

## Chapter 2

# Step-by-Step Hybrid Design

**Abstract** As discussed in Chap. 1, many institutions are moving towards offering hybrid classes as part of their curriculum. This transition may be a slow, thoughtful rollout, or may be made quickly without much preparation. In either case, some instructors may feel they do not have the tools to make the change. In this section, we will offer step-by-step review of how to organize a hybrid course, from the very first day you learn you are teaching online to the day the class goes live. These steps are gleaned from relevant research literature and our experiences. Here we examine questions related to the peculiarities of hybrid classes that you should keep in mind as you plan.

**Keywords** LMS • Textbook • Syllabus • Student support • Authentic • Discussion board • Consistent • Limiting distractions • Accessible • Feasible • Student and teacher roles • Assessment • Managing expectations

As discussed in Chap. 1, many institutions are moving towards offering hybrid classes as part of their curriculum. This transition may be a slow, thoughtful rollout, or may be made quickly without much preparation. In either case, some instructors may feel they do not have the tools to make the change. In this section, we will offer step-by-step review of how to organize a hybrid course, from the very first day you learn you are teaching online to the day the class goes live. These steps are gleaned from relevant research literature and our experiences. Here we examine questions related to the peculiarities of hybrid classes that you should keep in mind as you plan.

### 2.1 Step #1: Determine Available Resources

Before you begin making any concrete decisions about your course, it is essential to inventory available resources through your institution and textbook. Many secondary and postsecondary schools have learning management systems, online training opportunities, and established guidelines for online and hybrid learning.

Additionally, textbooks vary in quality and suitability to the hybrid learning environment. Considering all of your options and taking advantage of institutional and textbook resources is the best place to start.

### ***2.1.1 Where Can You Turn for Help?***

The first thing an instructor needs to find out is whether her institution offers any kind of help: specialist trainers, mentor programs for novice online teachers, written guidelines, workshops, etc. Many institutions offer at least one of these options and this is a good place to start. Generally, this help comes from the IT center, helpdesk, or teaching and learning center. Your particular department may also have a designated go-to faculty or staff member, sometimes referred to as a technology champion, to mentor new instructors. Network by discussing your plans to teach a hybrid course. Ask experienced instructors how they find professional development opportunities.

Some institutions require new online/hybrid instructors to complete an orientation program to familiarize themselves with the online learning environment. This is a great opportunity to not only learn online teaching skills, but also to make important contacts. The people in these centers are the online learning experts on your campus and generally want to help. If you find that your institution does not have anything developed to assist you, there are some resources available online. Some universities, such as Brandeis University (Brandeis 2014), Millikin University (Millikin 2011), or University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Learning Technology Center 2014), to name just a few, have made their guidelines public. Reviewing other institutions' available resources may be a good idea.

There are also many organizations that research, promote, and evaluate online education. For example, Educause is an organization that works to advance higher education through technology integration. Their website [www.educause.edu](http://www.educause.edu) is the online portal for the organization and serves as an online repository for papers and other resources. Additionally, the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) has many resources available on their website [www.iallt.org](http://www.iallt.org). This organization has a mission to “provide leadership in the development, integration, evaluation and management of instructional technology for the teaching and learning of language, literature and culture” (IALLT 2014). On the K-12 level, ISTE is a professional organization that connects K-12 teachers involved in technology integration. Their website [www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org) provides resources, webinars, academic papers, and notably, access to K-12 technology standards that have been widely adopted by teacher education programs and accrediting bodies.

### ***2.1.2 What Does Hybrid Mean at Your School?***

After taking advantage of training and technological support, it is time to answer a key question: what does hybrid mean at your institution? There are no widespread

regulations on the use of this term as we discussed in Chap. 1. So, each institution makes its own decisions about the particular number of f2f and online hours that comprise a hybrid course. Large courses with many sections taught by different instructors may require all course development to go through a coordinator or mentor. If you are the first or only faculty member to go hybrid with a particular course, you may find yourself in a position to propose a format for your hybrid course and defend your choices to faculty and administration.

