AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN STUDENTS’ SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Definitions:

HYBRID V. FACE-TO-FACE EDUCATION COURSES

Substitute some in-class instruction for online instructional components.

Most common contemporary form of university language instruction; learning experiences occur primarily in the classroom environment.

Benefits of hybrid instruction in the language environment:

1. Convenience of online course delivery helps students to learn at their own pace.
2. Amount of in-class time is decreased; increases teacher prep time & student work flexibility.
3. Helps the university to counter scheduling and other time constraints; more students potentially could be enrolled in language courses.
4. Building of language familiarity through multiple modes; i.e. in-class & online instruction.

Research overview:

Examination of hybrid learning in a Spanish 102 course.

• What do learners in a Spanish class report they believe about how they learn in an hybrid learning environment?
• What do learners in a Spanish class report they believe about Spanish before and after taking the course?
  + Determine if hybrid education is a worthwhile alternative in university language instruction

Participants:

• 18 hybrid students in a 102 Spanish class.

Methodology:

Exploratory study involving a newly developed Spanish 102 hybrid course on the UWEC campus.

• Students complete two (Pre and Post Course sampling) 20 minute belief surveys regarding hybrid learning and Spanish language learning.

• Students are asked to complete 10 five minute surveys regarding their engagement in particular tasks throughout the semester.
  ➢ 5 surveys given in-class.
  ➢ 5 surveys given after completion of online work.
• Students’ final exam scores are compared to students in the traditional F2F environment on common final.

Preliminary Findings:

1. Increase in Perceived Language Proficiency: Hybrid students rate themselves as slightly more proficient in Spanish after course completion (M = 4.9) compared to pre-course analyses (M = 4.4) on a 1 to 10 scale where 10 is ‘Very proficient’ and 1 is “Developing”.

2. Language Skills: As shown in Table 1, this pilot study may suggest that after course completion:
  • Participants in the hybrid format may view reading, grammar, and pronunciation in the target language as being less difficult.
  • Students may perceive writing, listening, and speaking in the target language as being more difficult.

3. Grammar Best Learned In-Class?: Preliminary results signal that when learning grammar, hybrid students may prefer to learn through an in-class format as opposed to solely online; students are better focused, feel more skilled with the task, are less confused, and are better able to connect previous instruction to new material through in-class instruction.

4. As shown in Table 2, initial findings from this small scale study show that students prefer a hybrid Spanish format for the learning of reading/writing, but do not prefer it for the learning of culture/speaking.

5. Comparable Final Exam Scores: Comparative common final exam scores between the two cohorts reveal a slightly higher average score among hybrid learners
  ➢ Hybrid Class Average 87.61% (n=18)
  ➢ F2F Class Average= 84.60% (n=28)

Analysis:

• After course completion, students felt their overall Spanish proficiency improved, and more specifically, their reading abilities.
• Students perceive distinct advantages and disadvantages to hybrid courses.
• Much work is still needed to fully understand the various aspects of hybrid courses and their effect(s) on second language learning.

Suggestions:

• Further comparative research between F2F learners and Hybrid learners with a larger research cohort is recommended.
• A qualitative study to further analyze participants’ beliefs about hybrid learning is needed.

Support for this project came from student Blugold Commitment differential tuition funds through the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Faculty/Student Research Collaboration Program.

**Table 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank According to Level of Difficulty</th>
<th>(n = 13)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Rank:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Rank:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Pronunciation</td>
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</table>

**Table 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Format</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete Online</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In my opinion, the best way to learn _____ is through...

Frequencies reported (n = 13)

- Writing
- Speaking
- Reading
- Grammar
- Pronunciation

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**Subject References:**

Cahill, Danielle and Diane Catanzaro.  “Teaching First-Year Spanish On-line.”

Scida, Emily E. and Rachel E. Saury.  “Hybrid Courses and Their Impact on Student and Classroom Performance: A Case Study at the University of Virginia.”

Shimazu, Y. “Language Course Taught with Online Supplement Material: Is It Effective?”. [http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.proxy.uwec.edu/hww/results/results_single.jhtml;hwwilsonid=1VE3PMBMQNKENQA3DIMSFGOADUNGIIV0](http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.proxy.uwec.edu/hww/results/results_single.jhtml;hwwilsonid=1VE3PMBMQNKENQA3DIMSFGOADUNGIIV0)


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