The Development of the *Study Buddy Map*, A Tool for L2 Conversation-Partner Programs

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Abstract

This is part two of a two-part series on L2 conversation-partner programs. The first part (James, Henrichsen, Tanner, & McMurry, 2019) described a particular conversation-partner program (Study Buddies) and outlined its history. It then reported the results of a needs analysis and evaluation of the program. To conclude, it made three recommendations: (a) revise the pairing process, (b) provide written guidelines for participants, and (c) plan activities beyond the initial orientation meeting. This second part describes our activities following up on the second of these recommendations. It outlines the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of a written product (the Study Buddy Map) created to provide instructional support for both participants in a conversation-partner dyad. It also directs readers to a website from which they can download their own *Study Buddy Map*.

Key words: ESL, foreign language learning, conversation partners, Study Buddy Map, program evaluation, peer tutoring

Introduction

After conducting the needs analysis and evaluation for the Study Buddy program at Brigham Young University's English Language Center (see James, et al., 2019, for details), we decided to address our second recommendation, that of providing written guidelines for Study Buddy tutors, as our next step in program improvement. These guidelines eventually took the form of the *Study Buddy Map: An English Language Tutoring Tool*. This map is a paper, brochure-type resource that provides tutors with prompts for topics and activities to use during Study Buddy sessions. This tool is meant to guide students through conversations and level- appropriate exercises.

Product Design and Development

Nearly a year before designing the *Study Buddy Map*, the lead researcher and author on our team realized that she wanted to create something that would be useful for people who wanted to help language learners. Seeking to be helpful, without knowing how to help, can be a frustrating experience for the would-be helpers. It was precisely this predicament that we wanted to remedy by creating a tool that volunteers could use when they were working as conversation partners with language learners.

Design Decisions, Specifications, and Constraints

Keeping in mind that our Study Buddy program was an extracurricular activity, we felt the need to make sure that the product we provided for the participants was not overwhelming or discouraging. Many types of courses, workshops, manuals, and books exist that teach people how to tutor or mentor in a language, but busy college students often don't have time to attend time-consuming workshops or read lengthy manuals or books. They need something that they can pick up, quickly peruse, and then use as a reference during their conversation-partner sessions, leading them to success. In other words, the product we envisioned needed to be more than just a list of guidelines, and it also needed to motivate the students to continue with their study sessions. It also had to be sufficiently flexible and provide enough content to get partners through a semester of Study Buddy sessions without the pressure of needing to do every assignment listed. The product needed to be simple enough that the students could refer to topics and follow the outline and come away feeling successful (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

The purpose of the product was not to make the students into professional tutors, but rather to help get partners speaking and sharing their own language with their partner in a way that would benefit them both (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). Perry and Hart, (2012) recommend that such a product should provide hands-on training that will provide partners with enough experience and guidelines that they will continue to help others speak their language and become more and more confident as they do so. Kang (2005) supports this idea, saying that it is important for guidelines to be positive and encouraging. Knowing that continual practice and persistence is what will make students more productive in their target language, the primary goal was to create a tool that would enable partners' desire and will-

ingness to continue with their study sessions. When study session time increases, speaking time in the desired language increases (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015), thus improving speaking skills.

Today, the term *technology* often infers an electronic product, a website, or a handheld app, yet *technology* can also include any sort of scientific knowledge that helps people solve a problem or perform a task (Galbraith, 1967, p. 12, as cited by Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino, 2002, p. 21). Initially, we considered creating an app or a website to provide topics and hints for the Study Buddy pairs, but we finally decided that a tangible object that could work as a reference and a guide would be more usable. Thus, we decided it would be best to create a simplified tool using an old-fashioned technology, a paper product that resembled a map. During partner sessions, this tangible object would be a reminder of the task at hand. At other times, it would serve as a reminder to meet with their partner. Of course, the tool needed to look professional and use warm and welcoming colors, so it would not intimidate or scare away the novice partners.