If you have control of the decision of how many hours to teach f2f and how many online, there are some factors to consider. First, a hybrid language course requires more advance preparation than a traditional course. Instructors need to maintain a close degree of coordination between the online and in-person activities. The two parallel halves of the course may diverge if careful attention is not paid to planning. Also, in order to take advantage of the online availability of authentic resources, the instructors may find themselves in a constant state of online research. These resources must then be vetted against the learning objectives and embedded in the design of the course. Unlike physical resources that we can keep safe in filing cabinets and under lamination, web resources are often changing. Their authors edit them. Websites are redesigned. And online videos are taken down. Therefore, instructors must expect that resource research activities that seem to be one-time investments in a traditional classroom become ongoing behaviors for online teachers. For many experienced teachers, lesson planning and preparation take place in the days before the actual lesson is taught. However, in a hybrid classroom, even experienced teachers must decide well before the first class meeting how all of the online and f2f activities will interact. More online hours means more course preparation up front.

Another important factor to consider when deciding how many class hours to conduct f2f versus online is the level of comfort and self-direction of the students. If your institution has an active online learning presence, then students may come to class already familiar with some of the expectations of the hybrid class and able to quickly jump into online learning. In contrast, if your hybrid class is innovative on your campus, you may find that students have a difficult time adjusting to a hybrid course that has a high percentage of online meetings. The less online experience your students bring to the table, the lower the percentage of online content should be.

In our college, where online learning is not a widespread tool, we believe that one online hour a week works well. In other schools with students more accustomed to instructional technology, Stacey has opted for much less f2f time. In order to be successful, courses must not only be well designed, but also be user-friendly. Students can learn some new technology skills through your course, but will likely be overwhelmed if they have to learn all the technology skills at once. In our study, we found that students responded best to the hybrid course when they only had to learn one new skill at a time. Keep in mind the cognitive demands of learning a new language while also learning technology. Overwhelming students with technology reduces their ability to focus on learning the language.

There is no ideal split of online and f2f meetings, however the authors of this study do have preferences. Berta believes that 70 % in person meetings and 30 %

online is best. That way, students still have plenty of time to do community building and group interaction, while also allowing opportunities to incorporate the best that online learning can offer. With 70 % f2f meetings, she feels that her class still retains the feeling of a traditional classroom. On the other hand, Stacey prefers at least 50 % of the class meetings to be conducted online. She asserts that a higher percentage of online meetings allows students to experiment with a wider variety of communication tools. It takes time and consistency for students to develop a high comfort level with digital tools. Stacey believes that 50 % of the total contact hours of a class is the minimum to get comfortable enough to experiment and be creative online.

### ***2.1.3 What Kind of Textbook Do I Use?***

If you have the freedom to choose your own textbook, you will find that there are options for hybrid-friendly textbooks. Most texts available on the market are not yet ready for a hybrid class, meaning they do not include activities that instructors can easily assign and assess during the online portion of the class. Some textbooks that are geared toward the hybrid or online environment include web-based learning management systems where you can assign learning activities, evaluate student progress, and keep the gradebook. Other textbooks have a digital component that is housed on your students' computers instead of online. If you choose a book from this category, then your students will submit their completed assignments through a learning management system that you set up.

The reality is that the textbook sets the scope and sequence of the course for many language programs (Young and Pettigrew 2014) and therefore represents one of the most important elements of the hybrid course. Choose a text that works for the content and the format of instruction.

### ***2.1.4 How Do I Choose a Learning Management System?***

Some teachers may wonder if they need a learning management system (LMS) at all. What benefits do these tools provide? While it may be possible to teach a hybrid course without using an LMS, we would not advise it; nor does an LMS-free learning environment appear to be a possibility for others researching hybrid language teaching (Young and Pettigrew 2014). Keeping the calendar, learning activities, assessments, and student records all in one place saves both the professor and students confusion. A good LMS can be a valuable ally in making our teaching more effective in the information age. Some of the benefits are:

1. Working with teachers and learners to identify appropriate learning goals.
2. Identifying and sequencing instruction appropriate for the individual learner.

