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The capstone study investigates effective ways to teach email skills to Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ABE/ESL) learners. Key influences included Cummins and Warschauer who advocate inclusion of computer literacy skills in adult second language teaching. The learners participated in approximately ten hours of email instruction using a curriculum developed by the researcher. Pre-teaching and post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists and copies of student email messages were used to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum. The study found that strategies for effective email instruction included direct instruction followed by significant practice time. Students performed well on email tasks involving simple clicking and icon recognition but had difficulty typing alphanumeric entries and working in multiple fields. Students who became most proficient generally sent more email messages over the course of the study. Other positive outcomes included enhanced student teacher relationships and student appreciation.

TEACHING EMAIL SKILLS IN THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION ENGLISH AS A  
SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by  
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To Susan Dunwell and her class of Level 3 English language learners their enthusiastic participation in the email study.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Scenarios

Recently I was assisting one of my Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ABE/ESL) students fill out an online application for a custodial position at a local hospital. The process took us about 45 minutes to complete, and as we came to the final fields in the form the student was asked to fill in her email address for submission of the application. Since she did not have an email address we were unable to complete her application and submit it. The student became quite exasperated and exclaimed, “America! In America everything is experience and email!” The following day the student returned and I helped her apply for a free email account so that she could submit her online application for the hospital position.

Scenarios like the one described above happen everyday in the lives of adult English language learners who live in the United States. Many adult English language learners cannot complete life tasks that would be quite simple for most English speaking Americans because they lack not only English skills but also basic computer literacy skills such as the ability to use email. The Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs that serve the needs of adult English language learners spend significant time teaching their students about communication skills such as using the telephone and postal mail services, but these ABE/ESL programs do not always allot sufficient time and resources to teach basic email skills to their students. This is unfortunate because the ways that we

communicate have changed during the past decade and today corresponding with email has become an essential life skill.

Learning to use email is an excellent way to introduce ABE/ESL learners to the Internet, a dynamic resource that is changing the way we communicate and access information. They can use email for personal communication with family and friends. They can use it to access resources on the Internet such as requesting information, making reservations and completing online purchases. Most employers and post secondary schools now want candidates to fill out applications online, and this always requires that applicants have an email address. In sum, learning to use email has many benefits for ABE/ESL learners.

The purpose of this capstone study is to investigate effective ways to teach email skills to ABE/ESL learners. While there are ample online and text resources available to help English-speaking adults learn to use email, I could not find a curriculum or guide that ABE/ESL instructors could use to teach basic email skills to their students. In order to find out what strategies were effective for this task, I designed and tested a curriculum for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL students. During this capstone study I attempted to find out if my email curriculum was an effective tool for teaching email skills to ABE/ESL learners.

## The Background of this Capstone Study

For the past three years I have worked as an Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ABE/ESL) teacher. In this role I have been extremely concerned about the lack of basic computer literacy skills, such as the ability to use email, among the adult immigrant and refugee students who are enrolled in ABE/ESL programs. My concerns regarding teaching computer literacy skills to adult ESL students began three years ago when I worked as a volunteer teacher in an ABE/ESL computer lab. While working with the students in the computer lab, I began to question exactly what it was the students were learning when they practiced English using the computer and I questioned whether or not they were learning computer literacy skills that they could apply to other areas in their lives. The computer lessons that I employed as a volunteer teacher did not necessarily build on the “life skills” lessons presented in the regular adult ESL classes such as how to fill out job applications, or read schedules and maps. Computer assisted language learning in this program centered on using behaviorist model software programs for learning English grammar and vocabulary through drill and practice. In the computer lab we never taught the students to use email or any other Internet-based resources. At that time I felt vaguely dissatisfied with the way the computer technology was being used in this ABE/ ESL program, but I wasn’t sure why.

Later that year I found a teaching position in a large urban ABE/ESL program. My interest in using computer technology as an English language-teaching tool continued to grow and I became very intrigued with how this program was addressing the need for computer literacy skills, especially Internet and email skills. An effective tool that this ABE/ESL program had created to help students use Internet resources such as email was

an Adult Basic Education home page. This home page was organized so that a group of selected links called “ESL Favorites” were easily accessible to the ESL students without the need to type complicated web addresses into the URL bar. There was also a link on the home page for *Yahoo!Mail* and I noticed that some of the students were proficient at accessing their email accounts using the link. This made a great impression on me and I began to seriously consider how I could use email to teach English and computer literacy skills to ABE/ESL students.

I began to ask other ABE/ESL teachers if they had used email as a part of their English language curriculum. While many teachers in the program thought that using email might have potential, at least for the higher-level English language learners, I did not find anyone who had incorporated email activities into their ESL curriculum. Teachers cited the following reasons for not using email with their students: getting email accounts for students without computer literacy skills was too time consuming, students come and go too often with our open enrollment policy so the effort would be wasted, students have limited access to the Internet, and that keeping up with and responding to student email would take large amounts of teacher time outside of class. I suspected that most of these reasons were probably true, but despite the above constraints I remained excited about the thought of using email as a way to teach English and computer literacy skills to my adult students. I felt optimistic that email had great potential as an instructional tool for ABE/ESL learners and knew that I wanted to try and use email with my students.

### My First Attempts with Email in the Classroom

Soon after, I started to use email with some of the students in my high intermediate CASAS Level 6 evening class (see Appendix A). At this time I did not have any formal email lessons for teaching email skills, nor was I familiar with any specific theories or empirical studies that provided solid reasons for using email with ABE/ESL students. I felt that email was an increasingly important and authentic way to communicate and I hypothesized that by using email with my students I could address two issues. I would inspire them to read and write more English and at the same time show them how to use an essential communication tool. Furthermore, I thought using email would be enjoyable and convenient. I envisioned working from home using my laptop, engaging in interesting online conversations with the students and sending them their homework assignments via email.

I jumped into using email with my class, and it was not long before I realized the prescience of the more experienced teachers who had warned me that using email with ABE/ESL students would be extremely difficult. I helped several of the students set up free Yahoo!Mail accounts in the computer lab, and quickly found that it was an very arduous and time-consuming endeavor. In order to apply for an email account students had to know how to complete online forms, (choosing fields and using drop down boxes), and most of the students had no experience with these types of tasks. Email user names and passwords had to be explained, chosen and remembered. Once the students received their email accounts there were so many new English terms and computer skills to learn: how to sign-on, how to compose and send messages, how to reply to received messages,

how to type an email address. I had not developed any formal lessons for teaching basic email skills, but basic email skills were the first thing my students needed to learn. I understood that I was not going to realize my vision of using email to assign homework or engage with my class in online conversations until students could master the basics of email.

My email instruction with this group of students was erratic due to the fact that I had not developed any step-by-step lessons for teaching email skills. Nonetheless we plundered on for a few weeks. A few of the students who had had previous experience with email were able to correspond with me but the students who were new to email never fully understood what they were doing. Learning to use email was a struggle for them due to their lack of basic computer literacy skills. On the other hand, it appeared that the students were interested in learning about email. My expectations changed and I realized that what I needed to do was design a curriculum that would introduce strategies for teaching basic email skills for my ABE/ESL students.

My pilot email study. In the fall of 2004 I took a position as a computer instructor in the large urban ABE/ESL program and I was excited that I would have many opportunities to teach computer literacy skills, such as using email, to the students. I decided to begin a unit for teaching email skills and armed with a well sequenced set of email lessons and a firmer grasp of the *Yahoo!Mail* application, I implemented a pilot study for teaching basic email skills with an intermediate CASAS Level 5 class. In Figure 1.1 is an outline of the email lessons that I planned for the pilot study.

Lesson 1	Email overview and discussion. What is email? Who uses it and why? What is your experience with email?
Lesson 2	Setting up email accounts for all students. Teaching students how to access their email from the browser and ABE/ESL homepage using ID's and passwords.
Lesson 3	Learning to understand the <i>Yahoo!Mail</i> interface and key email vocabulary.
Lesson 4	Composing and sending new email messages to the teacher.
Lesson 5	Reading new mail from the inbox. Replying to email received from the teacher.
Lesson 6	Sending email to a classmate.
Lesson 7	Sending students off to use email independently. They are encouraged to continue to email the teachers and one another and attend open lab to learn more email skills.

FIGURE 1.1. Lessons in the Pilot Email Study

Even though the email lessons in my pilot study were deliberately sequenced, they were not sufficiently detailed and they did not go as smoothly as I had hoped. Each lesson took significantly more time than I had anticipated. The class was fairly small, (12 students, including one who had used email before) but it still took three class sessions before the classroom teacher and I managed to help everyone sign up for an email account. As I proceeded with the lessons I found that the most common and persistent problems for the students included the following: confusion about the components of email addresses (name, @, ISP), remembering ID's and passwords, the functions of the To, Cc, and Subject bars, and the difference between the compose and reply functions. Both the English terms and the functions of the buttons on the email interface had to be explained and experienced many times before the students understood what each represented.

By the time we reached the sixth lesson, five of the twelve students had learned the functions of the buttons on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface and were semi-autonomous email users. They could sign on, compose and send new email messages and reply to received messages with minimal teacher assistance. It is important to note that these five students often came to the computer open lab period where they could practice, ask questions and get extra help. The seven students who used email only during instructional periods still required significant teacher assistance with most email tasks.

During the seventh week of the pilot study a very unfortunate but insightful event occurred. The participating classroom teacher was called away for two weeks due to the critical illness of a family member. The teacher, who is extremely conscientious, told the students that she would continue to email them while she was away in order to keep them updated on the situation with her family and her return to class. Since the students were all very anxious to hear the news from their teacher many of them came into the computer lab every day before class to check their email. This event proved to be a highly motivating factor for the students to use their email because there was a real communicative purpose behind it.

After the seventh week we went on a school break and for most of the students, and the classroom teacher, interest in the email project fizzled out. Some of the students and I continued to email one another, but after a couple of weeks the initial excitement passed and we ran out of things to say. We really didn't have a good reason to use email with one another. Two of the students were having a wonderful experience writing email messages to family members who lived in other areas.

## The Development of My Email Curriculum

At this time, I decided that the purpose of my capstone study would be to find out what instructional strategies would be effective for teaching ABE/ESL students to learn basic email skills. During the pilot study I had some success teaching email to the students. I had started the unit with a basic understanding of the *Yahoo!Mail* application and I had a well sequenced (if not particularly well developed) series of email lessons. Therefore I felt that I had enough experience to design a basic email curriculum for ABE/ESL learners that I could implement and test for my capstone.

My reflections on my two previous experiences with teaching email to ABE/ESL students had revealed key instructional elements that would be integral for the email curriculum I would design. I understood that the students needed direct, step-by-step instruction in email skills, and that they needed ample time in the computer lab to practice what they had learned. I knew that while the lessons had to be basic, they also needed to build on one another. Since most of the students had limited experience with computers, I decided that my email curriculum would focus on teaching four basic email skills: accessing email accounts, reading incoming mail, replying to email received and composing and sending new email messages.

### Chapter Summary

For my capstone study I wanted to find out what instructional strategies would be effective for helping ABE/ESL students learn basic email skills. Therefore, I designed a curriculum for teaching email skills to ABE/ESL learners which I implemented and evaluated for this capstone project.

The early experiences I had using email with my ABE/ESL students were not what I had hoped they would be. My visions of email messages flowing effortlessly between my students and myself were quickly dashed when I realized how difficult it was to use email with adult English learners who had limited computer literacy skills. It was my unsuccessful attempts at using email with two different groups of students, and my belief that all adults need access to email that revealed to me the need to investigate effective ways to teach email skills to ABE/ESL learners.

In the following chapter I will review the literature that addresses using email in the adult ESL classroom. I will describe the kinds of learners that are served in ABE/ESL programs in the United States, and I will discuss the recognized computer literacy standards and competencies recommended for adult ESL learners. I will impart pedagogy that advocates the use of Internet-based resources such as email for second language learning and I will summarize some key elements of email instruction that I obtained through my analysis of email studies performed in other adult second language classrooms. Throughout the chapter, I discuss how the above topics influenced the curriculum that I designed to teach basic email skills to ABE/ESL learners. In Chapter Three, I will describe how I implemented and assessed my curriculum for teaching basic email skills. I will describe the setting for my study and the student participants. I will explain my data collection tools and present the methods that I used to determine if the strategies I employed in my email curriculum were effective for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL learners. In Chapter Four, I will present the results of my email curriculum implementation. I will explain which email skills the students attained and which they did not and speculate on the reasons that they became more proficient in some

email tasks than in others. I will describe student levels of participation in the email study and display the relationship between the number of email messages sent by each student and their email proficiency levels. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the data presented in chapter 4 and consider on the reasons for my results. I will relate how the findings of my email study compare to the email studies done by other English as a Second Language teachers, and I will describe other positive outcomes of my email study. I will explain how I can use the findings of my study to strengthen and change the email curriculum and I will make recommendations for ABE/ESL teachers who want to use email as a part of their curriculum and I will suggest areas for further study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

For my capstone study I wanted to find out what instructional strategies would help my ABE/ESL students learn basic email skills so I decided to design, implement and test a curriculum for teaching these skills. This literature review presents four key topics that were integral to the development of the email curriculum. In the first section, I provide a description of the types of learners who are currently served in Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language programs in the United States. Then I illustrate and briefly discuss the relevant computer literacy standards and competencies currently used in ABE/ESL programs. Next I summarize some of the pedagogy that advocates the use of Internet based resources such as email for second language learning. Finally, I encapsulate the key elements of email instruction as found by other adult English as a Second Language instructors who have used email in their classrooms.

#### Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language Learners

The number of English as a Second Language learners in Adult Basic Education programs across the United States is increasing, and these new learners have highly diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. ABE/ESL educators are experiencing that factors such as country of origin, status of native language, exposure to English outside the classroom, levels of economic independence, and amount of previous education affect

the language and literacy development of the adult learners in their programs (TESOL, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1995; NCLE, 2003). Between 1990 and 2003, 37,704 Hmong, 20,693 Ethiopian, 16,035 Liberian and 42,532 Somali refugees arrived in the United States, and many of these refugees were adults who enrolled in ABE/ESL programs (Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 2003). Minnesota is experiencing record levels of immigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America and in 2002 alone 37,554 students enrolled in Adult Basic Education ESL classes there (Minnesota LINCS, 2005).

Some students come to the U.S. with electronic literacy skills that they can transfer to English computer tasks. However, many are East African refugees, who have come from chaotic environments where they could not work or study, so they have little knowledge of U.S. culture, schooling or computer technology (Suefert, 1999). As a result they are learning basic computer literacy skills for the first time when they begin their ESL classes (Warschauer & Healy, 1998).

California has the largest number of adult second language learners in the United States, and ABE/ESL educators there concur that English literacy now includes having basic computer literacy skills. However, California educators have found that regular computer classes do not typically work for adult ESL learners because these students usually do not have enough English and computer experience to keep up in computer classes geared toward native speakers (Thacher, 2004). This means that ABE/ESL teachers need to address the basic computer literacy needs of their students as a part of their life skills curriculum, which presents a new challenge.

#### Computer Literacy Standards in Adult ESL Programs

Creating computer curricula that respond to learner needs is an important issue in ABE/ESL education and the diversity of learners, program affiliations, purposes and material resources in these programs across the United States places a unique burden on the field (Fitzgerald, 1995, NCLE, 2003). Currently in the United States, curricular topics recommended for adult learners in ESL programs include participatory activities that deal with real issues in learners' lives such as reading schedules, filling out applications and researching information, many of which increasingly need to be done using Internet based resources. Yet, although the use of technology as a tool for teaching adult ESL has been growing and changing over the past ten years, there is not always a common infrastructure that guides adult ESL programs and many ABE/ESL teachers aren't sure what they are accountable for when it comes to teaching computer skills to adult ESL students (Thacher, 2004; NCLE, 2003).

Even though curriculum and instructional design are often varied, there are content standards, competencies and recommendations available to assist ABE/ESL educators design effective computer literacy instruction. The widely used Comprehensive Adult Assessment System (CASAS) that is used to guide ABE/ESL programming in many states and school districts has technology competencies that involve computer literacy skills including email skills. CASAS competencies are used by many adult ESL programs nationwide and include over 300 essential skills that adults need in order to become successful citizens in today's global society. CASAS competencies are correlated to SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) from the United States Department of Labor (CASAS, 2003) and many ABE/ESL programs, including the program where I carried out my capstone study, use the data from the CASAS assessment

system for reporting and funding purposes. Equipped for the Future (EFF) has worked under the auspices of the NIFL (National Institute for Literacy) to develop 16 standards, including computer literacy standards, which seek to guide instruction and assessment and improve the quality of teaching in adult literacy programs. The EFF standards attempt to address the skills that adults need in order to be successful parents, citizens, and workers in the 21st Century (EFF, 2004).

The information in Figure 2.1 below provides an overview of the CASAS technology competencies, the EFF technology standards, and my specific ABE/ESL program’s technology recommendations for ABE/ESL learners. The figure clearly indicates that CASAS, EFF and the specific ABE/ESL program all recommend that students learn to use email as a communication tool.

	<b>Learn Skills</b>	<b>Access Information</b>	<b>Communicate</b>
<b>CASAS Technology Competencies</b>	Simple keyboarding skills  Use common software programs	Identify job opportunities  Access resources and information	Apply for jobs  Write work related email
<b>Equipped for the Future Technology Standards</b>	Practice basic skills using electronic tools	Acquire and manage information	Use the Internet to communicate
<b>Program ABE/ESL Technology Recommendations</b>	Word processing  Grammar practice	Information gathering	Open and use email account

FIGURE 2.1. Computer Technology Competencies, Standards and Recommendations for Adult Basic Education English Language Learners

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the mandate for teaching email skills is clear, but this does not mean that ABE/ESL teachers have the appropriate curriculum or training to help them teach email skills to their students. My capstone study addresses this problem by developing and testing strategies for teaching basic email skills to Adult Basic Education English language learners. I hope that the findings presented in this study will assist the ABE/ESL teachers in my program and in other programs to find effective ways to teach about and use email in their classrooms. I believe that by teaching ABE/ESL students to use email, we can help them learn to use a vital communication skill that will further enable them to participate in our increasingly technological society.

#### Reasons for Teaching Email Skills in ABE/ESL Programs

Many adult English educators recognize that computer technology is fundamentally changing our society; and they feel strongly that English language learners now need to have computer literacy skills in order to fully participate. Teaching computer literacy skills is relevant in adult second language teaching not only because it may increase English language skills but also because it allows students the knowledge to access technology-based information and communication tools already being used by empowered members of our society (Cummins, 2000; Warschauer, 2003). Many adult ESL learners have few computer literacy skills in a world where technology skills including access to Internet-based resources such as email are necessary for inclusion and participation (Warschauer, 2003). For these reasons learning to use computers and the Internet should be a part of adult ESL programs (Rosen, 1996).

Computers can provide opportunities for many authentic tasks that can enable ESL learners to initiate family leadership skills and enhance language and employability (West, 2000), however most educational software used today in ABE/ESL programs continues to be technology driven, not learning driven. The grammar and vocabulary software, such as *The Rosetta Stone*, used by many ABE/ESL programs are based on the behaviorist model which advocates that people learn when they are exposed to information, asked a question and are subsequently rewarded for choosing the right answer (Cromley, 2004). Grammar and vocabulary drill and practice are viable uses of computer technology because computer software programs can provide students with the repeated exposure that is often needed to learn a language. However, these kinds of software programs do not allow for originality, expression and creativity, and they do not provide opportunities for authentic communication. Therefore it is important to provide opportunities for ABE/ESL students how to perform real life learning tasks using Internet- based resources. Real life applications of the Internet for adult learners could include scheduling appointments, finding maps and travel information, using search engines to gather information, and learning to use email to communicate. By learning to use email in English classes, adult students can become familiar with what has become the tool of choice for communication in business, education and politics (Belisle, 1996).