The characteristics and content we considered necessary for the tool included the following criteria:

- Clear, clean design features that make it easy to read
- Welcoming colors and graphics that are not intimidating to volunteers
- Examples and a simple structure for partner sessions
- Tips for working with and helping people
- A size that fits in a notebook or binder
- A design that folds up, so a large amount of content could fit in a small space
- Lesson or conversation session outlines that follow the ROPPPES model (defined below)
- Leveled content that fits with the ACTFL speaking proficiency levels
- Limited content so that reading would not take very long

The idea of "map" being a part of the project title was attractive, because the term connotes a journey and progress. Thinking that learning a language with a new friend can be like a journey led to the title *Study Buddy Map: An English Language Tutoring Tool.*

Development Process

After identifying these specifications, we decided to develop a large folding card, similar to a road map. We found successful educational reference materials in a similar format (Berman, 2008; Kershul, 2002) that were either laminated or printed on thick glossy paper, and we determined that either of these options would fit the needs discussed. Printing on 11" x 17" paper would allow our product to be folded into a small enough package to fit into a student's notebook for protection and be large enough for a considerable amount of reference material and guidance. A thick glossy paper would be less expensive than laminating paper in plastic—an important consideration when dealing with a limited budget.

One side of the card was reserved for the basic tips and information that student tutors would most likely need to know to get them started with their language partner. These tips were derived from the researchers' own experiences with tutoring, as well as from the time spent as a Study Buddy during the previous year. The map contained sections for the tutor as well as the learner, in the hope that they would make each of them feel more comfortable in their respective roles and encourage them to jump in and practice what they were learning.

The other side of the *Study Buddy Map* was reserved for conversation topics that the students could choose from for their conversation sessions. Eight general topics were chosen and divided according to language difficulty, so they could neatly fit into the four folded sections of the product. The eight topics were lined up across the page horizontally and appeared in different colored boxes. Three levels of difficulty were lined up vertically with novice level units at the top and then moving down through intermediate and advanced levels. The levels were based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) guidelines (Swender, 2012) and specified word-level vocabulary production at the novice level, sentence-level vocabulary production at the intermediate level, and more advanced paragraph-level production at the more advanced level. None of these eight topics was so demanding or time consuming that learners would feel tied down. Rather, they were free flowing to encourage open discussion and keep the excitement and willingness to communicate at a higher level.

Product Description

The final version of the *Study Buddy Map* was printed on a sturdy gloss paper in muted orange and blue. The 11" x 17" paper was positioned horizontally and has three score marks so the map folds like an accordion into a 4-1/4" x 11" document. The left front section has the title followed by a drawing of two friendly study partners and an encouraging explanation of the map's purpose (see Figure 1). The colors were selected to be welcoming and comfortable in order to attract novice tutors, who may feel intimidated by a bold, daring, or sleek design. The words, confident and comfortable, are used to promote confidence for both the tutor and the learner.
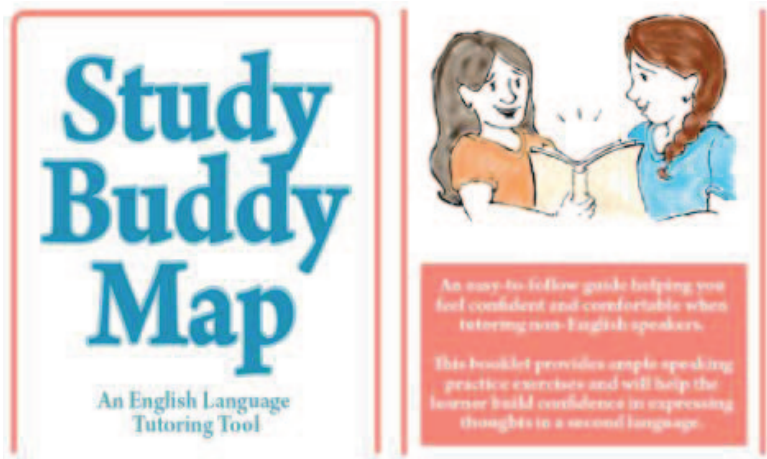
Figure 1. Front section of the Study Buddy Map

The center section of the map front serves two purposes. The section has a "Welcome" area that explains what a Study Buddy is and where to find more information (at studybuddymap.com). It also lists pointers for those engaging in the program or working with a language learning partner in general (see Figure 2). There are do's and don'ts intermingled with ideas for activities and examples of sensitive topics.

Figure 2. Welcome area of the Study Buddy Map

The bottom part of this section has tips for the tutor and tips for the learner (see Figure 3). The tips include practical advice that may seem natural to an experienced teacher, but are not so obvious to novice tutors and should be made very clear. It is also important to make sure that the learners are comfortable with their new learning environment so basic tips, like "pay attention to your partner's pronunciation" and "take notes," are included with the less obvious learning strategies to boost the confidence level of those partners who may be extra nervous. There is a little bit of room at the bottom of each list for notes, in case other ideas need to be recorded by either the tutor or the learner. This section is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather helps to boost partners' confidence and encourage them to begin. As participants work through a few sessions with each other, the expectation is that the partners will get comfortable with the process and not have to refer to the *Study Buddy Map* as much as they did in the beginning.