3. Assessing learner performance products.
4. Storing evidence of student progress.
5. Supporting collaboration.
6. Generating reports to provide information to maximize the effectiveness of the entire learning organization (Watson and Watson 2011).

For most hybrid teachers, a learning management system (LMS), also called a Course Management System (CMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), is an essential tool for organizing content, tracking student progress, and bringing students together to communicate. The decision of which LMS to use is one that many instructors will not have to make, but rather their institutions will make the decision for them. Often, larger educational institutions enter into exclusive contracts with specific LMS providers. Other institutions, such as the one where we teach, have a preferred LMS, but allow professors to choose an alternative. Other institutions with a less centralized instructional technology plan will leave the choice of LMS to the individual teacher. There are many free options such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and Canvas with which new hybrid teachers can experiment. As previously mentioned, many textbooks from large publishers have an LMS built into the online portion of the curriculum. In our experience, the differences between the many choices of paid and free systems are minimal. If you can learn to teach on one, you can learn to teach on others. So do not stress too much about which system you have, and instead focus your energy on making that system work for you.

Once you know what platform you will be using, inform yourself about it. Some essential characteristics of an LMS are: providing a management system, providing access to content delivery, enabling content development (including authoring, managing and storing), collecting the results of student performance, assessing learners' competency, and providing data security (Watson and Watson 2007). All of these are important to keep in mind for the proper function of a hybrid class. How does your LMS enact all of these functions? Click around. Build things. Experiment. Get to know your new virtual classroom space. You and your students will be spending a lot of time there.

## **2.2 Step #2: Organizing a Syllabus**

Once you have understood what hybrid means in your institution, have chosen a book, and have become familiar with the LMS, it is time to start working on your syllabus. The syllabus is the contract between instructors and students. If you are teaching just one of several coordinated sections, you will probably be given a syllabus as a starting point. But there are a few characteristics that should define all of them: a syllabus describes the guidelines, objectives, assignments, and the grading system of the course. It functions as a point of reference for all parties in a classroom. A well-organized, detailed syllabus reduces conflict in the classroom by establishing clear expectations. For that reason, the syllabus is one of the key

elements that we use to make sure that students and instructors all understand how the hybrid course is unique. We use this tool to set the tone for the class.

The process of creating a syllabus for a hybrid class is similar to the one we follow in a traditional class with some special attention paid to some peculiarities. In a traditional syllabus it is customary to list the professor's office hours and location. In a hybrid class, the teacher should consider also including any virtual space such as Skype accounts where students could contact you during the hours you are going to be available. Make sure to keep email, chats, and Skype on and available during your posted office hours so students can easily contact you.

In a traditional class, you will probably give a detailed description of the objectives of the course. In a hybrid course, you should also take some time to describe how the online and f2f learning environments will interact. The textbook and other required materials are usually in their own section on a traditional syllabus. For hybrid students, it may be important to describe how the textbook includes an online or other digital components and the equipment (laptop, smartphone, etc.) that the student may need during the course in addition to the required texts.

In the evaluation section, it is important to describe how students will earn their grades. Will the activities be conducted online or f2f? Will the grades be posted online? Most syllabuses also include information about where students can get extra support and how to seek accommodations for learning differences. In a hybrid course, this section becomes even more universally necessary. At some point, all of your students will have technical difficulties, equipment or software failure, and a myriad of other challenges to overcome with the target language, the technology, or with the particular assignments. In our classes, we anticipate some of these issues and give detailed instructions about what offices on campus can provide support for which problems. Students in this study reported rarely asking the professor for help outside of the f2f classes. By providing detailed descriptions of where students can go for help, the syllabus then becomes a troubleshooting guide that students can turn to even if the professor or classmates are unavailable.