### Specific Email Studies and Common Instructional Themes

ABE/ESL teachers need some specific guidelines on how to teach basic email skills, but research on using email with ABE/ESL students is not widely available. There are very few published studies that describe using email in ABE/ESL programs

(Cromley, 2000). However, many secondary and post-secondary language educators have experimented with using email as a tool for second language learning, and email studies have been published by Liu (1998), Fox (1998), Kelm (1998), Kung (2002), Greenfield (2003), and Torii-Williams (2004). These specific studies highlighted some of the key instructional elements for using email in the adult second language classroom. While reviewing these specific email studies, I will distinguish four common instructional themes: 1) direct instruction and time, 2) teacher leadership and commitment to the project, 3) integration and transfer and 4) student centered activities.

1) Direct instruction and time. Learning to use email is complicated, especially for learners who have had little or no experience with computers and adult ESL educators have found that when teaching email skills, new information needs to be presented in a step-by-step manner that moves from the simple to the more complex (Roberts, 2005; Warschauer & Healy 1998; Fox, 1998). They have found that students are more successful with email when email tasks are formalized and specific (Jor & Mak, 1994; Thacher, 2003; Greenfield, 2003).

Students need to learn about the functions of email software programs and how they work through both direct instruction and adequate time to practice their skills (Kung, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Jor & Mak, 1994, Gaer, 1998). Both instructivist and constructivist approaches should be used (Rosen, 1998). Teacher directed instructivist approaches are important because adult ESL students are more likely to succeed at using computers if basic computer skills are explicitly taught before using the computer to complete tasks and assignments (Thacher, 2004). Once computer skills are directly taught, participating in constructivist based activities (in which a learner constructs knowledge by actively

connecting and assimilating new skills and experiences into their existing knowledge structure), will help students to connect these new ideas to their lives in authentic and meaningful ways (Rosen, 1998; Cromley, 2004).

2) Teacher knowledge and commitment to the project. Instructors who have used email in the adult second language classroom have found that continuing teacher support and involvement are integral if students are to be expected to sustain their momentum during email projects (Fox, 1998; Roberts, 2005; Nagel 1999). Furthermore, they maintain that teachers need a solid knowledge of the specific email application that they will use if they plan to teach email skills to their students (Carter & Titzel, 2003). On a slightly different note, Liu (1998) and Nagel (1999) articulate that since email is personal in nature, teachers need to be vigilant that the flow of email messages remains steady and that confidentiality is maintained.

3) Integration and transfer. Many language teachers advocate integrating students' use of email into ongoing activities and assessments so that the skills learned through email lessons can be expanded and built upon (Warschauer & Whittaker, 1997; Fox, 1998; Kelm 1998; Gaer, 1998; Greenfield, 2003). Through integration it is hoped that as adult ESL students develop proficiency in specific technology applications such as email, they can extend their knowledge to new online situations (CAL, 2003; Greenfield, 2003).

4) Student centered activities. Adult language teachers have found that adult students want to write for a real audience because this reaffirms that using email is an authentic life skill (Cromley, 2000; Warschauer, 1995). Many have found that by providing opportunities for peer and teacher communication writing email becomes both meaningful and motivating (Barton, 2004; Liu, 1998, Kung, 2002). Other instructors

report that giving learners choices about what to write makes the learning more student-centered (Warschauer & Whittaker, 1997) and that using email can give students a sense of power and autonomy (Rosen, 1996).

### Chapter Summary

This literature review explained that the demographics of Adult Basic Education English as a Second language programs are changing. The new populations of students in these programs have unique English and computer learning needs because many of them have low literacy skills and limited computer experience. ABE/ESL educators, such as myself, are searching for effective strategies that will enable us to teach these learners how to use dynamic technological approaches to learning, such as email. ABE/ESL educators need access to curriculum and training that will help them teach basic computer literacy skills, such as the ability to use email, to their students.

The national and local curriculum recommendations for using computer technology in adult ESL education include specifications for teaching email and ABE/ESL programs can use these standards and competencies as a rationale to develop up-to-date curricula for teaching email skills. Enabling ABE/ESL students to use email will help them begin to build the computer literacy and Internet skills that have become increasingly fundamental for workers, parents and citizens.

For my capstone study I wanted to find out what strategies would be effective for teaching email skills to ABE/ESL learners, and the findings of other ESL teacher researchers provided me with important information concerning expectations, lesson planning, personal and logistical issues as I designed my email curriculum. Specific email

studies highlighted some key instructional themes for teaching email in the adult ESL classroom. These strategies include: the need for direct instruction (instructivist approaches) and sufficient time to practice skills, (constructivist approaches), teacher involvement and commitment to email projects, lessons that facilitate the integration and transfer of email skills, and using student centered activities. These four themes directly informed the lessons in the email curriculum that I designed, practiced and tested for this capstone study.

In the following chapter, I describe how I implemented and assessed my curriculum for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL students. I describe the setting for the study and the student participants. I explain my data collection tools and describe the methods that I used to determine if the email curriculum that I designed was effective for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL learners.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Overview

I wanted to find out if the email curriculum that I developed to teach basic email skills to Adult Basic Education English language learners was successful for teaching students how to perform the following tasks: access email accounts, read incoming mail, reply to email received and compose and send new email messages. In order to test the effectiveness of the strategies in my email curriculum, I conducted a five-week email study with a CASAS Level 3 class (see Appendix A) in an urban Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language program. The learners in the email study participated in approximately 2 hours of email instruction per week for a period of five weeks. The email lessons were designed by myself and were informed by three sources; my readings and analysis on how email is being used in other ESL classrooms, by what I learned in my pilot study on teaching email skills to ABE/ESL learners, and by what I learned through my extensive exploration of the *Yahoo!Mail* application that was used in this study.

The tools that I used to measure the effectiveness of my email curriculum were pre and post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists (see Figure 3.1) and copies of student email messages. Each participant completed a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist at the beginning of the email study. I also completed a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist on each student before the email lessons began. When

the lessons in the email curriculum had been taught, the students completed a post-study email skills proficiency checklist. At this time, I also completed a post-teaching email skills proficiency checklist for each student based on direct observation of his or her performance in the computer lab. The student proficiency levels from the pre-teaching email skills checklists were compared to the student proficiency from the post-teaching email skills checklists in order to determine how the students' email skills changed through their participation in the email lessons. The specific tasks measured in the email skills proficiency checklists were analyzed in order to establish which skills the students were attaining and which they were not so that the activities and lessons in email curriculum could be adapted.

The other source of data was copies of student email messages. All of the email messages that the students sent to the classroom teacher and myself were collected and saved in an electronic folder in the *Yahoo!Mail* application. These email messages were counted and used to determine how participation levels affected the post-teaching email proficiency levels of the students.

In the following sections I explain the rationale for this study. I describe the group of students who participated in the study, and the physical site and technology resources of the ABE/ESL program where the study took place. I explain the methods and tools that I used to gather data about the effectiveness of my email curriculum. A detailed description of the lessons included in the email curriculum can be found in Appendix B.

### The Rationale for This Capstone Study

I wanted to find out what strategies were effective for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL students because the two early experiences I had using email with these kinds of ESL learners were unsuccessful and I wanted to do some classroom action research in order to find out what kinds of approaches would work. As I spoke with other ABE/ESL teachers and searched for literature on using email with ABE/ESL learners, I realized that there was a dearth of information on this topic and I realized that the problem of teaching email to ABE/ESL learners probably went beyond my particular classroom. Thus, my original idea of doing classroom action research in my own classroom had to be adjusted. In the end this capstone became a classroom based quasi-experimental project. Since I did not have my own classroom at the time of the study, I found a teacher who was willing to allow me to come in, implement and test my ABE/ESL email curriculum with her class over a five-week period.

### Program Description

The setting. The email study took place at an urban community school in a large Midwestern city. The program is managed by the local public school system, and it is situated in a building that encompasses an elementary school, Community Education classes and the Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language program. The ABE/ESL program is located on the second floor of the school and utilizes six classrooms and a computer lab. The computer lab is state of the art and contains 25 Macintosh computers that run on Operating System X (OSX). The teacher computer is connected to an LCD

projector for demonstrations on a large screen. When the students come into the computer lab the computers are already logged on and the “Applications” page is up on the screen. This “Applications” page displays icons for all of the applications that are available for the students to use. All of the computers are connected to the Internet using the Safari browser, and clicking on the browser links the students directly to the program’s homepage. This homepage is organized categorically with World Wide Web links to local resources, English practice sites, and search engines. There is an easy to find link on the ABE/ESL homepage for *Yahoo!Mail*.

The computer curriculum. The program uses both the CASAS competencies and the EFF standards (see Figure 2.1) to guide instruction, so I used these competencies and standards as a rationale for developing my curriculum for teaching email skills. The program also has some very specific computer curriculum recommendations that guide computer use in their program and the instructors use these recommendations as they plan their lessons.

The ABE/ESL learners. The ABE/ESL program where the study took place has approximately 150 adult students. There are nine classes at the site, serving students with CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) level scores from 0-6 (see Appendix A). Most of the students come from Somalia, Ethiopia, Mexico and Laos, but there are also students from other regions at the school site. The students’ ages range from 21-70 years old.

The specific group that participated in the email study was a CASAS level 3 class. CASAS level 3 students are classified as “low-intermediate” English language learners. I chose this particular class because I knew that the majority of the learners had never used

email before and because the classroom teacher was eager to participate in the email study. During the time of the study there were twenty-one learners in the class. Nineteen of these learners agreed to participate in the study and sixteen students saw the study to completion. Of these sixteen students eight were from Somalia, three were from Ethiopia, three were Hmong (originally from Laos) and two were from Mexico. There were nine women and seven men who participated in the email study.

### The Lessons in the Email Curriculum

The email curriculum that I developed for this study consists of ten lessons, each approximately 1.25 hours in length. The lessons were taught over a five-week period. Each lesson began in the classroom with direct instruction and discussion using overhead screenshots of the email interface. Students spent the rest of each lesson using the *Yahoo!Mail* application in the computer lab. As the computer instructor for this program I taught all of the lessons. However, I had steady, ongoing assistance from the classroom teacher and occasional assistance from a volunteer. A detailed description of the lessons in the email curriculum can be found in Appendix B.

### Data Collection Tools

The two tools that I used to measure the effectiveness of my email curriculum were student pre-teaching and post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists and copies of student email messages. These data collection tools are described below.

### Email Skills Proficiency Checklists

The primary tools that I used to measure the effectiveness of my email curriculum were email skills proficiency checklists. At the beginning of the email study each student used the checklists to assess their personal email skills and they assigned themselves a proficiency level for each email task and subtask. We did the checklist together in the classroom, item by item. As I explained each email task on the checklist to the students, I used overhead screenshots of the *Yahoo!Mail* interface as visual aids. The students self-assessed their skills by checking the level they thought they were at for each task and subtask. I also filled out a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist for each participating student based on what I had observed in our computer classes and from how they had rated themselves. Once the email study began, the students and I did not look at the email skills proficiency checklists again until all of the lessons in the email curriculum had been taught.

The email skills proficiency checklists allowed the students to choose from the three proficiency levels described in Table 3.1 below. There is a student language version as well as a teacher version of these descriptors because I found it was necessary to explain the email proficiency levels to the students using an adapted version.

TABLE 3.1 Email Proficiency Level Descriptors

Student Language Version

Level 1	I do not know how to do this task yet. This task is new for me.
Level 2	I can do this task with a little bit of help from the teacher or a classmate.
Level 3	I can do this task by myself. I do not need the teacher or a classmate to help me at all.

Teacher Version

Level 1	The student does not know how to complete this task yet. The student needs direct, explicit instruction in order to complete this task.
Level 2	The student can complete this task with a little bit of help from the teacher or a classmate. Help includes prompting, pointing and reminding.
Level 3	The student can complete this task independently. The student does not need any assistance to complete this task.

When the lessons in the email curriculum were completed the students filled out the same email skills proficiency checklist again. I went through the checklist with them, item by item, as I explained each email task and subtask using overhead screen shots of the Yahoo!Mail interface as an illustration. The students self-assessed themselves by checking the proficiency level they thought they were at for each task and subtask.

After the students had completed their post-teaching self-assessments the class went to the computer lab. In the computer lab I asked the students to carry out each of the four basic email tasks as I observed them work and I completed a post-teaching email skills proficiency checklist on each participant. Since I was observing sixteen students,

the post-teaching email proficiency checklists took two class periods to complete which meant that the classroom teacher and volunteer had to instruct and supervise the students who were not being observed. (I also used a computer open lab period to observe and complete post-teaching email proficiency checklists on two of the students).

The email skills proficiency checklist that was used for pre-teaching and post-teaching skills assessment is shown in Figure 3.1 below. The same checklist was used for the pre-teaching and post-teaching assessments.

<b>Proficiency Levels</b>			
<b>Email Tasks and Subtasks</b>	<b>Level 1 Needs direct instruction</b>	<b>Level 2 Needs prompting</b>	<b>Level 3 Independent</b>
<b>1. Access Yahoo!Mail in the computer lab</b>			
a. Use Safari browser to access home page			
b. Find Yahoo!Mail link on home page			
c. Remember and accurately type in ID			
d. Remember and accurately type in password			
<b>2. Access and read new mail from the Inbox</b>			
a. Find, click on and open Inbox			
b. Click on and open new mail			
<b>3. Reply to message received</b>			
a. Find and click on reply button			
b. Write a reply in the text box			
c. Send the reply			
<b>4. Compose new email messages</b>			
a. Find, click on and open compose window			
b. Type email address into "To" bar			
c. Type topic into "Subject" bar			
d. Write message in compose text box			
e. Send new email message			

FIGURE 3.1 Pre-Teaching and Post-Teaching Email Skills Proficiency Checklist

Proficiency levels. In the email checklist, the three proficiency levels for each email task and subtasks (see Table 3.1 above) are indicated in the right hand columns. Proficiency level 1 indicates that the student needs direct instruction to complete this task. Proficiency level 2 indicates that the student is familiar with the task but that they need prompting or reminding to carry it out. Proficiency level 3 indicates that the student can complete this email task independently without help from the teacher or a classmate.

Tasks and subtasks. The tasks and subtasks on the email skills proficiency checklist are tightly aligned with the skills taught during email instruction and are organized as follows. The four basic email tasks and their subtasks are numbered and listed in the left most column. The four basic tasks are: Task 1) access email accounts, Task 2) read incoming mail, Task 3) reply to messages received, and Task 4) compose new email messages. Each of the four basic email tasks is followed by the subtasks necessary for its completion. Each basic email task has a different number of subtasks. Task 1 has four subtasks, Task 2 has two subtasks, Task 3 has three subtasks and Task 4 has five subtasks. The four email tasks and their subtasks are explained in detail in Figures 3.2-3.8 below.

Email Task 1- Access email accounts. In order to complete Email Task 1, the student must carry out the following subtasks: *a. use the Safari browser to access the ABE/ESL home page (not shown), b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the ABE/ESL program's home page (not shown), c. remember and accurately type in his or her Yahoo! ID in the first field below, and d. remember and accurately type in his or her password in the second field below and click on the "sign in" button, as seen in Figure 3.2.*

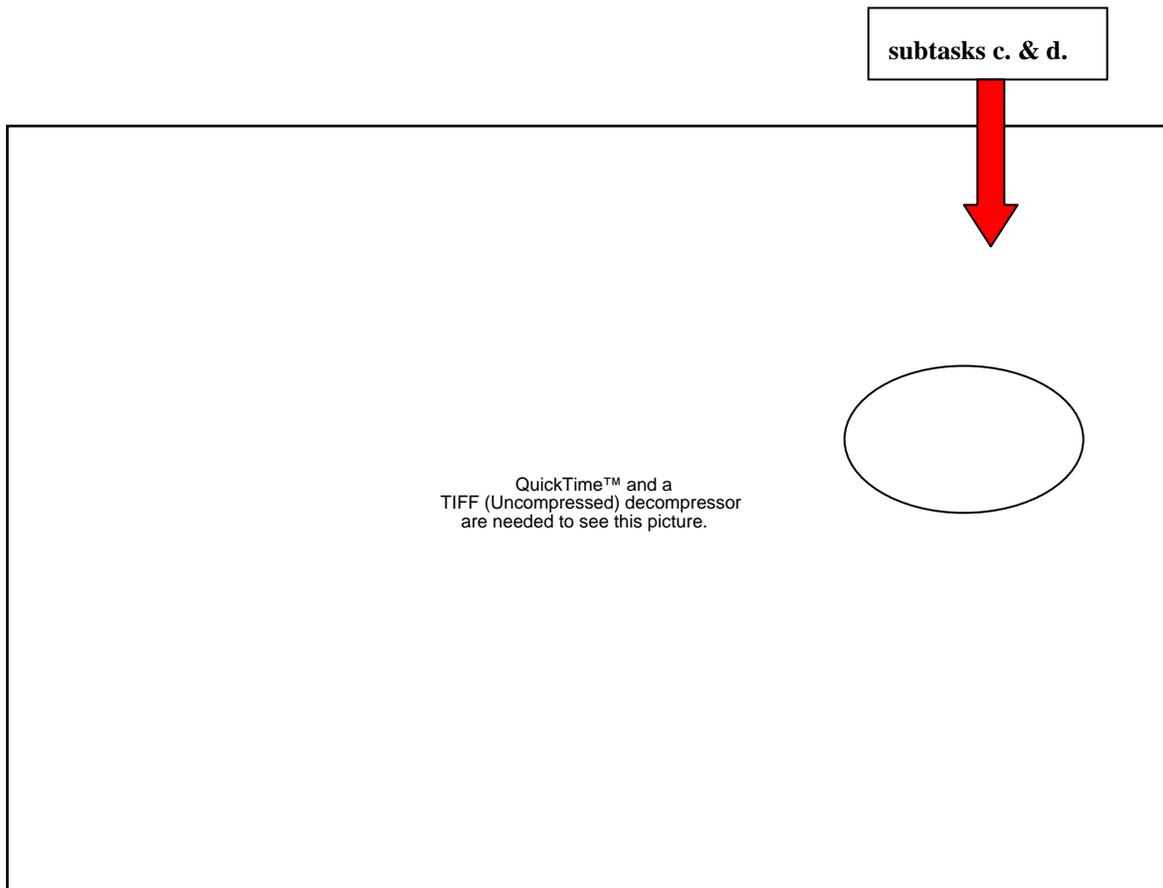


FIGURE 3.2 Access Email Account

Email Task 2- Access and read new mail from the Inbox. In order to complete Email Task 2, the student must carry out two subtasks. The first is subtask *a. find, click on and open the “Inbox” link*, which is located both in the left frame and on the “Welcome” sections of the interface as shown in Figure 3.3 below.

