

BLENDDED BASIC LANGUAGE COURSES:
MAKING PEDAGOGICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHOICES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

By
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ABSTRACT

Digital learning is becoming increasingly prevalent in colleges and universities in the United States (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Godev, 2014), including in the social field of second language learning. In larger language programs in particular, online and blended (partially online) courses are gaining popularity, such as the recently cited “hybrid revolution in Spanish-language learning” (Long, 2014, p. 1). Administrators look to digital solutions to tight finances, a lack of classroom space, and student demands. A current challenge in the field is helping instructors and students adapt to digital pedagogy and a new perspective: Technology provides innovative possibilities for instruction and interaction, not solely a distance replication of face-to-face courses (Blake, 2009, 2013, 2014; Goertler, 2011, 2014). To be successful, digital learning must include pedagogically sound course design and adequate support for both instructors and learners, requirements that may make this trend not as economical as originally believed (Godev, 2014).

Responding to Hermosilla’s (2014) declaration that “a pending task is to gather accurate data on existing hybrid Spanish programs in US colleges and universities in order to carry out comparative studies” (p. 3), this dissertation examines lower-division blended courses of languages other than English currently or recently taught at U.S. colleges and universities. The dissertation follows Wu’s (2015) assumption that the courses appearing in the prior research literature might not be representative of the vast number of blended courses that now exist.

The dissertation draws upon an original survey of 121 instructor and administrator participants representing 52 language programs and 13 languages, interviews with 21 of these participants, and surveys of 35 students in 4 participants’ classes. Conducted using mixed methods and thematic analysis, the dissertation provides information about blended course

designs so that other institutions can learn from them and emulate them. The study explores the choices that underlie the selection and development of curricula, materials, and technologies in blended language courses; student, instructor, and administrator perspectives on these courses; and support (training, professional development, and resources) available to participants.

Most participants (98 in total) reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the current setup of their blended courses. Variables correlated with instructor satisfaction included a greater number of years of instruction (overall and in the blended format), instructors' amount of influence over the curriculum and materials, their choice of teaching blended classes, and the availability of technology training in their programs. Themes emerging from the interviews included an emphasis on the communicative approach, the use of textbook website packages and (in a few cases) open educational resources, a frustration with inadequate student preparation, instructor autonomy, and varying levels of support for instructors and students. Blended courses in basic language programs are best served when instructors choose their level of technological integration, contribute to the course design, and are offered preparation and support related to both technology and teaching methods.

The study recommends ways that institutions, departments, instructors, and students of languages can make the most of digital pedagogy, not only in officially blended courses, but also in courses across the spectrum of technological integration, from fully face-to-face to fully online. Useful strategies include selecting and creating technological materials that align with the skills that instructors and administrators want students to develop, providing training and support for both pedagogy and technology to new and continuing instructors, and offering technological support to students. The lessons of this study are applicable not only to courses that are officially

blended, but also to all language programs considering or evaluating new technological integrations.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Digital Learning in Higher Education

Blended and online courses are becoming increasingly prevalent in colleges and universities in the United States (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Godev, 2014), even in the inherently social field of second language learning. In larger language programs in particular, blended (or hybrid) and online options are gaining in popularity: A recent issue of the journal *Hispania* highlighted “the hybrid revolution in Spanish-language learning” (Long, 2014, p. 1). While digital learning can provide a litany of advantages when used well, it often has institutional rather than pedagogical motivations (Goertler, 2011; Goertler & Winke, 2008). Higher education administrators look to blended and fully online classes as a solution to financial woes, growing enrollments, instructor shortages, classroom overcrowding, and student demands.

In order for the endeavor to be successful for teachers and students, digital learning comes with its own set of requirements that institutions must provide. Some of these requirements, such as pedagogically sound course design and adequate support for both instructors and learners, may result in hidden costs that make blended and online learning not quite as economical as originally believed (Godev, 2014). Although the costs of digital learning have not yet been adequately studied (Wu, 2015), the reality is that blended and online options should be provided for pedagogical reasons, as well as students’ and instructors’ convenience, and also take financial considerations into full account.

A current challenge in the field is helping instructors adapt to digital pedagogy as they adjust to a new perspective: Technology provides different possibilities for instruction and interaction, rather than simply a distance replication of face-to-face courses (Blake, 2009, 2013,

2014; Goertler, 2011, 2014). Two pervasive views among teachers and students are that the online mode cannot fully replicate face-to-face interactions (Gleason, 2013) and that it is most useful for flipping the classroom to place lectures or drill-type activities online (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). These perspectives make up only a fraction of what can be done in the online mode. While technology can provide many potential learning opportunities, these benefits may be overlooked if instructors and course designers lack familiarity with them, simply seek to replicate face-to-face lessons online, or apply technologies without a clear understanding of their affordances (Colpaert, 2006).

Blended Learning and Blended Language Learning

The term “blended learning” is used here to refer to “a combination of face-to-face and online teaching,” which is the first definition given by Sharma (2010) and which is often used interchangeably with “hybrid” or “partially online.” Although this combination can be carried out in a variety of ways, “the most common structure of a hybrid language course combines face-to-face (F2F) time with an instructor and the use of an online platform” (Hermosilla, 2014, p. 2), often one produced by the publisher to correspond with the textbook (Godev, 2014). The term “blended learning” has also been used within education to refer to a course with a combination of pedagogical methods regardless of technologies employed or to a purely online course consisting of several different technologies, as well as in the corporate world to refer to self-study and online training (Sharma, 2010). In the current language education literature, however, it refers primarily to combined classroom and online instruction.

Genís Pedra and Martín de Lama (2013) highlight blended learning’s “flexibility to adapt to the learners’ needs as regards time, place, and pace” and specifically include “socialization, interaction and active learning opportunities” as integral components of the blend (p. 128). Some

authors (Carrasco & Johnson, 2015; Rubio & Thoms, 2014) differentiate between “blended” and “hybrid,” using “blended” to refer to courses that incorporate online work without sacrificing any face-to-face classroom time (unlike “hybrid”), but this dissertation uses it to mean that some of the online work is replacing a portion of face-to-face instruction.

The benefit of blended language learning, as it is defined here, is the ability to include any combination of face-to-face, online asynchronous, and online synchronous components to support pedagogical objectives and satisfy learner needs. The blended approach employs language learning technologies to complement, rather than fully replace, the lessons that the instructor or course designer chooses to keep in the face-to-face mode (Gleason, 2013). Some language educators speak highly of the blend. According to Hermosilla (2014), who was synthesizing several earlier studies, “A well-planned hybrid course in which teachers spend less time lecturing and in which the students are more engaged in activities conducive to accomplishing communicative tasks has more effective learning results than a traditional all F2F instruction format” (p. 2). The blend has the advantage of being attractive to students who find it more convenient to attend fewer class sessions as well as those who enjoy working at their own pace, providing a possible solution for low-enrolled courses such as in the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs).

The primary challenges of blended language learning are the need to motivate students to work independently, the additional time required for instructors to provide feedback on online work, and the new mindset needed to create useful activities that make the best use of both face-to-face and online modes. Course designers, instructors, and students must all be supported during this process, but the same financial challenges that may cause institutions to turn to digital solutions may inhibit their ability to provide trainings, grants, graders, tutors, and course release

time (Godev, 2014; Goertler, Bollen, & Gaff Jr, 2012). An additional challenge in converting language classes to a blended model is that in many cases, innovative face-to-face courses already make efficient use of class time for interactive activities. Instructors in the redesigned blended courses therefore cannot spend less time lecturing (if they were already not lecturing), but rather sacrifice some valuable F2F communication time and need to replace it with equally useful online activities.

Blended and fully online (formerly “distance”) courses have been increasing in popularity over the past several decades (Carrasco & Johnson, 2015; Rubio & Thoms, 2014), “gradually replacing some traditional courses” (Godev, 2014, p. 21). It is more difficult to obtain data about blended courses than their fully online counterparts since blended courses are not always treated as their own category in data sources, often being grouped with face-to-face or fully online courses. Nevertheless, several recent reports show trends of universities increasingly moving toward both blended and online options as alternatives to traditional face-to-face courses, as well as of faculty opinions becoming increasingly favorable toward blended and online teaching (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012; Online Learning Consortium, 2015). By 2012, at least 6.7 million students in higher education (32% of all students) were taking one or more online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2013). According to a Pew Research Center survey (Parker, Lenhart, & Moore, 2011), “more than three-quarters of college presidents (77%) report that their institutions now offer online courses” (p. 1).

The same study found a stark difference between the perceptions of the public and of university administrators about the value of online education: While only 29% of the surveyed public believed that online courses provided the same value as face-to-face courses, 51% of surveyed college presidents believed that they did (Parker, et al., 2011). The blended format is a

beneficial compromise between the intentions of university administrators to provide online learning options and the skepticism of the public about fully online classes. Fully online courses are not necessarily replacing blended courses in higher education; rather, both options are part of a new trend of digital pedagogy (Blake, 2013).

A few studies have attempted to tease apart differences between blended and online versions of the same language course. Harker and Koutsantoni (2005) compared online and blended versions of an English for Academic Purposes course along several measures, including course completion, academic progress (pre- to post-test), and student satisfaction, and they found the formats to be largely equivalent in all but course completion, with fewer online students finishing the course. Of students who did complete it, online students were more satisfied overall than blended students, although online students also noted in their feedback more problems with the lessons.

How Can Blended Language Learning Succeed?

The success of a blended course depends upon the appropriate selection and distribution of modes for the learning context (Neumeier, 2005) and their integration into a coherent whole (Murphy & Southgate, 2011; Sharma, 2010). In the blended format, the instructor provides a link between the students and the technology, but the roles of the instructor and the technology remain separate and must be clearly defined (Sharma & Barrett, 2007). In the curriculum and materials design process, pedagogical principles should precede the selection and development of technological tools (Chapelle, 2009; Colpaert, 2006; Goertler, 2014; Green, St.John, Warnecke, & Atkinson, 2011).

Unlike in content-rich fields in which the mode of learning may matter less than the content that is to be learned, language learning provides a substantial challenge when moved

online, especially in lower-division courses emphasizing acquisition of the basic skills. This challenge is that students must develop all communicative skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing, or in signed languages, signing—which is at odds with the efficiency of the written mode. One of the great benefits of the Internet, quick retrieval of information, relies overwhelmingly on written text. In the past decade, due to faster Internet speeds, increased capacities for online data storage, and a broader reach of closed-captioning and other accessibility tools for students with disabilities, multimedia options for instruction have become much more feasible. Even with these gains, however, students still are accustomed to getting information from the Internet by opening a browser, performing a search, and reading the written text that appears. This process is so ingrained for many students that simply providing audio and video tools to engage students' aural skills—listening and speaking—does not automatically guarantee their use in place of faster, but less educational, solutions such as using a translation website. Instructors and course developers should consider this issue when designing online lessons so that students can more easily and frequently access them and learn from them.

The Present Study and Its Relevance

This dissertation examines blended courses of second/foreign languages other than English currently or recently taught at colleges and universities around the United States, with an emphasis on lower-division language programs, rather than upper-division content courses. This emphasis is because it is the basic communication skills that can provide the greatest challenges to teaching in an online environment. In addition, since lower-division courses have more sections, enroll more students per class, and are less specialized than upper-division courses, studying the lower division makes this research relevant for more instructors and students.

Since potential savings of cost and facilities in blended classes can be multiplied over multiple sections and terms, lower-division courses are good candidates for the work that is required to develop a course in the new format. The course can be reused many times, adjusted after feedback from multiple sections of students, and often administered by multiple instructors, such as teaching assistants in a multi-section class. Even within the lower division, Wu (2015) finds that online and blended courses are most common in STEM fields and calls for more research into these courses in the humanities. This dissertation aims to fill a portion of this research gap by being a systematic study of lower-division blended courses in second languages.

In this dissertation, blended courses are defined as courses in which approximately 25-90% of face-to-face instructional time is replaced by online activities that students complete either outside of class time or in a laboratory environment without the direct supervision of an instructor. This definition is adapted from Goertler (2011) and Scida and Saury (2006). Courses were included with as little as one day out of five of classroom instruction replaced by online activities, resulting in a proportion closer to 20% online. Although this range is broad, all courses within it are relevant for the study since the process of adapting the course to a blended model is instructive for other institutions, regardless of the course's exact online percentage.

The research literature provides instructive lessons about design, pedagogical theory, and evaluation of blended language courses, but it only reveals a small cross-section of what programs are actually doing in practice. This dissertation follows Wu's (2015) assumption that blended courses appearing in the research literature might not be representative of the vast number of blended courses that now exist. The blended basic language courses that are featured in published works could be unusual in various ways; their programs could have been awarded

funding for development, and they could be using methods more innovative than the common strategy of replacing face-to-face class time with the publisher's online activities.

Following this reasoning, simply totaling up the methods used in blended courses appearing in published articles does not provide a representative picture of what methods are actually being followed in practice and how well they hold up to internal evaluations and the scrutiny of students, instructors, and administrators. Responding to Hermosilla's (2014) declaration that "a pending task is to gather accurate data on existing hybrid Spanish programs in US colleges and universities in order to carry out comparative studies about them" (p. 3), this dissertation expands that call to basic language programs in general. It provides a broader picture of the university departments employing blended learning in some or all of their basic language classes as well as revealing deeper information about the learning contexts in a selection of the programs.

The relevance of this study is its applicability to other language programs that are currently developing or redesigning blended courses in their basic language sequence, as well as those considering developing them in the future. Hermosilla (2014) points out the variety of models currently being used in blended courses and calls for "more research to determine the most effective elements of hybrid programs" (p. 3). While avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach or a preconceived notion of best practices, this dissertation provides information about better practices, that is, methods that are working for different types of language programs, so that other institutions can emulate the ones that may work best for their program type. It also draws attention to possible pitfalls that the studied programs have already gone through so that others can better avoid them.

Of course, the lessons from blended classes are not applicable only to courses designated as blended, but rather to any course with technological integration, which at this point is most language courses. Even courses that still meet four to five hours per week can benefit from the lessons of blended courses to make their online components as effective as they can be and to provide a connection between online and face-to-face modes. The lessons are also relevant for programs seeking to develop fully online classes since some blended programs' solutions for the online mode might be just what other educators need to be able to move their courses fully online. Any language program deciding which formats of classes will meet their needs can consider the issues in this dissertation when making these choices and determining what resources they will need to provide for their instructors and students.

Existing blended courses in basic language programs at U.S. colleges and universities can provide lessons for the creation and improvement of blended (and other) courses at other institutions. The following research questions and sub-questions aim to focus the inquiry about these lessons on three main areas: pedagogical theory, participant perspectives, and support for participants.

Research Questions

- I. What choices (financial, pedagogical, or other) underlie the selection and development of curricula, materials, and technologies in blended language courses at U.S. colleges and universities?
 - Why and how were blended language courses implemented at the institutions studied?

- What types of curricula, materials, and technologies are being used in these courses? Are they created by the instructors or programs, or are they prepackaged?
 - What student assessment strategies are being used in these courses, and how do they align with the blended format and pedagogical goals?
 - How are these courses being internally or externally evaluated, and what are the results of these evaluations?
- II. What are student, instructor, and administrator perspectives on these courses?
- Why are students taking blended language courses, and how well are these courses meeting students' indicated goals?
 - Why are instructors teaching blended language courses, and how successful do instructors and administrators believe the courses to be?
- III. What support (training, professional development, and resources) is available to participants teaching and learning in blended courses?
- How are instructors being supported in the teaching of blended courses? What do instructors believe that they are gaining from these interventions?
 - How are students being supported in the use of technologies in blended courses? What do students believe that they are gaining from these interventions?

Theoretical Framework

Early research on blended language learning compared it to face-to-face courses in an attempt to prove that it was at least as good (Blake, Wilson, Cetto, & Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Scida & Saury, 2006). In a metastudy of online and blended learning across a variety of disciplines, Wu (2015) points out problems with the large amount of comparison literature concluding that student outcomes in online and blended courses are not significantly different from face-to-face courses. Not many studies establish causation or include an adequate control group for the claims made, many studies rely on small sample sizes, and “none of the studies account for attrition bias” (p. 13) when comparing student performance at the beginning and end of a course (Wu, 2015). Although Harker and Koutsantoni (2005) did measure the attrition rate in their online versus their blended courses, the larger studies analyzed by Wu (2015) did not adequately measure or account for it.

While some studies still compare the results of different types of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) within a blended framework (e.g., Hirotsu, 2009), for example, as an institutional requirement during the transition to blended learning, a newer line of research takes a different approach (Rubio & Thoms, 2014). The newer studies analyze blended courses as coherent wholes, taking the learning context into consideration in determining the suitability of the course design and materials and technology’s potential for achieving goals not possible within the limitations of the face-to-face mode. Blake (2009, 2014) prioritizes research on using CALL to enable interaction and encourage language use and learning outside the classroom, rather than simply comparing student progress and perspectives within the online mode with those from face-to-face learning and paper materials.

Another crucial element in the theoretical backdrop of this dissertation is the need for a connection between course design, learning goals, pedagogical principle, assessment type, and technology employed (Goertler, 2014; Hauck & Stickler, 2006; Humphries & Mihai, 2012). How much the instructor or course designer focuses on learning goals has been demonstrated to have an effect on both students' and instructors' reactions to the blend (Ushida, 2005). Yet, existing studies do not always note how well CALL is integrated into the course, sometimes only mentioning which technologies the course used. Although it can be difficult to quantify the degree of integration, courses can be placed on a spectrum from those that use technology primarily for student homework, for example on a publisher's website (e.g., Sagarra & Zapata, 2008), to those in which the instructor takes an active role in the creation and use of the online materials (e.g., Ticheler & Sachdev, 2011). Gleason (2013) notes the problem of scarce information about the use of technology in blended courses and calls for more qualitative, ethnographic description of the learning situation in blended language teaching to better capture the full contexts of the learning that produced the reported results, in line with Goertler's (2014) call for a connection between pedagogy, design, and technology.

With these elements in mind, this dissertation studies blended basic language courses in a variety of programs, including those not previously studied in the research literature, bringing out notable themes so that their strengths can be emulated and the consistent problems can be addressed through future interventions at other institutions that are developing blended courses. This dissertation aims to shed light on how much blended courses are distinguished by particular pedagogical choices and support of instructors, to what degree they seek to replicate online the same teaching strategies used in the classroom, and how much overt pedagogical choices are being supplanted by the efficiency of online drill-type activities that correspond to published

textbooks. It seeks to provide enough context regarding the institutions, languages, student body, administrative support, financial issues, and related factors to help other programs offering blended courses find analogous situations among the courses analyzed here.

By soliciting the opinions of instructors, administrators, and students, the dissertation aims to reflect the perspectives of a variety of blended course stakeholders in regard to the current setup and the reasoning behind their choices. Through survey and interview methodology, the study seeks to obtain descriptive and explanatory information that can support and guide other programs undertaking course development, implementation, and revision. A closer look at each program studied will reveal factors and themes correlated with positive reactions to the blend and will suggest ways that institutions, departments, instructors, and students can make the most of the format.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the five main threads about blended language learning, drawn from the research literature, that underlie the design and discussion of the present study. The first thread, design of blended courses and materials, begins with design trends and examples of materials that are relevant to blended courses in second languages, and it concludes with a summary of the main design models that are currently in use in blended second language courses in the U.S. as described in the literature. The next section builds upon the design models, proceeding through implementation into methods of course evaluation. The third component, student assessment strategies, brings in ideas about alternatives in technology-based assessment, including both traditional and newer options, and their relevance to blended courses. Instructor and student perspectives on blended learning make up the fourth strand of research reviewed here. The chapter concludes with ideas on support that can be provided for both students and instructors to improve their experiences with blended learning.

Design of Courses and Materials

Given the wide variety of design options available, blended course designers and materials developers have an enormous task in determining what to select and create for both the face-to-face and online modes. Fortunately, second language acquisition (SLA) research, language pedagogy literature, and instructional systems technology can provide a theoretical foundation for this process.

Course-level design

When designing a second language blended course from the ground up, a vast number of options are available for every level of design. Several theorists provide strategies to streamline the development process. Goertler (2011) isolates five stages in adopting a blended model: needs analysis, curriculum planning, implementation, evaluation, and revision. The needs analysis requires communication with all stakeholders to determine their desires for the course and to plan for all costs (trainings, etc.) that will be required. Curricular planning involves not only determining the course content and technologies but also specifying participants' roles and planning how the course will be evaluated and maintained. Implementation is more straightforward, but Goertler highlights the importance of being flexible during the process. Evaluation (both formal and informal) and revision are parts of an iterative process that require the continued support of all stakeholders.

Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) make reference to a similar, four-step design process: “investigation, application, representation, and iteration” (p. 29), based on Beetham and Sharpe (2007). The process starts from analyzing students' needs and moves into practice, determining how best to match up pedagogical practice with the design models to meet those needs. The iteration step reminds designers that the process is never over since choices must be made again and again based on available information. Gruba and Hinkelman acknowledge, however, that blended language course designers lack the luxury of starting from zero; rather, developing a blended course is a process of adapting the course that already exists, as a new iteration of an old design. They advocate basing design choices on SLA theories and considering micro (classroom), meso (course, department, and institution), and macro (standards) levels.

Also starting from the perspective that pedagogy should dictate the technology rather than the reverse, Colpaert (2006) applies principles from instructional systems technology to outline a development process for the creation of academic language learning materials. In particular, he highlights the multitude of choices available to instructional designers at each point in the process, many of which are often made implicitly without careful consideration, and calls for much-needed collaboration between language instructors and technology experts. These suggestions are even more crucial for blended courses, which have more design options available and thus more possible decision points for instructors and administrators—even if they are not always aware that all of these choices are possible.

Materials Design

Online materials in blended courses range from tutorial CALL, such as video lectures and drills, to newer, more interactive technologies that stimulate acquisition according to social or interactionist perspectives, such as forums, chats, and webquests. The next subsection consists of a brief history of these trends, as used in both blended and other formats of classes.

One older CALL design trend still commonly used, referenced by Lee and Chong (2008) and Scida and Saury (2006), is to employ asynchronous technologies to remove tedious elements (such as grammar explanations and practice, and preparation for more interactive activities) from the classroom, allowing more face-to-face time for oral skills practice. This type of tutorial CALL is what is generally used in publishers' textbook website packages. The choices in a blended setting are not only about where technology can be used, however; they concern where it can be most effective. Thus, Lee and Chong (2008) also advocate finding class components for which individual online practice is not just a replacement but is actually a more ideal solution,

such as pronunciation practice of homophones and homonyms, in which computerized or personalized feedback online can surpass in-class possibilities.

A more modern view is that taken by Goertler (2014), who divides SLA theories into three categories: linguistic, cognitive or psycholinguistic, and social, and uses them to explain how they can underlie digital pedagogy in blended courses. Each category of SLA theory implies certain processes of language acquisition and therefore suggests different types of CALL as the most effective. Activities in the online and face-to-face modes should be based on compatible SLA theories. For example, a communicative classroom focusing on socializing learners into a linguistic community would be best supported by interactive online activities with classmates or target language speakers, not drill-and-kill grammar practice, the latter of which matches up with Universal Grammar or behaviorism. Goertler's (2014) recommendations for blended learning include making theoretically grounded choices, understanding that student outcomes may differ in the blended format, carrying out a needs analysis, providing support for teachers and students, creating adaptive materials for a variety of learning styles, giving adequate feedback, and continuously collecting and analyzing data to modify the class.

In the same vein as Goertler's (2014) call for a connection between pedagogical principle and type of CALL, Lafford, Lafford, and Sykes (2007) aim to replace drill-type CALL activities with ones that embed words' complex layers of meaning in their cultural contexts. In a study of Spanish vocabulary applications, the authors found that most vocabulary activities take the form of drills to practice the meanings of individual words, such as matching items with pictures or with the first language (L1) and gap-filling in sentences, rather than anything that gives students greater insight into the pragmatic or cultural contexts in which these words appear. As a response, the authors propose ten design features rooted in psycholinguistic and connectionist

principles for developing CALL applications to aid learners' vocabulary acquisition. The features relate to cultural and pragmatic contexts, connections to background knowledge, multimodality/multimedia, salience, depth of processing, relationships among lexemes, feedback on learners' hypotheses about the lexicon, and task-based activities. The notable element of their study, in addition to the connection between CALL and pedagogical principle, is that their instructional model centers upon a desire to teach the lexicon and not only the grammatical system. Second language courses that follow a traditional textbook often resort to a curriculum designed around grammatical features, rather than basing it on contextualized acquisition of the lexicon.

The model used in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program in Chile (Bañados, 2006) is a blended approach that combines online practice monitored by teachers with face-to-face classes and additional face-to-face conversation time with native speakers of English. In this blend, the software utilizes audiovisual materials, communication between learners aimed at negotiation of meaning, and automated feedback designed to be more human-like. It also uses enhanced multimedia input such as changing the color, size, or other characteristics of forms to improve students' ability to notice linguistic features and incorporate them into their developing linguistic system. What is notable about this blend is that the different components are designed to work together; rather than simply being related to the same topics as the in-class work, the online components correspond to face-to-face activities. For instance, students may gather data in a pair activity and then enter it into the online system to receive feedback.

A comparison study undertaken at the University of California-Davis (Blake, et al., 2008) demonstrated that, according to an automated test of speaking, blended and distance learners of Spanish did not fall behind their face-to-face counterparts. The authors attribute this result to the

instrumental role of interactive, synchronous text and voice chat components, concluding that it is the effort and approach of the teacher, not the course format used, that contribute to students' success.

These and other studies demonstrate a wide variety of design and implementation processes and technological components underlying blended language courses currently or recently in use in higher education. They also reveal the importance of making pedagogical choices about the online materials used and the way work is distributed between modes, rather than relying solely on publishers' textbook website packages out of convenience. Even if a published package is used, instructors and course designers can integrate it into their vision of the blended course along with other materials as needed. Since most of the prior studies only focus on particular programs, however, it is difficult to determine just how much of a role pedagogical choices play in selection and development of materials and activities in blended courses across the United States. This dissertation aims to help fill that gap.

Design Models in Use in Blended Language Courses in the United States

With the preceding theoretical components as a backdrop, this subsection turns to the design of blended courses in the literature, including their online components, processes of materials development, underlying pedagogical theories, and amount and locations of face-to-face and online work. Recent research literature reveals several distinct models into which the majority of blended second language courses in the United States fall. Due to the focus of this dissertation and the stark differences between blended courses in ESL and other languages, research about ESL courses is excluded from this subsection.

In terms of online course components, the design models fall on a spectrum from those emphasizing drill activities and video lectures in the online work to those involving more

communication and interaction in the online work. In the area of materials development, the courses range from using completely publisher-provided online content to developing a new interface and activities, typically by the instructor or department as a whole. With regard to pedagogy, the models vary from entirely based on the preexisting face-to-face course and its learning goals to completely newly-designed and created intentionally for the realities of the blended format.

An additional distinction between blended courses is how they distribute the work between face-to-face and online formats. Some courses considered by their programs to be “blended” consist of four in-class days and only one online day per week (20% online). Others take the opposite approach to the blend, meeting face-to-face only one day per week, and still others find a middle ground.