By far the largest part of our syllabus is the calendar with a detailed description of class activities. While the f2f activities are left more or less vague in order to allow some flexibility throughout the semester, the LMS-based activities are clearly detailed including the specific activities students will complete, where they are submitted, and when they are due (see Figs. 2.1 and 2.2 for examples from two different semesters). We note on the syllabus that the calendar is tentative to let students know that the schedule is subject to change. However, the reality of a hybrid course is that the online content is unlikely to change much. Other than correcting minor errors in the instructions or due dates, the activities we build before the semester begins are the activities we actually use. Online learning can be a wonderful advantage in many ways, but with the course design we use, it is not a nimble form of instruction. Large scale changes are time consuming and difficult to make during the term.

In order to describe the assignments adequately on the syllabus, the teacher has to make some important decisions about the nature of the learning activities. For each activity, you need to decide if the activity will be synchronous or

Semana Dos	En Clase	En Moodle
lunes	Tema 1.3	
miércoles	Tema 1.3 (Cont.)	<p><b>Gramática:</b> Do the grammar readings related to 1.3a, 1.3b, and 1.4a, 1.4b in the textbook pages 354-357. View the tutorial video on the Ritmos app. Then complete the quizzes between Tuesday at 12:01am and class time on Wednesday.</p> <p><b>Discusión:</b> Post a response to the prompt on the Semana Dos Discussion Forum before class time on Wednesday.</p>
viernes	Tema 1.4	<p><b>Ritmos App:</b> 1.3 - Que estudias? (1-8) and 1.4 - Tiempo y fechas (1-8). Upload the PDF version of "Printout for this Tema" for both sections to the appropriate assignment before class time on Friday.</p>

Fig. 2.1 LMS-based class activities

**Semana Dos • January 12-16**

**F2F Monday**

**Bring To Class Prepared:** 1) RC: (Ritmos cuaderno text) pp. 10, Q (parts 1& 2), AND 2) Grammar Worksheet PDF 1: Intro Saludos y Despedidas (2 pages total)

**In Class:** Tema 1.1

**F2F Wednesday**

**Bring To Class Prepared:** 1) RC: pp 13: C (1-7), AND 2) Grammar Worksheet 1.1a (2 pages)

**In Class:** Tema 1.1

**Online Thursday**

**To Do By Midnight:** Ritmos IA 1.2

**F2F Friday**

**Bring To Class Prepared:** 1) RC pp. 17:N (1-6), AND 2) Grammar Worksheet PDF 1.1b (2 pages)

**In Class:** Tema 1.2


 **Dos: 1.2 Ritmos IA "Printout for this Tema" Turn In Here**

Fig. 2.2 f2f-based class activities

asynchronous. Synchronous activities are those that require students to all be on their own computers in the same virtual place at the same time working on that same activity. An online chat and video conferencing are good examples of synchronous activities that can be very useful in the language classroom. On the other hand, activities such as wikis, discussion boards, and voice boards allow students to log in periodically to add to an ongoing conversation. Students do not



necessarily all need to participate at one time, making them asynchronous activities. For a thorough description of options for online tools, see <http://ict-rev.ecml.at/en-us/Resources/Web-tool-directory> (European Centre for Modern Languages 2014).

The syllabus should be clear about which assignments are synchronous and which are asynchronous to avoid confusion and prevent students missing assignments. Due to the unfamiliar nature of online learning for many students, we have found that it is more important than ever to be clear about how student performance will be assessed. We include rubrics when possible, especially in activities where the grading system is not easy to figure out such as online discussions, oral presentations, online chats, etc. Chapter 3 includes a sample of our simple and effective rubric for grading the weekly discussion board. In addition to the due dates and evaluation rubric, the instructor should also describe in the syllabus how he will interact with students in online activities. For example, will the instructor post on the discussion boards, or leave that space for student-student interactions? How will she give them feedback on their discussions? The teacher needs to carefully think through all of these questions before beginning to build the course activities online or meeting with students for the first time.

One change we have made to our syllabus as a result of teaching in a hybrid format is the inclusion of a section on online communication, specifically communication by email (see Fig. 2.3 for a sample from Stacey's syllabus). The online environment not only makes written communication feel less formal, it also makes tone difficult to decipher. This could be a helpful point to include in your syllabus to establish guidelines for acceptable communication and promote positive written communication.