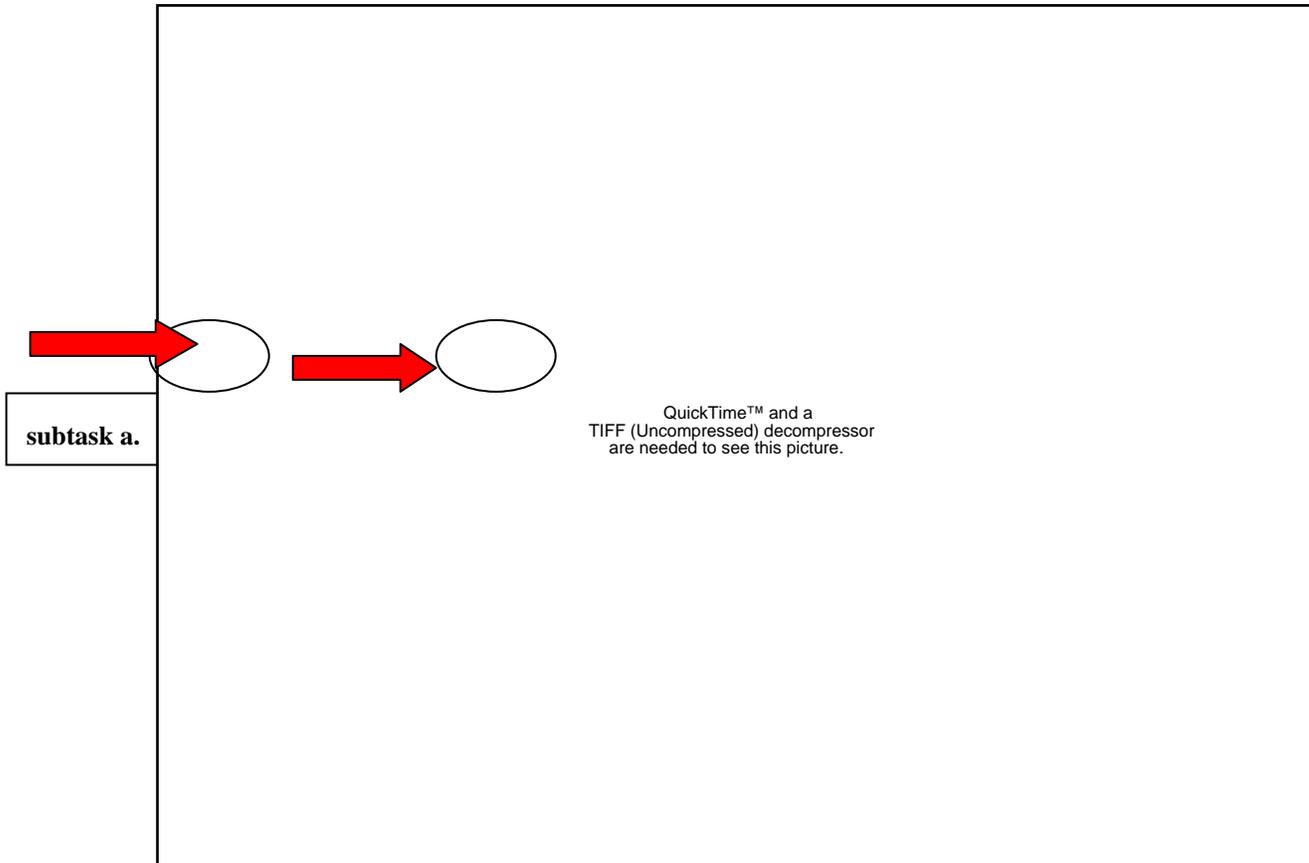


FIGURE 3.3 Find and Click On the “Inbox” Link

In order to complete subtask *b. click on and open new mail*, the students need to click on the bolded subject line for each new mail message displayed in the “Inbox” as seen in Figure 3.4 below.

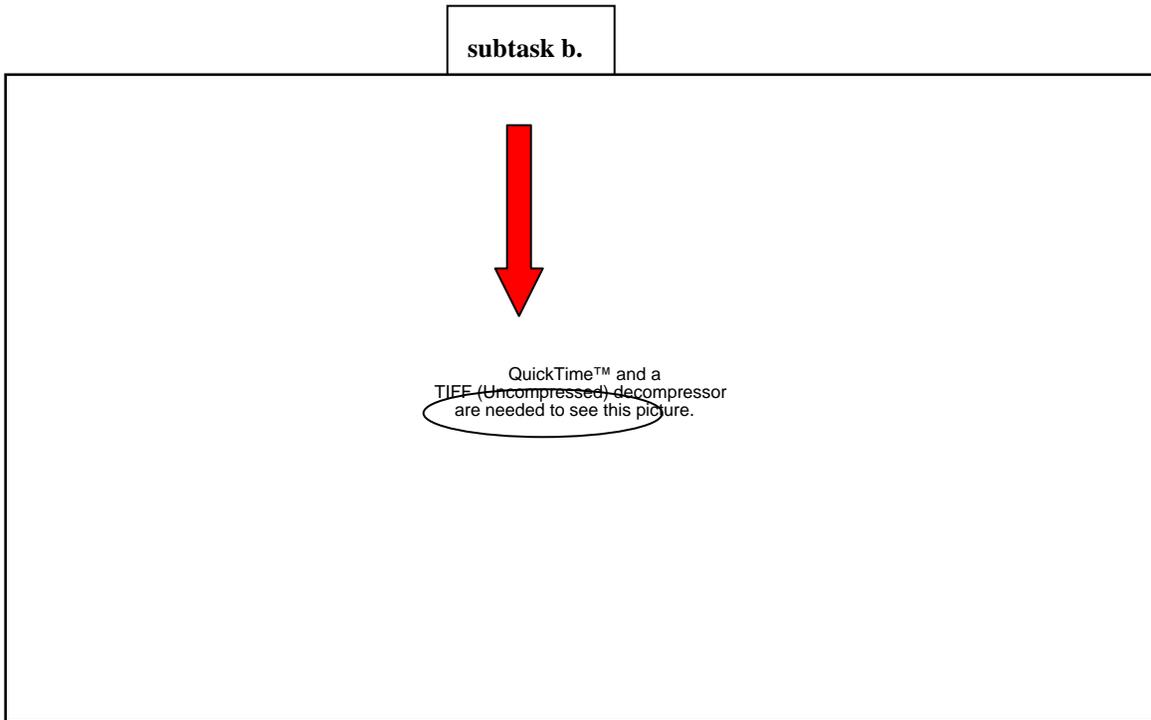


FIGURE 3.4 Click On and Open New Mail

Email Task 3-Reply to messages received. In order to complete Email Task 3, the student must carry out three subtasks. The first is subtask *a. find and click on the reply button*, as seen in Figure 3.5 below.

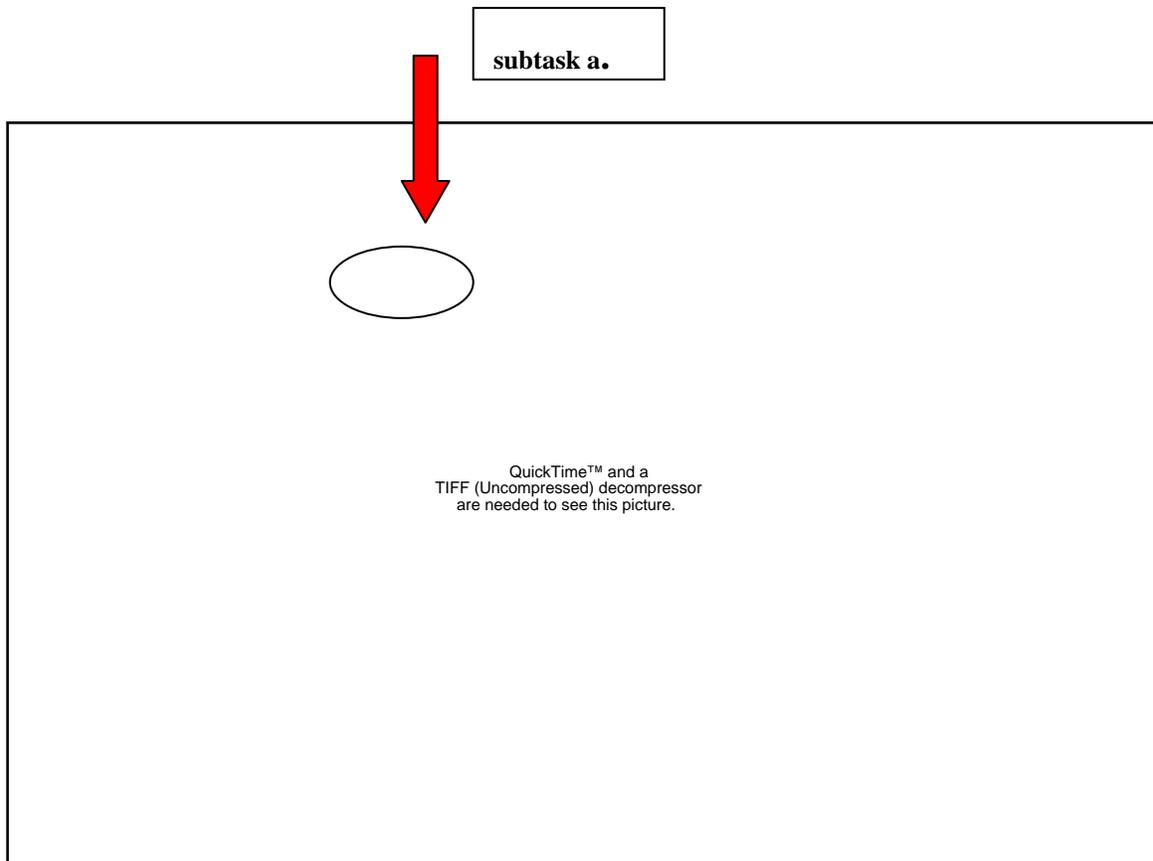


FIGURE 3.5 Click On Reply Button

After clicking on the reply button the student must complete subtask *b. write a reply in the textbox*. In order to do this, the student must click into the textbox and write a

brief response to the questions posed in the email they received from the teacher. When they finish writing their response they must complete subtask *c. send the reply*, by clicking on one of the two send buttons as illustrated in Figure 3.6 below. The student does not need to type in the recipient's address in order to complete this task because this information appears automatically.

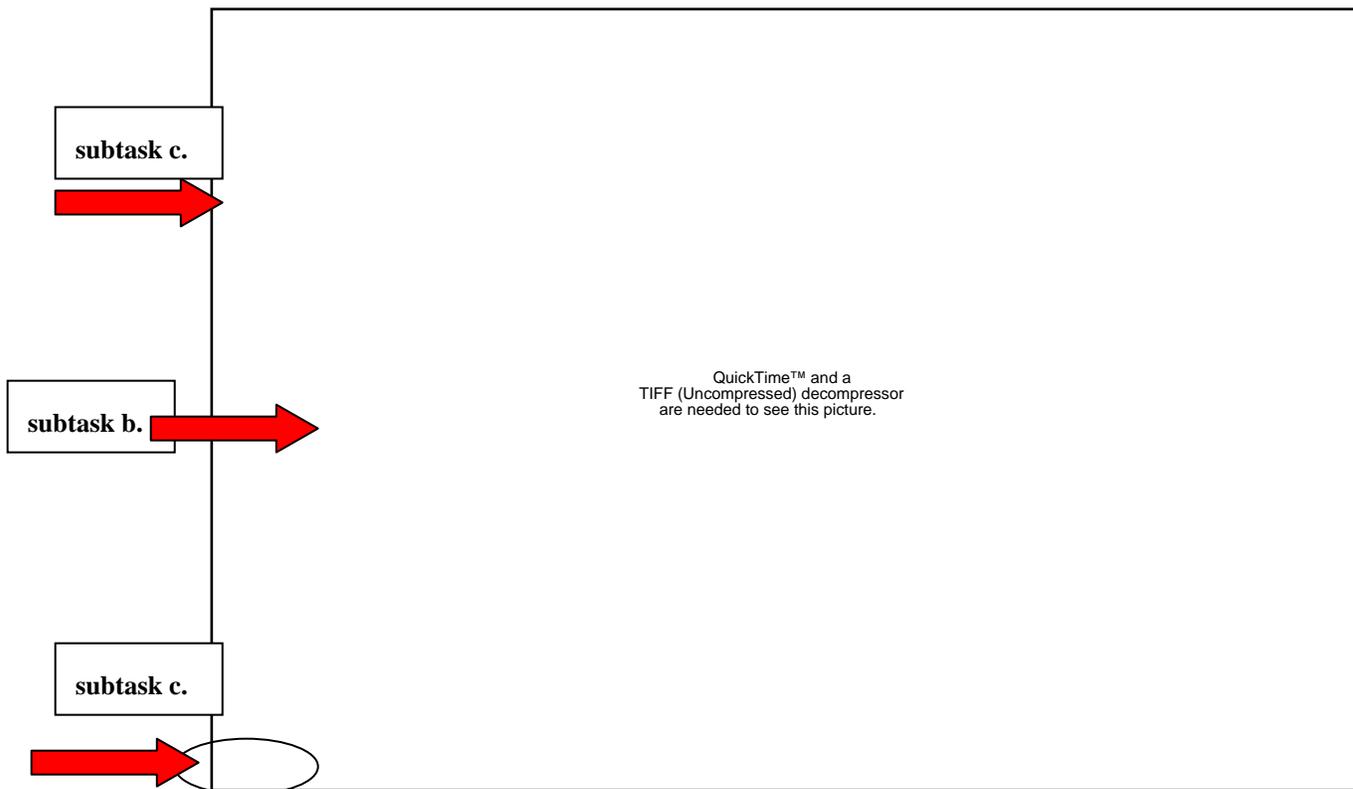


FIGURE 3.6 Write and Send a Reply to Message Received

Email Task 4- Compose and send new email messages. Email Task 4 has five subtasks. In order to carry out this complicated task the student must first complete

subtask *a.* find and click on the compose button, in order to open the compose page as shown in Figure 3.7 below.

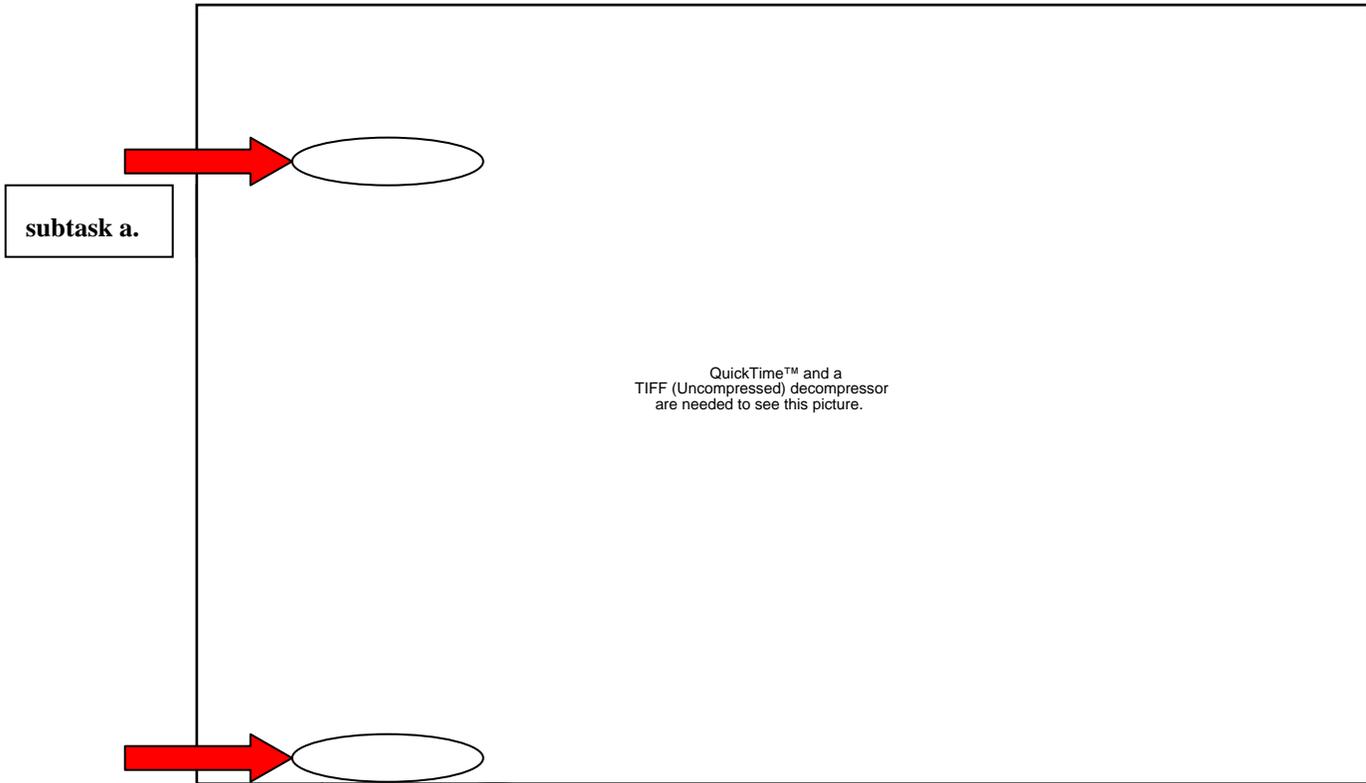


FIGURE 3.7 Click On the Compose Button

Once the compose page is opened the student must complete subtask *b.* type the recipient's email address into "To" bar, and subtask *c.* type the topic of the email message into "Subject" bar, as shown in Figure 3.8 below. Next the student must complete subtask *d.* write the message in compose text box, by clicking into the text box and writing a brief message. Finally, the student must complete subtask *e.* send the new email message, by clicking on one of the send buttons.