Tutor Tips	Learner Tips
1. Speak in clear and natural phrases, slower with beginners.	1. Pay attention to your partner's pronunciation.
2. Use relaxed, informal language.	2. Ask for help. Ask your partner to repeat or say things in a different way if needed.
3. Repeat and paraphrase if necessary.	3. Ask for examples, drawings, or to have things written down.
4. Use gestures and facial expressions.	4. Be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention.
5. Use nonverbal cues like pointing or pantomiming.	5. Keep a notebook for things you are learning. Record assignments, questions, and ideas for new topics.
6. Ask and answer questions to encourage conversation.	6. Compare your new environment and learning with your own to help you remember.
7. Model reading and have your partner copy pronunciation, intonation, phrasing, and stress.	7. Speak your new language as much as you can.
8. Take mental or written notes of mistakes, discuss after they are done talking—don't interrupt.	

Figure 3. Tips section of the Study Buddy Map

The final section on the front of the map provides an outline for a Study Buddy session that starts with three steps for the partners to follow: choose a topic, pick the level of difficulty, and pop the activities into the outline. The outline then shows seven sections, which follow the ROPPPES model of teaching, a format for planning effective ESL lessons used at the BYU's ELC. The ROPPPES model also explains what to do, in addition to showing an example in italicized text to make sure the instructions are clear (see Figure 4). When the map is folded, this outline is visible on the outside so that it can be referred to on a regular basis. As the Study Buddy partners follow the guided outline, they will find themselves participating in the ROPPPES model. This includes reviewing previous sessions (R=review), planning what to work on in the session (O=overview), sharing new information (P=present), encouraging partner learning (P=practice), coaxing the new skills from the partner (P=perform), recognizing, encouraging, and assessing progress (E=evaluate), and helping fix mistakes, summarizing what was learned during the session, and confirming a meeting time and plan for the next session (S=summarize). These steps were chosen for this outline to increase the success of the Study Buddy partners in their conversation sessions.

Figure 4. Outline section of the Study Buddy Map

The back side of the map is divided into eight columns, each bearing the title of a different theme along with conversation ideas that correlate with that theme (see Figure 5). The themes are typical conversation topics that learners from all culture backgrounds should feel comfortable discussing, but they can also be used as general ideas for structure if another topic is desired. The lesson ideas are designed to train the partners in effective language conversations and to support their continual Study Buddy sessions, not to be inclusive in structure, vocabulary lists, or themes.

Dates & Time	Family & Careers	Food & Shopping
★	★	★
Display a calendar and review the months of the year, days of the week, and how to say numbers for days. "This is the fifth." Practice giving details about a date on the calendar and take turns naming others. "What was yesterday's date?" "My birthday is on Monday, April 10th." Point to days on the calendar and ask for the correct date. **Review**—Ask questions like: "What day is before Saturday?" "What months are in the fall?"	Learn vocabulary relating to families, e.g., Mom, dad, aunt, uncle, etc. Share pictures of your families and discuss features, e.g., age, hair and eye color, size, etc. Ask your partner to describe family members (or other people) using vocabulary you have discussed. Use real pictures or draw them as needed. **Review**—Quiz your partner on the words used for relatives, e.g., cousin, aunt, brother, etc.	Show pictures of food and teach or review their names. Discuss which foods you both like or dislike. Let your partner talk about typical foods, favorite foods, or foods enjoyed since coming to this place. **Fieldtrip**—grocery store.
★ ★	★ ★	★ ★
Demonstrate how to tell time. Review different ways to say it. "It's one twenty." "It's 20 minutes past one." "It's 20 after one."	Introduce several occupations and describe the kind of work involved. Show pictures or act out the job to make it easier to	Look at a menu from a popular place to eat and describe typical meals in the area.

Figure 5. Conversations organized by topics in the Study Buddy Map

The columns on the back of the map have the same shades of orange and blue as the front to separate them from one another, and they are each divided into three sections. The three sections are marked with a single star, two stars, or three stars, representing *novice, intermediate,* and *advanced* levels respectively (see Figure 6). These levels follow the ACTFL guidelines which break the proficiency levels of language learners into five categories. The map uses the first three levels, as noted above.