For the most part, your hybrid course syllabus will look very similar to your traditional course syllabus. However, you will find that the hybrid syllabus greatly increases the amount of detail required to explain class policies, assignments, assessments, support, and possibly even includes some guidelines for effective online communication.

**E-Mail:** johnsons@hope.edu

I love getting emails and messages from students. However, notes sent to me should reflect an appropriate level of respect and professionalism. Please use my title (Profesora) and my last name (Johnson). Please do not use texting shorthand, but rather spell out all of your words. I do think emoticons can often be a good idea online, even in a professional setting, as they can help establish the tone of the letter. Tone can be easily miscommunicated/misunderstood in electronic communication.

Finally, remember that emails cannot be unsent. So, take a moment to get your email just right before you press the "Send" button. And let's show each other kindness and give each other the benefit of the doubt (not just in email, but in all communication). After all, we are all in this together. ☺

**Fig. 2.3** Inclusion of a section on online communication, specifically communication by email



## **2.3 Step #3: Building the Course**

Once your syllabus is created, you have the blueprint for building your course. Now, you stare at that blank page of the LMS, ready to create. Based on our review of previous research and our own experiences teaching (and making mistakes, rethinking, and trying again), we have some recommendations for teachers about to build the online portion of their first hybrid language course.

### ***2.3.1 Be You***

Your voice and body language are substituted by this platform (Dziuban et al. 2005). Be clear, concise, organized, and use a conversational, personal tone. Your students should feel the professor talking to them through this platform is the same one they see in the f2f class. Berta does not use informal terminology or emoticons in her online classroom for reasons she explains Chap. 5, but Stacey does. Stacey uses smiley faces and other friendly symbols frequently in her communications in order to set a relaxed tone. The most important thing is not whether you add smiley faces in online writing, but whether your authentic self shines through in your interactions with students.

### ***2.3.2 Train the Students***

Include tutorials and guides to the course in the first unit. Spend some time the first week of classes explaining how the LMS and any accompanying software or online platforms work. This investment of time will pay off with a smoother class experience in the long run. We have created some visual guides using screenshots from the course. These step-by-step guides walk students through some of the recurring processes in the course such as how to post on the discussion board or how to upload assignments.

### ***2.3.3 Designate a Q&A Discussion Board***

Chenoweth et al. (2006) found that ongoing tech support for students was just as important as it was for teachers. In our courses, there is one discussion forum at the very top, right next to the syllabus that is open during the entire course. This discussion board is a safe place for students to post their questions and problems in English and get quick help. Sometimes the professor contributes by answering questions or by directing the student to a visual guide that explains the process. Sometimes other students jump in and help troubleshoot issues. As the semester rolls on, the discussion board becomes an increasingly collaborative space where students know they can ask for help and receive it from a variety of sources.

When students email us with general questions about the course content or specific questions about technical issues, we urge them to post the question on the Q&A board so we can answer there. Also, when student want to take up valuable f2f class time discussing issues in English, we ask them to post their comment or concern to the Q&A board. Asking a question in the public discussion forum has become an efficient and effective method to deal with recurring issues that used to take up class time or require long email responses.

### ***2.3.4 Be Consistent***

We have found that we get the best results when we repeat the same format every week. Students know what they can expect on Mondays in f2f class. They know what they can expect for the online assignments on Tuesday. We keep the variety of kinds of activities to a minimum, focusing our effort and the students' attention on what works. Visually, each week is presented as a unit on the LMS. Students can clearly see the repeating pattern of the course week by week.

Another way you must take care to be consistent is in your expectations for how students turn in assignments and complete assessments. If you are going to use the LMS to make announcements, explain course activities, and keep the gradebook, stick to the LMS during the whole semester. Make the LMS your home base and conduct as much class business there as you can. Increase your use of the LMS by taking advantage of opportunities that these systems offer to upload homework or conduct communicative tasks.