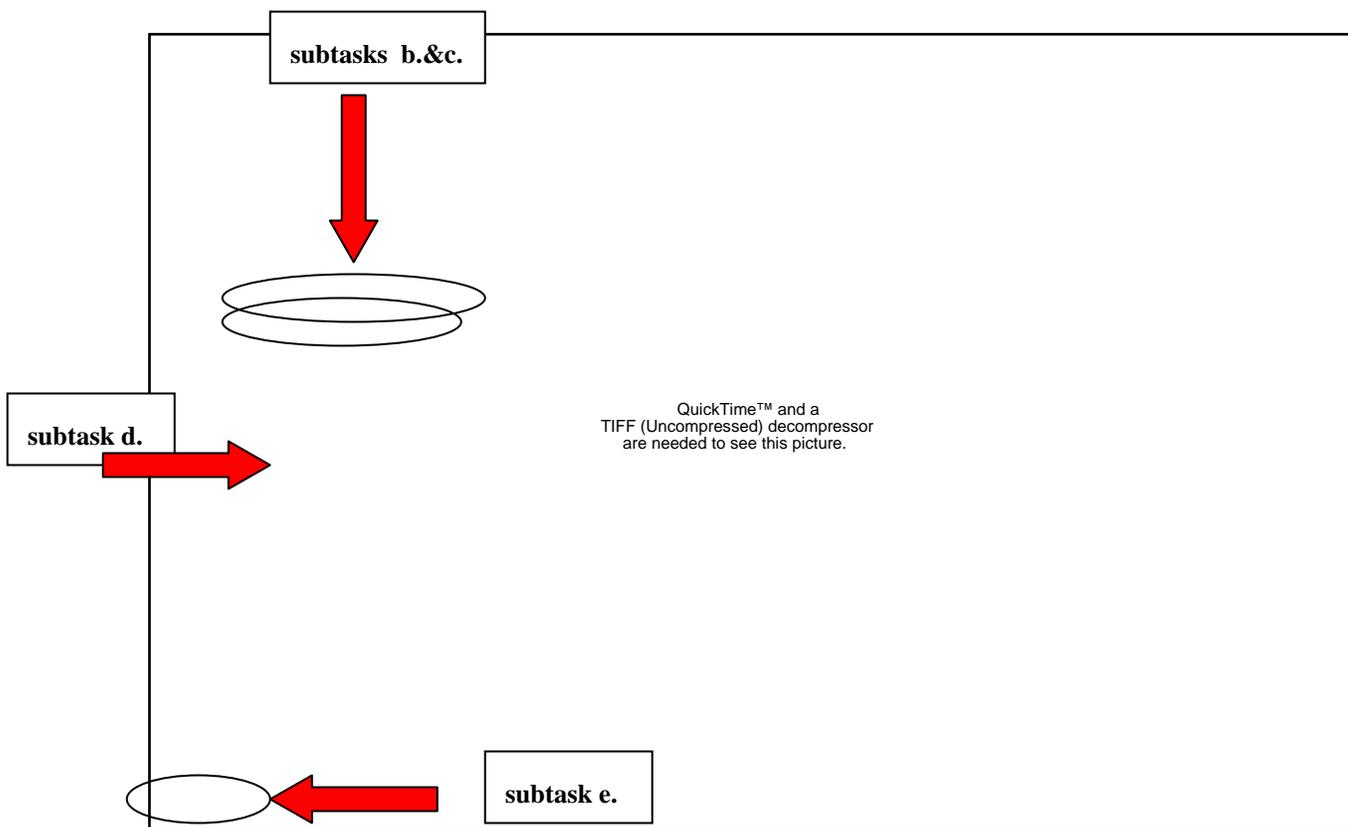


FIGURE 3.8 Composing a New Email Message

### Copies of Student Email Messages

Copies of student email correspondence served as a second source of data. The copies of student email messages were informative because they showed me how many messages each student had sent to the teacher and myself over the course of the email study thus providing me with a way to gauge student participation in the lessons. The participating classroom teacher and I kept copies of all student email correspondence in electronic folders in our *Yahoo!Mail* accounts and when the lessons were completed, I gathered and counted the number of email messages we had received from each student. I compared the number of messages sent by each student to an averaged email proficiency level that I had calculated and assigned to each student to find out if there was a relationship between the number of emails sent (participation levels) and email proficiency levels.

### Chapter Summary

Before I taught the lessons in my email curriculum I collected baseline data about what students currently knew about email by having them complete a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist. I also completed a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist for each student and assigned them a proficiency level ranging from 1-3 for each email subtask. When the email lessons were completed, each participant self-assessed their skills by filling out the email skills proficiency checklist again. At this time, I observed each student working on the four basic email tasks in the computer lab and I assessed their skills using my instructor post-teaching email skills proficiency checklist as a tool. The student proficiency levels from the pre-teaching email skills

checklists were compared to the proficiency levels from the post-teaching email skills checklists in order to determine how the students' email proficiency levels changed over the course of the email study. Students were assigned an average email proficiency level calculated from their post-teaching proficiency levels for the fourteen email subtasks. The email subtasks were analyzed to determine which email skills the students learned and which they did not so that I could adapt and strengthen the less effective lessons and strategies in my email curriculum. Finally, the saved copies of student email correspondence were counted and compared to the average proficiency levels for each student and relationships were noted.

In the following chapter I present the results of my email curriculum implementation. I show how the students' proficiency levels for the email tasks changed through their participation in the email lessons. I explain which email skills students attained and which they did not and speculate on the reasons that the students became more proficient in some email tasks than in others. I describe student levels of participation in the email study by showing the relationship between the number of email messages sent by each student and their average email proficiency levels.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Overview

I wanted to find out what instructional strategies would help ABE/ESL students to learn basic email skills. This chapter presents the outcomes of the curriculum that I developed for teaching these skills. The first section reports and discusses the pre-teaching email proficiency levels for each student as determined through an analysis of the email skills proficiency checklists that were completed by each participant and myself (the instructor) before the lessons in the curriculum began. The second section presents and compares the results of the post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists that were completed by twelve of the students and myself after the lessons in the email curriculum had been taught.

The third section presents and discusses the post-teaching email proficiency levels for all sixteen of the participants as observed and reported by the myself after the lessons in the curriculum had been taught. My analysis of the data shows how the students' email skills proficiency levels changed through participation in the lessons. I also discuss which email tasks the students became most proficient in and which tasks they were least proficient in, and I suggest the reasons for this. In the fourth section I present and discuss student participation levels in the study by examining the number of email messages each student sent to the classroom teacher and instructor as compared to their average post-teaching proficiency level for the email subtasks.

In Chapter 5 I report how my analysis of the data that I collected using the email skills proficiency checklists and student email messages informed the lessons and approaches in my email curriculum. I suggest specific actions that I can take in order to adapt the teaching strategies in my email curriculum in order to meet the unique needs of Adult Basic Education English language learners.

### Pre-Teaching Email Proficiency Checklist Results

At the beginning of the study I asked all of the participating students to self assess their email skills by completing a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist. Before the students filled out the checklists I presented and discussed the student language version of the three proficiency levels (see Table 3.1) so that students would understand how to rate themselves. Working in the classroom, we completed the checklist together, item by item as I explained each email task and subtask to the students using overhead screen shots of the *Yahoo!Mail* interface as visual aids. Each participant rated him or herself at a proficiency level 1 (needs direct instruction) for all of the tasks and subtasks on the email skills proficiency checklist since none of them had any previous experience with email. Several of the students protested that they were not even at a proficiency level 1 but at a level 0 because they did not even understand what the tasks were. (There were two students in the class who were already using Yahoo! Mail and although they participated in the email instruction, I did not include them in any of the reported data. During the course of the email study these two students went beyond the four basic email tasks. They learned to send attachments (drag and drop images) and delete unwanted mail. One of these students also began to organize her email into folders).

I also filled out a pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist on each participating student before the teaching began. I designated most of the students at a proficiency level 1 for each email subtask since none of them had any prior experience with email. (As I explained in Chapter 3, I chose this particular class for the study because I knew the majority of them had not used email before). The exception to this were three students who could use the Safari browser to get to the ABE program's homepage with a bit of prompting so I rated them at a level 2 (needs prompting) for this subtask.

Figures 4.1-4.4 below compare how the students and I assessed their email skills using the pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklists before the lessons in the email curriculum began. Each figure indicates that the students and I agreed that they needed direct instruction to complete the email tasks and subtasks that would be taught during the five-week study. The students had nowhere to go but up and they were very excited to start learning about email. Each of the email tasks and subtasks are explained in detail in Figures 3.2-3.8 in Chapter 3.

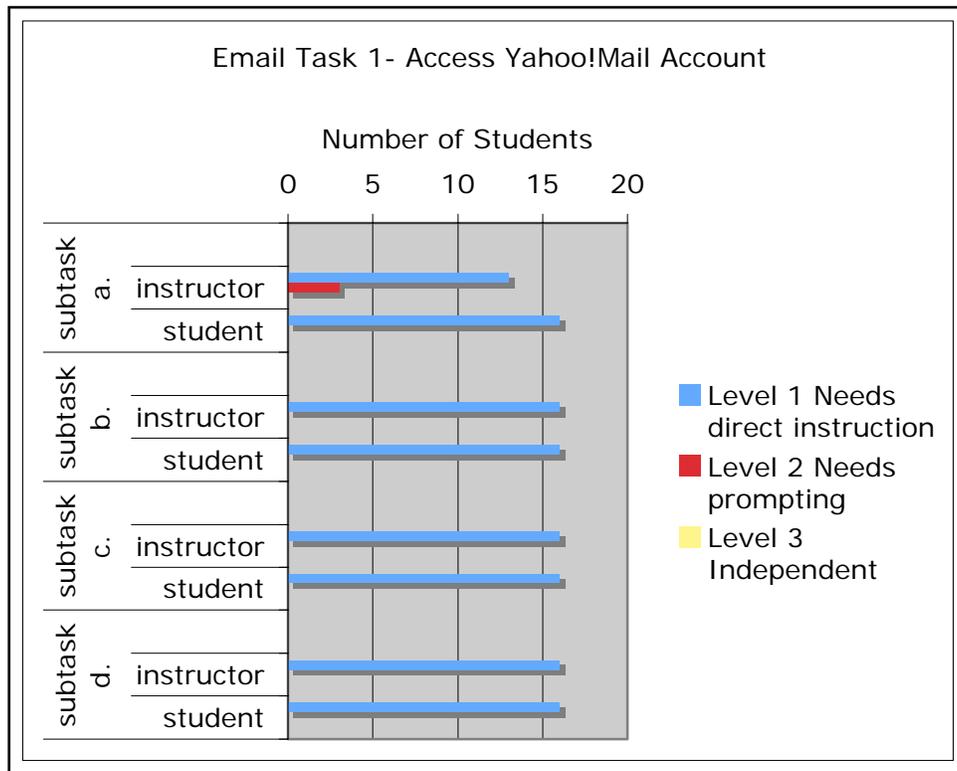


FIGURE 4.1 Student Pre-Teaching Self-Assessment Compared to Instructor Pre-Teaching Assessment (16 Students)

The steps or subtasks for Email Task 1-Access Yahoo!Mail account in the computer lab, are:

- a. Use Safari browser to access home page*
- b. Find Yahoo!Mail link on home page*
- c. Remember and accurately type in ID*
- d. Remember and accurately type in password*

The student and instructor pre-teaching assessments were largely aligned for the subtasks involved in Email Task 1- Access Yahoo!Mail account in the computer lab. The students' pre-teaching assessment and my assessments were the same for subtasks: *b., find Yahoo!Mail link on home page, c., remember and accurately type in ID and d., remember and accurately type in password.* The students all self-assessed themselves at a level 1 for these subtasks and I agreed with their assessments since none of them had any previous experience with email and thus needed direct instruction to do so.

For subtask *a., use Safari browser to access home page,* there was a slight discrepancy. I assigned three of the students a level 2 for this subtask because I had taught them to use the Safari browser during the morning open computer lab period so I knew they could do this with a bit of prompting. The remainder of the class was a level 1, and needed direct instruction to use the Safari browser.

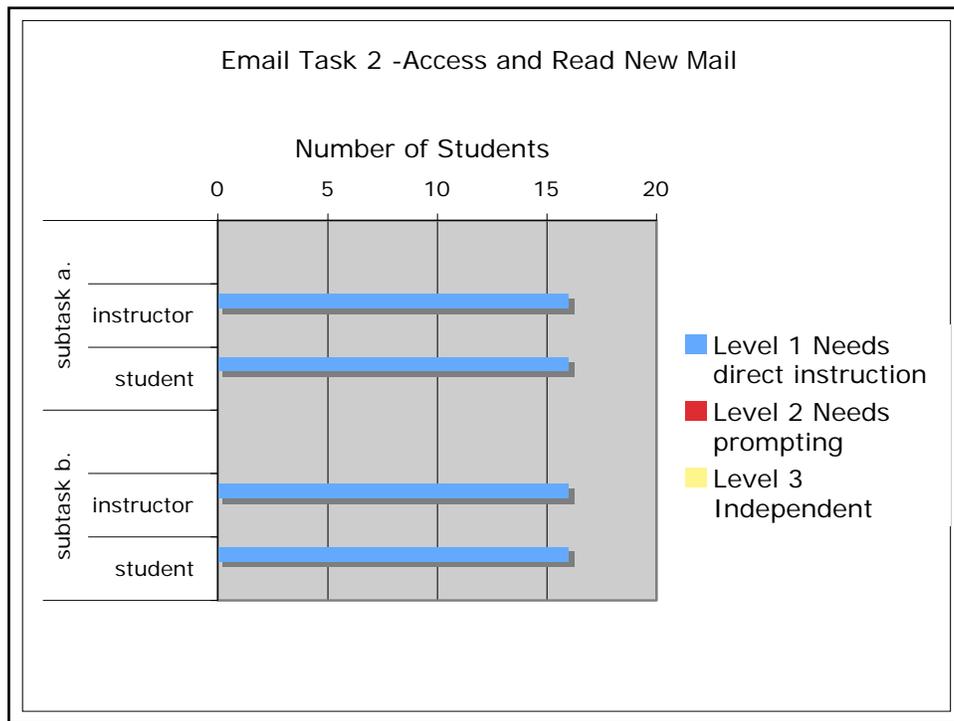


FIGURE 4.2 Student Pre-Teaching Self-Assessment Compared to Instructor Pre-Teaching Assessment (16 Students)

The steps or subtasks for Email Task 2- Access and read new mail from the Inbox, are:

- a. *Find, click on and open Inbox*
- b. *Click on and open new mail*

The students' and my pre-teaching assessments were aligned for the two subtasks in Email Task 2- Access and read new mail from the Inbox. The students all rated themselves at a level 1 for these subtasks as did I because none of them had any experience accessing and reading new mail and thus needed direct instruction to do so.

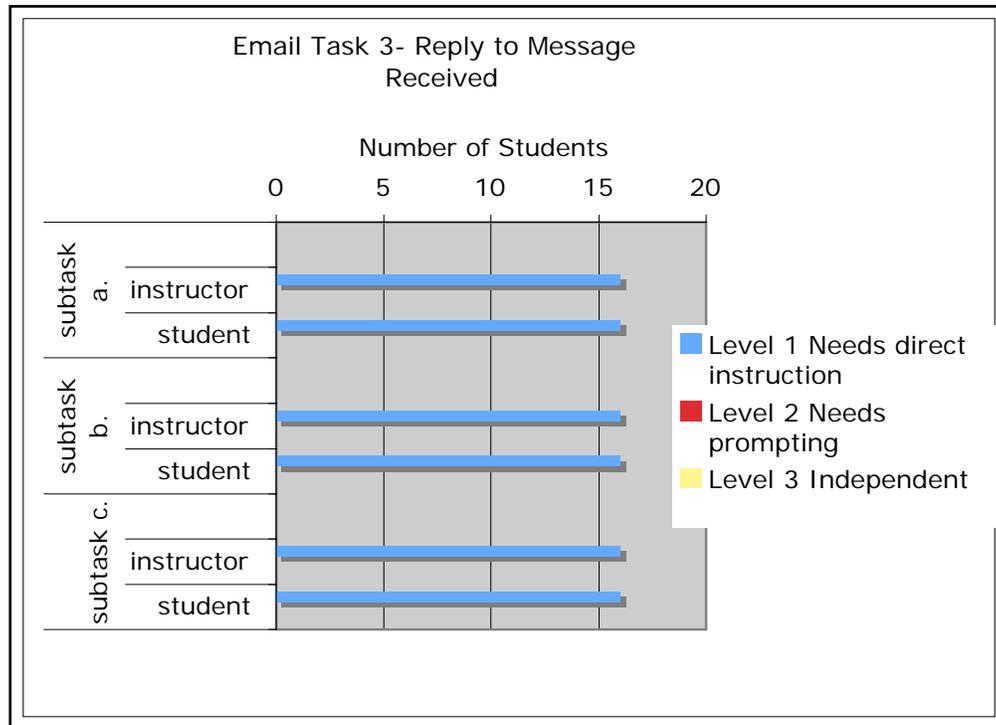


FIGURE 4.3 Student Pre-Teaching Self-Assessment Compared to Instructor Pre-Teaching Assessment (16 Students)

The steps or subtasks for Email Task 3- Reply to message received, are:

- a. Find and click on reply button*
- b. Write a reply in the text box*
- c. Send the reply*

The students' and my pre-teaching assessments were aligned for the three subtasks involved in Email Task 3-Reply to message received. The students all rated themselves at a level 1 for each of the subtasks and so did I because none of them had any experience replying to email messages and thus needed direct instruction to do so.

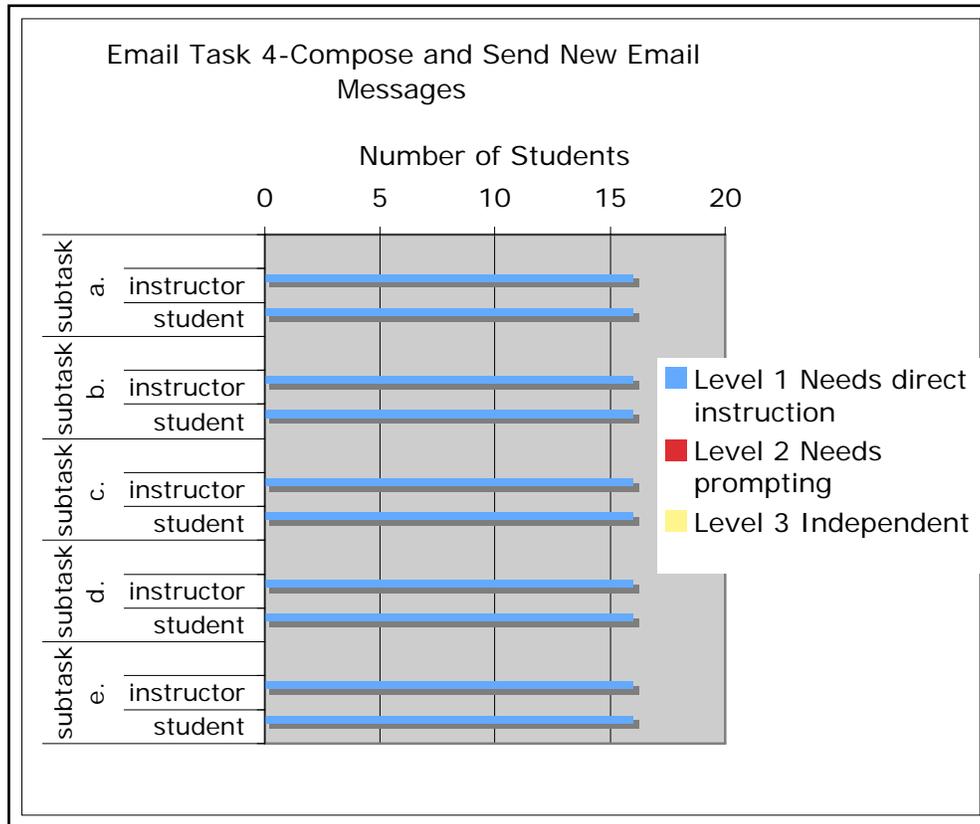


FIGURE 4.4 Student Pre-Teaching Self- Assessment Compared to Instructor Pre-Teaching Assessment (16 Students)

The steps or subtasks for Email Task 4- Compose and send new email messages, are:

- a. Find, click on and open compose window*
- b. Type email address into the To bar*
- c. Type topic into the Subject bar*
- d. Write message in the compose text box*
- e. Send a new email message*

The students and my pre-teaching assessments were aligned for the five subtasks involved in Email Task 4-Compose and send new messages. The students all rated themselves at a level 1 for each of the subtasks, as did I because none of them had any

experience composing and sending email messages and thus needed direct instruction to do this.

### Post-Teaching Proficiency Checklist Results

Student self-assessments. With the assistance of the classroom teacher, I taught the lessons in the email curriculum that I developed for this study (see Appendix B). At this time, I gave each student back his or her pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist and we went through the checklist together again, item by item. First we discussed the proficiency level descriptors together so that the students would understand what each level meant. Then I used overhead screen shots of the *Yahoo!Mail* interface to illustrate the email tasks and subtasks while the students completed their checklists again, this time using a red pen in order to differentiate their pre-teaching self assessment from their post-teaching self assessment. Only 12 students completed the post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists. Although 16 students eventually completed the study, only 12 of the participating students were in attendance on the day that I came in to do the self-assessment task using the post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists. Therefore I only have post-teaching self-assessment data from 12 of the participants.