Programs also differ in regard to where the face-to-face sessions meet. Hermosilla (2014) highlights three formats used in blended Spanish courses at different U.S. universities, based upon the amount of supervision that students have in completing their online work. One type consists solely of face-to-face classroom sessions and online work, another consists of classroom and language laboratory sessions, and the third uses all three formats (classroom, language laboratory, and online work). In this dissertation, blended courses are defined as those that replace a portion of face-to-face instructional time with online work that is not supervised in a laboratory, even if some laboratory work is also included, but it is difficult to make a determination across the board for all programs since some institutions consider a combined classroom-and-laboratory format to meet the definition of “blended.”

Table 2.1 (a-b) shows how some of these design models are combined in courses that appear in the research literature about blended learning in basic language programs at North American institutions.

Table 2.1

Examples of Blended Basic Language Courses Using Different Combinations of Design Models

a.	Fewer online days	More online days
Based on preexisting course		University of North Carolina-Charlotte (Godev, 2014)
Newly created for blended format	Carnegie Mellon University (Ushida, 2005)	University of California-Davis (Blake, 2014)
b.	Drill and video activities	Interactive online work
Publisher-provided activities	“A large public North American university” (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, p. 213)	University of Tennessee (Young & Pettigrew, 2014)

This comparison of formats and design models demonstrates that there is great variety in the blended courses currently or recently offered in basic language programs. Realizing the extent of the possibilities available and deciding what models to subscribe to will help in the decision process for instructors and administrators in other programs who are designing or redesigning blended courses. This dissertation aims to expand this description of existing blended courses to include more design models and examples of more combinations of models to assist in their course development process. Building on the prior research in this area, the dissertation seeks to address the choice inherent in the origin and development of blended language classes through the following research questions:

- I. What choices (financial, pedagogical, or other) underlie the selection and development of curricula, materials, and technologies in blended language courses at U.S. colleges and universities?

- What types of curricula, materials, and technologies are being used in these courses? Are they created by the instructors or programs, or are they prepackaged?

Implementation, Evaluation, and Redesign

Since the design process can be highly theoretical and idealistic, the first test of usability and practicality of a program's blended courses often does not occur until students enroll in the classes and begin using the materials. There are several ways to predict how the implementation phase will go and adjust materials accordingly: a program could involve multiple stakeholders in the design process (e.g., Cárdenas-Claros & Gruba, 2010) or designers could supervise the first run of a blended course by having students do the online work in a language laboratory prior to becoming fully blended during the following term (e.g., at the University of Tennessee). In any event, no matter how much work goes into the course before implementation, evaluation and revision will be necessary to produce the best possible product for instructors and students. This section draws upon the research literature to provide lessons for the process of implementation, evaluation, and revision.

Implementation and Feedback

Some blended course projects aim to involve a variety of stakeholders, including students, in the design process. One reason that this seemingly obvious idea is not used more often in CALL is that it can be frustrating and time-consuming to attempt to conduct usability tests of software before it is completed (McCloskey, Thrush, Wilson-Patton, & Kleckova, 2008). Developers generally must make predictions based on prior research and invest their time and money in creating software before it can be tested (McCloskey et al., 2008), after which point small revisions are the only cost-effective changes.

Cárdenas-Claros and Gruba (2010), however, found a way to involve students and an instructor along with a software designer in a participatory design project to construct and evaluate prototypes of help options (enhanced textual and multimedia input) for computerized L2 listening activities. To arrive at the best system before developing it electronically, the designers used paper models of the interface and asked participants to move the components around and explain their reasoning. Results suggest that this type of cooperation between software designers and users at each iteration of CALL development—giving trial users opportunities to influence it for their ease of use before design is complete—will help improve an electronic language learning product.

Gadbois and Quildon (2013) reported on the success of the blended format in a program for the development of functional French skills for employees of McGill University in Canada. The first iteration of this program's blended courses consisted of a direct transfer of material previously used in the face-to-face format in an unsuccessful attempt to conserve time and expend less effort in course development. Course designers subsequently realized that adapting face-to-face material was not efficient. The authors conclude that "it appears to be easier to redesign a course entirely from scratch rather than try to adapt material from one delivery mode to another" (p. 4). Designers subjected the user interface to usability tests with a sample student population and started a cycle of trainings about how to use the videoconferencing software: Technology staff trained the instructors, and the instructors trained the students. Even though the content was premade for the instructors, who had little prior experience with teaching in the online mode, "instructors quickly took ownership of the course content and felt they were still able to be flexible in their teaching by modifying existing or suggesting alternative learning activities" (p. 7).

The dissertation aims to discover choices and issues inherent in the implementation process at a variety of institutions through the following research sub-question:

- Why and how were blended language courses implemented at the institutions studied?

Course Evaluation Strategies

Turning to evaluation of blended learning materials, courses, and programs, the literature provides examples of various frameworks, explained in this subsection, to evaluate the suitability of designs. In keeping with the theoretical framework used in this dissertation, the focus here is on studies that analyze blended courses as coherent wholes, rather than the earlier comparative studies.

Examples of this newer line of research are Jamieson, Chapelle, and Preiss's (2005) and Jamieson and Chapelle's (2010) evaluations of English as a Second Language (ESL) CALL materials in the U.S. and abroad. The researchers developed survey and interview questions to correspond with the six CALL evaluation criteria from Chapelle (2001)—language learning potential, meaning focus, learner fit, authenticity, positive impact, and practicality—to determine effectiveness for each criterion and agreement among stakeholders. Results were positive in the U.S. context studied, but the materials were not an equally good fit for all learning contexts abroad, possibly due to a mismatch between learner levels and materials or even cultural factors. Jamieson and Chapelle (2010) also note that survey methodology is a feasible way of conducting a multi-site study, a claim that is relevant to a portion of the data collection in this dissertation.

Neumeier (2005) makes a concerted effort to diverge from the practice-based history of CALL and design a research-based framework to aid in the search for the optimal blend in future development of blended language learning programs. Her principles were elaborated through the

experience of designing JoblineLMU, a blended program aimed at teaching students at German universities how to use English in an employment application process. The system, designed for those intending to seek jobs in English-speaking countries, covers relevant linguistic and factual topics. Content is provided through self-access online modules and supported with face-to-face classroom sessions, resulting in a blended format. Neumeier's (2005) framework includes careful consideration of the choice and distribution of modes, the model of integration (including the sequencing of modes and level of integration), the teaching methods in each mode, the interactional patterns, the learner and teacher roles, and the locations used.

Neumeier's framework was used by Grgurović (2011) to evaluate an intermediate aural skills class in an intensive English program in an attempt to help fill a perceived research gap by describing in greater depth the learning environment in both modes of a blended language class. Based on the results of student surveys, teacher interviews, and class and language lab observations, Grgurović concluded that the face-to-face (the "lead" mode) and online modes were well integrated in the course, due to their inherent curricular connections and the way that the instructor used the material in class and lab time and kept track of student progress online. Student and instructor preferences differed in regard to how the work was divided up between modes, with some students preferring to work on activities at home on their own and others (similarly to the instructor) preferring to have lab time where the instructor could monitor and assist them. Even in the face of these differences, the blend was found to encourage the participation of all students, unlike the face-to-face classroom setting, which favored more motivated students.

This finding parallels Kissau, McCullough, and Pyke (2010), who found that the online, asynchronous mode in a French class encouraged all students to communicate. Kissau, et al.'s

(2010) case study was of an online upper-division French course, enrolling mostly heritage learners, at a U.S. university. The researchers found that through having time to compose online posts and thus contribute to the course regardless of how quickly they were able to prepare a response, students seemed to improve their competence and decrease their anxiety from the beginning to end of the course, and their total number of words written slightly increased. The course's format was beneficial to both heritage and non-heritage students. Despite the benefits of the course, students reported that having an initial F2F technology orientation would have helped them adjust to the format.

In a study with a setup similar to that of Grgurović (2011), Godev (2014) compared the time and effort that instructors spent on blended sections of a beginning Spanish class with the amount expected of instructors teaching face-to-face sections of the same class. The blended class had twice as many students as face-to-face sections, but each half of the class attended only one of the two face-to-face sessions every week, so the blended and face-to-face instructors spent the same amount of time in class per section. The grading time was alleviated for instructors of blended classes by cutting back on the number of submitted assignments requiring instructor grading. Results showed that instructors spent approximately only three more hours per semester than expected of those teaching face-to-face sections but that the blend may require greater effort of instructors because of the more varied tasks and modes among which they had to switch during the time that they were spending on the class. That is, by engaging in online teaching, grading, and communicating with their coordinator via multiple online platforms; reading and responding to student email queries; and teaching in the face-to-face mode, teachers may be spending more effort on hybrid courses than the researcher's estimate of their total working time reflects.

Madyarov (2009) presents a framework that was used in evaluating an online EFL course in the Middle East. Areas evaluated in this mixed-methods study included student engagement and perceptions (both formative and summative) and achievement of learning outcomes. Although the relevant criteria depend strongly upon the institution's own context, the framework used in this study—based on a synthesis of five preexisting frameworks from both language course evaluation and distance learning evaluation, with components similar to Goertler (2011)—is a useful model for the evaluation of other online and blended language courses. Madyarov's framework used self-reported quantitative data about students' level of engagement with online materials; data from student surveys and journals about the online course environment and organization, quality of instruction, assessment, and support for students; and quantitative student assessment data to determine how well students achieved the learning outcomes.

Hampel and Pleines (2013) report on an evaluation and successful redesign, aimed at increasing student participation and engagement with course materials, of a virtual learning environment in an intermediate German class. The course design used was primarily asynchronous, combined with some synchronous meetings with tutors. Although the class was technically distance learning, the lessons from its development and revision were relevant to blended courses because the synchronous meetings approximate what could also be done during face-to-face class sessions. The course's evaluation was not as theoretically grounded as the ones in the previous studies, but it brought about a successful redesign via its data collection method, which combined analysis of Moodle user logs with student surveys and tutor interviews. The research demonstrated that to encourage online participation in the course, it was necessary to reduce the number and variety of activities by removing wiki activities and cutting back on

discussion boards, to make the site less confusing through better organization, and to increase scaffolding via instructor feedback. Lessons from this study can be combined with theoretical frameworks to create a promising method to evaluate and redesign blended learning.

Finally, Young and Pettigrew (2014) took the perspective of evaluating a Spanish program during the process of a redesign to adapt the courses to a blended format. Their evaluation identifies the major challenges in making changes in a large, multi-section program in which courses are principally taught by teaching assistants. These changes include conceptualizing students' task of language acquisition differently for the blended format, such as how this task is distributed between in-class and online activities and the independence that students will need to demonstrate to learn material on their own. Starting from the formats and methodologies used and lessons learned by other institutions that had recently engaged in a similar redesign, the authors analyzed aspects of the program such as the textbook and electronic workbook, assessments, and pedagogical activities. For each element, the authors explained how it was handled in the redesign, how it took advantage of technological affordances to support the program's pedagogy, and how it matched up with national standards. The authors conclude that important variables in the success of blended courses are student preparation, instructor adherence to preferred pedagogical techniques, dependability of technology, and aligning the assessments with the instructional content and methods.

Although the specific evaluation criteria differ, what all of these studies have in common is their use of a framework by which blended learning materials, courses, and programs can be designed and evaluated. It would be instructive to find out whether these or similar evaluation frameworks are being used in practice at U.S. colleges and universities for their blended language courses or whether their reach is more limited to the published research literature.

Evaluative criteria used in practice might tend more toward a comparison between student grades or other assessment measures in equivalent blended and traditional classes (e.g., Blake et al., 2008; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Scida & Saury, 2006), even though research trends have moved past this type of study, or courses could be created and left to run without subsequent evaluation and redesign. The dissertation addresses the issue of course and program evaluation through the following research sub-question:

- How are these courses being internally or externally evaluated, and what are the results of these evaluations?

Student Assessment Strategies

The issue of student assessment, although not always included in discussions of blended course design, is central to the day-to-day implementation of the course. Whether student assessment results are being used to compare students' outcomes between blended and fully face-to-face classes or simply to ensure that all are meeting the proficiency requirements imposed by their institution, student assessment can have a substantial impact on how instructors and administrators evaluate the success of their blended courses. In addition, instructors are tasked with preparing their students for assessments, for their students' benefit as well as their own. Thus, the assessment types have a strong bearing on how the class is conducted in both face-to-face and online modes.

Two main themes emerge from the research literature about how to make the best use of technology to assess students in blended settings: moving traditional tests online and including non-traditional alternatives in assessment. Both of these areas aim to maximize assessment's potential, validity, reliability, and practicality, but in different ways and with different impacts on teaching and learning.

Shifting traditional examinations to an online format can be a straight transfer of the same question types, or it can use computer-adaptive testing and natural language processing where funding and workloads permit, such as for large-scale testing (Carr, 2011; Chapelle, 2008; Chapelle & Douglass, 2006; Choi, Kim, & Boo, 2003; Ockey, 2009). Work in this area must manage issues of test security and academic integrity, if students are completing assessments at a distance. New problems may arise, such as content-related validity, when the questions are randomly selected by a computer and do not necessarily represent weights of material studied. The heavily technology-based tools of this type highlighted throughout the literature have been developed primarily for the testing of English, but they can provide lessons for the development of tools for other languages as well, such as for blended classes that use traditional tests without spending face-to-face class sessions on them.

The second theme in assessment with technology, which holds the most potential for blended and online language assessment, is the use of technology for lower-stakes and formative assessments, including such alternatives as forums, blogs, wikis, recorded or synchronous speaking assignments, and online portfolios (Amoraga-Piqueras, Comas-Quinn, & Southgate, 2011; Cummins & Davesne, 2009; Duensing & Harper, 2011; Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011; Humphries & Mihai, 2012; Keppell & Carless, 2006). Palloff and Pratt (2009) recommend starting from a framework that unites course design, outcomes, activities, and assessment. They suggest using innovative online assessment techniques to measure the quality of students' learning, instead of simply attempting to quantify how much students know. In this manner, students are empowered to take advantage of technological tools such as Internet research in culturally-based target language sources, online dictionaries and thesauruses, grammar checkers,

and the ability to work interactively through blogs or collaboratively through wikis, while learning academic skills for how to make their work their own.

Strategies to develop and prepare learners for new forms of assessment for blended language classes can form part of a process that connects learning outcomes, assessments, and feedback, or, more accurately, “feed-forward” (Duensing & Harper, 2011, p. 63). In “feed forward,” feedback is given during the process of learning and assessing, while it is still relevant to students’ current and subsequent work (Keppell & Carless, 2006). Learner preparation strategies and a feedback dialogue between teacher and student are particularly relevant to the blended format since learner autonomy is even more crucial to success than in the classroom format (Duensing & Harper, 2011). A continuous loop of authentic assessments, collaboration, and formative feedback can help students take responsibility for their own learning (Gikandi, et al., 2011). To prepare students for this task, Keppell and Carless (2006) suggest clarifying the learning goals and showing them how instructors expect them to demonstrate their achievement. Using this method, students will begin to share instructors’ concepts of the quality of work and increasingly self-monitor.

One challenge of the online mode in a second language class is recreating the collaboration and interactivity of a physical space (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008). The speaking skill, frequently neglected or tested inefficiently even in face-to-face classrooms, is particularly problematic in online practice and assessment. Lyddon and Sydorenko’s (2008) sequence for constructing a speaking assessment task, which involves individual work, peer interaction, formative feedback, revision, and summative grading, is one practicable method of meeting this challenge. Specifically, in the researchers’ model, students listen and respond to prompts, first with and then without model responses given, which gradually removes the scaffolding. In both

cases, they analyze some responses (their classmates' as well as a model, if given) according to the rubric that will be used for grading their own subsequent work. After providing each other with feedback, transcribing their responses, and correcting their peers' transcriptions, the instructor provides feedback before they revise their recordings. Classmates, as well as the instructor, provide final feedback. This process, although it appears time-consuming on the surface, could easily prove more effective for learning than completing several unrelated speaking tasks instead.

In formative assessment in online contexts, validity is derived from assessments' authenticity (to the real world or to academic domains), connection to learning outcomes, availability of formative feedback, support for learners, and a multifaceted perspective that incorporates variety and flexibility (Gikandi, et al., 2011; Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012). In order for assessments to achieve validity, evaluation criteria and modes must be aligned with learning outcomes and methods. This point is especially important for learners' self-evaluation and cooperation in blended learning (Duensing & Harper, 2011). Humphries and Mihai (2012) stress the importance of simultaneously creating goals, lessons, and assessments, so that the material, format, and relative weights match in all three.

The literature provides a variety of assessment options and, in some cases, examples of where they are being successfully implemented. Questions remain, however, about the frequency of application of these various options in blended classes and whether programs are taking advantage of alternatives made possible by technology or simply replicating traditional assessment types online through self-grading multiple-choice tests, online workbook packages, and essay submissions. This dissertation addresses the assessment issue and its connection to the design and implementation of blended courses through this research sub-question:

- What student assessment strategies are being used in these courses, and how do they align with the blended format and pedagogical goals?

Instructor and Student Perspectives

Moving to the second research question, regarding participant perspectives on blended language courses, the prior literature is divided into instructor and student views. While it is widely assumed that students are more comfortable with technology than their older instructors, this presumption is not always borne out in practice. There is evidence of a wide range of views on technology and its use in language classes, among both students and instructors, which have substantial impact on the effectiveness of blended language classes. This section addresses the research literature on instructor and student perspectives in studies relevant to this dissertation.

Instructor Perspectives

Teachers' perceptions of and experiences with technology have a profound impact on the implementation and success of language courses in a blended format. One widespread challenge preventing language instructors from implementing newer CALL in their classes is a lack of familiarity or comfort with technological integration. In a large-scale survey study aimed at determining how post-secondary language instructors use technology in their classes, Arnold (2007) found that instructors reported only a moderate amount of technology use, with primarily basic Internet applications. Many respondents in that study saw technology as a tool to aid instruction and help manage large classes rather than as a resource for student learning.

Similarly, in a large-scale survey of instructors of French (Lomicka Anderson & Williams, 2011), most used only basic technologies such as accessing authentic multimedia and language reference sites via the Internet in addition to email and word processing, even though many had attended conference presentations on educational technologies. Although more

technology does not necessarily mean improved pedagogy, instructors who do not have all of the possible options available to them will not be able to make as informed decisions about technological selections to help students, especially as programs are moving to blended and distance formats (Goertler & Winke, 2008).

Compounding the issue with technological insecurity, instructors may be tasked with teaching technology-based courses that they did not create or with using resources that they may not fully understand. Rubio and Thoms (2014) identify lack of training as a problem for instructors of blended classes, especially teaching assistants who are often assigned these classes in large basic language programs. Nissen and Tea (2012) found that teaching assistants were often unaware of the roles that they needed to adopt in the online mode, thus potentially missing out on part of their ability to aid students. Their ability to feel involved in the courses and make them their own was primarily dependent upon their understanding of the courses' task-based methodology as well as of the relationship between the modes, two areas that many respondents found problematic. Other factors included their appreciation of online course content, their familiarity and comfort with course technology, their ability to ask for and obtain technical help, their level of integration into a teaching team, and their ability and willingness to take initiative in course implementation.

In the same vein, Drewelow (2013) surveyed 15 teaching assistants of blended courses in one Spanish program, who revealed that they generally saw the online mode as external to, rather than integrated into, the course; students could use it for extra practice and preparation for the face-to-face sessions. Teaching assistants overwhelmingly did not attempt to use it to create deeper learning opportunities for students. The perspective detected in these studies runs counter

to the field's growing understanding of the importance of integrating course components to scaffold learning experiences and support pedagogical goals (Murphy & Southgate, 2011).

On the other hand, teachers who are in the position of being able to create their own online lessons for their students to use in conjunction with their classes provide counterexamples to this trend, demonstrating instructor satisfaction with technological integration, despite the time commitment required to create the materials. For example, in the Flexi-Pack project at the University of London (Ticheler & Sachdev, 2011), instructors of less commonly taught languages created downloadable online materials for their students to use at their leisure to correspond with and support their learning in a blended environment. After the initial effort of materials development was over, instructors appreciated being able to save grading time by referring students to the relevant practice materials. This study did not address whether second-generation instructors who did not create the online materials would be able to maintain the same level of technological integration when instructing these courses.

Grgurović (2014) conducted an in-depth study of two blended ESL classes, doing multiple interviews of two teachers and also surveying their students. The main themes that came out of the instructor interviews were students' access to materials, students' recordings (for pronunciation practice, individual feedback, and instructors' ability to listen more than once before assigning a grade), monitoring student progress, and the existence of online materials that integrate well with face-to-face course components. With the introduction of the blended components, instructors saved time and gained ideas and confidence with teaching in the online mode.

Surveying teachers administering blended classes in a bilingual master's degree program in Spain, Martín de Lama (2013) found that 96.6% believed face-to-face classes to be "a very

necessary complement” to online work (p. 184), which suggests a preference for blended learning over fully online courses among the studied population. The teachers reported making frequent use of communication technologies such as videoconferencing, text chat, and discussion forums, but in the survey and follow-up interviews, many admitted that they did not use some of these technologies as much as they could have in their courses, which prevented them from maximizing students’ use of the target language outside of face-to-face class sessions.

Taken together, these studies on instructor perspectives of technology and blended courses reveal a complicated picture that combines teachers’ own comfort with technologies and the amount of control that they have over their instruction. Since the published programs may not be representative of all blended courses, however, it would be useful to determine how these two themes co-occur at other institutions and how they may differ by language or other factors.

Student Perspectives

One crucial variable in the literature on student reactions to blended language learning is how instructors perceive and address the blend. In Ushida’s (2005) one-semester study of blended French and Spanish courses at Carnegie Mellon University, students began the course with a certain degree of anxiety about the experience. Throughout the course, however, their motivation remained high as they completed online assignments, including a weekly synchronous chat with the language assistant, and their reactions to the experience were positive. The only notable difference between student reactions in the courses studied (one level of French and two levels of Spanish) was in the Elementary French course, in which the instructor’s viewpoint differed substantially from the others’. Concerned about the format being too difficult for the students, in face-to-face sessions she emphasized grammar almost exclusively, which could explain why her students were not as satisfied with the blend as the students of Spanish

were. As in the teaching assistant studies (Drewelow, 2013; Nissen & Tea, 2012), the French experience related by Ushida (2005) highlights the importance of instructors' agreeing with the technology and working to integrate it effectively, whether in a course that they designed or not.

Jochum's (2011) case study of a blended upper-division Spanish course of mostly non-heritage learners focused on comparing student perspectives between the beginning and the end of the course. The activities in the online mode consisted of writing, posting, and commenting, as well as uploading individual and group presentations. Students' comfort with the online format and with writing in Spanish improved from pre to post tests. Some students remarked they were able to discuss more online than they would have in class; the author hypothesizes this result as a lowering of affective filter and an increasing sense of community.

Now that blended language courses are becoming more prevalent, some have lasted long enough that the initial insecurity among instructors and students may have given way to a greater acceptance of the online format for certain course components. On the other hand, as long as instructors who never used digital pedagogy as students themselves are still beginning to teach these courses, the challenges reported in the literature almost a decade ago could still remain. New studies are needed to determine the current state of instructor and student preparation for the blended format and what their perspectives are on their language courses that use this approach. This dissertation adds administrator perspectives to the mix—both those who are and those who are not involved in the courses' daily operations—leading to the following research questions:

- II. What are student, instructor, and administrator perspectives on these courses?
 - Why are students taking blended language courses, and how well are these courses meeting students' indicated goals?

- Why are instructors teaching blended language courses, and how successful do instructors and administrators believe the courses to be?

Support for Participants

The literature points to a variety of work that can be done to prepare both instructors and students to make the most of the blended format in language classes, including familiarizing them with technology and methodology, making a concerted effort to support teachers transitioning to blended courses, sustaining collaboration between colleagues, and providing technological and pedagogical support for instructors and their students in blended classes.

Arnold (2007), Drewelow (2013), Nissen and Tea (2012), and Rubio and Thoms (2014) suggest training teaching assistants to make better use of technology. Kim, Rueckert, Kim, and Seo (2013) conclude that if future language teachers are exposed to educational technologies through their firsthand use as students, they will be more inclined to use them in their own classes. This perspective echoes Shelley, Murphy, and White (2013), whose participants in a study of transitioning to blended and online courses cited their own language learning experiences as inspirations for their teaching. For experienced teachers learning to teach online, Lewis (2006) recommends a process of active reflection, like his own that he details in his action research study, guided by journaling and feedback from a more experienced colleague.

Regarding collaboration between instructors, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya in Spain offers a comprehensive system of coordination for teaching online EFL courses that provides a possible model for other programs to follow (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006). Its methods include “face-to-face meetings, training of new teachers, reference documents for teachers, coordinators’ feedback on teachers’ work in the classroom, and online discussions of pedagogical issues” (p. 551). The aim is not only to provide instructors with knowledge and

skills for online teaching but also to foster a sense of community within the online teaching team. Nissen and Tea (2012) also found community-building to be crucial, along with other elements of intradepartmental cooperation. Based on participant interviews, Shelley, et al. (2013) reported that beneficial collaboration can occur among teachers new to the blended format who are not even teaching the same language or at the same institution.

In the realm of improving student perspectives on blended learning, the main thread in the research is a combination of better serving students' needs and enabling them to be more prepared for the new format. For example, Karabulut, LeVelle, and Suvorov (2012) call upon instructors to evaluate students' needs and technological preferences and take them into consideration when designing course components so that students' experiences will be more positive. Bueno-Alastuey and López-Pérez (2014) suggest that making CALL's benefits more explicit and providing students with training on how to use it effectively would improve skeptical learners' experiences.

From their study of student characteristics associated with success, Arispe and Blake (2012) conclude that students should be informed that blended courses will require them to set goals and work on them more autonomously than in traditional courses and that instructors should help them to do so. Young and Pettigrew (2014) offer specific recommendations for providing that help: self-tests for students to continuously monitor their progress, multifaceted linguistic explanations, comprehension checks, formative feedback to aid development of productive skills, and links to online technological training and support, including a forum for students to troubleshoot problems for each other.

These studies raise the question of how much is being done to support instructors and students in blended language courses currently being offered at U.S. colleges and universities. It

would be instructive to determine what different language programs provide in terms of training, preparation, development, and support options to their instructors (faculty and graduate students, including in teaching methodology courses)—and, where appropriate, students taking these courses as well—in the use of technologies in blended teaching and learning. The dissertation thus addresses these issues in the third set of research questions:

- III. What support (training, professional development, and resources) is available to participants teaching and learning in blended courses?
- How are instructors being supported in the teaching of blended courses? What do instructors believe that they are gaining from these interventions?
 - How are students being supported in the use of technologies in blended courses? What do students believe that they are gaining from these interventions?

This dissertation studies what is being done in blended courses in basic language programs at U.S. institutions of higher education to answer the questions about these five areas: design of courses and materials, implementation and course evaluation, student assessment, participant perspectives, and support for participants. By getting a clearer picture of what is being done at other institutions, the aim is for programs that are newly developing, adapting, or redesigning blended courses to be able to draw upon the lessons from existing courses that are the most relevant to the realities of their own institution and the choices that they are making.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Instructor and Administrator Survey

The first component of the project was a large-scale survey of instructors and administrators in basic language programs at U.S. colleges and universities, conducted online by the author in March-May 2015 and again in August-December 2015, using the Qualtrics software package. Two different versions of this survey were used: one for instructors and one for administrators. Although there was a lot of overlap between the two versions, the instructor survey focused more on the course's communication patterns and assessment strategies and the instructor's perspective on technical/pedagogical support, and the administrator survey focused more on the courses' development and evaluation process. Both surveys asked about participants' educational background, their teaching experience with blended courses, their comfort with using different technologies in teaching, and the specific technologies used in their institution's blended courses. The complete instructor and administrator surveys are in Appendix A.