### ***2.3.5 Limit Distractions***

Keep in mind that, although virtual, this is a space that the whole class will share and in which they will spend many hours working. In addition to consistency, seek out simplicity. Stay away from distracting pages and complex design. Your LMS may offer outlandish designs full of colorful options that defeat the purpose of the page. Choose a simple design that is easy to the eye so students focus on the task and not on the design.

Give clear directions with enough explanation to be unequivocal. Keep titles concise: "Upload Homework 2A Here", "Discussion Week Five", "Daily Reading". Keep the content links clean, organized, and easy to find. Once students click on a link, make sure there is plenty of information inside the link to complete the assignment well.

### ***2.3.6 Make Content User-Friendly and Accessible***

There is a common misconception that the younger generation is tech-savvy and can manage any technological task we throw at them. In our experience, the only 21st century skill in which all of our students universally seem to be

experts is texting, a skill of limited usefulness in an online course. Expect your students to need training in new tech skills. Make the development of 21st century skills an explicit objective of your course and coach students through the (sometimes frustrating) process of learning to harness machines to improve their performance.

Also related to technology, many students in our courses either do not own computers or their computers are out of date. These students may not be aware of the resources available to them on campus, or they may live far enough away that frequent visits to the computer lab are out of the question. For those students, asynchronous activities with little video content are more accessible than other kinds of synchronous or exclusively video-based instruction. Synchronous learning activities and videos tend to be difficult on older equipment because of issues with the bandwidth and processing speed required to participate. You do not have to avoid those activities altogether, but keep in mind that some of your students may have to make special arrangements to get to a computer lab on campus for activities that exceed the capabilities of their equipment.

One of the biggest issues currently in online learning is that of accessibility (Ingeno 2013). Students with certain learning differences or physical limitations need you to acknowledge them as you build your course. When you upload pictures, you will have the opportunity to include a detailed verbal description of each image. That detailed description could make it possible for a student with visual impairments to participate fully in your course. Some fonts are difficult for students with dyslexia to read. Choosing a simple font and ample spacing can make your written material more accessible. Your campus Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) office should have more information about how to incorporate the best kinds of activities into your course.

Make it a priority from the beginning to create a course that is easy to navigate for all kind of students.

### ***2.3.7 Focus on Feasibility***

When you go from f2f traditional classes to a hybrid format, you are going to discover that there are many exciting possibilities for learning activities. The key for not becoming overwhelmed and creating a manageable work-load is laser focus on what can be done well and within the allotted time frame. As Caulfield (2011) wrote, in order to take advantage of the hybrid environment you have to be willing to sacrifice some of what you used to do in your f2f class. For many professors, this is one of the biggest strikes against hybrid teaching, giving up tried and true teaching techniques from the traditional classroom (Sands 2002).

The most important aspect of hybrid teaching is to create activities that will promote learning. Your students will not be well-served by a professor who is overwhelmed by an unmanageable workload. Choosing hybrid activities based on their feasibility for your own context is limiting but essential.

Not only professors, but also students can become overwhelmed by the amount of work required in the online environment. Instantaneous verbal interactions in a f2f class become time-intensive reading and writing activities online (Sands 2002). If we, as the course designers, think of the f2f and online environments as separate unconnected entities, we may end up with a system that requires both the workload of a f2f class and that of an online course. Hybrid courses require activity redesign, not just additional activities, to ensure that the course is feasible for instructors and students alike.

## 2.4 Step #4: Managing the Course

Once your course goes live and students begin to interact with the content, a new hybrid teacher will quickly find that the roles of teacher and student do not look the same online as they do in a traditional classroom.

### 2.4.1 *The Role of the Online Professor*

For us, teaching in a new way meant becoming a new kind of teacher. The teacher's role is no longer of lecturer and manager, but of information curator and facilitator. In one of our data analysis meetings, Berta mentioned how much hybrid teaching has affected her teaching practice. She is clearer with expectations and assessments and gives her students more freedom to pursue their own interests than ever before. She no longer feels the need to micromanage learning, just to facilitate it.