In Table 4.1 below I compare my instructor post-teaching proficiency ratings to those of the 12 students who self-assessed their email skills at the end of the lessons. The first number in each proficiency level column indicates the number of students who rated themselves at this level for each subtask. The number after the slash indicates the number of students I assigned to this proficiency level for each subtask.

TABLE 4.1 Post Teaching Email Skills Proficiency Checklist Results  
Student Self Assessment (12 Students) and Instructor Assessment

Email Task	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>1. Access Yahoo!Mail account in the computer lab</b>			
a. Use Safari browser to access home page		8/0	4/12
b. Find Yahoo!Mail link on home page		5/0	7/12
c. Remember and accurately type in ID		1/2	11/10
d. Remember and accurately type in password		1/1	11/11
<b>2. Access and read new mail from the Inbox</b>			
a. Find, click on and open Inbox		4/3	8/9
b. Click on and open new mail		6/3	6/9
<b>3. Reply to message received</b>			
a. Find and click on reply		4/3	8/9
b. Write a reply in the text box		3/2	9/10
c. Send the reply		4/1	8/11
<b>4. Compose new email messages</b>			
a. Find, click on and open compose window	1	3/4	8/8
b. Type email address into To bar	1/1	5/5	6/6
c. Type topic into Subject bar	1/1	4/4	7/7
d. Write message in compose text box	1	4/4	7/8
e. Send new email message		3/4	9/8

Figures 4.5-4.8 below are task-based graphs that compare the 12 students' self-assessments and the assessments I gave them based on my direct observation of their performance on each of the four email tasks when the lessons had been completed.

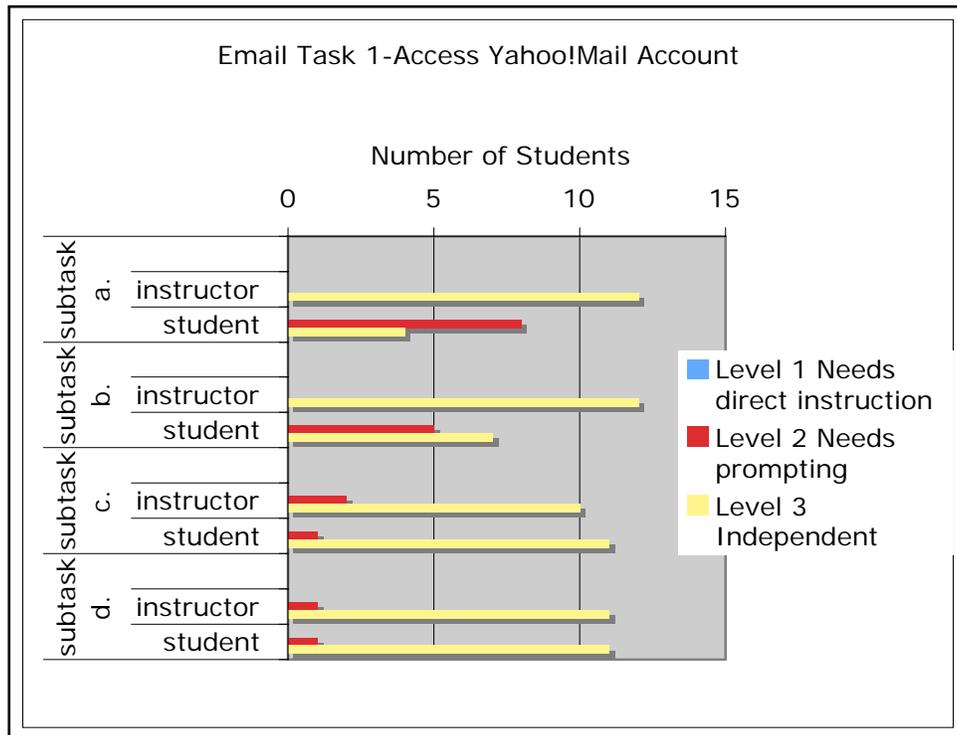


FIGURE 4.5 Post-Teaching Email Proficiency Skills Checklist Results Instructor Assessment & Student Self Assessment (12 Students)

Email Task 1. Access Yahoo!Mail account in the computer lab

*Subtask a. Use Safari browser to access home page*

*Subtask b. Find Yahoo!Mail link on home page*

*Subtask c. Remember and accurately type in ID*

*Subtask d. Remember and accurately type in password*

Figure 4.5 compares the students' post-teaching self-assessments and my post-teaching assessments for Email Task 1. All twelve of the students who completed the post-teaching email proficiency skills checklists reported that their email skills had increased through their participation in the email lessons and my observations concurred.

Our assessments for the email subtasks were mostly in alignment, but there were some differences. The largest discrepancies were for subtask *a. use the Safari browser to access home page*. My observations of the students performing Email Task 1 at the culmination of the lessons indicated that all of the students were able to perform this subtask without assistance so I rated them all at a level 3 (independent).

Contrary to my observations, only four students rated themselves at a level 3 for this subtask and the other eight students rated themselves at a level 2. I suggest that the reasons that the students gave themselves a lower rating than I did may be related to the use of the term “browser” in the checklist. Although the students were using the Safari browser every time they used email I noticed that they did not understand the term when they saw it in the email skills checklist and several of them asked me what “browser” meant. Looking back at my lessons I realized that I had not used or explained the term browser consistently during my teaching.

The students and I were also not in alignment regarding their skill levels for subtask *b. find the Yahoo!Mail link, on home page*. Again, my post-teaching observations showed that all the students could complete this subtask independently so I rated all of them at a level 3. However, five of the students rated themselves at a level 2 indicating that they still needed some assistance to find the *Yahoo!Mail* link.

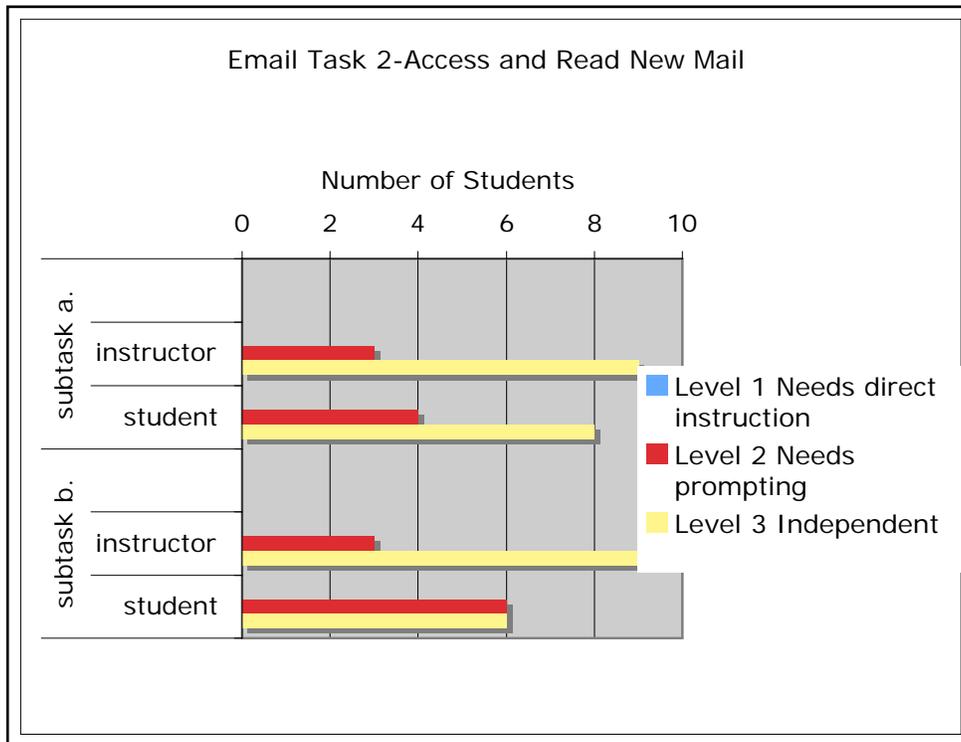


FIGURE 4.6 Post Teaching Email Proficiency Skills Checklist Results Instructor Assessment & Student Self Assessment-12 Students

Email Task 2. Access and read new mail from the Inbox

*Subtask a. Find, click on and open Inbox*

*Subtask b. Click on and open new mail*

The post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists indicated that the students' email skills increased for Email Task 2 and the students' self-assessments and my assessments were closely aligned. For subtask *a. find, click on and open the Inbox*, eight students reported that they were at a level 3 and four students reported that they were at a level 2. My assessment of their performance was much the same. My observations showed that nine students were at a level 3 because they could complete subtask *a.* without assistance and three students were at a level 2 because they needed prompting to complete subtask *a.*

The students' self-assessment and my assessment were different regarding subtask *b. click on and open new mail*. My observations showed that nine students were at a level 3 because they could open their new mail (indicated by bold text) without assistance and that three students were at a level 2 because they needed a verbal reminder that bold text indicated new mail and plain text indicated previously viewed mail. In contrast to my assessment, six of the students reported that they were at a level 3 and six reported that they were at a level 2 for subtask *b*. My observations lead me to believe that six students rated themselves at a level 2 for this subtask because they were not completely confident in their ability to notice the difference between old mail which was listed using plain text, and new mail, which was listed using bold text.

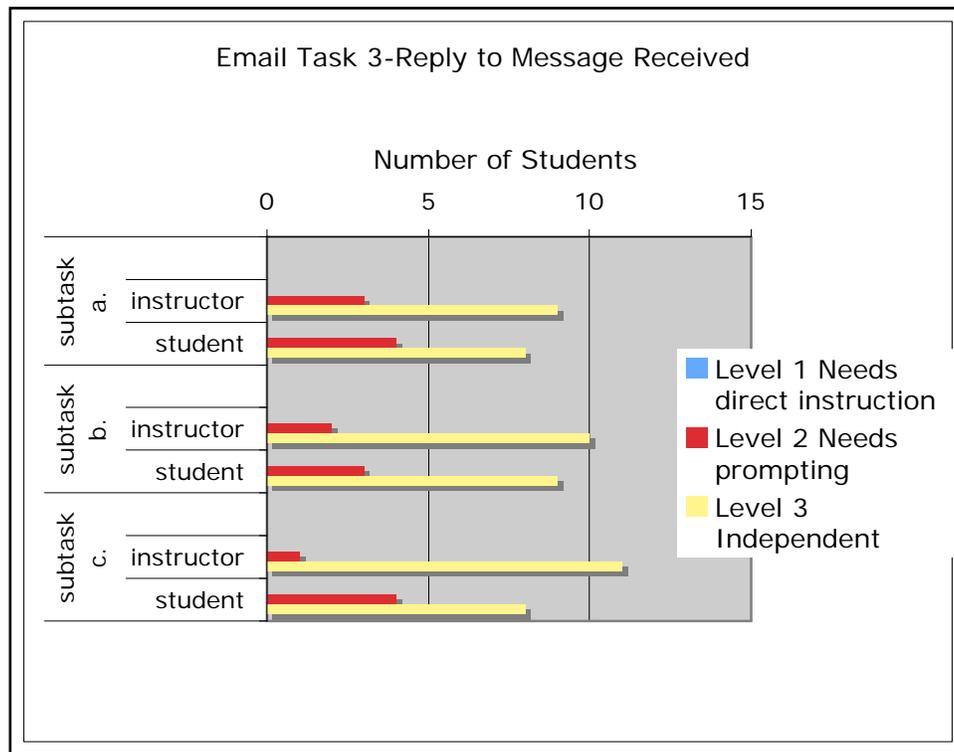


FIGURE 4.7 Post Teaching Email Proficiency Skills Checklist Results Instructor Assessment & Student Self Assessment-12 Students

Email Task 3. Reply to message received

*Subtask a. Find and click on reply button*

*Subtask b. Write a reply in the text box*

*Subtask c. Send the reply*

The post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists indicated that the students' skills for Email Task 3 increased during the email study. For subtask *a. find and click on the reply button*, I rated nine students at a level 3 because they could find the reply button on the interface and click on it without assistance. I rated three students at a level 2 for this subtask because they needed verbal cues to locate the reply button. The student self-

assessments were similar. For subtask *b. write a reply in the textbox*, I rated ten students at a level 3 and two students at a level 2 and the student ratings were mostly the same.

For subtask *c. send the reply*, there were discrepancies worth noting between our assessments. My observations of students performing this subtask in the computer lab showed that eleven students were at a level 3 because they could send the reply without assistance and that only one student was at a level 2 because he/she needed a verbal reminder to help locate one of the send buttons. In contrast, only eight students reported that they were at a level 3 for this subtask and four reported that they were still at a level 2. I hypothesize two possible reasons for this discrepancy. The first is that there was two send buttons on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface (see Figure 3.7 ) and I noticed that this confused some of the students. They were not sure that both of the send buttons would serve the same function and during the email lessons many of the students had questions about this. Another reason that made this subtask complicated was the fact that after the send button was clicked, a new screen appeared to tell the writer that the message had been sent. I had not explained this to the students during the direct instruction part of the lesson and because they did not anticipate it, it surprised and confused them.

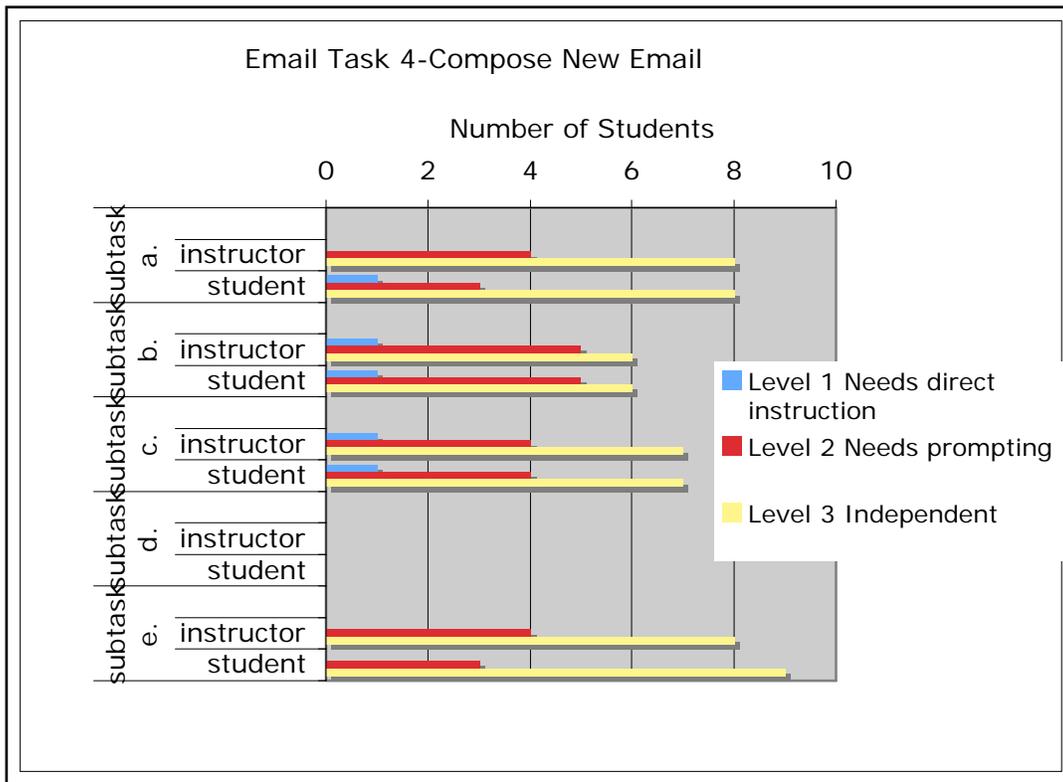


FIGURE 4.8 Post Teaching Email Proficiency Skills Checklist Results  
Instructor Assessment & Student Self Assessment-12 Students

Email Task 4. Compose new email messages

*Subtask a. Find, click on and open compose window*

*Subtask b. Type email address into the To bar*

*Subtask c. Type topic into Subject bar*

*Subtask d. Write message in compose text box*

*Subtask e. Send new email message*

The students' and my post-teaching assessments for Email Task 4 were mostly aligned. For subtask *b. type the recipient's email address into the "To" bar*, I rated six students at a level 3, five students at a level 2 and one student at a level 1. The students'

ratings were the same as mine. For subtask *c. type the topic into the “Subject” bar*, I rated seven students at a level 3, four students at a level 2 and one student at a level 1 and the students’ self assessments were the same.

For subtask *a. find, click on and open the compose window*, I observed that eight students performed at a level 3 and four students performed at a level 2 because they needed some prompting to find the compose button. For the most part, the student self-assessments were the same but one student self reported that she was still at a level 1 for this subtask indicating that she still needed direct instruction to open the compose window.

The student and instructor assessments for subtask *e. send a new email message*, only showed a slight difference, but my observations indicate that this discrepancy is worth noting because there were reoccurring problems with the “send” function during the lessons. Aspects of the “send” subtask that caused uncertainty were that there were two send buttons on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface (see Figure 3.6 ). Another reason that made the send subtask slightly complicated was the fact that after the send button was clicked, a new screen appeared to tell the writer that the message had been sent. This sometimes confused the students as explained above.

Finally, if the writer had forgotten to type a subject into the subject bar while composing a new message, a new screen would appear inquiring if the message should be sent without a subject. In that screen the students had to choose whether to add a subject to their message or simply send the message without a subject. These aspects made the “send” subtask more complex than my lessons had anticipated. The email skills proficiency checklists indicated that although the students’ skills for Email Task 4

improved during the study, however their proficiency levels for this task were not as high as they were for the other tasks.

The students frequently rated themselves lower than I did on the post-teaching email proficiency skills checklists. This indicated to me that some of the students were not completely confident about their email skills. In addition, it is likely that the students did not understand all of the language in the checklists so gave themselves lower proficiency levels than I observed during their performance.

### Post-Teaching Email Proficiency Levels

This section presents the data I gathered from my direct observation of the 16 students who completed the email study, working on the four email tasks in the computer lab after the lessons in the email curriculum had been taught. This section does not discuss the students' self-assessments as I did the previous section.

My observations showed that each of the 16 students who participated in the email study became more skilled in the four basic email tasks as a result of their participation in the lessons. This data is displayed below in Tables 4.2-4.5.

In the left most column of each table, the email task and its subtasks are shown. In the right columns are the three proficiency levels. The numbers in each cell indicate how many students I (the instructor) rated at each proficiency level for the corresponding subtasks. Figures 4.9-4.12 follow each table in order to display these results in a different format. A discussion of the students' performance follows each set of tables and figures.