The aim of the survey was to shed light on current practices in blended language courses at U.S. colleges and universities and the impact that these practices have on instructors and programs, enabling other practitioners to learn from them. The survey highlighted themes and trends in existing blended language courses, connecting the research literature to current practice in higher education, to help other practitioners predict and solve blended learning challenges in ways that work for them. These themes included instructor skills, expectations, and involvement; course design; assessment; evaluation of courses; and support (technological, pedagogical, and financial) for students, instructors, and programs.

Participants and Recruitment

The participants in the survey phase of the project were instructors (faculty members and graduate students) of blended courses in the basic language sequence for non-English languages at U.S. colleges and universities, as well as administrators of these programs (such as basic language program directors or assistant directors, language or level coordinators, blended course coordinators, or department chairs, depending on the size and organization of the program). A few respondents served in other related roles such as course developer (without also teaching or overseeing the course) or instructor or administrator in a heritage language program that offered blended courses (which was included because the format and level still met the basic requirements for the study). One administrator participant reported that her program had cut its blended classes, but her responses were included because the courses were recent, fewer administrator participants were available, and her experience could be instructive to other programs. Two instructor participants were no longer teaching blended courses at the institution on which they were reporting, but their responses were used because their experiences were recent—within the past year—and could influence other instructors.

Survey participants were recruited by direct email to those listed as teaching blended basic language courses at their institution or serving as an administrator in a basic language program offering blended courses. Many of the blended courses were found through Google searches of terms such as “blended,” “hybrid,” and “partially online,” along with names of different languages, and the restriction to only search sites with the top-level domain “.edu.” Others were found through searches of department listings and course schedules on the websites of specific institutions that the author suspected might offer blended courses, judging by existing research literature or other known information about the institutions. Some participants were

targeted specifically due to a recommendation from other participants, who knew of them and their work with blended courses. Email and telephone inquiries were made to some language departments or instructors to clarify about their course offerings before sending the survey. The survey recruitment email was also sent to several language education email listservs: the American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Language Programs (AAUSC); the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL); and SLATCOM, the listserv of the Second Language Acquisition & Teaching doctoral program at the University of Arizona.

The recruitment email with a link to both instructor and administrator versions of the survey was sent to faculty members and graduate student instructors at these programs at universities across the United States, most of which had several languages offering blended courses, as well as the selected listservs. There were 122 completed surveys received: 104 from the instructor survey and 18 from the administrator survey. All received responses were included in the results except one, totaling 121 survey responses: 103 from the instructor survey and 18 from the administrator survey. All included responses met the selection criteria of currently or regularly teaching blended classes at one's current (or previous but recent) institution, or, in the case of administrators, directly overseeing or developing blended courses. Only one response was excluded, due to the participant's experience being from a pilot and non-current version of the participant's former institution's blended course.

Questions and Analysis

Survey questions addressed specifics of the operation of the blended language courses, as well as respondents' perspectives on their courses, preparation, and background. Respondents were also asked about their own experiences teaching, developing, or overseeing blended

classes, and their comfort levels with different types of technology for language learning. Some survey questions were taken or adapted from Arnold (2007), Drewelow (2013), and Goertler and Winke (2008).

Survey data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitatively, participants' answers to open-ended questions and their comments about their courses as a whole were analyzed to detect trends in their blended courses and their perspectives on their course design, their frustrations, skills gained from methodology courses and institution-provided technology training, and other issues. Administrators' answers were analyzed for their perspectives on the courses and their knowledge of any financial and technical support provided by their institutions for implementing blended courses. Thematic analysis was used to get a better sense of the themes that came out of each program, which were then compared between programs, participant roles (graduate student, faculty member, administrator, etc.), languages, and other variables.

For instructor data, several methods of quantitative analysis were used. Table 3.1 displays the primary statistical tests run and the methods used for each. One method was a series of correlations in IBM SPSS Statistics 23. For some correlations, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, or Spearman's rho (r_s), was used because the two main dependent variables in the data were ordinal, rather than interval, in nature: instructors' level of satisfaction with the current setup of their blended courses and their estimation of how successful their blended courses are (both on scales of 1-5). These two variables were selected for the dependent variables in the quantitative analyses because they both provide a convenient way to measure the potential effects that the other factors (whether individual or program-level) could have on the instructor's overall experience with the blended courses. Where the independent variables were also ordinal

in nature, Spearman's rho was used. Where the independent variables were interval, however, Pearson's R was used for correlations.

Table 3.1

Statistical Tests Run on Quantitative Instructor Data

Factor	Test conducted
Years teaching second language courses	Spearman's rho
Years teaching blended second language courses	Spearman's rho
Amount based on preexisting courses	Spearman's rho
Instructor influence on blended courses	Pearson R
Institution type	Chi-square
Language taught	Chi-square
Chose to teach blended courses	Chi-square
Has face-to-face teaching experience	Chi-square
Has fully online teaching experience	Chi-square
Technology training provided to instructors	Chi-square
Has used technology training	Chi-square
Experience with language technology as a student	Chi-square
Amount created within program	Chi-square
Instructors select materials	Chi-square
Administrators select materials	Chi-square
Engages in collaboration with other instructors	Chi-square

All other potentially relevant factors, as outlined in Chapter IV, were analyzed as independent variables in the quantitative analyses. These factors include participants' length of teaching experience (overall and blended), their amount of influence on the design of the blended course, whether they chose to teach blended courses, which language or languages they teach, what proportion of the materials were created within the department or program (rather than prepackaged materials), institution type (state university, community college, private institution), types of technologies used, and types of assessments given.

Another method of quantitative analysis was Chi-square tests, conducted in SPSS 23 and Microsoft Excel 2013. Chi-square tests enabled comparisons between groups (such as language taught, level of satisfaction with the current setup, and whether training was provided to

instructors) to determine if there was any significant difference between groups in accordance with some variable that might be relevant to teaching blended courses. For the Chi-square data, the two groups of “very unsatisfied” and “somewhat unsatisfied” instructors were collapsed into a single grouping, as were “very unsuccessful” and “somewhat unsuccessful,” to avoid having unreliable results due to having too few respondents in a cell. Additional calculations and sorting of data were also done in Microsoft Excel 2013.

The administrator survey was less open to quantitative analysis because of its fewer participants, but it was still analyzed for information on administrators’ satisfaction, their estimations of course success, and participants’ roles in choosing and creating materials. In addition to qualitative analysis similar to the instructor survey but covering a wider range of topics, some quantitative analysis could be done. In particular, administrator data were included along with instructor data for some variables, where they answered the same questions such as their levels of satisfaction and estimated course success. Sorting and calculations of administrator data were done in Microsoft Excel 2013.

Student Survey

Following the instructor and administrator survey and follow-up interviews of some participants (as outlined below under “Focus Studies”), some instructors who were still teaching blended courses at the time of the interview, or in the subsequent semester, were asked if they would be willing to send a survey to their students (Appendix B).

The purpose of the student survey was to gain a greater understanding of course components and how students are using them, as well as a better understanding of students’ interest in blended courses and an overview of characteristics of students taking blended courses. Conducting the survey enabled a comparison between student and instructor perspectives within

the same language program as well as between student perspectives in courses of different target languages, in different types of blends, or in the use of publisher-created vs. instructor/department-created materials.

Participants and Recruitment

Student participants were recruited from one of the institutions with interview participants. Upon approval from the institution's human subjects protection office, these participants were contacted with a student participant recruitment email that five instructor participants at the institution sent to their classes. Each instructor, who taught one of four different languages, sent their students the recruitment email that contained a link to the consent form and a localized version of the student survey online.

Each survey was tailored to not only the name of the language that the students were studying, but also the specific online materials listed by the instructor in their survey (or later clarified by the instructor via email), using the names by which students know them. For instance, the name of the textbook website, the name of the school's course website, and so forth, were given as students use them. These names have been standardized here and in Appendix B for the purpose of reporting the results and comparing them between programs.

The classes surveyed were third-semester French (two sections), fourth-semester French (three sections), third-semester Spanish (one section), second-semester Italian (one section), and second-semester German (two sections). The survey was conducted online using the Qualtrics software with the University of Arizona license. To encourage more responses, at least one instructor used some class time to administer the survey in addition to emailing it to students.

Thirty-six students submitted the survey. One survey was discarded because the participant did not answer any questions after agreeing to the consent form. Of the remaining 35,

22 were from French (12 from 3rd-semester and 10 from 4th-semester), 6 from Spanish, 4 from German, and 3 from Italian. The classes participating in the student survey are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Classes Participating in the Student Survey

School	Program	Language	Instructor pseudonym	Course level	Number of sections	Number of responses
School A	Program 1	French	Michael	3 rd semester	2	12
			Lisa	4 th semester	3	10
	Program 2	Spanish	Eric	3 rd semester	1	6
	Program 3	Italian	Christine	2 nd semester	1	3
	Program 4	German	Paul	2 nd semester	2	4

Questions and Analysis

Questions on the student survey centered upon the student experience with the technology and language learning in their blended courses, students' motivations for taking the course in a blended format, and some potentially relevant student characteristics such as whether they learn best in a classroom or on their own, how easily technology comes to them, and how much effort they expend on homework assignments. Some survey questions were adapted from those in Coleman and Furnborough (2010), Hampel and Pleines (2013), Hémard and Cushion (2003), Karabulut, et al. (2012), Keppell and Carless (2006), and Winke, Goertler, and Amuzie (2010).

Focus Studies

The third component of the project was a more detailed focus on several of the programs whose instructors or administrators permitted the researcher to have greater access. The objective of the focus studies was to take a closer look at the context surrounding the factors identified in the previous stages, providing something between a distant, quantitative glance and the thick,

ethnographic description such as that called for by Gleason (2013), and avoiding the appearance of a “one-size-fits-all” mentality. The focus studies at one school also included the survey results of their students’ perspectives on the blended courses.

Interviews

Any respondents who agreed to be contacted with follow-up questions or arrange a Skype interview, and provided their email address, were sent an email with a mixture of factual and qualitative questions that aimed to provide a better picture of the learning situation in their language program and their perspectives on it. In this email, participants were instructed that they could answer the questions by email or arrange a Skype interview.

Participants and Recruitment

Interview participants were recruited from the pool of survey participants (instructors and administrators) who provided their email address in the survey and agreed to be contacted for a subsequent interview. Approximately 70 potential interview participants were sent an interview recruitment email with the option to set up an appointment to do the interview over Skype or to answer some questions via email instead.

Participants who responded to this request with answers to the emailed questions were considered to be doing an email interview. Of those, some were emailed several more times to answer additional follow-up questions. If the participants wished to continue with the interview but preferred Skype or had no preference for interview format, they were interviewed via Skype. Twelve participants answered the questions by email, and nine were interviewed on Skype (or similar), for a total of twenty-one interviews. The Skype interviews, of approximately 30 minutes each, were recorded through CallNote. One participant preferred to be interviewed on Google

Hangouts. Audio from this interview was recorded on a separate audio recording device. The list of participants and their characteristics is given in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Instructors Participating in the Interview (N = 21)

School	Program	Language	Pseudonym	Role	Interview Type
School A	Program 1	French	Michael	TA	Email
			Lisa	faculty	Email
			Lorraine	TA	Skype
	Program 2	Spanish	Eric	TA	Skype
	Program 3	German	Paul	TA	Skype
School B	Program 4	Italian	Christine	faculty	Email
	Program 5	Spanish	Stacey	TA	Skype
School C	Program 6	French	James	faculty	Skype
			Scott	faculty	Skype
School D	Program 7	ASL	Rich	faculty	Email
School E	Program 8	French	Isabelle	faculty	Skype
School F	Program 9	Spanish	Kevin	faculty	Email
			Teresa	TA	Skype
School G	Program 10	Spanish	Samantha	faculty	Email
School H	Program 11	Spanish	Mariana	faculty	Email
School I	Program 12	Spanish	Nicole	TA	Email
School J	Program 13	German	Katrin	faculty	Email
School K	Program 14	Portuguese	Gabriele	TA	Google Hangouts
School L	Program 15	Spanish	Diane	faculty	Email
School M	Program 16	Spanish	Amanda	faculty	Email
School N	Program 17	French	Edith	faculty	Email

Questions and Analysis

The interview questions delved deeper into the information underlying the briefer survey responses to better answer the research questions and sub-questions. In general, half of the roughly 30-minute Skype interview covered the format and materials of the blended class in greater detail than the survey allowed, and the other half asked participants to respond to specific questions about their program and their perspectives on blended courses. Email data generally took the form of responses to specific questions as well as to follow-up questions in additional emails. Sample interview questions are in Appendix C.

Interview data were analyzed qualitatively, attempting to clarify and go beyond the data from the survey questions and get a more detailed picture of the way that blended courses are being designed, implemented, and evaluated in language programs at selected universities. The interview also provided a greater focus on the pedagogical theories underlying the participants' blended courses, which could not be addressed sufficiently in the brief survey questions.

The interviews were treated with a version of thematic analysis based on Braun & Clarke (2006) and Boyatzis (1998). Themes were extracted from the interviews, along with the corresponding qualitative questions on the survey, and subjected to thematic analysis using inductive and semantic themes. Thematic analysis refers to the coding of qualitative information to make connections between material and enable further examination (Boyatzis, 1998). It is used here to help keep the researcher from allowing preconceived notions about the topic to influence the reading of qualitative responses, but rather allow the information to speak for itself.

Some of the themes that emerged from the interviews were prompted by the questions asked by the researcher, such as assessment methods and types of feedback given. Despite these similarities between some interviews, specific issues that emerged such as learner autonomy and instructor buy-in arose from the descriptive information and viewpoints expressed by the participants, rather than through the researcher's prompting. Examining common themes addressed by multiple participants is instructive because their comments reveal different viewpoints even when they address the same issue. For example, several interviewees expressed diverging perspectives about how well their learners are prepared for face-to-face class sessions after doing the online work. Although these comments came from responses to the researcher's questions, the participants' views are treated as indicative of a more complex theme.

Participants' comments are summarized in Chapter IV and further analyzed by theme in Chapter V.

Analysis of Course Materials

Survey and interview participants were encouraged to provide access to course materials to aid in analysis. Survey participants were asked only for a syllabus; if they agreed to be contacted with follow-up questions, they were also asked to provide descriptions of or access to course activities, assessments, and course or grant proposal documentation. The materials were intended to help answer questions about the alignment of learning goals, pedagogical theory, learning materials, and assessment types in the blended courses, as well as the original reasons for the blended courses' creation, more accurately than relying solely on the instructors' and administrators' words. Approximately one-quarter of survey participants provided a syllabus; additional programs' syllabi were publicly available online and downloaded for analysis. No participants provided other materials.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies used in this dissertation has been successful in providing a broad view of courses currently in practice as well as deeper information about these courses, their instructors, and their students. The results, then, respond to the calls in the literature for an overarching look at blended courses in the field as well as Blake's (2009, 2014) mandate to look at blended courses as coherent wholes, rather than simply comparing them to their face-to-face equivalents. The interviews and qualitative survey responses paint a unique picture of each program and provide ideas for other educators undertaking the challenge of the blend.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The data presented here come from the instructor and administrator surveys, student surveys, and follow-up interviews with instructor and administrator participants. The instructor and administrator surveys, discussed in the first major section, provide an overview of the programs and their components along with some participants' perspectives. The student survey, discussed next, adds depth to the results from four language programs at one institution and brings new voices into the analysis. The interviews fill in more information from a smaller number of participants, including more explanation of how the blended courses operate and participants' views on them. The interviews and a portion of the student surveys are presented in the third major section, Focus Studies.

Instructor and Administrator Survey

Participants and Courses

The 103 instructor participants represent 52 language programs at 40 or 41 institutions. (One instructor participant did not provide the name of an institution.) Eighty-eight work at state universities, thirteen at community colleges, and two at private institutions. The 18 administrator participants represent 16 language programs at 14 institutions. Fourteen work at state universities, three at community colleges, and one at a private university.

Of the 103 instructors surveyed, 11 self-identified as tenured or tenure-track faculty, seven as visiting faculty, 18 as adjunct faculty, 54 as graduate students, and 7 as directors or coordinators. Most of the 14 "other" responses were some form of lecturer or instructor likely equivalent to either full-time or part-time adjunct faculty. Some indicated multiple items.

Eighty-nine of the instructors had previously taught the language in a face-to-face, non-blended courses. Thirty had taught fully online. Only 68 instructors reported that their programs also offer fully face-to-face classes. Forty-six reported that their programs also offer fully online courses. It was hypothesized that instructors' prior experience teaching fully F2F or fully online might affect their approach to the blend. No obvious differences emerged based on these variables, but the effects are further explored in the focus studies below, such as Program 15 at School L.

Of the administrators, all but the one mentioned earlier (whose program stopped offering blended courses) currently offer blended courses in their programs. Most indicated that they were involved in these courses' creation. All have previously taught second language courses, and 14 out of 18 have taught blended language courses.

The languages represented by the 121 participants in this study are listed in Table 4.1. Seven participants reported working with multiple languages, which increased the total beyond the number of participants.

Table 4.1

Survey Respondents (Instructors and Administrators) by Language (N = 121)

Language	Number of participants
Spanish	78
French	24
Italian	9
German	5
Portuguese	4
Anishinaabemowin	2
Chinese (Mandarin)	2
Arabic	1
American Sign Language	1
Japanese	1
Polish	1
Serbo-Croatian	1
Vietnamese	1

Instructors' number of years of language teaching experience ranged from 7 months to 38 years, with a mean of 9.4 years. Their language teaching experience in blended formats ranged from 1 quarter to 18 years, with a mean of 3.4 years. (Although 18 years may seem unlikely, that participant described what sounded like this dissertation's definition of the blend.) Thirty-nine participants reported one year or less of blended teaching. Administrators' experience in language teaching or administrative roles ranged from 1 to 27 years (mean: 12.8), with 0-13 years overseeing blended courses (mean: 4.5). (The participant responding 0 developed the course but did not oversee it.)

Time that students spend weekly in a face-to-face classroom session ranged from one hour and 15 minutes to 5 hours, with most (100 out of 120) instructors and administrators reporting 2-3 hours of classroom time. Most of the remainder of the instructional activities are completed on students' own time. Eighteen instructors reported the use of computer lab sessions of varying length, and only twelve instructors reported using synchronous online sessions (webconferencing or text chat) with their blended classes. (No administrators reported the use of computer lab sessions or synchronous online sessions.)

Blended Course Development

Reasons for going blended. Of the 15 administrators who answered the survey question about why their programs developed blended courses, nearly half (7/15) cited "instructor interest," and just as many cited "department's interest in new teaching methodologies/formats." The complete results for this question are given in Table 4.2. While financial considerations were not listed specifically as a choice on the survey question, three administrators wrote in an "Other" answer related to economic and administrative concerns: classroom space (3/15) and the

difficulty of staffing classes that met five days per week (1/15). “Student interest” was at the bottom of the list (2/15).

Table 4.2

Administrators’ Reasons for Instituting Blended Classes (N = 15)

Reason	Number of administrators
Instructor interest	7
Department’s interest in new teaching methodologies/formats	7
At the request of the institution	6
Department’s interest in technology	6
Other	4
Student interest	2

Only 48 of the 103 instructors (46.6%) chose to teach blended courses. The percentage who chose to teach blended courses was starkly different when comparing instructors of Spanish and instructors of other languages ($p < .001$ in a Chi-square test): While only 31.3% of instructors of blended Spanish chose to teach in this format, 71.8% of instructors of blended courses in other languages chose it. The likely explanation is that in Spanish, many large language programs have teaching assistants who may not get to choose their classes. Also, in some of these programs, some or all levels have been converted to entirely blended, with no fully face-to-face option available. In other languages, the same course conversion may have happened but to a lesser degree than in large Spanish programs.

Instructors gave a variety of reasons for choosing to teach blended. Of the 48 instructors who chose to teach blended, 42 indicated an interest in trying new teaching methodologies or formats, 31 marked an interest in technology, 20 cited a schedule preference, and 14 selected “Other.” Most of the “Other” responses were from instructors who initiated their blended courses and had more program-level reasons, such as attracting or retaining students, a student

preference for fewer contact hours, the difficulty of daily attendance for some students, a desire to improve student learning outcomes, and differentiated instruction.

Overall, there was no obvious answer for why programs and instructors choose to go blended, but the most notable factors were instructor, departmental, and institutional interest along with the administrative benefits of saving resources and making courses more attractive to students. The administrative benefits were even more salient in the focus studies presented later in this chapter.

The design process: New or adapted? In the administrator responses, the only two respondents who listed that their courses were “newly-designed,” not based on preexisting courses, were administrators of less commonly taught languages: Arabic and Serbo-Croatian/Polish. This question asked respondents to assign a score of 1 through 4 indicating how much they were based on preexisting courses, in which 1 was newly designed, and 4 was heavily based on preexisting courses. Both of these administrators responded that face-to-face courses were also offered in their program, leaving it unclear whether the blended courses were newly designed because they were total redesigns or because they were new levels that had not previously been offered in face-to-face forms. In either case, the lack of existence of textbook website packages may have contributed to the administrators’ ability to design the course from the ground up.

All of the other administrators reported that their courses were either “somewhat” (a score of 3 out of 4) or “heavily” (a score of 4 out of 4) based on preexisting courses. These administrators came from programs of Spanish, German, French and Italian, Spanish and French, Spanish and Portuguese, or Spanish for heritage speakers. One program also included Japanese, but since the question was not asked separately for each language, it is not clear what difference

there might be in the development of the Japanese courses versus the more commonly taught languages in the same department.

In the instructor survey, 80 participants provided an answer other than “unsure” for this question. Instructor responses by language were more distributed across the spectrum than administrators’ were, with Spanish at all four levels from newly created (a score of 1 out of 4) to heavily based (4 out of 4), and with less commonly taught languages at all levels. The only LCTL appearing at “heavily” was Portuguese, which could be a result of these programs being part of departments that also include Spanish. The amount that each program’s blended courses were based on preexisting courses was averaged across all respondents within each program, and then averaged across programs within each language. The averages were then compared between languages and between more and less commonly taught languages. The results are given in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Instructor and Administrator Responses for How Much Their Blended Courses Were Based on Preexisting Courses, Averaged within a Program and Again Across Programs for Each Language

Language	Average response	Number of programs
Italian	3.52/4	7
German	3.5/4	4
French	3.35/4	13
Spanish and/or Portuguese	3.29/4	31
American Sign Language	3/4	1
Vietnamese	3/4	1
Chinese	2.5/4	2
Anishinaabemowin	1.5/4	1
Arabic	1/4	1
Serbo-Croatian and Polish	1/4	1

(Scale: 1 = Newly Designed, 4 = Heavily Based on Preexisting Courses)

Although it would appear from the raw numbers that there is a clear difference between some of the LCTLs and the rest of the list, there were no statistically significant differences in a

Chi-square test ($p > .05$). This result is likely because there were some notable exceptions among four Spanish and two French programs that used very little, if any, material from pre-existing courses when designing their blended courses. The focus studies later in this chapter explore differences between the programs that use disparate amounts of preexisting material.

Administrator and instructor responses both were analyzed for information regarding the balance between efficiency and pedagogical considerations in blended courses. While most administrators generally were satisfied with the setup of the courses, despite wanting to make some continuing improvements, much can be learned from the administrator of the German program that ceased to offer blended courses in a recent semester. She wrote that the reason why the program initiated blended courses was “to allow us to be more effective and efficient with our instruction,” but the format ended up inhibiting the balance between “pedagogical decisions” and “logistical benefits.” The program ended up eliminating blended and offering only F2F and fully online as options.

Technologies and Interaction in Blended Classes

Technologies used. Instructors and administrators were asked what technologies students use in their blended courses, given a list of thirteen options and the chance to fill in another. Numbers of technologies per participant ranged from 1 to 11 (Table 4.4). The average number reported was around five for both types of participants. Most instructors selected three to seven. Administrator responses varied more widely. The administrator who selected eleven technologies oversees blended courses in three languages (Spanish, French, and Japanese), and it is possible that different technologies are used with different languages at her institution. The six participants who reported the use of only one technology selected either the textbook website (4 people) or the course management system (2 people).

Table 4.4

Average Number of Technologies Used and Counts of Technologies Used, Reported by

Participant Role (N = 121)

	Average number of technologies used	Counts of technologies used										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Instructors	5.07	3	6	16	16	15	20	12	8	4	1	0
Administrators	4.89	3	2	3	2	1	1	0	3	2	0	1

Nearly all respondents (Table 4.5) indicated the use of a textbook website and a course management system. Responses dropped off substantially after that, with the exception of streaming/audio video, which was listed by the majority of administrators. While it was intended for streaming audio/video to refer to sites other than the textbook website, some participants may have been counting the textbook website again when selecting this option. Some technologies, such as extra practice websites, smartphone apps, and social media, were reported more commonly by instructors than administrators. It is possible that these additional technologies are not ones that are assigned by a program but are either recommended by individual instructors or used by students on their own, resulting in administrators' not being as aware of their use. Seven instructors and two administrators provided answers of "Other" with additional technologies that were not given as options. These answers included language learning software, web 2.0 materials, materials developed within the department or university, and TalkAbroad.

Table 4.5

Number of Instructor and Administrator Respondents Reporting Each Technology Used by Their Students (N = 121: 103 Instructors & 18 Administrators)

Technologies	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Textbook website	92	15
Course management system	87	14
Streaming audio/video	56	11
Other grammar/vocabulary practice websites	41	5
Student audio/video recording	39	7
Authentic websites from target language sources	36	8
Discussion boards/forums	28	8
Smartphone apps	16	2
Social media	15	5
Voice/video chat	11	4
Webconferencing software	10	3
Other	7	2
Student blogs	6	3
Text chat	3	1

Participants were then presented with their selected responses again and asked which of these technologies they believe to be the most and least beneficial for student learning (Tables 4-6 and 4-7). The textbook website, student audio/video recording, and webconferencing software reached high percentages of respondents who thought that they were beneficial, out of the ones who use them. The course management system displayed a sizeable proportion of “least beneficial” responses, which is understandable since it might not be used for teaching the language directly, but rather for organizing course materials.

Table 4.6

Number of Instructor and Administrator Respondents Reporting Which Technologies Used by Their Students Are Most Beneficial for Student Learning (N = 121)

Technologies	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Textbook website	75	12
Course management system	38	5
Streaming audio/video	30	4
Other grammar/vocabulary practice websites	25	2
Student audio/video recording	24	4
Authentic websites from target language sources	23	4
Discussion boards/forums	16	2
Smartphone apps	7	0
Social media	4	0
Voice/video chat	6	2
Webconferencing software	7	1
Other	4	2
Student blogs	2	0
Text chat	1	0

Table 4.7

Number of Instructor and Administrator Respondents Reporting Which Technologies Used by Their Students Are Least Beneficial for Student Learning (N = 121)

Technologies	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Textbook website	19	1
Course management system	33	5
Streaming audio/video	6	2
Authentic websites from target language sources	4	3
Student audio/video recording	5	1
Other grammar/vocabulary practice websites	8	0
Discussion boards/forums	6	3
Voice/video chat	1	0
Other	0	1
Webconferencing software	1	1
Social media	3	2
Text chat	0	0
Student blogs	1	2
Smartphone apps	2	0

In some cases, the number of participants who rated a technology as most beneficial or least beneficial exceeded the total number of participants using that technology. A closer look at the data reveals that some participants rated it as both most and least beneficial. For instance, out of 92 instructors using the textbook website, 75 rated it as most beneficial and 19 rated it as least beneficial, for a total of 94 responses. This total is because 78 instructors who used it rated it once, 8 rated it twice, and 6 did not rate it at all. It is unknown why some participants rated the textbook website as both most and least beneficial. Two of the eight instructors who did so had selected only the textbook website for technologies used by their students; thus, it was the only option from which they were able to choose for both of the follow-up questions, which could have promoted their dual response. The other six, however, had also selected other technologies, suggesting that their mixed answer for the textbook website was an intentional choice owing to its positive and negative features.