Faculty members may be reluctant to teach online in part because of a recognition that their old methods will not translate in the hybrid environment (Carmean and Friedman 2014). That fear is justified. The traditional model with the instructor as the source of all knowledge and the sole leader of the classroom does not work well in hybrid learning environments.

In order to be successful, a hybrid instructor must be:

**Trusting.** An instructor in a hybrid format needs to trust students to set and achieve their own learning goals. Much of the class happens in a virtual space, where a professor does not see or hear students interacting. As the facilitator, the instructor must trust they are doing their task and be willing to lose some control of specific classroom experiences.

**Prepared.** Being prepared is expected of all teachers. Rather than improvising classroom activities, teachers make lesson plans and unit plans and work systematically to report student progress. When teaching hybrid there are even further levels of preparedness: (1) we need to plan ahead and test new tools before students have to use them. (2) we have to anticipate problems, especially technological ones, and provide immediate resources to solve them. (3) we should be ready to go with a plan B, just in case an activity or a digital tool does not work.

**Present Online.** With an online presence, we mean that the instructor is able to give students relevant feedback (Tallent-Runnels et al. 2006) as well as have

an online persona. It is important students do not feel they are alone in the LMS. They need to feel your presence and know that you are paying as much attention to their online work as you do to their f2f work.

**Accessible.** The instructor has to be willing to check on the class evenings and weekends since students will often be working then. Stacey struggles to find the balance between online availability and her personal life. She loves teaching hybrid classes and integrating technology into her classroom. Yet, often, the last thing she does before she closes her eyes at night and the first thing she does when she opens them in the morning is check and return emails. Technology is wonderful, but we are still learning how to put up appropriate barriers between working hours and personal life. Technology has blurred every line between them.

### ***2.4.2 The Role of the Hybrid Student***

Student roles also change in this new learning environment. We found that the most successful students were:

**Open.** Successful students were willing to try new activities and improve technological skills to keep up with the course requirements. Students who resisted experimentation and preferred stability had a more difficult time adjusting to the hybrid course.

**Self-directed.** Students who took initiative and responsibility for their own learning were more successful. Student should seek outside help when necessary from campus resources like the technology support center or professor's office hours. We found students in our study generally sought outside help from two sources: campus resources, like peer tutoring, IT support, and the technology lab; and peers, like former hybrid language class students, native speakers, and current classmates. While we can give our students some guidance about how to find these resources, in the end the students themselves have to be self-directed enough to seek them out.

**Community-oriented.** Students need to be more committed to the well-being of the entire learning community, not just their own individual experience. While many of the online activities were completed individually, many required cooperation. A reduced number of f2f contact hours meant that almost all of the in-class activities were focused on group interaction. Students who enjoyed the course tended to work well with their groups.

**Prepared.** This is also a result of having highly group-oriented in-class activities. If students are not prepared, that affects the whole group's success. Students who failed to prepare well during the online portions of class also reported feeling disoriented or behind when they attended f2f meetings.

### ***2.4.3 Personal Qualities***

Interestingly, we found that certain characteristics were named by instructors and students in this study as either required for hybrid success, or as a result of

involvement in the hybrid class. These qualities include flexibility, preparation, patience, responsibility, community orientation, open mindedness, willingness to learn, risk taking, and process orientation. These qualities do not apply just to teachers or just to students. Everyone involved in the hybrid class experience has to agree to some shared values and work to become more flexible, adventurous, and committed in order to achieve success in the course.

Plan your course with these qualities in mind. A rigid hierarchy will not work in online language learning. Students must be given some autonomy over their learning and trust must be developed between the individuals in the course.

## **2.5 Step #5: Assessment and Data Collection**

Here we discuss the steps an instructor must take to design and build assessments into a course. While instructors in traditional classes could realistically piece together assessments quite effectively after the course is already underway, in a hybrid course that becomes much more difficult. It is important to the continuity and functionality of the course that an assessment plan for the semester be clearly reflected in the layout of the online class space. In addition, if any meaningful data is to be collected in order to inform future decisions about the effectiveness of the course, then those data collection methods should also be built into the basic design. Below we will present the aspects to consider when creating assessments for the hybrid language course.