The lessons or conversation sessions are also designed to have the three P segments from the ROPPPES model separated so the partners can better plan their Study Buddy session using the outline on the front of the map. Each lesson (see Figures 5 and 6) has a portion that presents, a second portion that allows practice, and a third that asks for performance of some type. There are also occasional bonus activities and fieldtrip ideas throughout the lessons to inspire the partners to apply their learning to real experiences. The final feature on the back of the map is a small graph in the bottom right corner defining the stars by the level names (see Figure 6).
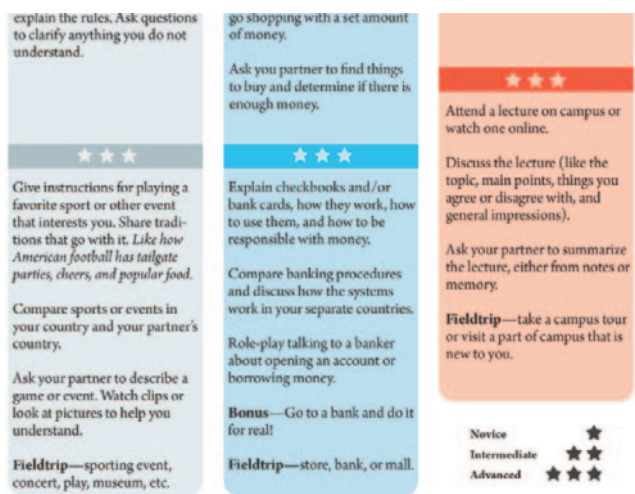
Figure 6. Stars in the Study Buddy Map to indicate activity levels

The maps were completed using *Adobe Illustrator* and printed at the university's print shop. The order was paid for with a grant provided by the ELC with the expectation of using them for the Study Buddy program the following semester.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Study Buddy Map

"I think the Study Buddy map is suited for Study Buddies that need help getting started with their sessions together and for someone who is very uncomfortable with the idea of teaching language to someone else." This quote from the survey about the *Study Buddy Map* reveals the two positive outcomes that are hoped to be gained from the creation of the tool; competence and confidence from the Study Buddy partners.

The second evaluation for this project was conducted regarding the *Study Buddy Map* itself. The evaluation of this tool (i.e., the collection of data from Study Buddy Program participants) was conducted with permission from Brigham Young University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Pilot

During the next semester, students registered for the Study Buddy program using a QR code, printed on a flier, which was linked to a Qualtrics® survey. This

was the method of collecting their contact information for a survey scheduled for later in the semester. During the orientation session at the beginning of the semester, the students were introduced to the *Study Buddy Map* and given a copy. The introduction included a review of the sections and a brief demonstration of how to use it. Contact information was collected from the students who had not previously registered, and the participants were all asked if they would be willing to complete the survey already mentioned. No other changes were made to the traditional orientation meeting or the Study Buddy program during this semester, so the only differences returning students would see would be the addition of the *Study Buddy Map*.

Evaluation Design

To find out if the *Study Buddy Map* was an effective tool for Study Buddy partners and whether or not it should continue to be used in the Study Buddy program, a survey was created that asked a variety of questions about the program as well as the map. Similar to the survey administered during the evaluation of the Study Buddy program, this survey included open-ended questions designed to elicit opinions on items that were important to the students. The following questions were created for the surveys, which were administered online through Qualtrics®.

1. You received this survey because you registered to be a Study Buddy. Did you get a Study Buddy partner?
2. Did you use the *Study Buddy Map*?
3. What did you expect to gain from being a Study Buddy this semester?
4. With 0 being "not confident at all" and 100 being "completely confident", rate your level of confidence for the following questions. When mentoring another student in your language, how confident . . .

   a. …were you when you began the Study Buddy program?

   b. …were you after you met with your Study Buddy once or twice?

   c. …are you now that you have met with your Study Buddy several times?
5. How often did you use the *Study Buddy Map* during your Study Buddy sessions?
6. How easy or difficult was the format of the *Study Buddy Map* to use?
7. What did you like about the *Study Buddy Map*?
8. What did you NOT like about the *Study Buddy Map*?

9. Rate the importance of the features of the *Study Buddy Map*?
    a. Color
    b. Layout
    c. Content
    d. Size
    e. Design features
    f. Instructions for use
10. Did the information provided in the *Study Buddy Map* make you a better Study Buddy?
11. Do you think the *Study Buddy Map* should continue to be available for the Study Buddy program?
12. What other comments do you have about your experience with the *Study Buddy Map*?
13. What other comments do you have about the Study Buddy program?