Online interaction. When asked about types of online interaction in their blended courses, instructors reported that students' online interaction was primarily with the computer (N=94), followed in frequency by interaction with classmates (N=49), with their instructor (N=45), and with target language speakers (N=12). (Administrators were not asked this question.) Interaction with target language speakers, using software such as TalkAbroad, was found at eleven different language programs at seven state universities and three community colleges. Languages represented in these eleven programs were Spanish (6), French (2), Chinese (1), German (1), and Vietnamese (1).

The proportion of participants reporting online interaction other than with the computer suggests that many blended classes are not taking full advantage of technological affordances for students to communicate in the target language outside of the classroom. On the other hand, this

result does not necessarily mean that blended classes contain fewer opportunities to communicate: Face-to-face time could be distributed differently to prioritize communication in the classroom. These ideas will be explored further in Chapter V.

Satisfaction and Success

Overall ratings. The majority of the instructors were “somewhat satisfied” with the current setup of their blended courses and considered them to be “somewhat successful,” while fewer than 15% were unsatisfied or considered the courses unsuccessful (Table 4.8 a-b). For administrators, the number of negative responses was even lower (Table 4.8 c-d).

Table 4.8

Instructors’ and Administrators’ Reported Levels of Satisfaction with the Current Setup of Their Blended Courses and Their Reported Levels of Success of Their Blended Courses (N = 121)

a. Reported level of satisfaction:		N	b. Reported level of success:		N
Instructors			Instructors		
5 = Very satisfied	28	5 = Very successful	22		
4 = Somewhat satisfied	54	4 = Somewhat successful	62		
3 = Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	6	3 = Neither successful nor unsuccessful	8		
2 = Somewhat unsatisfied	9	2 = Somewhat unsuccessful	3		
1 = Very unsatisfied	3	1 = Very unsuccessful	3		
Unsure	3	Unsure	5		
c. Reported level of satisfaction:		N	d. Reported level of success:		N
Administrators			Administrators		
5 = Very satisfied	6	5 = Very successful	6		
4 = Somewhat satisfied	10	4 = Somewhat successful	9		
3 = Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	1	3 = Neither successful nor unsuccessful	2		
2 = Somewhat unsatisfied	1	2 = Somewhat unsuccessful	1		
1 = Very unsatisfied	0	1 = Very unsuccessful	0		
Unsure	0	Unsure	0		

One instructor, a lecturer of Italian, explained that she would consider the course to be “very successful” if students prepared enough on their own before face-to-face class, adding that

some students do, but most do as little as possible. This perspective echoes the research literature, for example, Drewelow's (2013) finding that "There is a presupposition that students will prepare before coming to the face-to-face meetings ... Unfortunately, as the majority of the TAs (11/15) pointed out... the reality is often different" (p. 1013). This clash between instructor expectations and the reality of teaching students in blended classes is a common theme to which this dissertation will return in the following chapter.

When asked on what basis they were evaluating the success of the courses, instructors and administrators both favored grades and direct assessment measures. Observation of students and indirect assessment measures, evaluations or comments from students, and one's own satisfaction with teaching these courses were also important to instructors. Administrators' responses came in a slightly different order and also included feedback from course instructors, which was an option that instructors were not given. Comparison with the course in other formats (face-to-face or fully online) was an important basis for evaluation for nearly half of the participants (49 instructors and 7 administrators), indicating that their experience with fully face-to-face or fully-online courses may be influencing their judgment of their courses in the direction of the earlier line of comparative research, even if their program no longer offers a fully face-to-face format. "Other" responses from participants included evaluating students' language proficiency, measuring student retention, gauging student preparedness from previous courses, comparing their course with ACTFL standards, and correlating the quality of students' online work with their overall course grades. The full results for this question are given in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

On What Basis Instructors and Administrators Are Evaluating Course Success (N = 121)

Basis for determining course success	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Grades/direct assessment measures	85	18
Observation/indirect assessment measures	81	14
[Feedback from instructors]	(N/A)	14
Evaluations or comments from students	76	16
One's own satisfaction with teaching these courses	63	10
Comparison with the course in other formats (face-to-face or online)	49	7
Feedback from [other] administrators	17	4
Other	4	1

(Participants could select multiple responses. Text in brackets was only given to administrators.)

Comparing students' grades or preparation to their counterparts in face-to-face classes may be somewhat anecdotal, not only because there are other compounding factors affecting a student's performance in a class, but also because at some schools, all of the sections changed over to blended at once, such that the formats cannot be compared in the same semester. Regarding determining course success from direct and indirect assessment measures and student evaluations, it is unclear what, if anything, is being done in these programs to improve them based on the results of these evaluations. While it is possible that changes are being made, it is also possible that both student and course assessment measures are being used to justify the continuation of blended courses, rather than to make specific improvements.

Unsatisfied instructors. Since there are so many factors influencing participants' satisfaction with the setup of their courses and their perceptions of the courses' success, it is instructive to look at the characteristics of the unsatisfied participants' situations to find problematic areas that they may have in common. The twelve instructors unsatisfied with the current setup of their blended courses were all teaching Spanish, French, or Portuguese. All but two were teaching at a state university. Eight were graduate students. Of the twelve, only one (a

tenured or tenure-track faculty member at a community college) chose to teach blended courses; this participant cited an interest in trying new methodologies or formats. Although it is revealing that most of the unsatisfied instructors did not choose to teach blended courses, it does not fully explain the situation since 44 other participants who also did not choose to teach blended courses did not report dissatisfaction.

Another variable relevant to satisfaction could be whether the instructors engage in collaboration or communication about their classes with other instructors of blended classes at their own institution or elsewhere. The hypothesis is that more communication among instructors will help them see the usefulness of course components where they might not have seen it on their own, establish strategies to make the most of their limited classroom time, and learn from each other's successes and mistakes. Eight of the unsatisfied instructors (67%) engaged in this type of collaboration or communication, compared with 87% overall among instructors who answered the question about collaboration. The difference in collaboration rates between dissatisfied or neutral instructors ($N = 18$) and satisfied instructors ($N = 82$) was significant in a chi-square test ($p < .05$), suggesting that collaboration might be an important aspect of adapting to the blend.

Only six (50%) of the unsatisfied instructors reported that their programs offered technology training to instructors; all six had used it. Of those six, the two instructors of French, who teach in the same program, reported primarily low scores (mean: 2.2) for the relevance of the training types that they had taken, and the four instructors of Spanish (and one also of Portuguese), from three different institutions, reported higher scores (mean: 4.13). What the two instructors of French gained from the training was "confusion" and learning "how to work with a couple of new resources." Two instructors of Spanish were more positive, reporting that they

learned how to use the learning management system or received hands-on experience with the technology to better handle it in class, but a third remarked that the training was not very helpful because it was not hands-on.

Eight of the unsatisfied instructors reported having taken a teaching methodology course at their institution. Of these eight, only two reported that the course included technology topics: One listed a “brief discussion of online language learning and how to incorporate social media,” and the other gave examples of LMSs and YouTube as the only technology included at the time but mentioned that current iterations of the methodology course deal with blended courses. Five other participants indicated that their course did not deal with blended learning or technology. This gap in instructors’ preparation for blended courses may help explain some challenges that they face. The recommendations of Arnold (2007), Drewelow (2013), and Nissen and Tea (2012) to provide quality technology training to teaching assistants are especially relevant to those programs in which new instructors are assigned to teach blended courses.

The only unsatisfied administrator was a community college department chair overseeing three languages, who has taught both blended and traditional face-to-face classes. Her program initiated blended courses at the request of the college, as well as due to instructor interest, a lack of classroom space, and an interest in trying new methodologies. In this program, instructors select their own materials, as they do in half (9/18) of administrator responses. Probably owing to the multiple languages involved, however, administrators in her program do not select materials, setting this program apart from the majority of administrator responses. (Thirteen out of eighteen report that administrators select materials.)

Although the challenges faced by the unsatisfied instructors and administrator, as evidenced by their comments, are not entirely different from the challenges reported by other

survey participants, they seem to be disproportionately affected by them. A closer look at each relevant variable will help shed light on instructor-level, program-level, and institution-level factors that influence instructor outcomes.

Factors Influencing Instructor Outcomes. The variables reported in Table 4.10 correlated with instructor participants' reported satisfaction. Participants' number of years of overall second/foreign language instruction and number of years of teaching blended courses were positively correlated with their satisfaction with the current setup of their blended courses: Instructors who had taught for longer reported higher scores of satisfaction.

Two other variables also correlated with instructors' satisfaction with the setup of their blended courses. The amount of influence that the instructor had on the curriculum and selection of materials for the blended courses was an important factor in both instructor satisfaction and their estimates of course success, with greater influence associated with greater satisfaction and success. Whether instructors had chosen to teach blended classes correlated positively with their satisfaction but was not significantly correlated with their estimates of course success.

Table 4.10

Variables Correlated with Instructor Satisfaction and Estimation of Course Success

Variable	Test	Correlation coefficients (with significance levels)	
		Satisfaction	Success
Number of years of instruction	Spearman's rho	.226 (p < .05)	Not significant
Number of years of blended instruction	Spearman's rho	.212 (p < .05)	Not significant
Choice to teach blended classes	Chi-square	.275 (p < .01)	.203 (p < .05)
Amount of instructor influence on curriculum and materials	Pearson R	.260 (p < .05)	.268 (p < .01)

Instructors' reported satisfaction and success did not differ by language, type of institution (state universities, community colleges, and private institutions), or an instructor's

own experience using language technology as a student (asked as yes/no). The estimated percentage of materials developed within the program (divided into 25% or less, around 50%, and 75% or more) also did not have any correlation with instructors' rating of satisfaction or course success; many "somewhat satisfied" and "somewhat successful" ratings were associated with courses at both extremes of the development spectrum. Other variables that had no effect on instructors' reported satisfaction and course success were the degree to which the blended courses were based on preexisting courses, instructors' experience teaching face-to-face language classes (asked as yes/no), instructors' experience teaching fully online classes (asked as yes/no), the roles of instructors and administrators in selecting course materials and technologies, and whether participants collaborate with other instructors of blended courses.

Technology Training for Instructors

Nearly all participants reported that their language programs or institutions offer technology training to instructors (Table 4.11). This variable was positively correlated with both instructors' reported satisfaction with the current setup of their blended classes as well as their estimation of the courses' success. In a few cases, however, instructors from the same institution or even the same language program reported different answers about whether training was available, suggesting that not all instructors are aware of the available training options.

Instructors used various types of training options, both online and face-to-face, and rated them overwhelmingly positively. A summary of the results of each training type is given in Table 4.12.

Table 4.11

Instructors' Language Programs/Institutions That Offer Instructors Technology Training

Yes	No	Unsure	Correlation coefficients (with significance levels)	
			Satisfaction	Success
86	12	5	.389 (p < .01)	.389 (p < .01)

Whether instructors had used any of the training options (Table 4.13) was significantly correlated with their ratings of the courses' success ($p < .01$), but not with their satisfaction, in a chi-square test that compared instructors who had used the technology training ($N = 72$) vs. all other instructors ($N = 31$). These results suggest that the availability of training is a reflection of a program or institution's commitment to the development of digital learning solutions, which contributes to positive outcomes for instructors of blended courses, regardless of whether every instructor teaching blended courses makes use of the training. That is, some instructors might not use the training because they already feel confident enough with the technology, but the availability of the training indicates a deeper investment in the success of blended or technology-based courses on a departmental or institutional level. Another related perspective is that depending upon the content and quality of the training, it could be beneficial for even those more experienced in technological integration to participate in it, since it could give them additional ideas and lend more coherence to a blended program.

Table 4.12

Instructors' Use of Available Technology Training Types and Average Ratings of Their Relevance to the Instruction of Blended Courses

	Number of instructors	Average rating
Online resources to use whenever needed	58	4.21
Face-to-face lab sessions on specific topics	55	4.49
Drop-in hours	41	4.54
Synchronous training sessions conducted via internet at specific times	19	4.11
Other (ranging from "brief training" or "by appointment" to "semester course")	5	4.8

(Scale: 5 = Very relevant; 4 = Somewhat relevant; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Somewhat irrelevant; 1 = Very irrelevant)

Table 4.13

Instructors' Use of Available Technology Training

	Have taken training	Have not taken training	Training not available, unsure of availability, or no response given
Number of instructors	72	12	19

Participants' Comfort with Technology

Only 59 of the 103 instructors had ever used computer technology to study a language, and of those 59, six had done so only on their own, not as part of a course. Therefore, about half (53/103) of the instructors had used technologies in their own academic language learning and are now tasked with teaching blended courses. Among administrators, only 4/18 respondents had used computer technology to study a language. This result suggests that many instructors, designers, and supervisors of blended courses may have to work harder at first to understand the student perspective in a blended course or the connection between online and in-class work.

One hundred and eighteen participants rated their comfort using different types of technology in their blended classes. The question was on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Very

uncomfortable” and 5 being “Very comfortable.” Thirteen technology types were listed, and participants also were able to add another type of technology if desired. An average score of comfort teaching with technologies, omitting any responses of “Unsure” or blanks, was calculated both by technology and by participant role. In this analysis, administrators also included anyone self-identifying on the instructor survey as “Director/coordinator.” These participants were then excluded from the other columns of analysis by instructor role.

By participant role (Table 4.14), average ratings did not vary much: Faculty, graduate students, and administrators had similar responses. By type of technology (Table 4.15), average ratings ranged from almost 4 (“Somewhat comfortable”) to almost 5 (“Very comfortable”), with newer or less common technologies unsurprisingly rating on the lower end. Technologies that participants listed as “Other” actually scored lower, at an average of 3/5, but since these responses encompassed a wide range of technologies, the average value for “Other” is not very useful.

Table 4.14

Instructors’ and Administrators’ Ratings of Comfort Using Various Types of Technology with Blended Classes, Sorted by Participant Role (N = 118)

	Instructors			Administrators (took administrator survey) or directors (took instructor survey)
	Graduate students	Adjunct or visiting faculty	Tenured or tenure-track faculty	
Average of ratings given (on a 1-5 scale)	4.15	4.14	4.49	4.16
Average number of ratings given per participant	12.19	12.41	12.00	11.56

(Scale: 1 = Very uncomfortable; 5 = Very comfortable)

Table 4.15

Participants' Ratings of Comfort Using Various Types of Technology with Blended Classes, Sorted by Technology Type, in Descending Order by Average Rating

Type of technology	Average rating	Number of ratings
Course management system	4.71	114
Textbook website	4.64	113
Authentic websites from target language sources	4.60	113
Streaming audio/video	4.54	118
Other grammar/vocabulary practice websites	4.44	110
Student audio/video recording	4.36	114
Discussion boards/forums	4.25	111
Student blogs	3.87	107
Text chat	3.83	104
Voice/video chat	3.83	107
Social media	3.73	107
Smartphone apps	3.71	103
Webconferencing software	3.69	99
Other	3.00	8

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment. A section of each survey focused on the types, formats, and content of assessments that instructors are giving in their blended courses. It was intended to address the questions of how much assessments are being designed and given with the pedagogical and administrative needs of the blended format in mind and how much instructors are involved in their development. Since instructor involvement in the online mode and a connection between the online mode and the in-class mode are crucial to the success of blended classes, this section was intended to determine how assessment is contributing to or detracting from these goals.

The primary types of assessments used in blended classes, as reported by both instructors and administrators, are short answer test questions, evaluation of in-class participation, in-class conversation exams or presentations, multiple-choice test questions, and in-class compositions.

Not many classes are using blogs, portfolios, or online assessments other than student audio/video recording. The complete list of assessment types is given in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

Types of Assessments Given in Blended Classes, as Reported by Instructors (N = 103) and Administrators (N = 18)

Type of assessment	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Fill-in/short-answer test questions	92	14
Evaluation of in-class participation	83	14
In-class conversation exam or presentation	80	13
Multiple-choice test questions	77	13
In-class compositions	76	14
Essay test questions	69	9
Evaluation of online participation	59	7
Out-of-class compositions	52	12
Students record audio/video	46	11
Discussion boards/forums	22	7
Real-time online audio/video conversation exam or presentation	22	4
Blogs/wikis	6	2
Portfolios	4	1
Other (true/false test questions, skits, digital projects, unspecified)	3	1

When asked on which skills and topics students in their blended classes are assessed, instructors and administrators overwhelmingly selected writing, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, and listening, followed by reading and finally culture. The two filled-in “Other” responses of “test taking” and “spelling” may be an indication that some assessments are emphasizing these areas in addition to the content that is intended to be tested. The complete results for this question are given in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Skills and Topics on Which Students Are Assessed, As Reported by Instructors (N = 103) and Administrators (N = 18)

Skill/topic	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Writing	96	17
Vocabulary	95	15
Grammar	95	15
Speaking	94	17
Listening	91	17
Reading	88	14
Culture	76	12
Other (“test taking,” “spelling”)	2	0

(The instructor of American Sign Language indicated that he was taking speaking and listening to mean signing and understanding other signers.)

The most common methods for administering assessments, as reported by instructors and administrators, are paper-based in-class, online at home, and face-to-face conversations/presentations. Most classes seem to use a combination of these three elements, with some also using others such as paper-based at home or online in a computer lab. The complete results are given in Table 4.18. Even with the reduced class time, programs seem to be finding it difficult to give up paper-based in-class assessments as a main strategy. Presumably referring to examinations, one TA of Spanish added a note that “they used to be online at home but just this semester they were switched back to being done in paper and in class.” While it is not known how many of these programs attempted a transition to a new format and changed back, there is evidence that many are using online assessment as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional paper assessment in face-to-face class meetings.

Table 4.18

Assessment Methods Reported by Instructors and Administrators (N = 121)

Method	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Paper-based in-class	85	12
Online at home	83	13
Face-to-face conversation/presentation	77	11
Paper-based at home	23	2
Online in a computer lab	22	4
Other (“in a testing center,” “oral assessment,” “Skype,” “uploaded during class,” format depends on instructor preference)	2	3

Feedback. A series of questions had to do with the types of feedback for online work and the methods of providing this feedback to students since students’ ability to get and use feedback is important in their being able to make progress from one assignment to the next. Online work may include automated or instructor-graded activities on the publisher’s website, as well as instructor- or departmentally-created activities or file uploads on the course website, any documents submitted by email, blogs, online portfolios, etc.

Asked what types of feedback students receive for their online work, almost all instructors and administrators selected “evaluation of responses as correct/incorrect,” followed by “specific corrections” and “overall comments.” The complete results for this question are listed in Table 4.19. “Other” responses included automated guidance prompts, in-person feedback as needed, and voice emails.

Table 4.19

Types of Feedback That Students Receive for Their Online Work, As Reported by Instructors (N = 103) and Administrators (N = 18)

Type of feedback	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
Evaluation of responses as correct/incorrect	94	15
Specific corrections	59	15
Overall comments	52	11
Peer editing	10	4
Other	8	1

When asked how this feedback was provided, a vast majority of instructors indicated that it appeared automatically on the website. Instructor-provided feedback on the website was also frequent. Twenty-eight instructors give feedback in person, which could mean general feedback in face-to-face class sessions or individual feedback in office hours or student appointments. Administrators had similar responses, with the “Other” response being online peer editing. The complete results are given in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20

Feedback Methods for Online Work, As Reported by Instructors (N = 103) and Administrators (N = 18)

Feedback method	Number of instructors	Number of administrators
On website, automatic	89	15
On website, provided by instructor/grader	65	14
In person	28	7
By email	23	6
On paper	18	2
Other	4	1

Instructors’ influence on assessments. While it is understood that in many language programs, especially the larger programs that were well represented in this study, instructors may not have much influence on their assessments, instructors were asked which types of assessments in their courses they designed or which ones’ grading rubrics they designed. Percentages that

they designed (including rubrics) ranged from 33% to 73% by assessment type, as listed in Table 4.21. Multiple-choice examination questions, although commonly used, fell near the bottom of the list because many instructors do not write their own questions, using departmental exams or questions from a publisher's test bank. The types of assessments whose design process instructors were most likely to be involved in were discussion boards/forums, evaluation of in-class participation, and out-of-class compositions. For these assessment types, instructors may be writing their own questions and/or designing their own grading rubrics.

Table 4.21

Number of Instructors Who Designed Their Course Assessments, by Assessment Type, Compared with the Total Number Who Use That Type, and the Accompanying Percentage (N = 103)

Assessment type	Designed/total used	Percentage designed
Discussion boards/forums	16/22	73%
Evaluation of in-class participation	53/83	64%
Out-of-class compositions	32/52	62%
Essay test questions	40/69	58%
In-class conversation exam or presentation	44/80	55%
In-class compositions	40/76	53%
Students record audio/video	24/46	52%
Fill-in/short-answer test questions	47/92	51%
Blogs/wikis	3/6	50%
Portfolios	2/4	50%
Evaluation of online participation	27/59	46%
Multiple-choice test questions	35/77	45%
Real-time online audio/video conversation exam or presentation	9/22	41%
Other	1/3	33%

Support for Students

Only 67.6% of instructors (69 of 102 respondents to this question) reported that their students were provided with any type of orientation or training for their blended courses. Of these, 48 provide it themselves, 25 reported that their department provides it, and 20 reported

that the institution provides it. Among administrators, 88.9% (16 of 18 respondents) reported the existence of training for students, whether provided by some instructors individually (9), the department (7), or the university (3).

When asked about discussing the online activities during face-to-face class sessions, 20 instructors (19.6% of 102 respondents to this question) reported that they do not discuss the activities at all. The other 82 instructors discuss the activities to respond to student questions (67), to give feedback (43), to give instructions (35), or for other purposes (12), which include to provide context for the activities, to connect them to classroom practice, or to go over any activities that are particularly problematic.

Institutional Support for Blended Learning

Most administrators reported that their programs received little, if any, financial or technical support from their institution for the implementation of blended courses. A few examples of support that three separate programs received were a summer grant for course development, a new faculty position for fully online courses, and three years of teaching assistant support for materials development. The administrator who was “somewhat unsatisfied” with the current setup of the blended courses reported not receiving any institutional support other than instructors being required to attend a four-hour training session about distance learning. The full list of administrator responses, sorted into similar categories, is provided in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Administrators' Reports on Institutional Support for Blended Language Courses, Sorted by Category (N = 15)

Type of support provided	Number of administrators
Technical/infrastructure support	4
Faculty or teaching assistant position	2
Very little	1
None	3
Unsure	3
Small grants	2
Required distance learning training session	1

Note: One administrator provided two answers.

The responses from the instructor and administrator surveys provide an overview of the course designs, technologies, assessments, and support issues in blended courses of basic languages in the United States. A closer look at four programs that appeared in this study comes from the results of the student surveys, summarized below.

Student Survey

Courses and Participants

The classes surveyed were from French, Spanish, Italian, and German at a single institution. The 35 respondents came from third-semester French (2 sections, 12 students), fourth-semester French (3 sections, 10 students), third-semester Spanish (1 section, 6 students), second-semester Italian (1 section, 3 students), and second-semester German (2 sections, 4 students).

All of the students surveyed were taking courses that were not offered in a fully face-to-face format at their university. It follows that when asked their reasons for choosing to take their language class in the hybrid format, 28/35 (80%) indicated that there were no purely face-to-face classes available for their language and level. Some students, however, also indicated other

reasons for their choice of enrollment, such as preferring a combination of independent work and classroom instruction and not wanting to be on their own with a fully online class. The complete results are given in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23

Why Students Chose to Take Their Language Class in the Blended Format (N = 35)

Reason	Number of students
There were no purely face-to-face classes for my language and level	28
I prefer a combination of independent work and classroom instruction	8
I didn't want to be on my own with a purely online class	5
Other (Scheduling, assigned by advisor, unaware of what hybrid was)	4
There were no purely online classes for my language and level	3
I wanted the schedule flexibility of a hybrid class	3
I have had positive experiences with other hybrid classes	3

Student Perspectives on Class Resources

When asked how helpful each resource was to them in learning the language, students were given only the options for technological resources that their instructor had previously listed on the instructor survey, except where the instructor indicated changes due to teaching a different course level or altering materials since taking the survey. Therefore, not all students had the option of selecting all resource types, but an “Other” option was given in case they wanted to add anything else. Students were instructed to leave blank the ratings for any items that they had not used. Aside from three students who wrote in answers for activities that they found especially useful, the resources rated most highly by students were target language audio/video, their own recordings in the target language, smartphone apps, and the textbook website. Discussion boards were rated particularly low in comparison with the other resources, but they were only rated by nine students from two languages. The complete results are given in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Usefulness of Resources for Learning the Target Language, Rated by Students (N = 35)

Resource	Average usefulness rating out of 5.0	Number of ratings
Other (class interaction, feedback journal, conversation groups)	5	3
Listening to audio/watching video	4	31
Making audio/video recordings	3.8	10
Smartphone apps	3.5	15
Textbook website	3.4	34
Authentic websites	3.3	21
Other practice websites	3.3	18
Blackboard website	3.2	34
Using the language on social media	3.1	11
Discussion boards	2.3	9

(Scale: 1 = Not Useful; 5 = Extremely Useful)

Student Perspectives on Feedback

Students were asked about the formats of feedback that they received from the online activities in the course, as well as asked to rate the usefulness of that feedback. Aside from “Other,” in which one student rated in-class instructor feedback as 5/5, the most useful feedback formats were instructor feedback (on paper or in person, followed by on the website). Automatic feedback and peer feedback came in slightly below. The student who listed the instructor’s assignment of a feedback journal did not give it a numerical rating but wrote that “The assignment was very helpful for getting help on learning points from the instructor, and tips for staying motivated to learn.” The full results for formats of feedback and the average usefulness of each one are given in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25

Formats of Feedback and Their Usefulness, Rated by Students (N = 35)

Feedback format	Average usefulness rating out of 5.0	Number of students*
Other (instructor feedback in class, feedback journal)	5.0	2
Instructor feedback on paper or in person	4.2	15
Instructor feedback on website	3.8	17
Automatic feedback from website	3.3	28
Peer feedback on paper or in person	3.3	3
Peer feedback on website	N/A	0

(Scale: 1 = Not Useful; 5 = Extremely Useful)

Note: This figure was also the number of ratings, except that "Other" consisted of only one rating because the student who listed the feedback journal provided qualitative remarks instead of giving it a numerical rating.

Student Perspectives on Training

Only 13 students reported that they were provided with orientation or training to familiarize them with how to use the online materials. While all respondents from Spanish indicated that they were and all respondents from one level of French indicated that they were not (except for one who left the question blank), the other classes' responses were mixed, even with the same instructor. It is possible that not all students shared the same idea of what constituted orientation or training with the online materials.

When compared with their instructors' responses about whether their students receive training (Table 4.26), the results were drastically different in most classes other than fourth-semester French. This result could be because the instructor and student surveys were done during different semesters (Spring 2015 and Fall 2015), and instructors may have changed their provision of training between semesters. It is also possible that not everyone shared the same opinion about what constitutes training.

