



Integrative Blended Learning for French and Italian Language: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century

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Abstract

Decreasing student numbers and resources present major challenges facing University modern Language programs throughout the world. These are compounded by the increasingly complex needs of a diverse student population, many of whom enter University with little or no experience of the TL, who are studying a wide range of subjects, often across a number of degrees, and who are increasingly working part-time to finance their studies. Moreover, most are 'digital natives', 'leading blended... "partly virtual, partly tangible" lives'(Glazer 2012). Thus Language programs with limited resources must cater to beginners and elementary level language students who require flexible timetabling, access to high-quality, on-line, independent study materials and communicatively focussed, interactive classes. Blended Learning, which replaces some face-to-face instruction with independent study using on-line resources, provides an obvious and elegant solution. This paper presents our experience in creating and teaching successful Blended Learning courses for Beginner students of French and Italian (as a foreign language) at the University of Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand. The success of Blended Learning hinges on the design-quality and integration of every aspect of the learning package - from on-line materials and class lesson plans to assessment practices- so that "face-to-face and on-line activities reinforce each other to create a single, unified course" (Glazer 2012: 1). We sought to achieve this by employing balanced, integrative, 'modular' curricula that treat language as both 'object' and 'tool' (Ellis and Shintani 2014: 329), thus incorporating extensive multi-media TL input and explicit grammar instruction or focus-on-forms (FonFs) in the on-line materials. The latter serve as a form of intensive, guided pre-task planning (Ellis 2016: 419-420) for task-based, production-focussed class activities, including focus-on-form (FonF) intervention. We were also mindful to ensure 'buy-in' from teaching staff (Nissen and Tea 2012). After outlining our pedagogical approach, we report on the outcomes of the courses, using surveys; on-going student feedback and comparative final grades statistics.

Keywords: *Blended Learning; On-line Learning tools; Multi-Media Materials' development; Language Learning Pedagogy; Flipped Classroom.*

References:

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