TABLE 4.2. Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels-Email Task 1

Email Task 1.Access Yahoo!Mail account in the computer lab	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Subtasks</b>			
<b>a. Use Safari browser to access home page</b>			16 students
<b>b. Find Yahoo!Mail link on home page</b>			16 students
<b>c. Remember and accurately type in ID</b>		3 students	13 students
<b>d. Remember and accurately type in password</b>		2 students	14 students

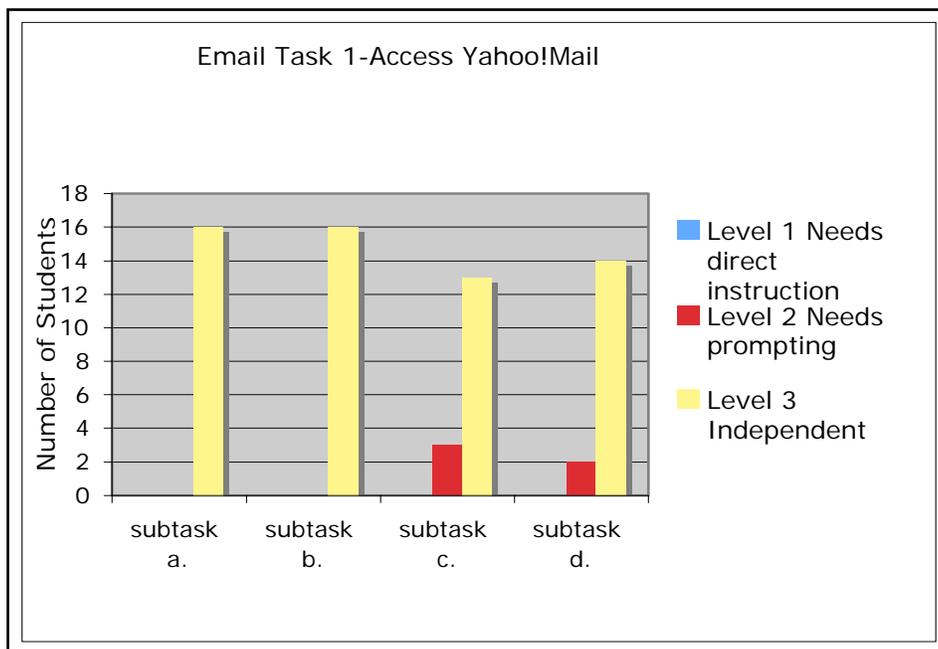


FIGURE 4.9 Instructor Post-Teaching Assessments-Email Task 1

Based on my observations of the students performing Email Task 1 in the computer lab at the end of the five-week study, I determined that sixteen students performed at a level 3 on subtask *a*. because they could use the Safari browser to access the home page independently. My observations also indicated that all sixteen students

were at a level 3 for subtask *b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on home page*, because they were able to do this without assistance. For subtask *c., remember and accurately type in your Yahoo! ID*, thirteen students performed at a level 3 because they could type their ID accurately into the proper field on the sign in interface. Three students performed at a level 2 for subtask *c.* because they needed prompting (pointing or verbal reminders) to type their Yahoo! ID accurately and into the correct field. Common problems the students had with subtask *c.* were misspelling their ID, leaving spaces in their ID or forgetting their ID and having to look it up in their email folder.

For subtask *d. remember and accurately type in your password*, fourteen students performed at level 3 because they could type their password correctly into the proper field. Two students performed at level 2 for this subtask because they had problems remembering their passwords, or typing them accurately and needed verbal assistance. Luckily each student had an email folder where they kept this information because many of them had to look up their IDs and passwords regularly.

TABLE 4.3 Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels- Email Task 2

Email Task 2. Access and read new mail from the Inbox	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Subtasks</b>			
<b>a. Find, click on and open Inbox</b>		3 students	13 students
<b>b. Click on and open new mail</b>		5 students	11 students

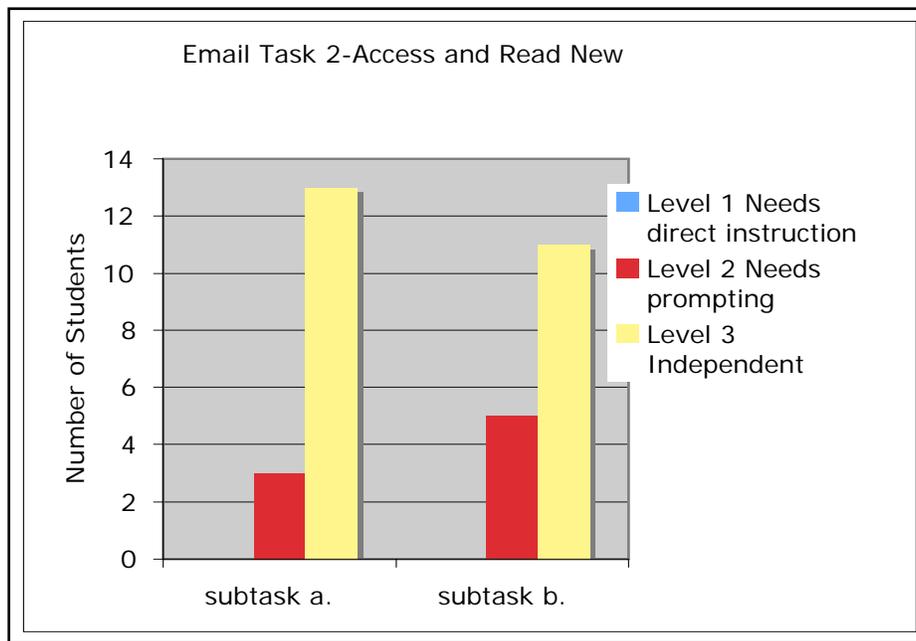


FIGURE 4.10 Instructor Post Teaching Assessments- Email Task 2

Through my observations of the students performing Email Task 2 at the culmination of the lessons I determined that thirteen students performed at a level 3 on subtask *a. find, click on and open the Inbox*, because they could find the Inbox link on the left side of the page and click on it to open their Inbox without assistance. I rated

three students at a level 2 for this subtask because they needed prompting (directional verbal cues) in order to locate the Inbox on the left side of the interface.

Subtask *b. click on and open new mail*, caused some problems for the students. My observations indicated that eleven students performed at a level 3 for this subtask, but five students only performed at a level 2 because they had problems discerning which emails were unread (indicated by bold type) and which had already been read. Throughout the study I was surprised at how difficult it was for the students to recognize the concept of bold and plain text and I tried to explain the differences between them many times during the email lessons.

TABLE 4.4 Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels-Email Task Three

Email Task 3. Reply to message received	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Subtasks</b>			
<b>a. Find and click on reply button</b>		4 students	12 students
<b>b. Write a reply in the text box</b>		2 students	14 students
<b>c. Send the reply</b>		1 student	15 students

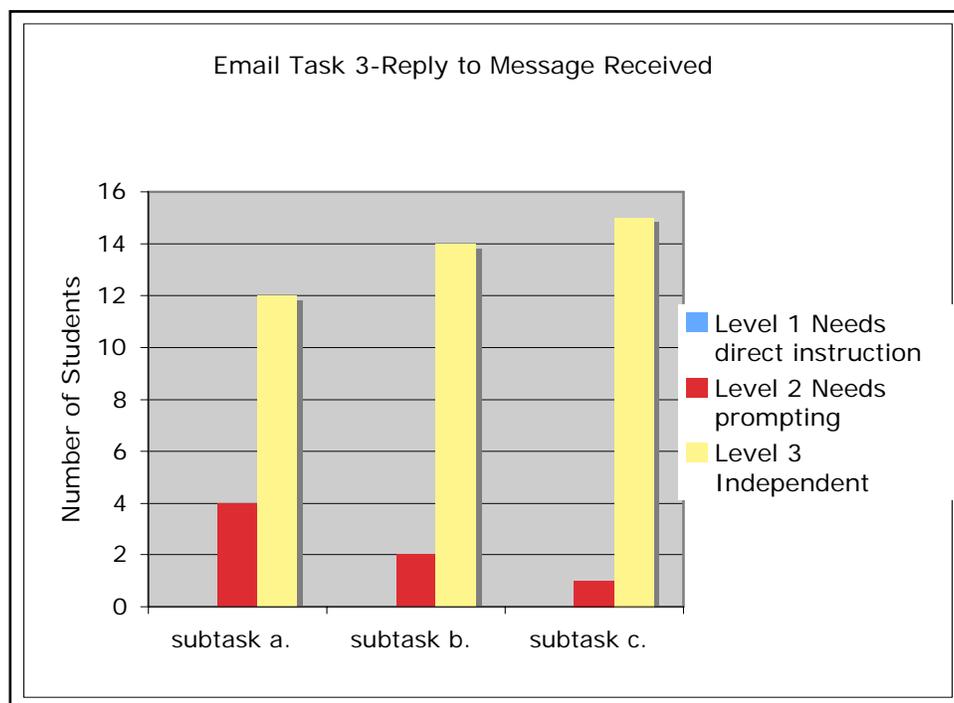


FIGURE 4.11 Instructor Post Teaching Assessments- Email Task 3

Through my observations of students performing Email Task 3 at the end of the study, I determined that twelve students performed at a level 3 on subtask *a. find and click*

on the reply button, because they could locate the reply button and click on it to open the reply window independently. Four students needed pointing or verbal reminders to locate the reply button so I assigned them a level 2 for this subtask. I observed that the small function buttons on the Yahoo!Mail interface were sometimes difficult for the students to find and the uniformity of the function buttons (Yahoo! does not use many icons on the mail interface) did not enhance recognition.

Fourteen students were at a level 3 for subtask *b. write a reply in the text box*, because they could click into the textbox and begin to write without assistance. Two students were at a level 2 for this subtask because they had to be reminded where to click in order to write their reply. Fifteen students could complete subtask *c. send the reply*, at a level 3 because they could locate one of the two send buttons and click on them without assistance. One student performed at a level 2 for this subtask because she could not locate either of the send buttons without verbal directional cues.

TABLE 4.5 Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels-Email Task 4

Email Task 4. Compose and send new email messages	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Subtasks</b>			
<b>a. Click on compose button and open compose window</b>		6 students	10 students
<b>b. Type email address into To bar</b>	1 students	8 students	7 students
<b>c. Type topic into Subject bar</b>	1 students	7 students	8 students
<b>d. Write message in compose text box</b>		6 students	10 students
<b>e. Send new email message</b>		5 students	11 students

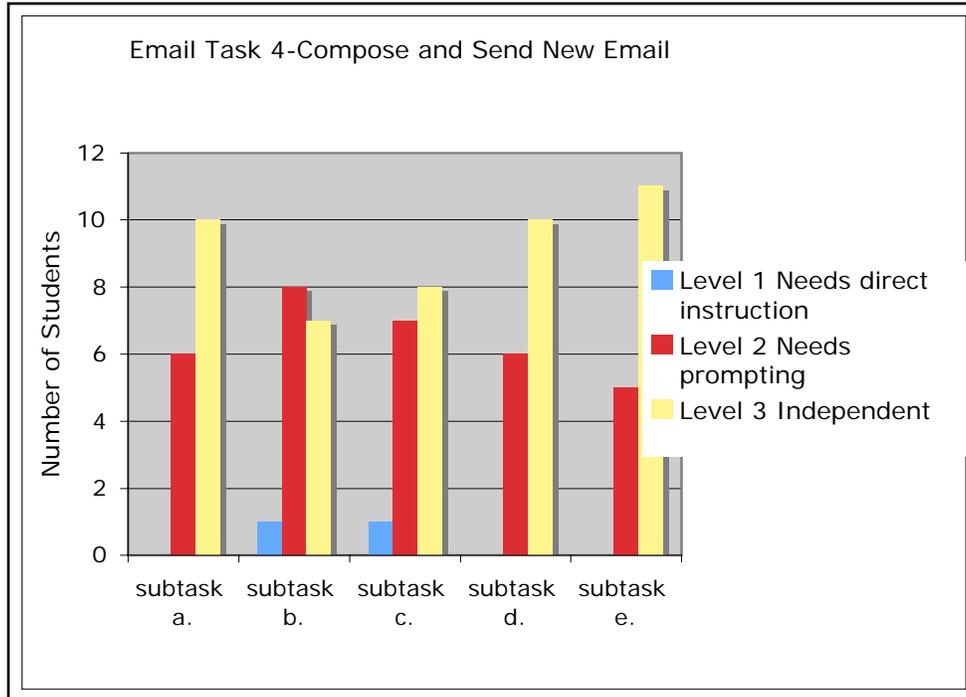


FIGURE 4.12 Email Task 4-Instructor Post Teaching Assessments

My observations of students performing Email Task 4 at the end of the study showed that ten students were at a level 3 for subtask *a. click on the compose button to open the compose window*, because they could find the compose button and click on it to open up the corresponding window without assistance. Six students performed at a level 2 on this subtask because they needed verbal directional reminders to locate the compose button at the top of the interface. Subtask *b. type an email address into "To" bar*, caused a lot of problems for the students. Only seven students could complete this subtask at a level 3. Eight of the students performed at a level 2 on this subtask because they needed reminders to omit spaces in the email recipient's address, they needed reminders for how to type the "@" symbol and they needed reminders how to type the ISP name

(*yahoo.com*) correctly. One student performed at a level 1 for this subtask because she typed the email recipient's real name into the "To" bar and thus indicated that she needed direct instruction in order to learn how to complete the task.

Eight students were at a level 3 and seven students were at a level 2 for subtask *c. type topic into the subject bar*. The purpose of the subject bar was difficult to explain and I had to remind the students to type the topic or title of their email in that field. One student was at a level 1 because she began to type her email message into the subject bar indicating that she needed direct instruction to understand and complete this subtask.

For subtask *d. write message in the compose text box*, ten students performed at a level 3 because they could click into the compose box and begin typing their email message without assistance. Five of the students performed at a level 2 for this subtask because they needed to be reminded where to click and begin typing. For subtask *e. send a new email message*, there was some uncertainty as described under Email Task 3 above. I rated eleven students at level 3 and five students at level 2 for this subtask.

#### Summary of Email Subtask Proficiency Levels

The data shows that the students had the highest proficiency levels for Email Task 1:

*Subtask a. use the Safari browser to access the home page* (sixteen students at level 3)

*Subtask b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the home page* (sixteen students at level 3)

The data shows that the subtasks for which the students had the lowest proficiency levels were Email Task 4:

*Subtask b. type email address into To bar* (seven students at level 3, eight students were at level 2 and one student at level 1)

*Subtask c. type topic into subject bar* (eight students at level 3, seven students at level 2 and one student at level 1)

In order to determine why the students had higher proficiency levels for Email Task 1, subtask *a. use the Safari browser to access the home page*, and *b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the home page*, I analyzed the specific skills needed to successfully complete the subtasks. My analysis revealed that these two subtasks simply involved locating and clicking skills, for subtask *a.* on the recognizable *Safari* icon, and for subtask *b.* on the *Yahoo!Mail* link. There were no fields, typing or spelling involved in these subtasks. The students also had a great deal of practice with these two subtasks because they had to complete them during every email lesson.

The subtasks for which the students exhibited the lowest proficiency levels were Email Task 4, subtasks *b.* and *c.* Subtask *b. type an email address into the "To" bar*, which involved significant typing employing email protocol such as, using the @ character, omission of spaces and accurate spelling. Subtask *c. type a topic into subject bar*, also involved typing into a field and while accurate spelling was not an issue, the term "subject" was a concept that many of the students had difficulty understanding. This could very likely be attributed to the low literacy levels of many of the students.

#### Individual Student Averages for Email Subtasks

I calculated an average score for each of the 16 student participants using my instructor post-teaching proficiency levels for the email subtasks. For each student I added the number of proficiency level 3's, level 2's and level 1's that I had assigned them for the fourteen subtasks in the email skills checklists. After I added the number of

tasks they performed at each level, I divided by 14 (the number of subtasks) in order to calculate an average proficiency level for each student. The students' average proficiency levels ranged from 2 (lowest) to 3 (highest) as seen in Table 4.6 below.

TABLE 4.6 Post-Teaching Average Proficiency Levels

<b>Student</b>	<b>Average Proficiency Level</b>
<b>b.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>c.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>a.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>d.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>f.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>k.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>h.</b>	<b>2.92</b>
<b>e.</b>	<b>2.92</b>
<b>g.</b>	<b>2.85</b>
<b>j.</b>	<b>2.85</b>
<b>i.</b>	<b>2.64</b>
<b>n.</b>	<b>2.57</b>
<b>o.</b>	<b>2.42</b>
<b>p.</b>	<b>2.42</b>
<b>l.</b>	<b>2.35</b>
<b>m.</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Number of Student Emails Sent

At the end of the study it was clear that some of the individual students had higher proficiency levels on the email subtasks than other students and I wanted to investigate if there were other possible reasons for this besides the inherent difficulty of the subtasks as explained above. I wanted to measure the students' participation levels in the lessons, however I could not accurately account for how many class hours each

student had worked on email (some students came to computer open lab to work on email, some were frequently late for class or absent) and I had not kept attendance records for the study.

In order to gauge the participation levels of the students, I decided to find out how many emails each student had sent to the classroom teacher and myself over the duration of the study (the classroom teacher and I had saved all of the student emails we had received in an electronic folder). The number of emails that the classroom teacher and I received from the students varied widely as can be seen in Figure 4.13 below. It is important to remember that the students also exchanged emails among themselves in week four of the email study and a few students were beginning to send email messages to family and friends. These emails were not accounted for in the data.

As Figure 4.13 below shows, the highest number of email messages sent to the classroom teacher and myself by a particular student was 20 messages. The lowest number sent to the classroom teacher and myself by a particular student was 3 email messages.

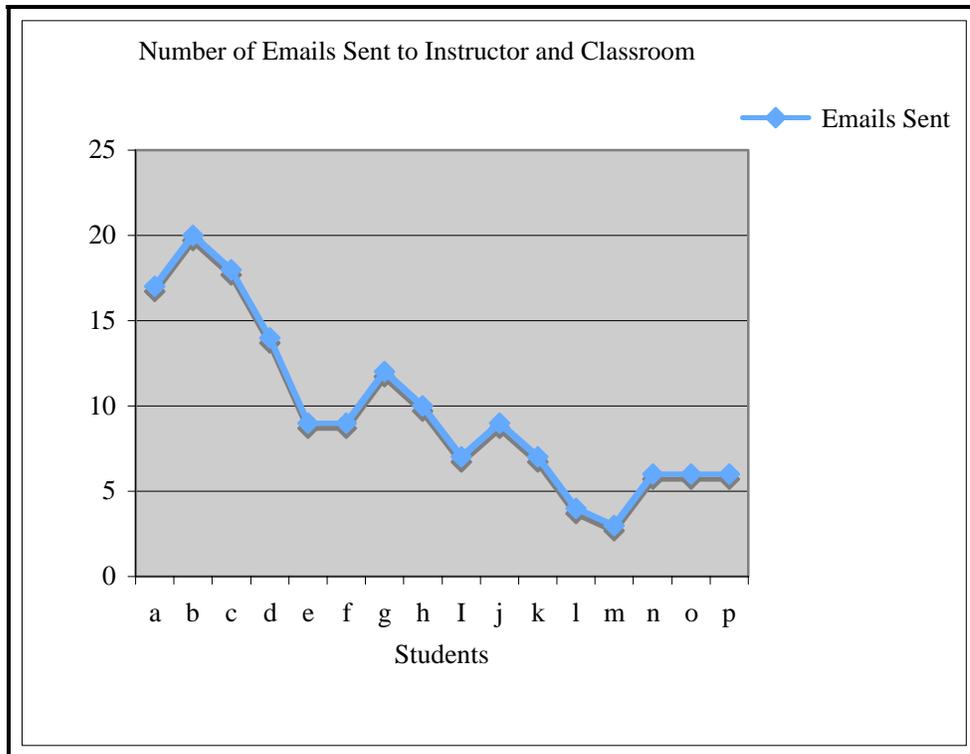


FIGURE 4.13 Number of Emails Sent

In order to find out if there was any correlation between the numbers of email messages sent to average post-teaching proficiency levels, I compared the number of email messages that each student sent to the classroom teacher and myself to the average post-teaching proficiency level that I had calculated for each student. Figure 4.14 below shows the comparison of emails sent to each student's average post-teaching proficiency level.