### ***2.5.1 Course Assessments***

Every activity in the online portion of the hybrid course must be assessed in some way. Unlike a f2f classroom where students are motivated to participate just by virtue of being in the classroom under the gaze of the professor and peers, if online activities are not accounted for in the gradebook, they will not be completed. Accounting for student contributions online does not always mean that the instructor gives detailed feedback. For many activities, we ask students to complete the work thoroughly and thoughtfully and assign credit or no-credit. Some activities, such as the discussion boards and presentations, are graded with a rubric. Rubrics help to provide detailed feedback quickly, but must be prepared and made available to students before the actual assessment takes place so that students will understand the standard to which they are being held. We also make use of peer and self-assessment in particular for group projects and interpersonal language tasks. In the next chapter, we will share a few rubrics we have used for specific assignments.

The assessment you choose should not only be useful for providing feedback to your students, but also feasible for you to complete in the time available to you.

If you are teaching large sections of beginning language courses, frequent and detailed proficiency testing could be very useful for meeting your students learning goals. On the other hand, administering and scoring frequent proficiency tests can be so time-consuming that it doesn't allow you much time to give other kinds of feedback or prepare lesson plans. How will you grade the discussion boards? How much grading time will you allocate to that? How will you grade presentational tasks? Will you use rubrics? Checklists? Completion grades? In our experience, it is best to plan assessments conservatively at first because online evaluation often takes longer than planned. As you become more comfortable in the hybrid classroom environment, you can tailor your assessments to your own strength and the needs of your students. Until then, start slow with meaningful but infrequent evaluation of student performance that compares student performance to the stated course objectives (Dziuban et al. 2004; Tallent-Runnels et al. 2006).

Depending on your LMS and the options you have for creating and editing assessments, you probably have access to the following features:

**Availability.** Here you can set the day and time you want the activity to open and when you want it to close. You can also set the due date and if the activity has a grace period.

**Submission type.** You will use this to set the number of uploads you accept as well as the size and the type. Some activities with individual submissions may be easier to grade if students submit as a PDF or if the copy and paste their writing directly into the online form. Figure out what kind of submission will make your life easiest and go that route.

**Grading.** In this part you can choose the grading scale, if you are using a rubric, and how you want the grade to appear to students on the gradebook.

### ***2.5.2 Managing Expectations***

When the course begins and students start taking assessments, it is important to manage students' expectations about what kind of feedback they will receive and how long it will take to receive it (Sitter et al. 2009). Research (Means et al. 2009) shows that for most interventions, classroom practices, and assessments, hybrid classes do about as good a job as other kinds of classes. So, when necessary, use authentic assessment tools (Dziuban et al. 2004; Tallent-Runnels et al. 2006) that promote learning, get student buy-in on the course from the beginning, and limit the assessments to just those that promoting course objectives.

When it comes to assessments in an online class, we have found that the more we do online, the better. Students benefit from being able to revisit their work to complete self-assessments and to reflect on their progress. As teachers interested in improving our course, we were able to go back and review digital archives to make decisions about how to improve the course from one semester to the next. The quiz feature on our LMS allowed us to easily run reports so that we could look for trends in student performance. That kind of data collection is very



difficult in a traditional classroom, but easy to automate in the hybrid environment. However, all of that convenience comes at a price. Online assessments impose a learning curve on new instructors, and are time consuming to set up and manage.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Before your first meeting with students, make sure that you have prepared a good course for them. First, determine the resources you will need, such as a textbook and an LMS, and seek out sources to provide them. Then, formulate your syllabus, build your course on the LMS, and ensure that all assessments are embedded in the online activities. Once you have designed and created your course, it is time to go live. That is when the real excitement of the hybrid course begins—as you watch the students transform the course by interacting with the content and with each other.

Hybrid Language Teaching in Practice  
Perceptions, Reactions, and Results

Carrasco, B.; Johnson, S.M.

2015, XI, 82 p. 10 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-16425-0