

Week 2 Webinar and Chat Questions
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Webinar Questions:

1. How do you design your course for interaction? What kind of activities do you save for the classroom and what kind of activities do you put online?

Roxana: In the foreign language classroom is by nature very interactive. Even though students develop all the four skills of the language (reading, speaking, listening, and writing), we focus on the communication skills to create language meaningfully. The online section of the class focuses on acquisition of the language (structures, vocabulary). Students are able to learn the new material, work on individualized practice and interaction with the material. In the face to face section of the blended class, students can practice oral communication in pairs and groups. Students are able to participate in the face to face activities if they are prepared for class. In order to be successful in class, it is imperative that students complete the set of pre-assigned online activities.

2. How do you decide which mode to use at the design stage? Is the design influenced by connectivity and accessibility or students profile - i.e background of students or the availability of the technology?

Roxana: There are many items that may decide the design of the course: uniqueness of the discipline, adoption of specific software program, schedule of classroom availability, and available technology for on campus activities.

3. Does the discipline that you are teaching determine into the kind of "blend" that you give to a particular class?

Roxana: The foreign language class is an excellent fit for a blended class due to the importance of communication and creativity with the language. I think that every discipline will have a unique "blend", however they should include the following ingredients: integration, interaction, communication, and socialization.

4. How do you communicate your expectations for blended interactions to your students? How often do you communicate with students?

Roxana: One of the most important components of the blended course is a well-designed training. During the first week of class students should be clear about the expectations of the class. I recommend including an on campus and online training.

Those expectations should also be included in a "course contract" document. The information included in the course contract should be communicated with the

students at least once a month. Clear communication will foster an organized class, which will assist student in their organization skills.

5. What is the role of the instructor/designer to design for interactions in the course as opposed to interaction that will happen regardless? Is interaction frosting or a graded activity?

Roxana: The blended format leads to interaction. However it is important to design the course in a way that the interaction will happen in both modes of the course. The online component could be utilized to foster written interaction, whereas the on-campus component could foster the oral interaction. It all goes back to the clear and unique design of the blend. It is important to keep in mind the integration of both sections of the course to ensure that interaction is not duplicated.

6. Reconsidering the issue of quantity and quality, how much quantity is necessary quality interaction?

Roxana: The quality of the interaction will definitely ensure a successful blended class. At times a blended class includes too many activities/interactions which do not offer additional quality engagement. Students need to get a feeling that each activity assigned online/on campus is meaningful and will contribute the learning process. On the other hand, a blended class could be overwhelmed and hard to navigate if there are too many activities or they are duplicated. Therefore, quality is essential for course success.

7. How can I best increase the rigor of online activities?

Roxana: The online section of the program should be assigned to engage students in the course material. Students should not get the feeling that the online activities are “busy work” or use the online section of the program simply to practice the material covered on-campus. Therefore, if students are engaged and are able to interact with the online material, it will become more “rigorous” in the students’ perception.

8. What does the instructor role look like? What kinds of shifts have your observed in your own teaching role in your blended courses? Do you find yourself being more student-centered? And what does that look like to you?

Roxana: The role of the instructor shifts in a blended course. Since the course is student-centered and students are much more involved in the learning process, I consider the instructor to be facilitator. The class must be organized very carefully before the semester starts, giving students the opportunity to be self-guided. However during the semester the instructor should be able to reflect on the students’ progress and guide students accordingly to ensure success.

Instructors are the subject experts, however their role should shift to be aligned with this modality.

9. Do you think it is important to participate in online and blended course to design a blended course? Does it help to capture the do's and don'ts?

Roxana: It is important to participate in an online class first before you start working on a blended course. Many instructors jump into a blended course because it is required by the administration. If that is the case, it is important to understand very well both modalities before creating a blended course. Make sure that you create your own "blended philosophy" and discuss it with other colleagues (from any discipline) before you start developing a blended course.

10. How can you prepare/train course administrators/faculty for "moderating" online/blended interactions?

Roxana: It is essential to train faculty / administrators to engage in the teaching using a blended/online modality efficiently. Faculty must understand his/her role as facilitator / moderator in a blended / online class, compared to the traditional role of content delivery expert. Each institution should design a training for prospective blended faculty to prepare them for this new modality. At our institution the IDT and experience faculty have embarked in "summer camps" experiences to train instructors interested in teaching blended courses.

Chat Questions:

1. Do you ever query your students for feedback on the delivery / activities?

Roxana: I usually ask students to provide peer to peer feedback in online and on campus projects. Students use rubrics provided by the instructor.

2. Do you have a course policy (expectations document) for your course, especially in terms of online communication?

Roxana: I have a course contract and students must complete it the first week of class. The online expectations must be very clear from the beginning, however they may need to be revised or adjusted throughout the semester.

3. Are your online shells redeveloped each session or are they static and the blended part is more flexible or something else?

Roxana: I developed a "master" shell for each blended course, however the course are revised each semester. Instructors must be able to be flexible in a blended course, and must be able to adjust to the needs of each class.

4. Are you familiar with any studies highlighting the importance and success of student to student interaction? Here are two suggested in the chat today.
 - Swan 2003 - LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS ONLINE:WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US
 - 2011 Social Presence within the Community of Inquiry Framework