Table 4.26

Student and Instructor Opinions about Training Provided to Students in Each Class, by Language and Level (N = 34 Students & 5 Instructors)

Language and level	Students: Fall 2015		Instructors: Spring 2015
	Provided	Not provided	
German (second-semester)	1	3	Yes; provided by self and university
French (third-semester)	4	8	Yes; provided by self
French (fourth-semester)	0	9	No (not aware of any)
Spanish (third-semester)	6	0	No (not aware of any)
Italian (second-semester)	2	1	Yes; provided by self

The 13 students indicated the types of training that they received and the usefulness of each one. The most useful was “Other,” owing to the student who explained, “A representative from [publisher] came to class to explain how [the textbook website] works, it was a comprehensive explanation. Also our instructor gave us training, and created a semester-long Blackboard thread/posting for students to ask any questions.” The student went on to write that the “Instructor-led Blackboard posting/thread was most useful because certain parts of the online technology would become problematic for one reason or another, and we could post questions, and our instructor would investigate and give advice throughout the semester.” Aside from “Other,” the other types of training all ranked slightly more useful than the midpoint when averaged across all students. The average usefulness ratings and the number of students of who rated each one are given in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27

Students' Ratings of the Usefulness of Types of Training with Online Materials (N = 13)

How training was provided	Average usefulness rating out of 5.0	Number of students
Other	5.0	1
During class time	3.9	9
Online as a self-access option if needed	3.4	11
Online as an assignment	3.3	4

(Scale: 1 = Not useful; 5 = Extremely useful)

Note: Some students reported receiving multiple types of training.

Student Perspectives on Goals

In preparation for asking students how well their blended course met their goals, they were asked to list their goals for the class: “What, specifically, did you want to learn in this class?” Thirty students answered the question. Their responses, given in short-answer form, were reduced into the categories listed in Table 4.28, which also shows their results. Of the 30, 17 (56%) listed speaking or conversation as a goal. Eight listed language in general, and the other skills and topics such as grammar, writing, culture, and reading fell lower on the list.

Table 4.28

Students' Indicated Goals, with the Number of Students Who Listed Each One, As Interpreted from Short-Answer Responses (N = 30)

Goal (to improve, learn about, etc.)	Number of students
Speaking/conversation	17
Language (in general)	8
Grammar	5
Writing	4
Culture	2
Reading	2
To fulfill a requirement	2
Communication	1
Vocabulary	1

Student Perspectives on Learning, Technology, and Their Blended Course

Students were also asked to respond to a series of Likert scale questions that dealt with their own characteristics as a learner, as well as their experience with the course and with technology in general. In a set of correlations in Excel, none of these characteristics were found to correlate with how well the course met their stated goals, the overall sentiment of their comments about the blended course that they expressed in the qualitative questions (coded as positive, negative, or mixed), or their answers to whether the course made them more independent learners. It was hypothesized that perhaps students who self-identified more as independent learners would have more positive feelings toward the blended course than those who did not, or that those who did not self-identify more as independent learners would be able to develop that skill through the semester, but these hypotheses were not borne out by the results.

There were, however, some interesting results for individual questions, as given in Table 4.29. First, although most students indicated agreement with the statement “I learn best in a classroom” (average agreement level = 4.06/5), this did not coincide with an opposite trend for the statement “I learn best on my own” (average agreement level = 3.17/5). It is possible that students were not seeing learning on one’s own as the opposite of learning in a classroom, and thus indicated agreement with each statement independently.

Table 4.29

Average Student Agreement with Likert Scale Survey Questions (N = 35)

Statement	Average agreement level out of 5.0
I learn best on my own.	3.17
I learn best in a classroom.	4.06
I take my time on homework and make sure I understand before moving on.	3.60
I can generally figure out technological tools on my own.	4.37
The technology in this course was easy to use.	4.37
This course helped make me a more independent learner.	3.31
This course helped me meet my goals that I stated above.	3.73

(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

For “I can generally figure out technological tools on my own” and “The technology in this course was easy to use,” even though the two questions had the exact same averages, the same students did not answer the two questions the same way, making the correlation coefficient only .55. Fortunately for the students as well as for the success of the courses, most students indicated that the technology was easy to use. The two students who indicated disagreement with the statement about course technology being easy to use also provided negative qualitative comments about the homework websites. In one case, the student’s complaint was about the scheduling of assignments, wishing that the topic could be covered in class before it is assigned for homework since it can be confusing to try to do an assignment on a topic that students had to teach themselves. The other student wrote that the homework is assigned on multiple platforms and not all in one place and suggested reducing the number of places that students have to search for homework assignments. In neither case did the negative comments reflect the functionality of the homework website, but rather how this component is being integrated into the course.

Although there were not enough responses from some of the languages to do a reliable Chi-square test comparing the averages on different questions by language or by class, some

interesting comments still can be made. Average responses for the question about the ease of use of the courses' technology (Table 4.30), exhibit some slight variation by language, but the key point is that all four respondents from German answered "Strongly Agree." This result, although not quantitatively significant, is notable because the German course is the only one using an open educational resource (OER) textbook. Thus, the homework for this class is not assigned through the textbook website. It could be that the OER is enough to affect the question's results, but with only four respondents from German, it is impossible to determine from quantitative data alone.

Table 4.30

Student Agreement with Survey Question "The Technology in This Course Was Easy to Use," Averaged by Language (N = 35)

Language and level	Average level of agreement out of 5.0	Number of responses
German (second-semester)	5.0	4
French (third-semester)	4.58	12
French (fourth-semester)	4.4	10
Spanish (third-semester)	3.83	6
Italian (second-semester)	3.67	3

(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

In general, students were slightly more positive than negative about how well the blended courses met their stated goals. After removing any responses from students who had not stated their goals (5 students), students' average agreement with the statement "This course helped me meet my goals that I stated above" was 3.73 (between "Neither agree or disagree" and "Agree"). Although these responses differed slightly by course (language and level), the results were not significant in a Chi-square test ($p > .05$). The results for this question are given in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Student Agreement with Survey Question “This Course Helped Me Meet My Goals That I Stated above,” with Students with Non-Stated Goals Removed, Averaged by Language (N = 30)

Language and level	Average level of agreement out of 5.0	Number of responses
German (second-semester)	4.33	3
French (third-semester)	4.13	8
Spanish (third-semester)	3.83	6
Italian (second-semester)	3.67	3
French (fourth-semester)	3.2	10

(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

In a short-answer question, students were asked whether they would or would not recommend a blended language course to other students, and why or why not. Thirty-one students answered this question. Their responses were coded as “positive,” “negative,” or “mixed,” based on their direct answer, if they gave one, along with other information in their response. One student’s response was coded as “unclear.” The 30 analyzable responses varied widely, with 50% overwhelmingly positive, 33% negative, and 17% mixed (Table 4.32).

Table 4.32

Overall Sentiment of Student Responses to Whether They Would or Would Not Recommend a Blended Language Course and Why (N = 31)

Sentiment of student response	Number of responses
Positive	15
Negative	10
Mixed	5
Unclear	1

Qualitatively, student responses about their recommendations of a blended class referenced a wide range of strengths and weaknesses of the blend. Strengths listed in the positive or mixed responses included schedule flexibility, time-saving, independence, the availability of online tools to help with student learning, the effectiveness of the course instructor, and a variety of benefits related to the required online activities. In these responses, the online activities were

described as engaging, useful when taken seriously, reinforcing of in-class work, teaching students how to learn independently, helping raise students' course grades above their test grades, and more interactive than paper homework. Weaknesses listed in the negative or mixed responses included too much online homework, a lack of in-class time to go over topics required for the homework, a lack of feedback or delay in feedback about wrong answers in the homework, the sense that the online component simply serves to make it easier for instructors to grade, a lack of interpersonal communication, the need to teach themselves grammar, the failure of the format for unmotivated students, and issues with the online homework package. Downsides of the online package were that it was expensive, it was impersonal, and its technical problems sometimes resulted in unsaved work.

While at least ten students indicated that they would not recommend a blended class, it is unclear what their experience is with fully face-to-face courses that causes them to make that recommendation since that format is not offered for most basic language courses at their institution, School A. A lot of their complaints had to do with the limited face-to-face class time and with aspects of the online homework—two issues that may also show up with face-to-face classes. Many purely face-to-face classes also use online homework and, as instructors know well, suffer from not having as much in-class time as instructors and students may want. Thus, it is not clear if these problems have to do with the blend or simply are being perceived that way by students.

While it is assumed that most students took a language course in high school, these courses are different from university-level language courses in a number of ways. Since language classes proceed more slowly through lessons in high school, they can offer more face-to-face class time per topic. The style of homework also differs since online textbook packages are not

yet as ubiquitous in high school classes. While blended classes may especially suffer from the problems of limited class time and the challenges of online homework, it is not clear if the students who note these weaknesses are truly able to make comparisons with university-level face-to-face language classes or if they are basing their judgments on their high school experiences. Therefore, their comments about downsides should be taken as suggestions for improvement, rather than at face value as arguments against the blend.

The final question of the student survey allowed participants to add any other comments that would be useful to designers of future blended language courses. Sixteen students provided substantive comments, mostly regarding suggestions for the workload, the amount of class time, the setup of the online platform, the scheduling of online assignments and face-to-face activities, specific skills that could be addressed more, types of projects that worked especially well, types of activities of which students want more, and a need to know how to study on one's own. In general, students appeared to want a greater focus on learning to use the language, especially the spoken language, instead of simply completing assignments. They called for more listening and speaking exercises and video chat with native speakers. One student in a class that was assigned video chat with native speakers praised this assignment.

The wide variety of perspectives obtained from the student survey, although from a small sample of individuals at one institution, exemplifies student perspectives on the blend that are relevant to other programs using similar components. Interestingly, within the same institution and even the same language, students had strikingly different opinions about the online textbook package and other elements of the course setup, which suggests, as expected, that there is no one-size-fits-all methodology that will be beneficial to all students. Student perspectives may also depend upon characteristics of their instructor or other course elements, and more can be

learned from matching up their responses with those of their instructors. A more complete picture of each program in which the students were surveyed is found below in the focus studies, which also include interviews with their instructors.

Focus Studies

The focus studies below report the results of interviews with instructors in seventeen programs at fourteen institutions, along with other relevant information gleaned from program websites and, where applicable, student surveys. The results are presented in narrative form to paint a picture of each program from the perspective of the instructor or instructors interviewed. Emerging themes are addressed here but are analyzed in Chapter V.

Program 1: French at School A

The French program at School A, a large state university, offers both blended and fully online courses in the basic language sequence. The blended courses are approximately 75% face-to-face and 25% online, and they have replaced the traditional face-to-face classes. The only fully face-to-face classes that are still offered in this program are those in an intensive format: multiple semesters of French in one semester. Therefore, most students take blended or fully online courses.

Program 1 Instructors. Several instructors from this program responded to the survey and were contacted with follow-up questions. Of these, two responded with answers and additional information: one adjunct faculty member (Lisa) and one graduate student instructor (Michael). A third, Lorraine, who is a graduate student instructor, was interviewed over Skype.

Lisa's and Michael's answers paint a picture of this program as being typical for blended courses in some ways, such as making heavy use of standardized, packaged materials, but also allowing instructors, especially faculty members, to be innovative, time permitting. Eleven

themes that emerged from a careful analysis of these two respondents' answers are students' motivation and understanding of course demands, students' use of available resources, the distribution of paper and online assignments, the processes by which learning goals are determined and evaluated, instructor creation of online materials, the look and feel of the online interface, the shortcomings of the online materials, time saved or lost by students and instructors, the availability of oral communication practice, the classroom atmosphere, and the overall effectiveness of the blended format.

Lisa wrote that the courses' success depends upon student motivation and dedication to using the available resources and completing the online work. "When they are less successful, it is not necessarily because of the setup, but because students choose to only complete a portion of the assignments," such as only the ones on paper. In student evaluations, some of Lisa's students even requested a return to more paper homework in place of so many online activities. She has also noticed a decline in the proportion of students doing the online work, even though it is worth 25-30% of their course grade and they can receive instant feedback, "make corrections, and learn from their mistakes," a process that she deems "ideal" for those who use it. Lisa references the online work as a strength of the blended format since students can work at their own pace, listening to or watching material as many times as they need to, which would not be possible in a regular classroom. The self-grading homework is also better for busy instructors who have large enrollments. Michael adds that "the online material lacks a certain sophistication." In his opinion, a reason some students come to class unprepared is because the online activities are not sufficiently engaging to hold their attention long enough for them to study and learn French.

In addition to using the textbook website, Lisa has created some of her own activities that use authentic French materials online. For instance, she pairs interviews, news reports, and film

clips with preview and comprehension questions and also writes online scavenger hunts for students to research relevant topics in French. Students do the activities as homework and bring their results to class to submit. “The students find them fun, and I think they learn a great deal from them,” she adds. She cites the ease of bringing authentic materials into the class as one of the great advantages of going blended, although she acknowledges that her program at this point is not making the most of this opportunity. Michael, too, has supplemented the textbook package with his own activities. “Last semester I found myself consistently decreasing the number of activities I assigned online,” he wrote, “instead creating my own activities for students to do on their own time.” Like Lisa, Michael designed activities for students to use the Internet to complete tasks. Unfortunately, creating his own activities comes with a substantial time commitment; “realistically,” he added, “I just don't have time for all that.”

In regard to the online setup, Lisa would prefer a system other than Blackboard “for creating dynamic online classes” since it cannot be customized in the ways that she would like to promote student learning. “If we could create different looking online classrooms I think students would respond more favorably,” she explained. For example, she posts extra practice links on Blackboard, but she suspects that few students use them because they rarely look at Blackboard and “most are surprised to find out later these resources are there.”

A related problem in Lisa’s opinion is that her students may be viewing the online work as extra homework that they can skip, rather than required classwork done at home. With reduced interaction with other students and their instructor, students may have trouble staying motivated to do the work. Traditional classes with frequent class meetings “created more of a family-like bond,” Lisa wrote, which is more difficult to achieve in blended classes. In addition, students have less of a chance to actually speak the target language, making them “more

comfortable reading and writing and less proficient at speaking and listening” than they would be in a class that meets more frequently. Michael added that by having four consecutive days without a French class every week, “students easily lose focus and forget what is going on in class,” which causes him to spend too much time reviewing the previous topics before moving on to new material. “Lack of retention of what's been learned might be the biggest disadvantage,” he claimed. Although Michael maintains a strong belief in the capabilities of learning language in the online mode, he explained, “we haven’t yet figured out how to make it as effective as face-to-face language learning,” creating constant challenges for the blend.

In the Skype interview, Lorraine elaborated on the circumstances surrounding the program, specifically that the program’s large size and brief training causes some instructors like herself not to be fully aware of the online options available to them in their blended courses, although she noted that some instructors understand the system well enough on their own. Even despite the blended program’s large size, instructors can modify their sections’ version of the shared examinations. These examinations, along with daily vocabulary and grammar quizzes, are given in a paper-and-pencil format.

Lorraine is currently assisting in a curricular redesign that includes a complete overhaul of the assessments for blended French, which still will be paper-and-pencil for the written portion but will focus on the four skills of reading, open-ended writing, listening, and speaking, replacing vocabulary and grammar, which will be relegated to daily quizzes. The speaking portion will be completed individually with the instructor in the classroom while the class takes the written portion.

Lorraine spoke in depth about the types of activities that she emphasizes in class: anything that is communicative and involves interaction with the other students and with her. In

class, she emphasizes aural skills and especially pronunciation since she acknowledges that students do not get enough out of online speaking activities in which the feedback is delayed. She wants to be able to assist them in the moment in which they are trying to make the connection between the written word and its phonological form, not just provide feedback after an online audio or video activity. She spoke highly of the camaraderie that students develop in her class, despite the reduced class time, and indicated that they enjoy helping each other during a game such as a conjugation relay in which they take turns conjugating verbs on the board and editing each other's conjugations.

Online, she relies mostly on activities from the publisher's web package, including vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension activities, but not the speaking activities. She prefers the assignments that are automatically graded, not to reduce her workload, but so that students can get more rapid feedback and have multiple tries at an activity, enabling them to learn more from doing it. She does not use discussion boards on the course website because they seem too structured and disconnected from real life, but she has considered instead using social media, such as a Facebook group for the course, so that students can interact with each other in French in a more relaxed environment.

Program 1 Students. Michael sent the student survey to two sections of third-semester French at School A. Twelve students responded. Their results were included in the student survey data above and are reported separately here.

Student reasons for going blended. The overwhelming reason (12/12) why the respondents from Michael's classes took French in the blended format was, unsurprisingly, because no purely face-to-face classes were offered. The full list of reasons that students selected for why they took the blended course are listed in Table 4.33.

Table 4.33

Students' Reasons for Taking Their French Class in the Blended Format (N = 12)

Reason	Number of students
There were no purely face-to-face classes	12
I didn't want to be on my own with a purely online class	3
I prefer a combination of independent work and classroom instruction	2
I wanted the schedule flexibility of a hybrid class	2
There were no purely online classes	1
I have had positive experiences with other hybrid classes	1

In the instructor survey, Michael reported the use of seven online materials, as listed in Table 4.34. His students were instructed to rate how helpful each one was in learning French on a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most) and to leave blank any that they did not use. All materials were rated by students at a mean average of at least a three out of five. Listening to French audio/watching French video was rated the highest, at an average of 4.36 out of 5. The rest of the results are given in Table 4.34, along with the number of students who rated each material.

Table 4.34

Students Reporting the Helpfulness of Each Resource in Learning French (N = 12)

Material	Average rating	Number of ratings
Textbook website	3.67/5	12
Course website	3/5	12
Practice websites	3.2/5	10
French audio/video	4.36/5	11
Authentic websites	3.56/5	9
Social media	3.09/5	11
Smartphone apps	3.6/5	10

(Scale: 1 = Not helpful; 5 = Extremely helpful)

Assignment feedback. All students (12/12) reported receiving automatic feedback from the website. In addition, five students acknowledged getting instructor feedback on the website, and two students listed receiving instructor feedback on paper or in person. One student added, via an "Other" option, getting instructor feedback in class if further explanation or clarification

was needed. Students rated the usefulness of automatic feedback at an average of 4.08/5.

Instructor feedback online received a rating of 4.4/5, and on paper or in person (including the “Other”) 4.67/5. It is not clear whether some students received more instructor feedback than others or if some were simply more aware of receiving feedback than others.

Similarly, only four of the twelve students reported that they were provided with any training or orientation to help with how to use the online materials. The formats in which they reported that this training was given are reported in Table 4.35, along with the usefulness of these orientations, which range from an average of 3 to 4 out of 5.

Table 4.35

Students Reporting Usefulness of Each Type of Training (N = 4)

	Usefulness	Number reporting receiving this training
During class time	4/5	3
Online as an assignment	3/5	2
Online as a self-access option if needed	3.67/5	3

(Scale: 1 = Not useful; 5 = Extremely useful)

Student goals. Eight out of 12 students indicated a specific goal for what they wanted to learn in their class. These goals centered upon communication: Seven respondents listed some version of it with some specifically mentioning accent, speaking, writing, reading, and culture. The eighth student mentioned only a language requirement.

Likert scale questions. In the final quantitative portion of the survey, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements on a five-point Likert scale. This portion revealed that although the majority of students indicated that they learn best on their own, more of them indicated that they learn best in a classroom. If students are reporting their preferences accurately, the hybrid format that capitalizes on both of these formats may indeed be a good fit for the students. The majority of students also indicated that they work thoroughly on

homework and are good at figuring out technological tools on their own. All students agreed that the technology in the course was easy to use. Only a few, however, indicated that the course made them a more independent learner. Most indicated that it helps them meet the goals that they stated above. The mean averages from this section are listed in Table 4.36.

Table 4.36

Student Participants' Mean Level of Agreement with Each Statement

Statement	Mean level of agreement
I learn best on my own.	3.17
I learn best in a classroom.	4.58
I take my time on homework and make sure I understand before moving on.	3.83
I can generally figure out technological tools on my own.	4.42
The technology in this course was easy to use.	4.58
This course helped make me a more independent learner.	3.33
This course helped me meet my goals that I stated above.	3.92

(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

Qualitative results. Asked whether they would recommend a hybrid language course to other students and why, the eight respondents' comments can be divided into positive (3), negative (3), and mixed (2). In the positive responses, students claimed that the online activities supplemented and reinforced material learned in class. Negative responses depicted the online materials as expensive and "impersonal" and a poor replacement for the face-to-face conversation and immediate feedback of the classroom. One student who believed that the online activities were useful also revealed that not all students felt invested in them. Another student wrote that the learner's effort makes more of a difference than the format of the class.

The final question asked students to add anything else that would be useful for blended course developers. Suggestions included having instructors convince students of the blended format, giving them more direction for how to study at home, and incorporating video chat with native speakers, an activity that the student believed would be more helpful than the speaking

portions of the online homework. Another student suggested that the online portion should only contain homework to reinforce in-class learning rather than require students to teach themselves new concepts, blaming the latter format for why students resort to Google Translate for assignments. A final suggestion was to decrease the unnecessary complexity of the format of the online materials, which are not always compatible with student computers.

Taken together, the instructor and student data from Program 1 helps explain and contextualize some of the challenges that participants face. Unfortunately, since no purely face-to-face French option exists in the basic language sequence at School A, it is not possible to suggest that only the students who feel self-motivated or invested in the online materials take advantage of the blended format. In order for all students to be successful, changes may need to be made to draw students into more engagement with the language. Other programs described below can provide some ideas.

Program 2: Spanish at School A

Eric is a Master's student teaching Spanish at School A, the same state university that has the French program described above. Like the French program, the Spanish program has converted its regular face-to-face courses to blended, and it also offers online courses. Instructors generally teach both blended and fully online. Although the blended and online programs operate separately, instructors who teach in both are able to use a lot of their materials in both formats. With only a small amount of annual formal training, instructors generally improve their teaching through their own experiences as well as informal collaboration with peers.

Eric describes his program as being in a state of transition. Although it relies heavily on the textbook package for its online component because of instructor and administrator preferences, there are other types of activities that have been piloted and may be phased in, such

as chats, online presentations, and community-based projects. In the textbook package, there are some audio recording and writing activities that instructors are responsible for grading, but the majority of items are automatically graded. This setup could be to help ensure uniformity across large numbers of sections and also to alleviate the teaching load of two courses every semester, which Eric sees as particularly heavy for graduate students.

Eric spoke at length about the communicative approach and how it is carried out in his program. In particular, he believes that the assessments do not reflect the way that instructors are being asked to teach. He tries to make his classroom communicative, asking students to come prepared to use the language, serving as their guide to give short explanations and answer questions when needed, and letting them use the majority of class time for practicing what they are learning. Assessments, however, are heavily based on discrete grammar points and cultural facts with single correct answers, which “do not reflect a communicative classroom” where students are being asked to use language productively. “I know it’s difficult,” Eric explained, “but we have to find a balance between being able to assess a large group of students and maintaining the integrity of the communicative approach.” Despite the large teaching load and its accompanying grading time, Eric would prefer assessments that were more open-ended and that better reflected student language proficiency.

Another challenge that Eric finds with a communicative classroom is the student preference for receiving grammatical explanations in class. “We just talk most of the time,” Eric explains, “and many times, students become frustrated because they think ‘I’m not learning anything. He’s not teaching me any grammar.’” His view, however, is that students do not need him to spend more than a few minutes explaining a grammatical point “because they’ve already seen it outside of class or they have the resources” to study it. He often simply introduces a point

and asks them to work on it on their own, not only because of the limited classroom time, but also because he believes that students learn better by working through the material in their studying. Then, when they come back to class, they can work on automatizing the material in communicative activities.

Some students still ask Eric to use more of class to explain the grammar, but he responds by trying to help students understand that the course is set up that way for a reason, that they are still learning grammar while communicating, and that he is there to assist them when needed. What Eric identifies as the “number one challenge” of the communicative blended course is getting students “to buy into and understand this method and why this is the way we’re doing it.” It takes time to teach students what they need to do to be successful in a blended course, such as “how to learn online, how to learn on their own, and how to learn a language in general.”

One innovation that Eric has piloted that has alleviated part of the problem of student buy-in is a feedback journal. He first used it as part of a fully online course but plans to use it with all of his classes, both online and blended. In the feedback journal, students are asked to reflect each week on their progress on the can-do statements that Eric has given them for the week, along with responding to the feedback that he gives them on their assignments and the voice emails that he sends the class with overall feedback based on his observations of the class’s linguistic issues. “It’s a little bit of extra work,” Eric admits, “but the student feels more oriented and more supported.”

Eric’s feedback journal assignment is a good example of constructing a feedback loop with dialogue between instructor and students, with formative comments influencing the subsequent task (Duensing & Harper, 2011; Gikandi, et al., 2011; Keppell & Carless, 2006). Not only does it give students the opportunity to learn from the feedback that he gives them and

incorporate their learning into future assignments, but it opens an important line of communication between student and instructor. The feedback journal gives Eric a semester-long method of achieving student buy-in for the communicative method. Giving students the opportunity to work with feedback about their production demonstrates to them the usefulness of the activities that they have done. “Now they’re really starting to understand what the point is of conversation and building,” he adds.

Program 3: Italian at School A

Christine, a faculty member teaching Italian at School A, explains that the reasons why School A moved to the blended model are that “classroom space is at a premium and most students’ schedules don’t allow them to devote more than two days a week to a foreign language.” Admitting that having only two-and-a-half hours of face-to-face instruction per week is not ideal, this instructor makes it work by using the flipped classroom approach. Online time is dedicated to presentation of information and studying; in-class time is for real-time communication. Christine makes narrated presentations for both her blended and fully online classes; students use these, along with the resources on the publisher’s website, to do the practice activities, preparing them to jump directly into communicative activities during face-to-face sessions. Christine places films on the course website so that students can watch them and do the accompanying activities outside of class, saving in-class time for the subsequent discussions of the films.

The assessments in Christine’s Italian program have undergone a series of changes in recent years. The original testing model required instructors to administer oral testing outside of class time, which was not feasible for the blended classes. The first overhaul of the assessments placed oral testing online for students to complete asynchronously. Unfortunately, purely online

assessments took too long to grade, and the program was forced to make another change. In the current system, which Christine developed along with other program administrators, students prepare using both online and in-class activities, but the actual assessment takes place during a face-to-face class session. Students are paired up and assigned a situation that they must role-play with only five minutes to prepare and without making or using any written notes. Thus, students can take the assessment, and instructors can grade it instantly via a rubric within a single class session. Written assessments take place both in class for larger tests and online for shorter vocabulary and grammar quizzes. Christine credits both the current setup of the assessment system and the utility of the publisher's website with the success of the flipped classroom model in her program's blended classes.

Program 4: German at School A

Paul is a graduate student teaching German at School A. Unlike the Spanish and French programs there, the German program is small enough that instructors—whether adjunct faculty or TAs—have more control over their classes' assignments and exams. Paul, like most other instructors in the program, teaches both blended and fully online classes. The blended classes replaced the fully face-to-face classes before Paul arrived, but he was present for another program transition, which was removing quizzes, exams, and other assessments from class and putting them on Blackboard. That change saved valuable instructional time and meant that instructors reclaimed the equivalent of two full weeks of class time, for which Paul was grateful, no longer having to rush through complex topics in a single class period.