These questions produced qualitative data that could be used to determine if the participants felt prepared to tutor before they began, if the *Study Buddy Map* helped them feel more confident in their task, and if they thought it should continue to be used in the program. These questions were asked during a single survey after program participants had used the tool on a weekly basis for about two months. The next section will review the responses to the survey and analyze the data to answer the research questions.

Findings

Thirty-nine participants took the survey. Twenty-eight of them indicated that they had a Study Buddy partner. The others did not receive one. When asked about what they expected to gain from the experience, most of the responses echoed the ones from the needs analysis survey. They expected to improve their language skills, help others, and make friends. For example, one student responded that he expected to "[connect] with others, [improve] my language skills, and [learn] more about the culture of my Study Buddy."

Students were also asked to rate how confident they were when mentoring another student using a slider on a scale ranging from 0 (not confident at all) to 100 (completely confident). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the re-

sponses to this question. The calculations included responses from students who marked that they had received a Study Buddy.

Table 1. Confidence level while mentoring

Time	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
..were you when you began the Study Buddy Program?	9.00	100.00	65.11	27.18	738.74	28
…were you after you met with your Study Buddy one or twice?	9.00	100.00	69.93	25.63	656.88	27
… are you now that you have met with your Study Buddy several times?	0.00	100.00	75.00	25.68	659.26	27

The mean confidence level increased by nearly 5% from the beginning of the program to when participants had met once or twice. There was another 5% increase from the time they met once or twice to when they had met several times. These increases, although modest, may suggest that the guided practice provided by the *Study Buddy Map* contributed to higher confidence levels among participants.

Of the 28 responses from those that had a study buddy, 13 (46%) indicated that they used the *Study Buddy Map*. Three (11%) students indicated that they used the *Study Buddy Map* every time they met with their partner while 11 (39%) used it occasionally. The other 14 (50%) reported that they never used the map during their sessions (see Table 2). Some students commented that they did not receive a map at the beginning of the program, which may account for the lower number. In addition, a couple of comments explained that students planned to work on homework or TOEFL prompts and didn't need other materials.

Students also indicated how easy they felt the *Study Buddy Map* was to use. Eleven (39%) said that the *Study Buddy Map* was very easy to use. Another 11 (39%) said it was not easy or difficult, and 6 (about 21%) said that it was somewhat easy to use (see Table 3). None of the students said that it was somewhat difficult or very difficult. This was good to learn, since one of our design specifications was to have an easy to use product.

Table 2. Frequency of using the Study Buddy Map

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Every time	3	10.71%
Often	0	0.00%
Occasionally	11	39.39%
Never	14	50.00%

Table 3. Responses to the question How easy or difficult . . .

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very easy	11	39.29%
Somewhat easy	6	21.42%
Not easy or difficult	11	39.29%
Somewhat difficult	0	0.00%
Very difficult	0	0.00%

In response to the open-ended questions, participants indicated what they liked and disliked about the *Study Buddy Map*. Students tended to like the ideas and topics provided to stimulate conversation during their sessions. They also appreciated the examples and the overall ease of use of the product. Things they disliked about the map were a little more varied. One student said that, "The map seemed mostly geared towards vocabulary and did not seem to include very much grammar tips."

Another student lamented that he only had a physical copy. Other comments were that the visual display had too many words on the page and that the items on the map did not challenge her partner very much.

These comments suggested that some of the students could use more of a challenge when they mentioned broader content, grammar tips, and not enough push. This possibility may suggest a need for an advanced tool or further training for the mentors. Another comment recommended using a digital format for the *Study Buddy Map*, which might be considered in the future.

To understand which features of the *Study Buddy Map* were most important for the users, the participants rated six features on a 5-point Likert scale. *Size* and *design features* were both rated *neither important nor unimportant* by 50% or more of the respondents. In other words, these two areas did not appear to be the most important features to focus on during development. On the other hand, *content* and *instructional use* were both rated *very important* and *somewhat important* by over 60% of the respondents. The final two features, *color* and *layout* appeared to be more spread out across the scale with no distinct pattern (see Table 4).

Table 4. Ratings of various elements of the Study Buddy Map

Element	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	Total
Color	1 3.57%	9 32.14%	9 32.14%	4 14.29%	5 17.86%	28
Layout	5 17.86%	11 39.29%	9 32.14%	1 3.57%	2 7.14%	28
Content	12 42.86%	5 17.86%	8 28.57%	0 0.00%	3 10.71%	28
Size	2 7.14%	9 32.14%	14 50.00%	2 7.14%	1 3.57%	28
Design features	4 14.81%	8 29.63%	14 51.85%	1 3.70%	0 0.00%	27
Instructions for use	8 28.57%	9 32.14%	7 25.00%	2 7.14%	2 7.14%	28

Additionally, students indicated to what degree they felt that the *Study Buddy Map* contributed to their efficacy as a Study Buddy. Of the 28 participants who had partners, 16 (57%) responded positively (see Table 5).