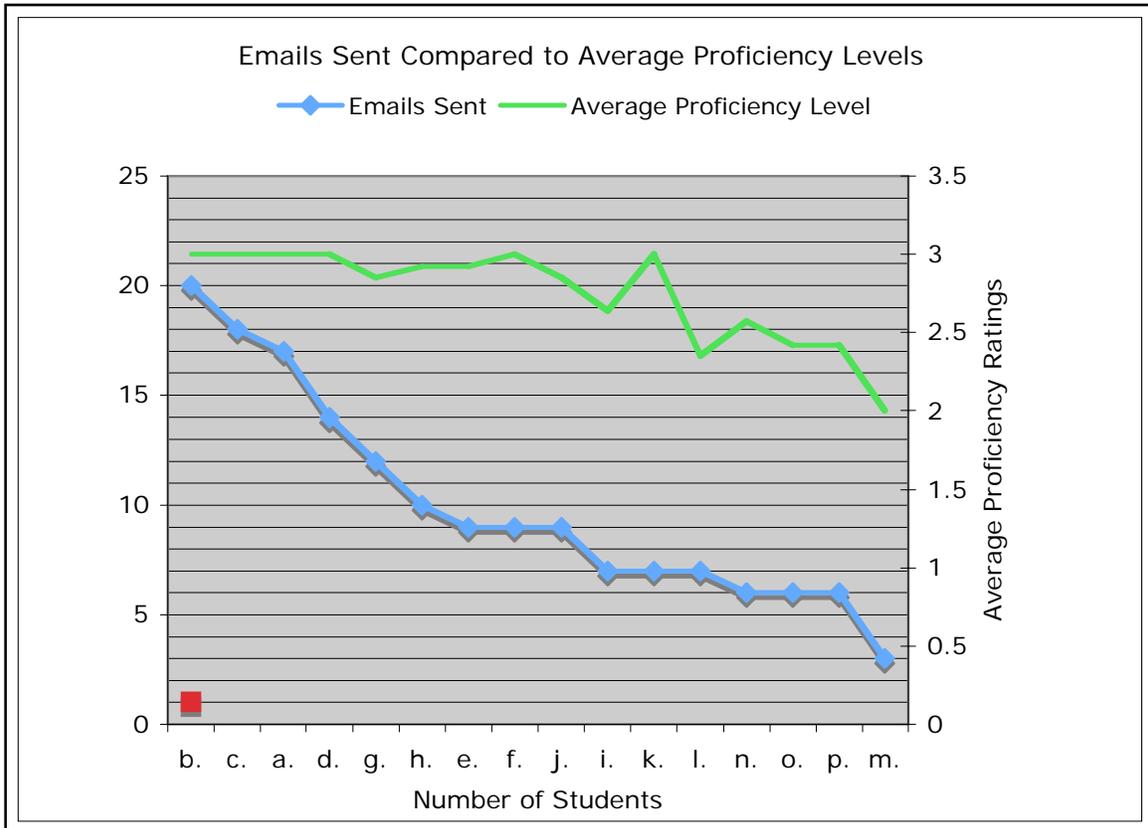


FIGURE 4.14 Emails Sent Compared to Average Proficiency Levels

Figure 4.14 shows that the nine students who sent 9 or more email messages to the classroom teacher and instructor over the course of the study had average post-teaching proficiency levels of 2.7 or higher. The exception was student “k” who had an average post-teaching proficiency level of 3 even though he only sent 7 email messages to the classroom teacher and instructor. The data indicates that the students who spent more time working with email (sent more email messages) had higher post-teaching average proficiency levels than the students who spent less time working with email.

## Chapter Summary

The data that I collected from the pre-teaching and post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists indicated that the students in the class increased their email skills as a result of their participation in the email lessons. All of the students who participated in the lessons increased their email skills during the study but individual students did not attain their email skills at the same rate. Average post study proficiency levels for individual students ranged from 2.0 to 3.

A breakdown and analysis of the email tasks and subtasks indicated that the students as a group had high proficiency levels for some subtasks and low proficiency levels for other subtasks. The students demonstrated the highest levels of proficiency for Email Task 1, Access *Yahoo!Mail* account, subtask *a. use the Safari browser to access the home page*, and subtask *b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the home page*. The students demonstrated the lowest proficiency levels for Email Task 4, Compose and Send New Email Messages, subtask *b. type email address into To bar*, and subtask *c. type topic into subject bar*. I explain how I can use the above findings to modify my email curriculum and instruction in Chapter 5.

The data indicated that those with higher proficiency levels used email with the most frequency. The students who sent more emails to the teacher and instructor during the course of the email study generally had higher average post-teaching proficiency levels for the email subtasks than the students who sent fewer emails. Many of the students were highly engaged in the lessons and were enthusiastic about learning to use email. These students sent the teacher and I many email messages during and outside of

class and therefore had a great deal of practice using their *Yahoo!Mail* accounts. Other students were less enthusiastic about email as the five-week study went on. These students often sent fewer email messages and did not become as proficient as some of their peers.

In the following chapter I discuss the data presented here and speculate on the reasons for my results. I explain how I can use the findings of my study to strengthen and change the curriculum that I developed and tested for this capstone study. I describe how the findings of my email study relate to the email studies done by other English as a Second Language teachers and I illustrate some other positive outcomes of my email study. Finally, I make recommendations for ABE/ESL teachers and suggest areas for further study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The purpose of this capstone study was to investigate strategies for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL learners. Since I could not find a curriculum or guide that ABE/ESL instructors could use to accomplish this task, I designed and tested my own curriculum. During this study I attempted to find out if the strategies that I used in the curriculum were effective. I specifically wanted to see if the students could learn to carry out the following four email tasks independently: access email accounts, read incoming mail, reply to email received, and compose and send new email messages after five weeks (approximately 10 hours) of email instruction. In order to test the effectiveness of my email curriculum, I implemented it with a low intermediate CASAS Level 3 class in an ABE/ESL program.

In this chapter, I summarize the results of my study and in doing so I will consider the reasons for the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the strategies that I used in my email curriculum. I describe how I plan to use the findings of this study to strengthen and adapt my email curriculum in order to make it more effective for Adult Basic English language learners. I illustrate some other positive outcomes of my email study and I explain how the findings of my email study relate to the email studies done by other English as a Second Language teachers. Finally, I make recommendations for ABE/ESL

teachers about using email with adult English language learners and suggest areas for further study of this important topic.

### The Effectiveness of the Email Curriculum

The findings from this study suggest that the strategies that I employed in my email curriculum were somewhat successful for teaching basic email skills to ABE/ESL students. Before the lessons in my curriculum began, most of the students had never used email before so they were at a proficiency level 1 (needs direct instruction) for all of the subtasks on the pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklist. The students' proficiency levels on the post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists (both student self-assessment and instructor assessment) were significantly higher than they were on the pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklists. This strongly suggested that the students' email skills had improved through their participation in the lessons.

Figure 5.1 below shows the average post-teaching email proficiency that I calculated for the participants after the lessons in the email curriculum had been taught as explained in Chapter 4.

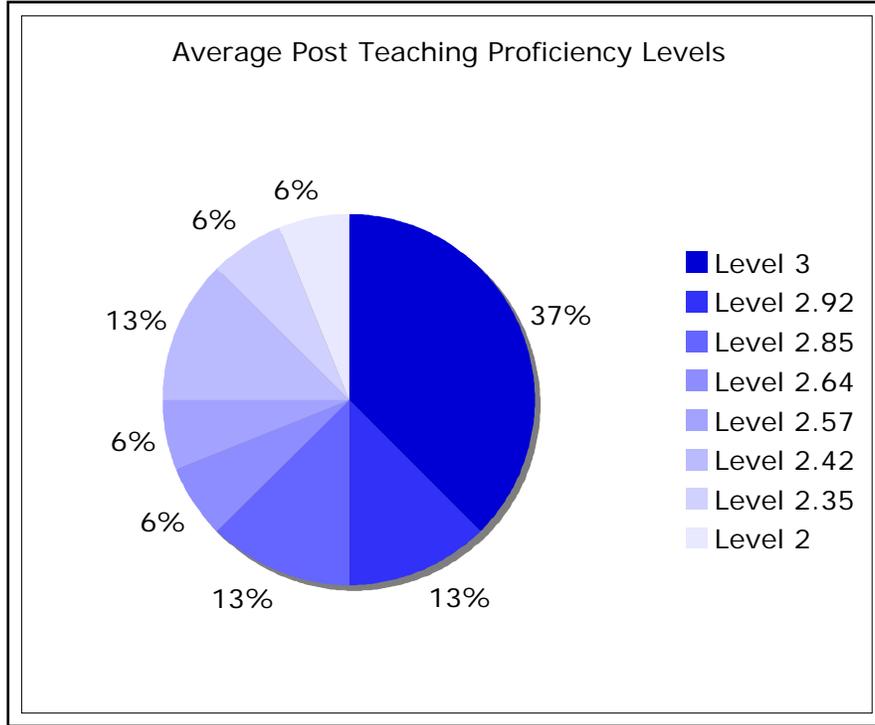


FIGURE 5.1 Average Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels

As Figure 5.1 illustrates, at the end of the email study half the class (8 out of 16 students) had average post-teaching email proficiency levels of 2.92 or higher on a scale from 1-3. Three quarters of the class (12 out of 16 students) had average post-teaching email proficiency levels of 2.57 or above.

#### Email Task Proficiency Levels

The data from the post-teaching email skills proficiency checklists indicated that the students performed better on some email tasks and subtasks than they did on others. Table 5.1 below highlights the email tasks and subtasks with the highest and lowest proficiency levels.

TABLE 5.1 Email Tasks and Subtasks with the Highest and Lowest Proficiency Levels

Highest Proficiency Levels	Lowest Proficiency Levels
Email Task 1	Email Task 4
<i>Subtask a. use the Safari browser to access the home page</i>	<i>Subtask b. type an email address into “To” bar</i>
<i>Subtask b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the home page</i>	<i>Subtask c. type a topic into “Subject” bar</i>

Table 5.1 shows that the students demonstrated the highest levels of proficiency for Email Task 1, Access Yahoo!Mail account, subtask *a. use the Safari browser to access the home page*, and subtask *b. find the Yahoo!Mail link on the home page*. The students demonstrated the lowest proficiency levels for Email Task 4, Compose and Send New Email Messages, subtask *b. type email address into To bar*, and subtask *c. type topic into subject bar*.

#### Adapting the Email Curriculum

Analysis of how the students performed on the four basic email tasks and their requisite subtasks helped me to determine which lessons in my email curriculum were effective and which needed to be adapted regarding content, time or methods. Below I use the four basic email tasks as an outline to describe the ways I can adapt the lessons in my email curriculum to meet the needs of adult English language learners such as the group that participated in this study.

Email Task 1- Access Yahoo!Mail in the computer lab. During the preliminary lessons and lessons one and two, I think it is necessary to spend more time exploring the components of email ID’s and addresses such as user names, the “@” symbol, and ISP’s because these subtasks were consistently difficult for the students. It would be beneficial

to bring keyboards into the classroom so that students could practice finding the @ character and the period in *.com*. Since recognizing the difference between an email address, user name, password and ISP's was often a problem, I could create card-sorting activities where students work with a partner or small group to sort and categorize these items. It would also be helpful to take more time to talk about passwords by relating this idea to concepts that the students may already be familiar with such as PIN numbers.

Email Task 2- Access and read new mail from the Inbox. During lesson three it would be valuable to have the students practice differentiating between bold and plain text. One way might be to give each student a paragraph that in which are embedded some bolded words. I could ask the students to find and circle the words in bold and compare their findings with a partner. They could also work with a partner to look for bolded words in a classroom textbook.

Email Task 3- Reply to message received. Throughout the lessons it would be helpful to review the functions of the various buttons on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface. The compose, reply and send buttons were often difficult for the students to differentiate because *Yahoo!Mail* does not use many icons on the email interface and the uniform size and color of the compose, reply and send buttons did not enhance recognition.

Email Task 4-Compose new email messages. Email programs are created based on terms that English speakers are familiar with from other milieus and native English speakers usually understand the terms such as "compose", "Inbox", or "Cc" because they have been commonly used in schools and places of business. Many ABE/ESL students are not familiar with school and business terminology in any language. Therefore it would be useful try to make some connections between the terminology in the email

program to what the students may already know. I could connect the term “subject” as in *subject bar* to concepts the students might be familiar with such as the title of a story or school subjects. The term “compose” could be related to the noun “composition” which might be a term students are familiar with.

Student self-assessments. When the study began and I was helping the students complete their pre-teaching email skills proficiency checklists, I was not sure that the process was going to be helpful. Even though I tried to keep the language on checklists and proficiency level descriptors as simple as possible, these documents were somewhat intimidating for the students to fill out. Completing the post-teaching checklists was an easier task because after instruction the students had a much better grasp on the language in the checklists and a deeper understanding of the tasks and subtasks described there. Despite the problems incurred using the student email skills proficiency checklists, I liked the idea of adult students being accountable for measuring and assessing their own learning and in the future I would have the students use a skills checklist throughout the lessons so they could keep track of their progress.

Other ideas. The email curriculum could be expanded to provide further opportunities for the students to use their email accounts. One strategy for this could be to set up a key pals exchange within the class, with another ABE/ESL class or with a mentor. Another method would be to create authentic ways to integrate email into other areas of the ABE/ESL curriculum such as modeled by Susan Gaer (1998) at the Santa Ana Community College. Gaer invites her students send her their class projects and assignments via email and she publishes their work online on her Student Projects Page for other students to read.

### Participation Levels Compared to Average Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels

Table 5.2 below compares each student's average post-teaching email proficiency level to the number of email messages they had sent to the classroom teacher and myself over the course of the study.

TABLE 5.2 Average Post-Teaching Proficiency Levels Compared to Number of Email Messages Sent

Student	Average Proficiency Level	Number of emails sent
b.	3	20
c.	3	18
a.	3	17
d.	3	14
g.	2.85	12
h.	2.92	10
e.	2.92	9
f.	3	9
j.	2.85	9
i.	2.64	7
k.	3	7
l.	2.35	7
n.	2.57	6
o.	2.42	6
p.	2.42	6
m.	2	3

The data indicates that the students with higher post-teaching proficiency levels used email with the most frequency. The students who sent more emails to the teacher and instructor during the course of the email study (had higher participation levels) generally had higher average post-teaching proficiency levels for the email subtasks than the students who sent fewer emails.

### Other Positive Outcomes Related to the Email Study

Enhanced student-teacher relationships. Other adult ESL educators have found that using email in the second language classroom enhanced student teacher relationships and my email study confirmed those (Barton, 2004, Liu, 1998, and Kung, 2002). In this study the participating teacher and I developed more meaningful relationships with the students through the email messages that we exchanged during the email lessons and we found that writing email messages to gave us an opportunity to get to know the students on a much more personal level. By communicating with the students through email, the teacher and I learned more about the students' families, jobs, hobbies and past histories. The classroom teacher and I found that we were able to engage in personal conversations with the students because we knew more about them. Some students even began to ask us questions about ourselves. The email study definitely opened up more opportunities for authentic use of oral and written English between teachers and students.

Student enjoyment. The students frequently expressed their appreciation for having an opportunity to learn about email. The day that we finished getting everyone in the class their personal email account, the class erupted in spontaneous cheers and applause. Many students thanked me verbally for helping them to get an email account. Other studies have recognized that using email can give students a sense of power and autonomy (Rosen, 1996) and many of the students in this group appeared very proud to have email. Student email messages indicate that participants were genuinely happy that they were learning to use email. Below are some of the students' comments about email as taken directly from emails we received.

Student B- *“thanks for your questions and teaches”*

Student C- *“thank you for help me. I am happy for wrote me email and continue”*

Student E-*“Susan Ryan I gared you Emeil send for me thankyou”*

Student H- *“thank you susan I like your email so I want answer your question...”*

Student G- *“I received your letter that you wrote to me I was very happy, then.”*

Student D-*“susan ryan think you for ask about my job.”*

Student P-*“thanks Teache SuSan I am happy I am learn.”*

### Recommendations for ABE/ESL Teachers

This study suggests that Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language educators can teach email skills to their learners but it takes time, planning and a deep understanding of the email application that one plans to use. ABE/ESL instructors who want to teach and use email with their students must be willing to spend significant time on this type of curriculum if they want their students to succeed (Fox, 1998; Roberts, 2005; Nagel 1999). The classroom teacher and I were both very committed to the email study and we both spent a great deal of time composing, reading and responding to student emails over the course of the five-week study.

When teaching about email to adult English language learners the lessons need to be well planned and include both instructivist and constructivist types of instruction. Other adult second language instructors have found that students need to learn about the

functions of the email software program and how they work through both direct instruction and adequate time to practice their skills (Kung, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Gaer, 1998) and my experiences with this group of adult English language learners bear this out.

Another key component of effective email instruction is teacher knowledge of the software and it is integral that teachers who plan to teach email skills to their adult ESL students have a solid knowledge of the email application they plan to use (Carter & Titzel, 2003). The classroom teacher and I both opened our own *Yahoo!Mail* accounts in anticipation of using this particular email application with the students and we practiced using it for several weeks before we began the lessons in the study. Teachers also need to keep in mind that *Yahoo!* and other email service providers are continually updating their applications and that the email interface may undergo some changes during the course of instruction.

#### Using Email in the ABE/ESL Classroom-Ideas for Future Studies

Computer literacy skills have become essential life skills and it is critical for adult ESL students to learn to use email and other Internet based resources that will assist them in their lives as students, parents and citizens (Warschauer, 1998, 2003; Cummins, 2000). As educators it is our responsibility to offer the resources and opportunities now available on the Internet to our students (Terrill, 2000; Le Loup and Ponterio 2000; Liu, 1998).

By teaching basic email skills in the ABE/ ESL classroom, educators have an opportunity to help their students develop a basic computer literacy skill that is becoming

an increasingly important method for communicating and accessing information in our society.

There are many ways that teachers can investigate strategies for using email in the ABE/ESL classroom. One interesting future study might be to find out if student writing improves through using email in the classroom. Another study might investigate whether ABE/ESL students who learn to use email in the classroom go on to transfer their online skills to other areas of the Internet. Another study might be to compare some free web based email programs in order to determine which applications would work best for ABE/ESL learners. *Yahoo!Mail* may not be the best email application to use with ABE/ESL students but I used it because it was easily accessible through my program's Adult Basic Education Home Page.

### Major Conclusions of This Capstone Study

This capstone study indicated that that the strategies that I employed in my email curriculum were somewhat successful for teaching basic email skills to this group of ABE/ESL learners. Each lesson began with explicit teaching about the processes of email and was followed by constructivist-based activities where students practiced what they learned, and I suggest that this instructivist/constructivist paradigm as suggested by Rosen (1998) helped the students to succeed. Although it was difficult to see the students struggle with the email tasks while working on the computers during the constructivist parts of each lesson, I tried to hold back and observe their problem-solving skills instead of jumping in to save them.

Students had the highest proficiency levels for Email Task 1-Access email account, followed by Email Task 3-Reply to email received and Email Task 2-Read new mail from the Inbox. My observations indicate that the reasons for student success with these tasks included low difficulty level of the subtasks such as clicking and icon recognition versus typing information into fields, and high frequency of practice for these tasks. The email task students had the lowest proficiency levels for was Email Task 4- Composing and sending new mail. I suggest that this task was most challenging for the students because of the increased difficulty of the subtasks including accurately typing information into the correct fields, and the low frequency of practice for this task since it was taught towards the end of the curriculum.