Unlike the Romance languages, Paul's program is not using a textbook package that comes with a full complement of assignable online activities. At the time of the interview, Paul had been using a traditional textbook for the blended course and an open educational resource for

the online course, but in the following semester, the blended courses also switched to the fully online open educational resource. In neither case, however, did the textbook come with activities to submit online, which means that instructors were tasked with creating their own activities—such as worksheets, group projects, and writing prompts—for students to complete for the online component of class. Something else that seems to differ from other blended courses' online work is that instructors typically assign activities that practice the previous topics, rather than introducing the subsequent ones. This style differs from the flipped classroom approach that puts the introduction and preparation online to get students ready for the following classroom session.

The department has specified overall learning objectives for each course level, but “for each individual task that we have our students do...we write down a list of goals,” Paul explained, “and we make sure we get them to hit those goals.” Since only one or two instructors teach each level of German, they create their own written assessments for their students or create them together with only one other instructor. This process means that the instructors are less bound by exactly what is in the textbook and are better able to use it as a guide, only having to agree on a shared set of vocabulary and grammar points when there is another instructor teaching the same level. “We make sure our tests mirror what we do in class,” Paul explained, “that the activities that we’re doing in class and writing and grammar exercises are the things they’ll be covering on the tests, and that it’s the same style.” In this way, instructors are able to connect learning goals, classroom practice, and assessment.

Paul credits his supervisors' specialty in second language acquisition for the setup of the program, which emphasizes the communicative approach. “From the day you walk into a [class], it’s all in German. Everything is focused on communication. Everything they’re doing in class, everything they’re doing with a partner, is all communicative,” Paul reported. “We explain what

the assignments are, the tasks are, and we let the students go. We walk around to the groups, ask them questions, and get them going on their way.” When asked where the directive for the communicative approach came from, Paul stated that his supervisors have seen it to be the best way to promote student learning and retention of material, and he seems to agree with them wholeheartedly.

“Students don’t always get it,” Paul admitted about the communicative approach; “it takes them out of their comfort zone” to use only German in the classroom instead of sitting passively and listening to an explanation of grammar, but “it makes a big difference with them later on when you have an oral exam and you ask them the questions” and they actually can answer. From the instructor perspective, Paul recalled that this teaching method is difficult to get accustomed to at first, especially for new teachers who repeat the patterns that they observed as students, but it gets much easier with practice. Instructors also meet weekly with their supervisors to discuss activities that worked well, ones that worked less well, and other issues such as suggesting connections between classroom activities and assessments. The weekly communication affords them a lot of feedback from supervisors, and “everybody’s always in the loop about what’s going on.”

Program 5: Spanish at School B

The Spanish program at School B, a campus within a state university system, offers face-to-face, blended, and fully online courses in its basic language sequence. Because the blended program is only a small part of the full program, it has a different character than some of the other Spanish programs in this study. The blended program at School B is administered jointly with the online program, rather than the face-to-face program. The blended and online curricula thus have more in common with each other and are completely separate from the curriculum and

textbooks used by the face-to-face program. Teaching assistants such as Stacey, who was interviewed for this study, teach both blended and fully online courses, using similar materials in both.

The blended program's small size lends it a dynamic quite similar to that of a smaller department or a less-commonly taught language—like the German program at School A—in place of a large Spanish program. The few teaching assistants enjoy a large amount of freedom over their sections because only those who are specially selected by the program administrators and entrusted with blended classes are teaching them.

In lieu of a traditional textbook, the blended and online Spanish programs at School B use an online system of their own design. Students interact with course content and complete both synchronous and asynchronous activities through the online system.

As Program 5 was able to diverge from the face-to-face Spanish curriculum, it successfully avoided the problem identified by Gruba and Hinkelman (2012), which is that blended language course designers are often bound by the limitations of the preexisting course. Thus, it recalls Gadbois and Quildon's (2013) realization that starting over is more effective and, in the long run, easier than making an ill-fated attempt to adapt the earlier course to a blended format.

Program 6: French at School C

School C differs from most others in the focus studies, as its instructors explain, because it is a community college with different needs and resources than the state universities. James, an instructor of French interviewed for this study, currently teaches fully online classes as an adjunct at this school and initiated the blended French classes, on which he reported for this study. James's motivation for adding a blended class was that the reduced classroom time would

fit better around his work schedule as a staff member at the same institution, enabling him to serve in both roles as instructor and staff.

James's course includes three weekly hours of classroom time and two weekly hours of language laboratory time. While the language laboratory component in place of fully online work might seem to invalidate this course's blended status, it is still included in this study for two reasons. First, the types of online work in this class could just as easily be done outside of the language laboratory with similar results. The only differences are that the laboratory computers monitored students' time and sent the instructor a report of what sites the students visited during their session, which encouraged greater time on task and enabled them to receive credit for doing activities that did not submit results to their instructor. Second, the course met state requirements to be considered blended because it had at least one-third of the work online. Since the program considers it to be blended and it meets all other criteria for a blended course, it was classified as blended for the purposes of this study.

James's development of blended classes fit with the open educational resource that he had already been using as the textbook for his face-to-face French classes. The textbook decision, which he made on his own since all instructors of the language were not required to use the same textbooks, was a result of the community college students' economic situation. According to James, many of them cannot afford a high-priced publisher's package with online access to the corresponding materials. Using the OER enabled students to have free access to an online textbook. Having to use this textbook online led naturally to transitioning the course to the blended format. Another important factor was the availability of a language laboratory, which many institutions no longer have. At School C, the language laboratory is still a mainstay of several languages' programs, including English as a Second Language, and is not scheduled to

disappear in the near future since students' economic situations may prevent them from having reliable Internet access and devices at home.

One main theme that emerged from the interview with James was the issue of autonomy, both of learners and instructors. He mentioned that learners' autonomy is crucial to their success in a blended course, even more so than in a face-to-face class. The language laboratory setup seems to help with this issue by providing support for students, with both a grading incentive for them to do the work and a supportive atmosphere in which to do it, but they still must be in charge of their laboratory time and do more language acquisition on their own without the structure of the classroom. James also uses the can-do statements from the Common European Framework, shares them with students in each lesson, and encourages them to use them to keep track of their own learning.

The issue of instructor autonomy is also relevant. James was able to develop his blended course because of the time and economic circumstances that caused him to look for a solution, as well as not having to use the same materials as other instructors. He put together a set of free resources and assignments that students complete through the course management system, creating a coherent program for students. For instance, on the course management system, students submit audio recordings of themselves reading text passages, and they make spontaneous webcam recordings in answer to video questions, in addition to submitting score reports for written work done through the open textbook website.

Since creating his blended course, James has worked with language instructors at his institution to introduce them to OERs and other technologies and pedagogical methods through hands-on workshops. Several others have since begun using these materials for their classes.

The institution as a whole provides its support for digital learning through giving a small stipend to instructors who submit a course plan for an online or blended course. While the stipend itself is not a substantial reward, having to submit a course plan encourages instructors to put thought into their learning goals and lesson outcomes for digital courses and to connect these with the course activities and assessments.

This institution has a second campus at which Scott, another faculty member interviewed for this study, teaches blended courses in both French and English as a Second Language. To counter the problems of declining enrollment, Scott developed his blended French course using some recommendations from other faculty and the lessons that he had learned from his blended ESL classes. In his ESL classes, Scott uses a publisher's textbook package that includes access to a wealth of online resources and activities, but, like James, he found that the equivalent package in French was too expensive for the community college students. Scott estimates the cost of the ESL package at \$50 for a semester and of the multiple-semester French package at \$300, concluding that publishers suspect that students of French are willing or able to pay more for their textbooks than students of ESL.

Since Scott was already concerned about the declining enrollment, he wanted to make his course as accessible as possible to students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. His solution was to base his blended French curriculum around an old edition of the department's usual textbook, which students could purchase more cheaply than the current edition with its online access, and to supplement it with the corresponding lessons from an open online textbook—the same one used by James.

Unlike James, Scott does not require his students to complete online work in a language laboratory. His campus offers computer labs for student use, but he notes that most students

prefer to use their own devices, even if these devices are phones or tablets that do not work perfectly well with all course technologies. In lieu of submitting coursework on a website for the online component of the blended class, Scott's students keep a homework journal in which they either write out answers or print their completed pages from the online textbook and keep the pages in a binder to submit in class. Scott also gives students pop quizzes during face-to-face sessions to make sure that they have done and fully understood their online work. He then uses face-to-face class sessions for communicative activities, for further explanation and practice of concepts that are more difficult for students to grasp on their own, and for written and oral assessments.

Program 7: American Sign Language at School D

Rich, a faculty member teaching American Sign Language at a state university, attributes the success of his courses to “knowing the importance of testing and actually utilizing enough tests to track student learning and provide feedback for improvement.” In his program, he creates his own assessments, contrasting with other programs in which instructors either do not create their own assessments or have administrative or time constraints that prevent them from providing as much feedback to their students.

Rich has spent over a decade developing, delivering, and refining the online components of his curriculum. Since he does not have to spend as much time every semester creating new teaching materials, he is able to spend more time giving feedback to students. Programs with a more rapid turnover of teaching assistants or adjunct instructors cannot expect their instructors to have as much material pre-prepared and to be able to spend as much time grading assessments and providing feedback. For American Sign Language, this point is crucial because signing assessments, like speaking assessments in spoken languages, may take substantial time to

administer and grade, as compared with fill-in-the-blank or similar written assessments, which are often used for spoken languages but may be useless for ASL. If substantial testing and feedback can be successfully implemented in blended ASL courses, it is an auspicious indication that this method can be adapted to provide a wider variety of options for blended courses of any language.

Rich primarily devotes in-class time to motivate student use of the language in an enjoyable setting, to observe students' use of the language, to provide immediate feedback as needed, and to carry out assessments. He prefers in-class administration of assessments to maintain their integrity, but alleviating technological problems may also enable all students to have equal access to course requirements.

One problem in language classes acknowledged in the literature (for example, Blake, 2013) is that students do not spend enough time on task to achieve fluency. Blake (2013) has proposed digital learning as a possible solution to encourage students to spend more time actively using the language, but blended programs differ in how much their online components actually enable or encourage students to do that. Rich calculated how much time students would be spending online in his course both to ensure that they develop fluency and to justify moving a certain number of credit hours of the course online.

To do so, he did not attempt to monitor students' number of hours of online work but rather worked backwards from course outcomes. He determined how many outcomes students needed to acquire in one semester, including vocabulary, grammar, culture, and pragmatics, and approximately how much time students would need to devote to them to reach the level required for the assessments, using a complex formula. From there, he could estimate how much time successful students would have to spend online during his course. Although some students will

achieve more than others, he estimates that the differences still fall within the same range as students who earn different grades in a face-to-face class.

Program 8: French at School E

School E, a state university, offers a refresher or “bridge” course for students who have had French in high school to review vocabulary and grammar in a more intensive format before continuing with intermediate level classes. Isabelle, a faculty member in the French program who designed the blended format for this course, was interviewed for this study.

Isabelle’s refresher class is the only blended course offered in French, giving her substantial leeway to make choices about its implementation. Isabelle developed the course several years ago through a grant program that was a collaborative effort between a publisher and her university. She now alternates between teaching it and turning it over to one of several teaching assistants to allow them to get experience teaching blended classes.

Since the course is intensive, covering a broad review of several semesters’ vocabulary and grammar, it meets twice a week for over an hour. The third day, however, has been replaced in the blended format by online office hours that Isabelle keeps, via text chat on the course website and an Adobe Connect webconferencing session, to answer questions that students have while working asynchronously on the online material.

In the online mode, students work through a lot of the details about the grammar topics, preparing them for more communicative activities in face-to-face class sessions. The online activities in Isabelle’s course range from those provided by the publisher’s website to additional ones that Isabelle has created and placed on the course website, including forums, VoiceThread prompts, and compositions. From the publisher’s website, Isabelle selects the full gamut of activities from self-graded to instructor-graded to partner chat activities involving distance

recording with a classmate. In addition to grading the partner chat activities, Isabelle also takes the time to manually regrade quite a few of the self-graded activities to help students' scores more accurately reflect their performance, due to imprecision in the automatic system. Despite all of the grading, Isabelle actually cites course development as the larger time commitment for a blended class, likely because she does not usually have more than ten to fifteen students in the course at one time. With a larger class, the grading could become much more time-consuming.

At School E, all of the students in the same level of French take common paper-based examinations. Since there are face-to-face sections of the refresher class in addition to Isabelle's blended section, she must prepare her students for the same assessment as the other students. Acknowledging that her students do not make progress as quickly as students in face-to-face sections, preparing them for the common assessments is part of what motivates her to spend so much time creating and grading assignments. The assessments give instructors a handy means of comparing student results in the two class formats; according to Isabelle, students' test scores do not substantively differ between blended and face-to-face formats.

Program 9: Spanish at School F

Kevin, an adjunct instructor of Spanish at School F, which is a campus of a state university system, answered some questions by email. His program converted a five-day-a-week class into a two-day-a-week model one year before. The online component is provided by the publisher, but he supplements it with activities using other online materials such as YouTube videos that he brings into the classroom.

Kevin believes that the increased technological integration as a result of the conversion is "superior to previous approaches...in terms of learning outcomes," even though it can be less rewarding for the instructor to see the students in class less often. He believes that the new

system, with less class time and more automatic grading, allows instructors not only to spend more time working on their research but that the time-saving measure also “frees up the TA to come up with more creative, communicative, and engaging activities in the classroom.”

Interestingly, Kevin believes that “the new program also forces students to come to class more prepared” since they have to submit activities online using the new material before they attend the corresponding face-to-face class session. This response differs from the instructors who reported that their students were coming to class less prepared under the blended model than when they had a greater amount of face-to-face class time.

Reporting that “students want more classroom contact hours in class,” Kevin reflects that “perhaps the balance has been tipped too far in the direction of the online component,” surmising that the ideal balance between instructor workload and students’ desire for more face-to-face learning opportunities might be three hours per week in the classroom in place of the old five or the new two.

Teresa, a graduate student teaching Spanish in the same program, gave more information over Skype about the program and her blended classes. She has taught only two courses in the blended format and has not supplemented the publisher-provided material with additional online activities. She uses mostly self-graded activities and only a few instructor-graded ones, providing feedback on them through the publisher’s website, because they take her three to four times longer to grade than they would if they were submitted and graded on paper.

Teresa explained more about the circumstances leading to the change to the blended format a few terms earlier. A program review several years ago indicated a problem with the large amount of time that graduate students were spending on their teaching, keeping them from making rapid progress in their graduate programs. The change to the blended format, according

to Teresa, was meant to be for the benefit of the graduate students, without losing quality in the lower-division language courses. She enjoys having more time for her research due to teaching fewer days a week.

Like Kevin, Teresa reports that students seem to be more prepared than prior to the program's conversion to the blended format. According to Teresa, the online final exam in the blended classes is more to evaluate the classes than to evaluate the students: Students take it on the publisher's website on their own time, and owing to the possible integrity issues, it is not worth very much of the overall grade. It is given to ensure that proficiency goals are being met in the blended courses.

The speaking final exam is a skit that students prepare and present during a single class session, similarly to Program 3 (Italian at School A). Even though Program 9 has reduced the speaking exams from twice to once per semester in their conversion to the blend, Teresa reports that the students are proficient enough in the language by the end to succeed on the speaking final because it is similar to what they are tasked with doing every day in class.

Relatedly, Teresa states that she uses the communicative method in class, which she actually finds easier to do in the blended classes since students are arriving more prepared. In the blended classes, students have already done the related online work, rather than expecting to learn the material in class and waiting to catch up on the online activities at the end of the chapter, which was the deadline in the old system.

Kevin's and Teresa's observations that students come to class more prepared than they did in face-to-face classes differ from the perception of some other instructors in this study, who believe that students often do not do the online work or do not learn enough from doing it on their own. It would be instructive to determine which additional factors in the courses' design

and implementation affect student preparedness and completion of online work. This issue is discussed further in Chapter V.

Program 10: Spanish at School G

Samantha, a faculty member teaching Spanish at School G, a state university, answered some questions by email. According to Samantha, her institution's blended classes, which have replaced one weekly hour of face-to-face time with online activities, work well because of the technological integration, in particular: "Most students (and instructors) find there is a lighter cognitive load associated with the blended classes." This positive result seems to her to be more prevalent than the smaller number of students and instructors who feel overwhelmed with the blend. "Students who actually do the homework...show up to class feeling better prepared," she explains, adding that "The information we cover in class seems to soak in deeper than before we used blended classes."

While most instructors who were asked about the learning goals simply referenced or repeated the goals stated on the syllabus, Samantha clearly articulated a specific learning goal for her program's blended classes: "To provide learners with chances to use and understand beginning Spanish in as close to an immersion environment as can be reasonably created." The blended courses in Samantha's program were developed several years ago using grant funding for one of the developers. The classes continue to be evaluated, both by students using regular course evaluations and through a system of instructors' self-evaluation. Some levels also have regular meetings for instructors to discuss strengths and weaknesses of their courses with each other and with their coordinator.

Samantha's classes use forums on the course website and packaged activities from the publisher's website. As in Kissau, et al. (2010), Samantha finds that students who participate less

in the classroom may be more active in the online forums since they have more time to produce and correct their work. The forums are also essential for the connection between face-to-face and online modes. “It is important that instructors make overt connections between what students do online and what students do in class,” she explains, giving the example of an instructor referencing what students said in the forums about a textbook reading as a way to stimulate class discussion of the topic.

Program 11: Spanish at School H

Mariana, a faculty member teaching Spanish at School H, a community college, reports that the online component of blended classes allows for some degree of differentiated instruction since students can complete work at their own pace. “Students in a class are at different levels of listening proficiency,” she writes; “performing listening activities outside of the classroom allows students who benefit from listening more times to do so.” Online, she likes to have students do “listening or pronunciation practice, pre-reading activities that include audio visual materials, homework that requires web searches, etc.” so that in-class time can be spent applying their knowledge.

For online materials, Mariana uses a mixture of publisher-created materials, her own PowerPoint presentations, and assorted Internet resources that she finds and selects. Despite its strengths, blended learning has a drawback that “students often consider the online work as optional if it doesn't have points attached, so they don't do it. If you ask them to watch a video in the classroom, they do it without asking how much credit they're going to receive for doing so.” Mariana's insight points to the tradeoff between allowing students to take as much time as they need with an activity by doing it online and ensuring that they do it by completing it together in a face-to-face class session.

Unlike the majority of the instructors surveyed and interviewed, Mariana lists a specific pedagogical benefit of the technology training that she received as an instructor of blended classes: “redesigning curriculum to meet course outcomes in a blended environment.” The workshop that she found the most useful was “Applying the Quality Matters Rubric,” which showed instructors “how to align learning activities and assessments in and outside the class with specific learning outcomes in a way that makes more sense for students,” as well as how to integrate the online and face-to-face modes.

Program 12: Spanish at School I

School I is a state university that has converted all of its lower-division Spanish courses to a blended format. Nicole, a graduate student teaching first-year blended courses, had taught Spanish for only a year when interviewed for this study.

Nicole believes that the program’s online materials “were easily accessible and utilizable” from the instructor perspective, although students tended to complain that the activities were isolated and repetitive. A challenge with the online materials, for Nicole, was incorporating them into the face-to-face class sessions because they did not seem to build up to something that could be done during class. She suggested a solution to smooth out this disconnect: “It would be nice if the smaller activities done both inside and outside of class amounted to larger, more meaningful projects.” In addition, although the methodology course that Nicole took included a discussion of the importance of technology, she recalls that the course did not provide adequate resources for carrying out its directives in the classroom.

It also frustrated Nicole that students were sometimes asked to complete homework on material that they had not yet practiced in class since it would be preferable for them to develop facility and get their questions answered before being assessed on new material. She got the

sense that students were hurrying to complete homework and other coursework, causing them to be less than prepared for class. She detected “some hostility and misunderstanding” among students, which she attributes to their having to learn course material on their own, instead of from classroom lectures.

In the midst of these challenges, Nicole found that using technology innovatively and bringing her own spontaneity and energy to face-to-face class sessions helped to ensure the success of the course. The technology that she provided did not need to be complex; even a PowerPoint presentation based on a popular television show could help students use a lesson’s vocabulary in a relaxed, familiar context.

Overall, Nicole believes that the blended format affords students “more opportunities to play with the language outside of class, thereby giving them the opportunity to make language connections that ... can only be done with long periods of time immersed in the language.” The blend, therefore, frees up class time for interaction to reinforce what students learned on their own.

Program 13: German at School J

The German program at School J used to offer blended courses and switched back to offering only fully face-to-face and fully online because faculty believed that these options were better for their students. According to Katrin, a faculty member who answered questions via email, the program went blended “to be more effective and efficient with our instruction, but we did not find that we could find a good balance” that achieved the benefits of both pedagogy and logistics.

The former blended courses “used the same activities as in our face-to-face courses, but allowed students to create more online projects and videos.” Quizzes and other assessments were

also moved online, freeing up class time for communicative teaching and answering student questions. Instructors adapted existing materials for the online component of blended work, rather than creating everything new, but they added different digital projects for students to do. Katrin wrote that all of their courses were designed to be communicative with course goals being both to develop linguistic skill and to contribute to overall academic goals. Instructors aimed to use the same style of pedagogy, regardless of course format: face-to-face, blended, or fully online.

Unfortunately, in the blend, “students did not do the things they were supposed to do to prepare.” Independent work was the wrong format for some students. “Our students are very young and often are still learning how to be independent,” Katrin added. Katrin and other faculty conducted some internal evaluations, which led to their eventual decision to stop offering blended courses. Fortunately, the face-to-face and fully online courses were able to benefit from some of the work done for the blended courses. Most of the face-to-face German classes “make heavy use of technology inside and outside of the classroom,” Katrin wrote. The new digital projects, for example, are still being used, as are the online quizzes, but the face-to-face courses cover grammar explanations and readings during classroom sessions because students seemed to need that support.

Program 14: Portuguese at School K

Gabriele, formerly a teaching assistant of Spanish and Portuguese at School K, answered questions via Google Hangouts about the blended Portuguese class that she taught at her former institution. The course, in an intensive format covering two semesters of material in one semester, was team-taught with another teaching assistant. Gabriele was tasked with teaching the face-to-face portion, while the other teaching assistant was assigned to grade the online work.

This team-teaching arrangement was not without its drawbacks for Gabriele. While the intention of the arrangement was to keep the teaching assistants from going over their usual working hours—the intensive course was more credits than one teaching assistant normally teaches in a semester—it provided an artificial separation between in-class and out-of-class work. Gabriele found that she often needed to know how students were doing in their online work to better help them in class. Since she was not tasked with grading their online assignments, she had not been keeping up with their online progress, a situation that she found problematic. In addition, she did not know if they ever even looked at or listened to the feedback that the other teaching assistant was providing for them, such as individually recorded audio messages to help them correct pronunciation issues in their audio recordings since they were not instructed to do anything with this feedback.

Regarding teaching methodology, Gabriele, like many others, reported that her program expected them to teach using the communicative method. She found it more difficult to teach communicatively, possibly because of the intensive nature of the course and not only its blended format. There were many grammar points to cover during the semester, and students often did not learn them on their own and come to class ready to use them in conversation. Also because of the intensive format, Gabriele found that it was impossible to cover as much material as was designated for the semester. The course ended up not covering the final few grammatical points that the non-intensive version was able to include. Part of the problem that Gabriele noted was that the online components on the publisher's website were not as extensive for the Portuguese program as they were for the equivalent Spanish program, which she had previously used in teaching that language. She had originally intended to seek out additional materials to supplement students' learning of Portuguese, but the materials were not in place from the

beginning of the semester, and she never found the time to look for any due to her teaching schedule and the workload of her graduate courses.

Gabriele's Portuguese class was offered with a very small number of students, only eight, after several of the initial enrollees dropped. Despite this small number, there was still a wide range of proficiency, achievement, and reasons for interest in the language. Students were fairly evenly divided into two groups: Some had studied other languages and enjoyed learning language and others had familial or other personal connections to Brazil or Portugal. Despite these motivations, many students, in Gabriele's estimation, still found the course to be challenging. The student for whom the blended format worked best, she reported, had previously studied Spanish and Italian and was able to get much of the material on her own. The others had less success with the blended, intensive format and caused Gabriele more frustration in trying to reach them.

Program 15: Spanish at School L

School L, a state university, converted all of its first-year Spanish courses to blended, from five days to three days per week about five years ago. Diane, the department chair, answered some questions by email about the process and the resulting courses. In addition to making program-level decisions and supervising coordinators, Diane also directly works with teaching assistants and adjunct instructors including conducting trainings.

According to Diane, the main advantages of the blend are administrative. Neither teaching assistants nor students wanted to have class five days per week. Scheduling instructors to teach around their graduate course load was a challenge with daily classes, and the same classrooms were often not available at the same time every day. Blended courses solve all of these issues at the expense of contact hours, which Diane acknowledges as a disadvantage, but

one that the program has overcome by making class time “more meaningful and interactive.” One method that they used was working to eliminate teacher-centered grammar presentations. In class observations, Diane has seen new teaching assistants start off doing less lecturing than their predecessors who began teaching prior to the program’s instituting the blended classes, and even the continuing teaching assistants now work to include more communicative activities than they used to do.

Diane’s program put a lot of effort into ensuring a successful transition to the blend, including researching other programs and conducting training for both new and continuing instructors. In an interesting hands-on move, program leadership gave instructors sample lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations to illustrate the best ways to spend the reduced class time. “There was some resistance” from teaching assistants accustomed to the fully face-to-face format, Diane writes since they had to redo their lesson plans and not reuse all of the same materials from years past, “but [the transition] was surprisingly smooth.” Acknowledging the very real concern of doing students a disservice by taking away contact hours, she tried to sell instructors on the new format by reassuring them that they would be packing more into the remaining time.

Like many programs, Diane’s is designed to be communicative, but she recognizes that it does not hold fast to this approach due to its use of a traditional-style textbook. The resulting combination of methods is “eclectic with an emphasis on communication.” To help students with their in-class communication, homework activities that lead directly to in-class work are selected from the publisher’s package and assigned for the appropriate dates. Diane’s own experience as a teaching assistant at another university, “feeling like there was this huge disconnect between

homework and class,” inspired her to “make a clear connection (for students and instructors) between those elements so that one is seen as preparing for the other.”

Program 16: Spanish at School M

School M, a branch of a state university, has converted first-year levels of their basic Spanish program to a blended format. Amanda, the coordinator of the basic Spanish program, answered some questions via email about the courses and their development. The first-year program went blended to free up classroom space for other courses, but Amanda believes that blended classes are also more attractive to students because of this generation’s overall dependence on technology.

Amanda rates the blended courses as very successful and attributes this success to a combination of the textbook and its online materials and the instructor training that the program conducts every semester. The program carefully selected its textbook via committee research and publisher presentations and has changed it twice to make sure it best meets the needs of the program.

Amanda places a strong emphasis on the communicative approach and clearly delineates the roles of input and output in the blended courses. Students do input activities related to a new topic online before coming to class so that they have already acquired enough language to be able to do output activities, such as conversation, during face-to-face class meetings. This setup, which prevents students from having to produce a lot of output online before receiving instructor guidance, likely alleviates the student frustration issues that some other programs are finding with their online work.

One structural change that the program has made in assessments with the transition to blended is replacing in-person oral exams, conducted as a conversation with a proctor, with

online partner chats. “Students enjoy speaking to each other more than to a proctor,” she writes, and the new format seems “to make the conversation much more spontaneous and natural.” In addition, the blended courses added in-class writing assignments to ensure that students have a strong enough command of the written language to move on to second-year courses, the Spanish minor, and the Spanish major.