Table 5. Study Buddy Map contributed to greater efficacy as a study buddy

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Definitely yes	3	10.71%
Probably yes	13	46.42%
Might or might not	10	35.71%
Probably not	0	0.00%
Definitely Not	2	7.14%

To sum up, in regard to our first evaluation question—*Was the Study Buddy Map an effective tool for Study Buddy partners?*—it appears that those who used the map found it useful.

Since, the survey was given near the end of the semester, after students had been working with their Study Buddies for some time, it seemed valuable to get their point of view regarding the value of continuing to use the *Study Buddy Map* as a permanent part of the Study Buddy program. There was a very positive response to this question with 21 (75%) of the students answering with a *definitely yes* or a *probably yes*. Another 6 (21%) of the students answered that it *might or might not* be continued, and only 1 (4%) answered *probably not* (see Table 6).

Table 6. Continue using the Study Buddy Map?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Definitely yes	9	32.14%
Probably yes	12	42.86%
Might or might not	6	21.42%
Probably not	1	3.57%
Definitely Not	0	0

When asked for general comments and feedback about the Study Buddy Map, 17 (60%) of the responses did not indicate anything in particular. One student said,

"It's a Great tool for me and my Study Buddy." Another student echoed those thoughts but also admitted to not using the tool. "It looked like a great tool, we just never really used it. We talked about topics we wanted to know how to talk about better and that took up a lot of time."

Apart from the Study Buddy Map, students were provided the opportunity to give comments and feedback about the Study Buddy program itself. One participant's response praised the program and said that, "It has been really helpful—way more helpful than conversation labs I have had to go to for some Spanish classes. Its one-on-one nature forces me to speak in Spanish and then I get real time feedback when I am doing something incorrectly." Others mentioned that in addition to the language practice, they were able to make friends and have an enjoyable time talking.

From the above responses, it is clear that the Study Buddy program has been beneficial for those students who have participated in it. We know the program has lasted for many years and has the potential to continue helping students if they can get the training and resources they need to keep them involved.

Revisions

Several people—professors, classmates, an editor and friends—were given copies of the *Study Buddy Map* to review and provide comments. Based on these reviews, several small revisions were made in hopes of enabling the map to be a better learning/teaching resource. The first change was the addition of the legend in the bottom corner on the back that explains the conversation-topic levels indicated by the stars. The second change involved dividing the welcome section from one large area into two smaller sections, thus eliminating the fold line going through the original paragraph of instructions. The third change was a revision of the em dashes throughout the map to make them consistent with printing standards, adjusting some of the spacing throughout, and correcting a few typographical errors. The overall design and format were well received by advisors, and cohort members, as well as the participants in the Study Buddy program who took the survey, so no major changes were considered necessary. Three non-formatting suggestions included a request to change the map into an online app, a complaint about having too many words in the outline, and a suggestion to add more pictures. While each of these suggestions may benefit a few users in some way, they were consid-

ered as merely alternate suggestions and not necessary to improve the effectiveness of the tool for the majority of users.

Conclusion and Future Plans

The results of this evaluation encourage the continuing use of the *Study Buddy Map* in the Study Buddy program. In addition to the *Study Buddy Map* itself, future participants at Brigham Young University will receive training on how to use it, and additional research will determine how much training is necessary for optimal use. Other future projects could include a *Study Buddy Map* website with training videos and instruction, an online app, and an evaluation of the participants' progress throughout a semester in the program. Marketing plans are already underway to provide a way for other institutions and individuals to obtain copies of the *Study Buddy Map* for their own use (studybuddymap.com). While the *Study Buddy Map* is not a perfect tool, it is hoped that it can still be useful to the BYU Study Buddy program and similar programs elsewhere. One of its main purposes is to reduce participant attrition in the Study Buddy program by helping the individual student feel more comfortable in the role of a tutor. In this regard, it has great potential value for language tutoring programs at universities, high schools, and community help organizations. It can also work for families with exchange students or immigrant neighbors by providing the simple tools a willing volunteer may need in order to feel confident in helping a friend become more fluent in a new language. We look forward to seeing the *Study Buddy Map* utilized in a variety of programs and helping a large number of people—one tutor at a time.

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