The students with higher average email proficiency levels generally sent more email messages to the teacher and instructor during the course of the study. Students who sent nine or more email messages to the teacher and instructor generally had higher average post-teaching email proficiency levels than those who sent fewer than nine email messages. It would be difficult for me to speculate on exactly why some students sent more email messages than others. Perhaps they were responsive to learning about email because they knew that they could use email to communicate with other people in their lives such as friends and family members. Perhaps they were simply enjoying the email correspondence we had during our class sessions. It is also possible that they anticipated a need to be familiar with this communication tool in order to prepare for their future here in the U.S.

This fall, five months after the email study was completed, many of the students who participated in the study have returned to our program and several of them are still

using their email accounts to write messages or transact business on the Internet. One of the students recently came in to the computer lab to see if I could help her purchase some airline tickets online. We used the *Yahoo!Travel* site to secure a good price, and she purchased her tickets over the Internet, a task she could not have completed without an email address. Another student came in to complete an online job application for a position at a local hospital. An email address was required to submit the application so we got out her email folder, found her email address, entered it, and sent the application off to the employer. A third student who participated in the email study has moved to another school, but he has been using email to correspond with the classroom teacher and myself on a weekly basis.

I have discussed using email with ABE/ESL students with many other ABE/ESL instructors during the course of this capstone project and their responses to teaching email skills to this population have been mixed. Some instructors have told me that we should be focusing on teaching keyboarding and word-processing skills when we use computers with our ABE/ESL students. Others instructors prefer to use language-learning software such as *The Rosetta Stone* in which students can work on their reading, listening, speaking and writing skills in a controlled electronic environment. My personal philosophy about how to use computers in the ABE/ESL classroom is still evolving, but I strongly believe that programs that serve ABE/ESL students need to provide opportunities for learning about Internet-based resources for communication and information and learning to use email is a great place to start.

## APPENDIX A-CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ESL

# CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ESL

Scale Scores	CASAS Level	Descriptors
250	<b>E</b>	<b>Proficient Skills</b> SPL 8** Listening/Speaking: Can participate effectively in social and familiar work situations; can understand and participate in practical and social conversations and in technical discussions in own field. Reading/Writing: Can handle most reading and writing tasks related to life roles; can read and interpret most non-simplified materials; can interpret routine charts, graphs, and labels; fill out medical information forms and job applications. Employability: Can meet work demands with confidence, interact with the public, and follow written instructions in work manuals.
245		<b>Adult Secondary</b> SPL 7 Listening/Speaking: Can function independently in survival and social and work situations; can clarify general meaning and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret non-simplified materials on everyday subjects; can interpret routine charts, graphs, and labels; fill out medical information forms and job applications; and write an accident or incident report. Employability: Understands routine work-related conversations. Can handle work that involves following oral and simple written instructions and interact with the public. Can perform reading and writing tasks, such as most logs, reports, and forms, with reasonable accuracy to meet work needs.
240	<b>D</b>	<b>Advanced ESL</b> SPL 6 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy most survival needs and social demands. Has some ability to understand and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics. Can participate in conversations on a variety of topics. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simplified and some non-simplified materials on familiar topics. Can interpret simple charts, graphs, and labels; interpret a payroll stub; and complete a simple order form; fill out medical information forms and job applications. Can write short personal notes and letters and make simple log entries. Employability: Can handle jobs and job training situations that involve following oral and simple written instructions and multi-step diagrams and limited public contact. Can read a simple employee handbook. Persons at the upper end of this score range are able to begin GED preparation.
235		<b>High Intermediate ESL</b> SPL 5 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy basic survival needs and limited social demands; can follow oral directions in familiar contexts. Has limited ability to understand on the telephone. Understands learned phrases easily and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simplified and some authentic material on familiar subjects. Can write messages or notes related to basic needs. Can fill out basic medical forms and job applications. Employability: Can handle jobs and/or training that involve following basic oral and written instructions and diagrams if they can be clarified orally.
230	<b>C</b>	<b>Low Intermediate ESL</b> SPL 4 Listening/Speaking: Can satisfy basic survival needs and very routine social demands. Understands simple learned phrases easily and some new simple phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition. Reading/Writing: Can read and interpret simple material on familiar topics. Able to read and interpret simple directions, schedules, signs, maps, and menus. Can fill out forms requiring basic personal information and write short, simple notes and messages based on familiar situations. Employability: Can handle entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral and written communication but in which tasks can also be demonstrated and/or clarified orally.
225		<b>High Beginning ESL</b> SPL 3 Listening/Speaking: Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs; may have some simple oral communication abilities using basic learned phrases and sentences. Reading/Writing: Reads and writes letters and numbers and a limited number of basic sight words and simple phrases related to immediate needs. Can write basic personal information on simplified forms. Employability: Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks can be demonstrated.
220	<b>B</b>	<b>Low Beginning ESL</b> SPL 2 Listening/Speaking: Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs; asks and responds to basic learned phrases spoken slowly and repeated often. Reading/Writing: Recognizes and writes letters and numbers and reads and understands common sight words. Can write own name and address. Employability: Can handle only routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated.
215		<b>Beginning Literacy/Pre-Beginning ESL</b> SPL 0-1 Listening/Speaking: Functions minimally, if at all, in English. Communicates only through gestures and a few isolated words. Reading/Writing: May not be literate in any language. Employability: Can handle very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated. Employment choices would be extremely limited.
210	<b>A</b>	
205		
200		
190		
180		
150		

This chart provides general skill descriptors by level. Level descriptors for reading, math, and listening correspond to scaled scores on tests in those specific skill areas.

APPENDIX B-Email Curriculum for Adult Basic Education English as a Second  
Language Learners

## **Email Curriculum for ABE/ESL Learners**

### Teaching Philosophy for the Email Curriculum

It is my intent that the lessons in this curriculum progress from teacher directed to student centered as the students begin to understand the workings of email. The activities are sequenced students so that can build on the skills they learned in the previous lessons. By the time they get to lessons eight and nine it is hoped that the students can complete the email tasks independently. Each lesson begins with a discussion about the lesson content and the tasks that the students will be expected to carry out that session. These discussions will give the students an opportunity to ask any developing questions they may have about using email.

### **The Teacher and the Instructor**

In the lessons there are two “teachers”. For the purpose of this capstone the teachers be denoted as follows:

The **instructor** is the computer lab teacher (myself).

The **teacher** is the participating classroom teacher.

*Logistics will be written at the bottom of each lesson in italics.*

## **Preliminary Lessons-Signing up for free email accounts**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn that free email accounts are available from Yahoo!
2. Students will learn how to fill out online forms in order to sign up for a free email account.

### Learning Activities

#### P.1 Discussion about the Email Study Project

The instructor will explain that the class will be starting the email study during the next few days. She will inform the students that before the study begins, everyone needs to get a free email account and that she and the teacher will make sure everyone gets an account.

#### P.2 Sign-Up for Email Accounts

The instructor and the classroom teacher will help each participating student sign up for a free email account with Yahoo! Mail. This may take a few sessions but it can also be done with students outside of class in the days prior to the start of the email instruction.

### **Logistics**

*Each student should print 2 copies of his or her email account information. They will keep one copy and the Instructor will put the other one in an email folder.*

*The Instructor will add each student email address into her email address book and print a class list of email addresses for easy reference.*

## **Lesson 1- Introduction to Email**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand that we can use the Internet to send electronic mail anywhere in the world.
2. Students will be able to state some of the benefits of using email.
3. Students will understand what the components of an email address mean.
4. Students will recognize the key vocabulary needed to navigate the Yahoo! Mail interface.

### Learning Activities

#### 1.1 Pair and trio discussion about email

Students will work in pairs or trios to discuss the following questions:

What is email? What does the “e” in email stand for? How does email work? What do we need to use email? The questions will be typed and given to each pair or trio to discuss.

Student pairs will report out their ideas about the questions and the instructor will write their ideas on the overhead for everyone to see.

The Instructor will read all of the ideas aloud as she writes them.

The Instructor will verify true ideas about email and explain unknowns.

The Instructor will ask if the students have any other questions about email.

## 1.2 Powerpoint presentation on email

The Instructor will give a brief *Powerpoint* presentation describing the components of email.

## 1.3 Email Concept Introduction

The following terms will be used throughout the curriculum.

1. Email address
2. Password
3. ID
4. Inbox
5. Reply
6. Send
7. Compose
8. To
10. Subject
11. Sign in
12. @
13. .com
14. Inbox

The Instructor will ask the students which terms they are familiar with and encourage them to explain what they know. These email concepts will be posted in the classroom for the duration of the study. The Instructor will use screen shots of the *Yahoo! Mail* interface during each lesson in order to illustrate these concepts.

## **Lesson 2- Accessing Email Accounts in the Computer Lab**

### Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to find *Yahoo!Mail* from the Applications screen using the Safari browser and the *Yahoo!Mail* link.
2. Students will be able to sign in to their email accounts using their user ID and password.

### Learning Activities

#### 2. 1 Discussion and assignment of the email task

Students will be told that today they will “sign on” to their email accounts in the computer lab. They will use their user ID’s and passwords to access their personal *Yahoo!Mail* account.

#### 2. 2 User ID and password review

In the classroom, the students will use their email folders. They will take out the document they printed in the preliminary lesson that contains their email address, user ID and password. Students will read over this document with a partner.

### 2.3 Email concept review

The Instructor will use overhead screen shots of *Yahoo!Mail* interface in order to illustrate the email concepts that the class will focus on today.

### 2.4 Using email in the computer lab

Students will go to the computer lab to complete the following tasks:

1. Use the Safari browser access the home page
2. Click on the *Yahoo!Mail* link
3. Accurately type their user ID in the appropriate field
4. Accurately type their password in the appropriate field
5. Access their personal email account

The above steps will be typed on paper and distributed to each student as a guide.

### *Logistics*

*After this lesson the Instructor should send a group email to the class. In her email she should ask them a few specific questions about themselves. In the next lesson students will be going to the Inbox and reading and replying to the mail the Instructor has sent them. It is easy for the Instructor or Teacher to send out a group email to the class every couple of days to make sure they have one or two items in their Inbox to read.*

## **Lesson 3-Read and Reply to Email Received From the Instructor**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to access their email accounts using their user ID and password with minimal assistance from the instructor and teacher.
2. Students will be able to go to the Inbox and open the mail from the Instructor.
3. Students will be able to open and read the mail the Instructor has sent them.
4. Students will be able to write and send a simple reply to the Instructor.

### Learning Activities

#### 3. 1 Discussion and assignment of the email task

The students will be told that the task today is access their email account and go to the Inbox. Then they will click on and read the mail sent by the Instructor. After they have read their mail they will write and send a reply to the Instructor.

#### 3. 2 Read and reply to email received

In the computer lab students will sign in and access their email account. They will go to the Inbox and read the email from the Instructor. Students will write and send a reply to the Instructor.

*Logistics-The teacher should send a group email to the class because they will be accessing the Inbox and reading mail from her during the next lesson.*

## **Lesson 4-Read and Reply to Email Received From Classroom Teacher**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to access their email accounts using their user ID and password with minimal assistance.
2. Students will be able to find the Inbox and open the mail the Teacher has sent .
3. Students will be able to read the mail the Teacher has sent them.
4. The students will be able to write and send a reply to the Teacher.

### Learning Activities

#### 4. 1 Discussion and assignment of the email task

The students will be told that the task today is to access their email account and find the Inbox. They will read the mail sent by the teacher and write and send her a reply. The students will be advised that the instructor and the teacher want them to try and complete this task with less help than they received last week. Students will be encouraged to help one another complete the task.

#### 4. 2 Read and reply to email received

In the computer lab students will access their email account and sign in. They will go to the Inbox, click on and read the email from their teacher. Students will write a reply to the questions asked in the email they received and send their reply.

## **Lesson 5- Composing New Email Messages**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn to use the compose feature of *Yahoo!Mail*.
2. Students will learn how to type a recipient's email address into the TO bar.
3. Students will learn to choose and type a topic into the Subject bar.
4. Students will compose and send a simple email message to the Instructor

### Learning Activities

#### 5.1 Discussion and assignment of email task

Students will be told that today they will compose a new email message and send it to the Instructor. They will be advised that they need to use the TO bar and the Subject bar correctly for this task.

#### 5.2 Learning to compose new email messages

The instructor will explain that when you want to write a new message in *Yahoo!Mail* you need to click on the compose button. The Instructor will use screen shots of the compose page to illustrate where the compose button is located.

#### 5.3 Learning to type an email address into the TO bar.

The instructor will display her email address and explain the different components including: user name, @ symbol and the service provider (ISP) and how to type an email address in the TO bar. The instructor will use an overhead screenshot of the *Yahoo!Mail* compose page to model how to write the recipient's email address into the TO bar.

#### 5.4 Learning to type a subject item into the Subject bar

The instructor will also model what items are appropriate to type into the Subject bar using an overhead screen shot of the compose page.

#### 5.5 Learning how to write in the compose text box

The instructor will use an overhead screen shot of the compose page on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface to model how to write a new message in the compose text box.

#### 5.5 Composing and sending new email messages

Students will find the compose button and use it to access the compose page. They will type the instructor's email address into the TO bar. They will write an appropriate subject item into the Subject bar. They will compose an email message in the text box and send the message to the instructor.

#### **Logistics**

*The instructor will provide each student with a paper strip that contains her email address that they can use and keep in their email folder (also one with the teacher's email address).*

## **Lesson 6- Composing Email Messages to the Teacher**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand how to use the compose feature of *Yahoo! Mail*.
2. Students will understand how to type a recipient's email address into the TO bar.
3. Students will understand how to choose and type a topic into the Subject bar.
4. Students will understand how to compose and send a new email message to the teacher.

### Learning Activities

#### 6. 1 Class discussion and assignment of the email task

The students will be told that the task today is to compose and send a new email message to the classroom teacher. The students will be advised that the instructor and the teacher want them to try and complete this task with less help than they received last week but they will be encouraged to work together to complete the task.

#### 6. 2 Review functions of the TO bar

The instructor will use an overhead screen shot of the compose page on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface to review how to write a recipient's name into the TO bar.

### 6.3 Review functions of the Subject bar

The instructor will use an overhead screen shot of the compose page on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface to review how to write an appropriate subject item in the Subject bar.

### 6.4 Review how to write in the compose text box

The instructor will use an overhead screen shot of the compose page on the *Yahoo!Mail* interface to review how to write model how to write a new message in the compose text box.

### 6.5 Composing and sending new email messages

In the computer lab students will use the compose button to access the compose screen. They will write the teacher's email address into the TO bar and a topic into the Subject bar. They will compose an email message in the text box and send the message to the teacher.

## **Logistics**

*The students should have a paper strip containing the teacher's email address in their email folders.*

## **Lesson 7-Writing Email to a Classmate**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand how to compose and send a new email with minimal assistance.
2. Students will use the TO bar and the Subject bar with minimal assistance.
3. Students will be able to write a new email message in the compose textbox and send it with minimal assistance.

### Learning Activities

#### 7.1 Class discussion and assignment of the email task

The students will be informed that today's email task is to compose and send a new email message to a classmate. Students will be advised that they should think of 2-3 questions they would like to ask the classmate in the email message. The students will be advised that they should try to complete this task with significantly less help than they received during the last lesson. The email addresses of classmates will be typed out on strips and passed out to each student.

#### 7.2 Review

Before the students begin the task the instructor will use an overhead transparency of the compose screen shot to briefly review the functions of the TO bar, the Subject bar and the compose text box.

### 7.3 Composing a new email message to a classmate

In the computer lab students will use the compose button to access the compose screen. They will write a classmate's email address into the TO bar and an appropriate item into the Subject bar. They will compose a new email message to a classmate asking the classmate 2-3 questions about themselves. Students will send the new message.

#### **Logistics**

*The Instructor will make paper strips containing the email addresses of the students to pass out. Alternatively, students can write their email addresses on strips of paper to pass out.*

*Students who finish the task quickly can choose to email someone else.*

## **Lesson 8-Reply to Email From Class Partner**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to access the Inbox and open the mail their classmate has sent them with minimal assistance from the instructors.
2. Students will be able to read the mail their classmate has sent them (2-3 questions).
3. The students will be able to write and send a reply to the email they received from their classmate with minimal assistance from the instructors.

### Learning Activities

8.1 Students will be informed that today they will go to their Inbox and account and read and reply to the mail they received from their classmate.

8.2 Read and reply to email received from classmate

In the computer lab students will go to the Inbox and read the email they received from their classmate. Students will write a reply to the questions asked in the email and send their reply.

*Logistics-The instructor should send everyone an email message in order to prepare for the upcoming evaluation lesson.*

## **Lessons 9 and 10- Instructor Evaluation of Student Email Skills**

### Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to access their personal *Yahoo!Mail* account with out assistance.
2. Students will be able to access and read new mail from the Inbox without assistance.
3. Students will be able to reply to email messages received without assistance.
4. Students will be able to compose new and send new email messages without assistance.

### Assessment Activities

#### 9.1 Discussion and assignment of tasks

The students will be informed that today the instructor is going to assess their email skills. They will be informed that they will reply to an email message the instructor has sent them. Then they will compose and send a new email message to a person of their choice. They will be reminded that instructor will be watching them as they complete their email tasks today and she will be completing an email skills proficiency checklist on each student.

9.2 Assessment task 1 (covers skills 1-4 in the email skills proficiency checklist)

- Students will access their email accounts
- Students will go to the Inbox and open the mail the Instructor has sent them.
- Students will read the mail the Instructor has sent them.
- The students will reply and send a simple reply to the Instructor.

9.3 Assessment task 2 (covers tasks 4-8 in the email skills proficiency checklist)

- Students will access their email accounts
- Students will choose a person to compose and send a new email message to.
- Students will use the TO bar and the Subject bar correctly.
- Students will compose a new message in the textbox and send a new email message to someone.

*Logistics- The evaluation lessons will most likely take two class periods.*

## APPENDIX C-Participant Consent Letter

March 11, 2005

Dear Pratt ESL Student,

I am a graduate student at Hamline University where I am working on my master's degree in Adult ESL Education. This spring I will be conducting a research study to see what adult English language students learn when they participate in a five-week email unit.

I would like you to participate in the five-week email unit and research study. During the study I will be teaching students how to get an email account and how to use email. Your participation will involve filling out two checklists asking you what you know about email. You will be asked to fill out one checklist at the beginning of the study and you will be asked to fill out a second checklist at the end of the study. I will also complete two email checklists for each student. I will keep copies of the email you send to me.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you participate you will help me and other teachers learn how email can be used to help adult ESL students learn English. The email study poses no risk to you. You may withdraw at any time and it will not affect your treatment in the class or your grade.

The checklists that you fill out are anonymous and I will not use student names when I write about my study. The results of the study will be published at Hamline University but your name will not be used.

Return of this letter with your signature will be considered your agreement to participate in the email study. You may ask me any questions about this study at any time. Translations of this letter are available for you if you wish.

Sincerely,

Susan Ryan  
612 668-1125

Andreas Schramm  
Hamline University  
651 646-8621

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I give my consent to participate in the above study. I understand that I will fill out two checklists asking me what I know about email. I understand that the teacher will also fill out two checklists about me and that she will keep copies of the email I send her. I also understand my name will not be used and I can withdraw at any time.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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