Program 17: French at School N

Edith, the director of the French basic language program at School N, a state university split across multiple campuses, answered some questions via email. At School N, several Romance language programs work together on their blended courses, led by the director of the Spanish basic language program. In recent years, these programs have converted most of their basic language courses to the blended format. Edith reported that the transition went smoothly, especially because all teaching assistants in the program now attend a weeklong workshop to prepare them to teach blended courses. Edith estimates that three days of the workshop are devoted to pedagogy.

In the first semester that the program went blended, the director of Spanish surveyed the students enrolled in blended courses to find out their reactions. Fortunately, Edith recalls, their reactions were “extremely positive.” In addition, directors met with instructors and found grades from before and after the switch to be comparable, justifying the blend. Although the grade comparison, as in the French program at School E, was reminiscent of the older research perspective of blended versus face-to-face classes, it suggests effort to ensure that course quality would not suffer with the transition to the blend.

Edith expressed satisfaction with the French program’s chosen textbook and its online component. “I think that’s the essential aspect,” she noted: “working with a book you are

comfortable with and an electronic platform that is easy to use, especially for the TAs.” Most of the online activities, which are self-grading, come directly from the publisher; Edith selects the activities and assigns the deadlines. She has added online questionnaires that students can complete about films that they watch for extra credit.

Edith’s program, along with the other Romance languages, went blended for financial reasons: to lower costs and make the best use of classroom space. Unfortunately for the teaching assistants, their teaching load increased from three to four courses per year with the switch to blended. The self-grading online activities are meant to save the instructors grading time and offset the increase in workload.

Edith believes that the blend has a benefit for students as well since the program made substantive changes in the face-to-face class experience when it went blended, making it “more dynamic and engaging.” She explains, “We eliminated all the rote activities from the classroom and focus on communication and engaging students in using the language with classmates and their instructor.” She adds that the learning goal has not changed; it remains “to develop communicative competence in an L2.” With new resources, however, she understands that students’ path to that goal is different than it would be in a face-to-face course, and she has tried to make it more efficient.

Another hint of the old perspective comparing blended and F2F courses was detected in Edith’s comment that pedagogically, blended courses are as good as F2F ones when run by knowledgeable educators, due to the improvements in their in-class sessions. The online work “forces [students] to be more autonomous in their learning,” although she acknowledges that less dedicated students “suffer” while the motivated ones succeed. Students who are better able to trust that they can learn from their peers may get more out of class meetings at the expense of

those who cannot. Instructors have to be attuned to classroom dynamics, an issue that they address in the instructor training, to make the best matches of working partnerships between students in the classroom.

Themes

Themes emerging from the focus studies—interviews and student surveys—include student preparedness, assessment and feedback, the setup of the online materials, the integration of modes, learning goals and their connection to instruction and assessment, uses of face-to-face time, the communicative approach, the difficulty of prioritizing oral communication, instructor autonomy, learner autonomy, instructor buy-in, student buy-in, the pressure to be cost-effective, and institutional support for blended learning. These and other themes are analyzed and discussed in Chapter V, which also includes recommendations based upon this analysis.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thematic Analysis

Learning Goals

When asked about the learning goals for their blended courses, most participants referred to their syllabi, which stated typical goals for basic language courses, centering upon proficiency, communication, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Most participants also indicated that these goals were the same as for their face-to-face courses. In some cases, the course had been redesigned and the learning goals had changed when the program switched to blended, but there was not much evidence of the learning goals having changed to reflect the manner by which students interact with course material in the blended format.

Some participants gave more specific responses about their blended courses' learning goals. Katrin, from German at School J, included in her description of course goals helping students acquire general academic skills. From this perspective, digital learning is crucial since students will be taking their technological experience away from language courses and applying it to courses across other disciplines. Edith, from French at School N, acknowledged that students' paths to meeting the learning goals are necessarily different in a blended course than in a traditional one and has tried to design the courses to make these paths more efficient. This perspective takes advantage of the affordances of digital learning in helping students to achieve course goals. Samantha, from Spanish at School G, also acknowledged the format of the blend when stating that her program works to simulate the immersion experience as much as possible for beginning students. For materials used in her courses, along with the standard course website and textbook website, Samantha listed text chat, discussion boards, and streaming audio/video,

but not authentic websites, possibly because the difficulty level of some of the authentic materials could be too great for first-year language students. Regardless of the specific resources used, this method of compiling different types of online activities for an overall goal of increasing language input and output suggests some of the potential of the blend.

Other programs were less clear about how the curriculum design and daily instructional methods connected to the learning goals. In some cases, the lack of clarity was because the instructors were not as certain about the learning goals, acknowledging that they did not know them offhand or referencing the course syllabus. In other cases, the disconnect from learning goals seemed to be because the curriculum design and daily instructional methods were determined more by the teaching materials or the department's pedagogical approaches than by the learning goals themselves.

Communicative Approach

Every instructor asked about the pedagogical theories applied in their program responded with some version of the communicative approach. What James pointed out about the instructors in his program, however, also rings true for participants across the country: "If you asked any language instructor at [School F] 'What teaching methodology do you use in your courses?' they'll say 'Oh, I teach in a communicative way,'" but "you'll get 500 different answers of what communicative language teaching is."

For the instructors interviewed, the communicative approach includes different combinations of these factors: staying in the target language, reducing in-class grammatical explanations, getting students to learn through actively using the language, and grading some tasks on production and communication instead of grammar. How they integrate these components into their classrooms differs for all instructors, depending on their own teaching

styles and the constraints of their programs and materials. Nevertheless, many aspire to the ideals of the method because of departmental expectations and their own desire to get their students communicating.

How well the method ends up working depends upon two factors: how well prepared the students are for in-class activities, which is the explanation most often given by instructors, and how grammar-dependent the in-class activities are, which is a confounding variable. If the in-class activities require students to have worked through the grammar on their own via the textbook website and be ready to apply it in class, students are being tasked with teaching themselves the grammar, which is one common student complaint. Although the system of having students begin new topics online works for Kevin and Teresa with their students of Spanish at School F, it does not need to work for everyone for their blended courses to be successful. The in-class activities could be more consistently productive for prepared and unprepared students alike if they enable the students to work through the linguistic material to gain familiarity and confidence with it before going online to practice it on their own, as in Paul's German class at School A.

Unfortunately, once enough students fall behind in preparation and are unable to keep up with what the in-class activities require of them, a cycle begins that is difficult to break. Students end up demanding in-class grammatical explanations, which prevent them from using as much class time to use the language actively or increase their ability to communicate in the language and therefore participate in future activities. Besides the obvious option of simply not giving into the temptation to explain the grammar in class, the other solution would be not to expect students to develop as much command of the grammar through the online lessons, but rather to scaffold the in-class activities to allow them to develop this facility during class sessions.

Of course, the online lessons' content and format is another variable that must be addressed separately. While some students are better independent learners than others, the amount and style of learning materials at their disposal, along with what they are tasked with doing with them, can make the learning process either easier or more challenging.

Textbook Website Packages

The vast majority of blended classes in this study take advantage of prepackaged materials from textbook publishers as a primary online component. While these packages have improved in recent years, introducing new activity types such as voice recording (alone or even in pairs with another student) and Internet scavenger hunts, course designers often choose not to use these more technologically advanced activity types because they greatly increase instructors' grading load. In a face-to-face session, instructors can make sure that all students are on task and doing the activity by moving around the room and spot-checking student work: listening in on conversations, answering student questions, or asking a few students to share their answers with the class. Online, instructors could grade a speaking activity more thoroughly and give more substantial feedback, but these benefits come at a substantial cost of instructor time, and there is no guarantee that students will even look back at the feedback received. In a blended class, instructors may choose to forego assigning online speaking or writing activities, causing students to potentially miss out on practicing these essential skills.

A second problem with the use of prepackaged materials is that they may easily end up determining, rather than supporting, the course curriculum. Instructors are tasked with teaching what is in the textbook in a precise order; otherwise, the online components would not match up with the course. Prior to textbook website packages, textbooks were more flexible; even though each subsequent section might have built on the previous ones, there were no automatically

graded online activities that presupposed knowledge of all of the vocabulary and grammar from earlier sections. With modern packages, instructors have less ability to move, change, or skip lessons without affecting students' ability to successfully complete standardized online activities. In addition, despite Neumeier's (2005) suggestion to make intentional decisions about which resources must be used and which are optional, the textbook packages lend themselves best to assigning a list of activities for everyone in the course to complete as a requirement by the same dates.

The strength of a curriculum "that revolves around a ready-to-use electronic packet, as prepared by a publisher" is that it "may take less time to set up than a course whose materials have to be researched, selected one piece at a time, and finally uploaded to a learning management system" (Godev, 2014, p. 23). This uniformity also serves programs that have multiple sections of the same course, especially when taught by teaching assistants with little to no prior teaching experience—the type of program studied by Young and Pettigrew (2014) and that make up the majority of results in this study.

Unfortunately, this practice not only forces learners to comply with a one-size-fits-all assignment, but it also creates a system in which teaching assistants are learning this uniform way of teaching the textbook and may have a more difficult time breaking out of it once they are in a position to develop their own classes. It also causes a problem with any methodology classes or instructor trainings: If trainings support a methodical way of teaching, the problem may repeat itself as instructors learn that style of teaching. If methodology classes and trainings depart from this plan, on the other hand, instructors may become increasingly frustrated because they will know other options but not be able to implement them within their current teaching situation.

Although this issue has always existed in large or uniform language programs, it is potentially more serious with lockstep technology packages.

Textbook packages typically conform to the three traditional phases of deductive instruction: Present, Practice, and Produce (Sharma, 2010). While publishers' materials vary in how they handle these phases, this tripartite distinction suggests a shift back to more traditional and less communicative instruction. In addition, the presentation phase may be scant, hidden, or not required, causing students to skip it and subsequently get frustrated when they are unable to produce language instantly. Although the packages may have some components designed for inductive learning, such as familiarization with new vocabulary and grammar while doing listening or reading comprehension activities, it may not be apparent to students or new instructors how to use them.

As examples of these packages, it is instructive to examine two textbooks used by survey participants that offer distinctly different designs in their corresponding online materials. *Vistas* (Blanco & Donley, 2011), a Spanish textbook package used by at least eleven survey participants, offers grammar tutorials and e-book pages that are assignable via the homework interface. If instructors assign them, students see them assigned just prior to the corresponding grammar activities, and they receive one point for clicking on them (compared to a range of approximately eight to fifty points for an activity). These videos are not substantively different from those offered by competing programs, but the difference lies in being able to assign them for students to find and view, rather than encouraging them to jump directly to the Practice and Produce phases.

A diverging example comes from *Dímelo tú* (Rodríguez Nogales, Samaniego, & Blommers, 2008), a Spanish textbook package used by at least one participant. This textbook's

website offers similar tutorial videos but does not make them obvious on the student website interface. The tutorial videos are found in a list several links away from the main screen, are labeled with the corresponding chapter numbers but not linked to other chapter materials, and are not assignable as homework. The problem with this model is that instructors using a deductive approach in a blended class may expect students to view the materials for the Present phase on their own time, but if they jump directly to the homework without taking the time to track down the tutorial videos on their own, they are missing the Present phase unless the instructor or program creates other assignable materials to take their place.

Inductive language instruction refers to getting students to notice relevant information, often grammatical in nature, from language examples given. This method is much more difficult to accomplish with online work, in particular with published packages that are set up for Present, Practice, and Produce. There are notable counterexamples, however, including some within the *Vistas* textbook cited above, in which the video episode in each lesson introduces new structures and then draws students' attention to them in the review section at the conclusion of the video. In that section, the phrases are subtitled as the characters repeat them, and the key forms are enlarged and in a different color. Of course, instructors can create their own inductive lessons using available materials: for example, asking students to locate all of the definite or indefinite articles in a given text, whether from the textbook or another source, and explain why each is used. It would be difficult to make these activities self-gradable online, however, and it could be challenging to justify adding additional regularly-assigned homework activities on top of the work that students are already tasked with doing in their purchased textbook package.

Language programs without the resources to develop an instructional system of equivalent quality on their own, especially the polished audio and video materials and slick

graphics that these packages typically contain, can find it easier to adopt one of the market's bestsellers and design a course around it than to reinvent the textbook package. In addition to streamlining larger programs for the purposes of horizontal articulation and assisting inexperienced TAs, this method produces the least resistance within a language program whose instructors speak different regional varieties of a language; the textbook's lexicon and grammar unify the program and avoid conflicts about whose version to use when assessing students.

Departments need not be satisfied using the package alone for the online component of a blended course, however. As in Isabelle's French refresher course at School E and Samantha's Spanish courses at School G, instructors can layer other activities on top of the textbook package to encourage students to work thoughtfully with course material and achieve more than can be measured in self-grading activities. These additional activities, which often stimulate a greater quantity and more complex quality of language production than the prepackaged ones do, can include writing and speaking assignments and even synchronous or asynchronous interaction with classmates or target language speakers.

If a program wishes to invest in creating its own materials for inductive learning, it may become difficult to do so on top of a publisher's textbook package because of the amount of work for students and the conflicting pedagogical theories inherent in the materials. An alternative would be to base its curriculum around an OER and create activities for students to submit that meet the program's goals for student learning. With an OER, instructors would not feel compelled to assign the textbook materials as often as they might if students had paid a large sum for a slick textbook package.

While free online materials have traditionally not been enough to replace an available textbook package for the most commonly-taught languages, especially in the realms of high-

quality audio and video, OERs are improving in these areas and could become a viable option for more programs. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, no OER encompassing the scope of a traditional first-year textbook is known to exist for Spanish, but some resources, including authentic video, exist that an inventive program could work into a brand-new curriculum.

Participants' Comfort with Technology

The quantitative ratings of participants' comfort with technology paint a partial picture of the situation with blended classes. Most participant ratings of their comfort with a technology were high: Not only did the participants' 1431 individual ratings average 4.18 out of 5, but 76.4% of them were scores of 4 or 5 out of 5. Even a moderate rating would not preclude instructors from choosing to use a particular technology in their classes or from using it effectively. That said, instructors and course designers constantly make choices about what to include, given limited time, a desire not to overwhelm students with many different website logins and instructions, and the technical support that must be provided for each technology. Thus, as participants' average comfort levels with each technology, as given in Table 4.15 in Chapter IV, decline by technology type, it appears that the applications for synchronous communication, as well as blogs and social media, are not as likely to figure into instructors' plans. This result is confirmed by their listings of which technologies they use in their classes, in Table 4.5 in Chapter IV.

By participant role, Table 4.14 in Chapter IV, the takeaway about participant comfort with technologies is that even though graduate students are less in control of the design of their courses, their average comfort with technologies is not substantially different from that of the faculty. Judging by these numbers, as well as participants' facility with technology as echoed throughout the interviews, ceding more control to teaching assistants to integrate new

technologies into their blended courses would not seem likely to bring about a substantive change, which complicates solving the problem of limited digital resources. Framing the issue as one of interaction rather than specific technologies, however, could lead to a more fruitful discussion for instructors and course designers alike.

Interaction in Online and Face-to-Face Modes

The low proportion of instructors and administrators reporting online interaction with target language speakers, or even with classmates, suggests that many blended classes are not taking full advantage of technological affordances for students to communicate with others in the target language outside of the classroom. Students may be engaging in beneficial language and culture activities, but in some of these courses, the lack of interaction online indicates that reduced classroom time is not being replaced by other types of meaningful interpersonal communication, either in written or oral modes.

These results can also be interpreted in a different way, however. It is possible that the face-to-face sessions in a blended class take on a different distribution of activities than in a fully face-to-face class, owing to instructor or course developer preference about how to use students' limited time in a room with other learners of the language. Although most participants did not highlight this possibility, one teaching assistant of Spanish wrote in the survey, "Blended courses certainly enhance speaking in the classroom since more time is dedicated to this skill." Simply because a blended class is not taking advantage of technological affordances for out-of-class communication does not necessarily mean that less interaction is occurring than in a face-to-face class; it could be that oral communication is prioritized during in-class instructional time.

In order for such a beneficial redistribution of activities to occur, it must be part of an intentional series of decisions about how the blended course is to be set up and administered.

Collaboration and communication between course designers and instructors, if they are not the same people, are crucial for determining how learning goals will be met and how the work will be distributed between face-to-face and online modes. How the blended course is going to compensate for limited face-to-face time needs to be a conscious choice with several diverging possibilities: prioritizing certain types of work during the limited classroom time, using technological affordances to create meaningful interaction outside the classroom, or a combination of these options. Neumeier's (2005) framework for evaluating blended courses, which includes the teaching methods and interactional patterns in each mode, would be a good model for course developers to follow in making these choices and for instructors to understand in carrying them out.

The research literature demonstrates the importance of integrating the face-to-face and online modes to help students understand how they work together to promote learning (Drewelow, 2013; Murphy & Southgate, 2011). Programs vary in how much they are able to achieve this goal. In many cases, the pedagogical approaches for each mode fail to connect with each other. Participants speak highly of the communicative approach, but their online materials are heavily based on textbook packages. Neumeier (2005) explains that learning objectives can be incorporated into blended courses in isolation or in parallel; that is, learning a new skill can take place in either mode or in both of them at the same time. Isolating a skill to one mode could still be effective if it is preparation for practice in the other mode, but the learning theories must be consistent. Goertler's (2014) reminder that each activity type reveals a certain underlying pedagogical theory helps identify why the setup of some blended courses is less than ideal: The communicative approach in class and a drill-and-kill pedagogy online are not compatible.

Course Design Models

Survey and interview responses revealed a basic picture of two models of blended courses. In one model, grammar instruction has been moved to the online mode, to free up class time for face-to-face communication. Examples of this format come from three teaching assistants of Spanish at different state universities. One wrote, “As this is my first year teaching Spanish as a graduate instructor, it is a relief to me that the grammar instruction does not fall completely on my shoulders.” Another wrote that the blended format enriches speaking in class since more class time is devoted to it, but she noted an inconsistency in that formal examinations focus on vocabulary and grammar. The third commented, “Students hate it because they have to do the assignments with new grammar before going over it in class. They basically teach themselves the grammar.” These courses seem to be set up in a similar way to that of Ushida’s (2005) instructor who was not content to let the students study the grammar on their own and ended up sacrificing class time to cover the same material. This temptation is one possible downside to this model.

The other model, which was found among instructors of a variety of different languages, including some LCTLs such as Chinese, Vietnamese, and German, has a strikingly different view of using technologies for out-of-class work. Rather than replacing face-to-face explanation time with its online equivalent, as in the first design model, the second model works toward increasing interaction and communication in the online mode, as evidenced by the larger number of technologies and types of interaction that the programs use. The choice of this design model may be attributed to whether or not programs were already using in-class grammatical explanation as an instructional style; those who were not would not wish to move explanations online for the bulk of the at-home instruction, but rather to move some of the interaction online.

Another reason that programs might choose one or the other of these two design models is one of necessity. As the instructor of Vietnamese pointed out, “The instructors of such blended courses have to spend a great deal of time to research and develop their own materials since there are no textbook websites with many automated graded exercises and lack of other online materials in the target language.” This model recalls Ticheler and Sachdev’s (2011) study of instructor-designed blended materials for less commonly-taught languages.

Larger language programs may be employing the first model also out of necessity. As one instructor of Spanish wrote, a challenging workload, which had increased at that institution (and elsewhere) with the introduction of blended classes, influenced their course design. Programs in languages such as Spanish that have many sections of courses, often staffed by teaching assistants, can be attracted to publishers’ self-grading course packages, especially when no institutional resources are available to design a new curriculum (Young & Pettigrew, 2014). As another Spanish instructor in this study pointed out, the blended format “allows for consistency in language learning and neutralizes instructor [influence] across the board.” This lack of individual instructor influence can be seen in these large programs as a benefit for horizontal articulation: Every section is, at least ostensibly, the same.

Relatedly, some languages have an advantage in technological integration into their classes for various reasons. Goertler & Winke (2008) found that Spanish and German surpassed French and languages with non-Roman writing systems in their amount of technological presence in basic language courses. (That study did not look specifically at blended courses.) That result could be due to the availability of language-specific educational software, inherent compatibility problems with typing in some languages on U.S. operating systems, or instructors’ comfort with the technologies. Therefore, it can be expected that it would be more

straightforward to design a blended course in a language that enjoys greater access to educational technology, but it could also be more difficult in those same languages to move beyond the available packages and develop new content, especially given limited resources.

Assessment and Feedback

Three areas related to assessment emerged from the survey and interview results: homework, testing, and alternative forms of assessment. Regarding homework, the majority of participants use online homework on the textbook website because they use textbook packages that include it. This format is in line with the general trend of moving to online textbook packages in blended and non-blended courses alike. The main differences between these packages and traditional paper workbooks are that some activities are graded instantly, giving students immediate feedback, but the instructor-graded activities take longer to grade online than on paper, so instructors assign fewer of them. There is, therefore, a shift toward evaluating homework responses as correct or incorrect and less opportunity than in the past for open-ended language production in homework assignments.

This shift in homework style is not unique to blended classes: Many classes in Spanish, French, Italian, and other commonly taught languages now use these packages, whether blended or face-to-face. Of blended classes, the exceptions found in this study are in LCTLs and courses that use OERs, where instructors must create or provide other submission methods for homework activities. Some instructors add additional homework assignments of worksheets, webquests (online scavenger hunts), or activities on the course website, but these are usually more of a supplement to the typical homework package than a newly created curriculum.

In regard to testing, the main advantage that blended classes seem to find in the online mode is to provide tests that can be taken on a computer, allowing for automatic grading of some

portions. In some cases, these tests are administered outside of class time, which adds the advantage of converting some in-class time from testing to instructional activities. Other blended courses continue with paper tests. Whether the tests are done online or on paper, the format seems to still adhere strongly to the traditional format of a language exam, focusing on vocabulary and grammar (and possibly culture) or the written and aural skills. Depending on the size of the blended program, the assessments are written by individual instructors or shared across the program.

Some instructors indicated that the examinations do not match up with the teaching methodology of the course. All instructors asked about teaching method answered that they subscribe to the communicative approach, but since most are using traditional tests, there may be a disconnect between teaching and assessment. In a few cases, instructors spoke about revising their assessments to make them more relevant to the course. For instance, in French at School A, Michael pointed out that the traditional tests do not match up with the communicative teaching approach, but Lorraine spoke about participating in an overhaul of the examinations to move away from vocabulary and grammar and focus more strongly on the four skills, which should help alleviate this problem.

Other instructors who spoke about assessment revision in their blended courses had tried moving assessments online and for various reasons decided to return to their older methods of in-class testing. In particular, oral examinations seem to be particularly prone to this problem. For example, Christine (Italian at School A) found that conducting the oral exams online required much more time for assessing and grading, but moving them back into class streamlined the process and saved grading time at the expense of only a single class session. Others reported similar experiences with online testing. Although these problems are not unique to blended

classes, there does appear to be a pressure for blended classes to make the most of the online mode, which is not always the most conducive to ease of assessment for teachers and learners.

Few instructors indicated that they were using alternative assessment forms such as blogs, portfolios, or synchronous online communication for presentations or conversations. The courses requiring the greatest use of homework types other than the textbook website are LCTLs and those using OERs, but those courses were not always the ones with the new assessment forms. Some of the LCTLs and OER-based courses use worksheets of the instructors' creation or require students to submit screenshots, printouts, or handwritten answers for online activities. Another assessment theme emerging from interviews was the journal. Whether for feedback (Eric at School A), vocabulary (Lorraine at School A), or homework (Scott at School C), the journal provides an ongoing cycle of submissions and feedback at regular intervals, giving instructors the chance to regularly check up on student work and influence student work in future assignments.

Other Factors Influencing Instructor Outcomes

The reason why number of years of teaching experience—both overall and in blended learning—correlates positively with instructor perspectives on satisfaction and success could be a combination of two factors. Seasoned instructors may be better equipped to handle the challenges that the blended format provides, such as a limited amount of face-to-face class time, but they also are more likely to be faculty members with more control over their own classes. Although participant role (divided into tenured/tenure-track faculty, adjunct/visiting/provisional faculty, and graduate student/teaching assistant) did not demonstrate a significant correlation with instructor perspective on its own, years of teaching may be an indication of instructor status as well as experience.

It is unsurprising that the choice to teach blended classes also coincided with more satisfied instructors, but this result should be interpreted with some caution. Those who did not choose to teach blended classes but were assigned them anyway could be those who were initially opposed to the idea, or they could be instructors from larger programs in which everyone has to teach blended classes. Not having chosen the blend is not necessarily an indication of opposition to blended learning, and negative experiences associated with not having chosen it could be related to other factors in these larger programs.

Kim, et al. (2013) and Shelley, et al. (2013) note the importance of instructors' own prior experiences with technology as students in determining how they will use it as instructors. The reason that instructors' use of language technology as students turned out non-significant in the present study could be because it did not differentiate as to what types of technologies they had used. Many of today's instructors and administrators who used technology as students may have used the more basic types of technologies (e.g., textbook website, course management system) that do not necessarily promote interaction and learning experiences outside of the classroom, leading them to replicate the same model in their blended classes.

Arnold (2007) hypothesizes an interaction between age, teaching experience, and experience using technology as students since older instructors will generally have more teaching experience but will have used technology less or differently as students. Since the present study did not ask participant age, it is possible that some of the effect of having used technology as students is masked by having participants of vastly different ages. On the other hand, instructors' self-reported comfort with technology types did not vary by their role as faculty or graduate students, suggesting that age and role are part of a more complicated interrelationship of factors.

Support for Students

The inconsistent appearance of orientation or training for students in this study points to the same problem indicated by Goertler and Winke (2008), which is that departments are not consistently providing technology orientations for students. Although nearly half of the instructors in the present study are providing training for students to meet this need, many other students might start off at a disadvantage. The comments from the unsatisfied administrator in the present study help explain this issue:

Our hybrid classes have very high dropout rates. Students think they only have to come to class for 3 hours but forget that they are in a 5 hour a week class. So they have more homework than face-to-face students, but they don't take the time. ... We really do need to train instructors better and students. ... Instructors need to understand how to run a hybrid class and students need to know what it takes to be successful in one. And this should happen BEFORE they start, but it doesn't.

Eric, the TA of Spanish at School A, also remarked that students need to be guided to be successful in a blended course, not only with the technology, but also with how to learn a language. While this issue is always a challenge for instructors of basic language classes, it is more concerning in a blended course since students are on their own with the materials throughout much of the learning process. Programs could benefit from taking a hard look at where students are falling behind and take steps to prevent it through designing specific interventions. Of course, these interventions, if they are to be done during face-to-face class time, must be balanced against the challenge of already not having very much class time to distribute among activities. Online or out-of-class interventions such as Eric's feedback journal are another alternative.

In regard to devoting face-to-face class time to the online work, the study's data on this point can be interpreted in two different ways. While 80.4% (82 of 102 respondents) discuss the online activities during face-to-face class sessions, 34.3% (35 of 102 respondents) reported using this time to give students instructions about how to complete the online activities. The latter

result is consistent with Drewelow's (2013) finding that 40% of participants found it necessary to regularly use face-to-face class time to explain how to do the online activities. While it is necessary to integrate the face-to-face and online modes so that students understand how they connect (Drewelow, 2013; Murphy & Southgate, 2011), the frequent use of class time to explain the online activities may indicate a problem with the distribution of time and functions between modes, one of the parameters cited by Neumeier (2005) as important to explicitly choose when designing a blended class.

