnel Administrators' of North Carolina (PANC), Fall Conference, 2001</p> <p>http://www.nrms.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-534/pancTD111601.pdf</p>

Instructional Environment / Context

Managerial supervisory support	At this point, ELMS personnel don't really know how many people taking the self-directed course will have mentors or supervisors supporting them. They are aware, however, that one school is taking the course as a school, so in that instance, they would have support from the principal.	Educating Language Minority Students (ELMS) website and ELMS grant proposal supplied by SME
Availability of needed technology Hardware Software	ELMS personnel have not reported any issues with learners having access to technology. They also provide technological support if learners have issues with the course.	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/news/2012-13/20120807-01
Availability of needed Resources	ELMS provides a contact email if learners have questions about the contact. Other resources include the ELMS website, ELMS blog, and ELMS Facebook page.	ELMS contact information
Physical aspects of site for implementation	Not applicable; online delivery	
Social aspects of site	Although ELMS has a Facebook page, the learners do not have social interaction while they are actually taking the course, e.g., discussion boards or monitoring. As mentioned above, ELMS is aware of one school taking the course as a school, so presumably that would foster a social experience.	ELMS on Facebook
Relevance of skills to workplace	Highly relevant, given increasing number of EL students in North Carolina classrooms	Educating Language Minority Students (ELMS) website and ELMS grant proposal supplied by SME