On the other hand, some instructors, including Samantha at School G, use the online activities as a bridge between modes, intentionally building in class upon the work previously done online. This connection can be beneficial because it can help students to see the purpose of the online work. Relatedly, Sharma (2010) cites the importance of having coherence between the modes to avoid the negative connotations that some participants may ascribe to blended learning. Whether coherence is created by clearly delineating the work to be done in each of the modes or by building in points of crossover between them is a design decision that instructors and course developers must be aware that they are making.

Institutional Support for Blended Learning

The lack of institutional support for blended classes detected in this study provides a steep challenge for course designers who want to go beyond simply using available technology packages and develop bespoke solutions for their students. Often, existing faculty and teaching assistants do not have the necessary technical expertise or time to design a completely new system, and money is not available for new positions or release time. This point will be discussed further in the Implications and Recommendations section below.

Instructor Collaboration

In the quantitative analysis, the non-effect of collaboration on instructors' perspectives about their courses differs from Shelley, et al. (2013). One possible reason is that collaboration might not have as great of an effect on blended courses in programs of different design models, especially in the first model mentioned above, where the online component is structured to the degree that individual instructors' contributions have less impact. Another possible reason is that the extent to which collaboration occurred with survey participants in the present study—along with the amount of instructor cooperation or community-building recommended by Ernest and Hopkins (2006) and Nissen and Tea (2012)—could not be measured to the level that Shelley, et al. (2013) did with interviews. Additionally, unlike with the participants studied by Shelley, et al. (2013), who took part in a carefully-designed program of mutual support, few of the participants in the present study engaged in collaboration with instructors at other institutions, and the collaboration at their own institution may be limited.

On the other hand, a low proportion of the unsatisfied instructors reported collaborating or communicating with other blended instructors, and even one of the ones who did report it listed “Complaining about things we have no power to change” as one form of communication. Although collaboration was not a significant correlate with instructor satisfaction overall, the results from the unsatisfied instructors reveal that a lack of meaningful collaboration in combination with other variables such as not choosing to teach blended courses could be associated with a pattern of negativity among instructors. As blended and distance programs grow, there will be an increasing need for programs to support their instructors, not only by providing them with more substantial training options but also by encouraging them to work together in ways that have a positive impact on courses and students.

Student Preparedness or Course Design?

As mentioned earlier, students' lack of preparation for in-class sessions is a common frustration among instructors of blended classes. There were some notable exceptions such as Kevin, Teresa, and Samantha, who reported that students came to class better prepared to participate after doing online work, but the overall trend was in the direction of less student preparation in blended courses. Although not many instructors commented directly on the lack of available class time causing this problem, the complaint about students being ill-prepared on material that they were supposed to have learned online hints at an underlying challenge with the setup of some courses. When reflecting on this issue, the question arises of whether student preparedness is the problem or, rather, whether some institutions' course designs do not lend themselves to making the most of both modes. The latter could also explain why both extremes appeared in the results: Some instructors reported strikingly better student preparation with the blend, while others face the challenges of students' being frustratingly worse prepared.

Using the online mode primarily for lecture and homework-type activities may lead to greater frustration for both students and their instructors. Such an underlying design issue might not be immediately apparent to instructors, especially those without substantial experience in digital learning, and can therefore be difficult to resolve. Even having used technology as students of a language does not guarantee the adoption of newer, more relevant tools as an instructor, especially if the tools that instructors once used as students were of a more traditional type. Isolated resources that might have provided adequate support to students in a traditional face-to-face class—especially to those interested enough in language learning to go on to become language teachers themselves—do not fully replace classroom time in a blended course.

Expecting for these resources to be sufficient and for students to make up any difference by putting in additional effort may be a source of the frustration.

If the course design and selection of technologies need to be addressed, it raises the issue of whether instructors and administrators are being prepared to rethink the purpose of the online work and design learning experiences accordingly. The research literature and the current study suggest that, at many institutions, educators are not. As one teaching assistant of Spanish wrote, “The course design is not in line with ACTFL standards and the assessments are made by inexperienced grad students.” In this case, the instructor seems to be familiar enough with research perspectives on language pedagogy to be frustrated by the course setup but does not have the power to influence it. Others are not even getting the background for how to make the course more effective. A teaching assistant of Spanish at a different institution wrote, “Our methodology class was a language pedagogy theories class that was largely unhelpful in terms of how to be an effective hybrid course instructor.” In programs where many graduate students are teaching blended or distance classes, it is essential to incorporate digital pedagogy throughout the methodology class.

It is also instructive to return to the issue of the former German blended program at School J. A dilemma like Katrin's of achieving the best of both efficiency and pedagogy might become apparent right away if instructors and students are struggling, or it might not become apparent until a program is subjected to an evaluation at a later point. That this program that was so intent on sound pedagogy switched away from blended should not be seen as a strike against the blend but rather as a reminder that it is not enough to put some of the course material online and expect students to achieve the same results as before: rather, care must be taken to make sure

that the program achieves the proper fit for its instructors and students, and that changes are made if needed.

Instructor Autonomy

The issue of instructor autonomy is a perplexing one. In many cases, TAs in basic language programs have little influence on the course design regardless of its format, and thus, it can be awkward to suggest that instructors need to have greater autonomy when the course is blended. Allowing instructors more freedom over the blended course design, however, under the guidance of a supervisor, may prove important for several reasons. Most importantly, when being removed from the design process and not fully appreciating the online components, instructors of blended courses may be left with the sense that they are losing valuable class time without gaining enough added material to make up for it. Relatedly, TAs who are too far removed from the online materials might not be the best help to students struggling to do these activities or see their importance.

Nissen and Tea (2012) support this reason to involve instructors of blended courses in the development of their own online materials. In their study, those who played no role in development tended to see the face-to-face mode as primary, regardless of the course design. This result implies that even a seemingly well-designed blended course could be problematic in the hands of an instructor who had no contribution to the materials, has not extensively tried out the online components from the student perspective, and does not understand how the modes are best integrated.

In the present study, most of the instructors unsatisfied with their course setup were teaching in large Spanish and French programs at state universities, where they would not have been likely to be able to contribute to materials development or course design. Most instructors

interviewed, whether satisfied with the setup or not, indicated that they had not created online materials for their blended courses or that the materials that they had created were PowerPoint presentations or a few supplementary activities on their course management system. A few instructors working alone—like Rich, the American Sign Language instructor at School D—developed a complete online program for their courses, but this method is uncommon. While it is not necessary for every blended instructor to use great technical skill to develop online materials, having a hand in the design process could help instructors bridge the gap between the online materials and the realities of the classroom.

Answering the Research Questions

I. What choices (financial, pedagogical, or other) underlie the selection and development of curricula, materials, and technologies in blended language courses at U.S. colleges and universities?

In the programs studied, blended language courses were implemented for a variety of reasons, following the overall trend of moving toward digital learning solutions in higher education. One of those reasons, added specifically by a few administrators and also referenced by some instructors, was financial. A widespread belief, evidenced in some survey and interview responses as well as prior studies, is that blended courses are somehow cheaper to implement since they meet less often. In most cases, however, the only savings is in classroom space since instructors are teaching the same number of sections as before. In a few programs, instructor workload has increased with hybrid classes, through assigning them more sections or enrolling more students per section, but other institutions have kept the load the same, which is logical because grading student work does not decrease with a change in format.

An exception to this general trend was Program 9 at School F, which instituted their blended Spanish courses as a result of a departmental study that suggested that their graduate students were spending too much time teaching and not enough on their master's and doctoral programs. In this case, the teaching assistants were already teaching only one section per session, but the section met five days a week. With the switch to a blended format, the teaching assistants would not be teaching every day and could devote more days to their graduate coursework. This institution provides a notable counterexample to the overarching theme of institutions implementing blended learning for cost-saving reasons.

Of course, blended learning has hidden costs and other considerations not always evident up front. While programs may think that technology and instructor preparation costs are the same, irrespective of format, the reality is that instructors need to be prepared to teach in the blended mode, which may require departments to go beyond their typical training sessions and methodology courses when preparing their TAs. In addition, many programs are relying heavily on student-bought textbook packages to provide work for the online days. In the more commonly-taught languages, these ubiquitous packages allow programs not to create their own materials for the online component. While there is a plethora of material available on these websites, it is not always integrated into the way the course is being taught, but rather layered on top of the skeleton of the preexisting face-to-face course. The hidden costs, then, are preparation of instructors, continued support for instructors as they adjust to teaching blended, and provision of materials. Departments need not spend a lot of money developing entirely new materials. Even creating activities relating to existing authentic materials, however, and developing a curriculum using them, takes more time than instructors are typically able to provide during their course.

In regard to implementation of blended courses, many were created based on their face-to-face predecessor. An important counterexample is Program 5 at School B, where the blended Spanish program director and team developed an entirely new online platform and chose a different textbook for the blended courses. At that school, the blended program is working in tandem with the online program, rather than with the face-to-face program or completely separately. It may be for this reason that it has more fully adapted to the blended format instead of being too attached to the framework of its face-to-face predecessor.

There are stark distinctions between programs that created a new curriculum for their blended courses, in the style of the Language Online program at Carnegie Mellon University (Ushida, 2005), and those that took a portion of the material from a traditional course and placed it online, typically by using a publisher's textbook/technology package. In the former case, represented in this study by Program 5 at School B and some of the LCTL programs in the survey, there is more room for pedagogical considerations in design choices. In the latter case, such as Program 1 (French) at School A, efficiency reigns supreme, with less attention given to the pedagogy since the courses were simply adapted, rather than created anew.

There is not much evidence of a trial-and-error implementation phase with curricular and materials revision as needed. Prior literature about adapting courses to the blend refers to implementing activities in a computer lab setting before the Internet component goes fully online in a subsequent term. This process enables instructors to supervise students using the online materials and make necessary changes before the program switches to the blend. In many of the cases studied in this dissertation, however, the implementation appeared to be more sudden, and the curriculum was not as thoroughly revised after implementation. One notable exception was Italian at School A, where Christine took the curriculum through several revisions, including

changing the assessment formats, until she and other instructors were more satisfied with it. Another exception is ASL at School D, where Rich has gradually developed and revised his curricula for nearly two decades.

Data about student assessment sheds light on how language programs take advantage of new technological options for evaluating students. Although programs vary widely on this parameter, student assessments still heavily favor the traditional options such as multiple-choice tests and compositions. It is hypothesized that in the process of adapting face-to-face courses for the blend, it was easier for course designers to conserve the original methods as much as possible. It is also more time-consuming to administer and grade more interactive options, as well as more difficult to grade them equitably. With the notable exception of Christine in Program 3—Italian at School A—who took the courses through a series of online assessment options before returning to the original in-class method of doing speaking exams, there is not much evidence of a trial-and-error process of developing and revising assessment methods suited to the blended format.

Instructors and administrators were found to be more likely to compare student scores between blended and traditional face-to-face (or distance) formats as a means of evaluating the blended courses, rather than employing the evaluation frameworks presented in the literature. This finding, which suggests the earlier line of comparative research, was expected because the research literature has had limited impact on blended courses that layer an online textbook package over the preexisting course design. Combined with a lack of evidence of program evaluation of the blended curriculum, this result suggests that the evaluation that is taking place in regard to these courses is happening to justify their continuation, rather than to improve them through substantive changes.

II. What are student, instructor, and administrator perspectives on these courses?

Students in the studied population are overwhelmingly taking blended language courses because their institution does not offer fully face-to-face courses in their language and level. Citing additional reasons for their choice, some also noted preferring a combination of independent work and classroom instruction and not wanting to be on their own with a fully online class. The list of students who did not want a fully online class, however, did not match up with the list of students who indicated that they do not learn best on their own, suggesting that more factors are at work.

Student responses were split about whether the blended courses met their goals and whether they would recommend blended courses to other students. Of those who stated goals, most emphasized oral communication, which they believe is more difficult to practice in a blended course. Since their institution went blended long before they started their language sequence, however, some of their concerns might not be stemming from the format but rather with basic language courses in general. That is, even an extra hour of face-to-face class time per week might not give them enough additional communication time to make a real difference in reaching their goals, but students blame the blended format. On the other end of the spectrum, the other common student response was that they appreciated the flexibility of being able to do the drills outside of class time. Since most of the courses used similar textbook packages, the question still remains as to whether these perspectives would differ with a curriculum that was less drill-based.

Instructor perspectives parallel those seen in the literature, with instructors who have less experience with the blend demonstrating less satisfaction with the courses than more experienced instructors and administrators. Differences between those instructors who designed the courses

and those who did not were not statistically significant in quantitative measurements since so many instructors and administrators were at least “somewhat satisfied” with the setup of their courses, but differences emerged between some of these programs in how instructors and administrators spoke and wrote about them in their qualitative responses.

Additionally, a greater sense that the courses are meeting instructors’ goals was detected if instructors chose the blend, understood the connections between the assignments, played a role in the development of assessments, were offered training, and taught in a format that enabled greater interactivity with the material. Since there were a variety of interacting variables and not enough programs reporting newly-created technologies, not all of these measures were statistically significant, but themes emerged that distinguished Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese, with their online packages, from the less-commonly-taught languages.

III. What support (training, professional development, and resources) is available to participants teaching and learning in blended courses?

Surveys and interviews revealed that most programs are not providing adequate support to students and instructors. Types of support available were primarily campus-wide digital learning resources to be used prior to teaching blended courses or as needed for help with specific issues, rather than development sessions for blended learning instructors of languages or continued interaction between instructors to enable them to help each other with technological or pedagogical issues that arise during the semester.

While it was hypothesized that instructors would be more satisfied with the blended course setup of programs that provided them with substantial technological and pedagogical support, such as training, development, and resources, this conclusion was muddied by a lack of agreement within a program as to the existence of support. It is unclear why, within the same

program, some instructors answered that training was provided and others answered that it was not, but it could depend upon when they started teaching, whether they were graduate assistants or faculty members, the specific courses that they taught first, whether they were able to or chose to attend the training, or other factors. While the support questions did not have a statistically significant relationship with instructor perspectives overall, it is notable that the majority of dissatisfied instructors reported either a lack of training or receiving training that was not fully relevant to the realities of their blended courses.

The instructors who received training at their institutions reported learning primarily technological items, such as familiarization with the online program and any resources used by their departments. Although most were positive about this training, not many mentioned anything specifically related to the pedagogical component that also must be addressed when learning to teach in the blended format. Those who did gave examples such as being shown by more experienced instructors how to do everything related to the class, but these responses were not common. At the end of the survey, some instructors reported still being in the process of trying to figure out how to make the best use of class time and how to manage the blend, suggesting that these are pedagogical areas that could benefit from more support.

While instructors generally believed that students were receiving training to help them with technological issues in their blended courses, just under half of instructors reported providing this training themselves, and under one-third of students reported receiving training, which they rated, on average, slightly below “somewhat useful.” These discrepancies suggest that instructors could be expecting students to be getting preparation that they may or may not be receiving. In a closer look at School A, although most students reported that the technology was easy to manage, many also noted that they did not receive training at the beginning of the course.

Taken together, these results suggest that students might not be receiving adequate support for how to manage and get the most out of their blended courses. Since they might not be having obvious problems with the technology, but rather having more difficulty with figuring out how to manage the blend, they might not turn to their instructors or seek out other resources until they are behind in course material.

Contributions to the Field

Overall, the dissertation adds to the picture available in the prior literature of what methods and pedagogical theories are being followed in blended language courses and the perspectives of their students, instructors, and administrators, making the view more comprehensive than previous studies that highlighted one or more individual programs or courses. By combining the broader survey methodology with focus studies on particular programs, it both reports on general trends and takes a closer look at the contexts in which blended learning is taking place.

The findings of this study reveal the current practices in blended language teaching at U.S. colleges and universities for the purpose of enabling other programs' administrators and instructors to learn from them and gain ideas for their own courses. It also compares student and instructor perspectives with the practices inherent in their programs, thus suggesting changes that programs can make in their design, support, and evaluation to improve teachers', learners', and administrators' satisfaction with blended courses. By checking for evidence in practice of the recommendations made in the literature about blended language teaching, the study provides a bridge between research and practice, providing support for (and contrasts with) the findings of previous studies and helping designers of the next wave of blended courses to take better advantage of the lessons in the research literature.

The lessons from this dissertation are relevant, not only to blended courses in basic language programs, but also to fully online and fully face-to-face courses. Developers and instructors of fully online courses have to work even harder to create opportunities for interaction because they do not have the built-in classroom time where this interaction can happen more naturally. Examples of what is working in blended courses can help them meet this challenge. Turning to face-to-face courses, there is no longer such a thing as a purely face-to-face language course in most programs: There is some online component for studying or homework submission, whether a textbook package or a course management system. Lessons from the blend are also applicable to those courses even though they still have more face-to-face time.

Limitations and Further Research Directions

This project was intended to be both broad and deep and thus has a few gaps that need to be addressed. In this project, participants self-selected whether or not to respond to the survey and requests for interviews. As a consequence, even though results are more representative of blended courses than the existing literature, they do not include all perspectives and may not be fully representative. The emerging themes and trends, however, shed light on issues that may also affect blended courses in other programs outside of the ones studied.

In addition, the results from some programs may be affected by institutional-level factors, of which the participants surveyed were unaware or took for granted when responding to questions. For instance, even within a specific type of institution (state university, community college), the student body may have different characteristics, such as a different breakdown of majors, admissions requirements, etc., that affect the makeup of the students in the basic language sequence.

Future work in this project will continue to focus on specific university programs, drawing upon interviews of instructors and administrators and surveys of more classes of students, to obtain a more detailed picture of the courses surveyed. This work will be in line with Gleason (2013), who recommends qualitative, ethnographic studies on blended language teaching to better capture the full contexts of the learning that produced the reported results. The project will continue to attempt to understand and explain differences between language programs, as well as between instructors and classes within the same program or between languages at the same institution, to sort out instructor-level, program-level, and institution-level factors that influence outcomes. With a lengthier survey of students, more individual differences between learners can be used to explain their varying reactions to the blend. For this project, the student survey was kept short to encourage participation. Questions that can be added include students' motivations for studying the language and their prior experiences with language courses in different formats.

It also would be instructive in the future to witness the process of creation or revision of a blended basic language course or a digital pedagogy methods course in one of these programs to determine firsthand which of these issues are discussed by stakeholders during the development process, what the major obstacles are, and how they are confronted, to contribute even deeper information to the project.

Implications and Recommendations

Despite some programs' creating blended courses for administrative reasons, the final analysis reveals that they are not actually cheaper to implement than traditional face-to-face courses. The hidden costs of blended courses usually include the textbook with online package, a cost that is passed along to students, as well as necessary technical and financial support from

institutions. While some instructors thrive in the blended environment, departments must invest in preparing and supporting their instructors so that they are equipped to handle the challenges of the blend. It can be a daunting challenge for instructors who are not prepared to help students make the most of the limited face-to-face time that they have as well as guide them in what to do during their online time.

One way to prepare instructors for the blend is by not increasing or even reducing their workload. At Program 9, instructors of Spanish report that their students are more prepared for class meetings than before the switch to the blend, even though they use a similar textbook package to other programs where students seem to be less prepared. In this program, however, TAs are required to teach only one section at a time, suggesting that at other institutions the problem of instructor overload might be passed along to students.

Programs that receive additional funding, such as grants for course development or additional faculty or TA positions, have an added advantage in course design over those who are stuck trying to redesign a course without extra time or funding to do so. Of course, additional time and funding would help with a course in any format, not just blended. There are, however, added challenges in the blended format that must be addressed if the course design is going to consist of more than having students go online to complete the materials on the textbook website in place of some in-class hours.

Based upon the results of the surveys and interviews, some lessons can be formulated for institutions, programs, instructors, and students. Institutions can provide financial and technical support for instructors and departments developing blended courses, helping to connect them with others who have already done it well, rather than leaving them on their own to reinvent the blend.

By not converting all courses to a blended format and by maintaining some fully face-to-face sections, departments can ensure that the students taking and instructors teaching in the blend are the ones best suited to it. Although it may be tempting to expand the potential savings over more sections, the savings from blended are mostly imaginary, and it is important to provide multiple formats so that both teachers and learners can choose what works best for them. By having the choice of teaching blended or not, instructors will not end up believing that they were forced into it and addressing it negatively. Converting an entire program to blended removes instructor and student choice and makes it more difficult for instructors to work together. Blended programs with a smaller cadre of instructors, such as Spanish at School B, function as a more cohesive unit, similarly to a smaller language program like German at School A, giving even the larger languages like Spanish and French this needed advantage. Departments can try to keep workloads manageable, allow instructors opportunities to interact with students online without adding a disproportionate amount of grading, and provide needed opportunities for instructor preparation, cooperation, and feedback.

Not much evidence of program-level evaluation of blended classes was available in this study. While it is important to not be too punitive with new instructors, evaluation and revision is an important process that may be overlooked in blended language courses currently being offered. Evaluation could help instructors learn how to more quickly adapt to the blended model as well as make needed changes in the course designed to help instructors and students alike.

When designing and redesigning a blended course, pedagogical choices should inform which technologies are used, rather than the other way around. The advice of Colpaert (2006), who takes this concept as a starting point, would be relevant to the development of curriculum and materials for blended classes. Colpaert highlights the multitude of choices available to

designers at each point in the materials development process, many of which are often made implicitly without careful consideration, and calls for collaboration between language instructors and technology experts.

To solve the various issues of both instructor involvement and course design, the best solution would be to involve instructors in a collaborative development of course curriculum and materials, under the oversight of those experienced enough in digital pedagogy to give credibility to the results in the eyes of other instructors. Depending upon whether courses are staffed by faculty or graduate students, the process of assisting instructors in developing skills in both technology and course design could occur through a combination of targeted trainings and the program's methodology course. In order for successive generations of instructors to feel connected to the online components, a revision process could be enacted that enables each new cohort of instructors to be involved in updating and replacing materials.

Of course, these suggestions are resource-intensive, requiring valuable instructor time and oversight. Institutional buy-in will have to increase to make it possible through grants and new faculty and teaching assistant positions, few of which have been available to the current sampling of programs. On the contrary, some institutions are trying to use blended courses to increase instructors' course load. It will require a shift in perspective to acquire these resources and improve institutional support for blended learning. With the introduction of more online and blended courses and programs (Goertler & Winke, 2008), however, it is possible that this institutional support will become more widely available. Whether the new resources available for fully online programs will be extended to blended courses, enabling them to take advantage of more innovative technologies and incorporate components from their fully online counterparts, remains to be seen.

In the meantime, instructors can make the most of their blended courses by creating or working with other instructors to design materials that go beyond the textbook online component. Students are aware when the online component of the course consists of teaching themselves the language and may be dissatisfied with it. Even a small amount of online input from instructors, in the form of instruction and feedback, could give students a needed boost on online days. Instructors need to have the freedom to create some materials of their own. They also need to clearly communicate to students what will be required of them and the purpose of the different components in the blended course.

What is needed to move forward with blended and distance language learning is a focus on helping current and future instructors and administrators become comfortable with the available technology tools so that they can make pedagogically based choices for more effective language learning, rather than simply aiming to replicate the face-to-face classroom experience in a new format (Goertler, et al., 2012). While some of these decisions must come down from administrators, even participants in this study working within larger language programs were able to have some success adding activities of their own.

Finally, students can make the most of the blended format by choosing this format only if they are willing to take on the responsibility of working independently and meeting frequent deadlines. Since it was not demonstrated from student results that the blended format can encourage students to develop needed study skills and other qualities of motivated learners if they do not already have them, future research will be needed to answer this question. In the meantime, knowing what is required of them from the start of a course can help students make a more informed decision about course enrollment. Throughout the term, they must keep up with the material and use available resources before they feel lost, not after.

Conclusion

Blended courses in basic language programs are going strong, despite the myriad challenges facing them. Heavy instructor workloads and a lack of support for instructors and students compound the frustrations caused by mismatches between the expectations of students, instructors, and course designers. These challenges cause some larger language programs to fall back on using prepackaged materials, which can be limiting for instructors who want to do more with digital pedagogy. Despite these issues, the continued existence of these courses and the high ratings given to them by the majority of instructor and administrator participants in this study are evidence that a lot of educators are working hard to make them successful. Student responses indicate that blended courses are working well enough to warrant their continuation but also offer suggestions for improvement.

At the same time, the trend toward fully online courses in higher education is even stronger overall than the push toward blended. The competition between these two formats could eventually cause blended courses to give way to fully online, but if it did, it would be detrimental to language programs to lose this beneficial compromise between traditional and digital instruction. Since students may use their language of study in both face-to-face and online situations in the future, it makes sense to conserve both modes of instructional activities as integral components of a language class.

It is hoped that language programs will be supported as they take advantage of new technologies, involve instructors in the creation of more meaningful and satisfying materials, encourage instructor collaboration, create opportunities to familiarize participants with technology tools, and revise course design based on participant feedback. Effective blends, based on solid pedagogical foundations and corresponding to participants' technological comfort,

create opportunities that are not judged to be simply as good as face-to-face classes but different, combining the best of traditional learning opportunities with the affordances of digital pedagogy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Surveys of Instructors and Administrators

Survey of Instructors

Please answer the following questions about your professional background and the blended course(s) that you teach. At the end, there will be a box for additional comments (optional), as well as information about how to get in touch with me if you have materials that you would like to share (also optional). I really appreciate your participation in this survey.

About you

What is your role/What are your roles at your institution? (Check all that apply.)

tenured/tenure-track faculty

visiting faculty

adjunct faculty

graduate student instructor/teaching assistant

director/coordinator

other _____

What language's (or languages') blended courses do you teach?

At what institution(s) (colleges or universities) do you teach blended second/foreign language courses? _____

What level(s) of blended language courses do you teach (either in the current session or courses that you regularly teach)? (Check all that apply.)

first year

second year

other _____

For how many years have you been...

teaching second/foreign language courses? _____

teaching blended second/foreign language courses? _____

Did you choose to teach blended courses?

Yes

No

Why did you choose to teach blended courses? (Check all that apply.)

schedule preference (fewer contact hours, etc.)

interest in technology

interest in trying new teaching methodologies/formats

other _____

Have you taught the language in a traditional (not blended) classroom before?

Yes

No

Have you taught the language in a distance (fully online) course before?

Yes

No

In what field(s) do you have academic background or degrees? (Check all that apply.)

second language acquisition

language pedagogy

linguistics

literature

academic work related to the language that you currently teach

academic work related to other languages

other _____

Have you ever used computer technology to study a language?

Yes

No

Did you use computer technology to study a language...

...as part of a course that you took?

...on your own?

...both?

Your program and its blended courses

What formats of courses are offered in your program? (Check all that apply.)

face-to-face

blended

fully distance

In your program's blended courses, how many hours, per week, are the students:

in a face-to-face classroom session: _____

in a face-to-face computer lab session: _____

in a synchronous online class session (video conferencing, text chat, etc.):

_____ expected to work on their own time (doing online activities, forums, homework, etc.):

How successful do you consider the blended courses in your program to be?

- 5 = Very successful
- 4 = Somewhat successful
- 3 = Neither successful nor unsuccessful
- 2 = Somewhat unsuccessful
- 1 = Very unsuccessful
- Unsure

On what basis are you measuring the success of the blended courses? (Check all that apply.)

- student grades or other direct assessment measures
- indirect assessment/observation of students
- your own satisfaction with teaching
- feedback from program administrators
- students' comments about or evaluations of courses
- a comparison with courses in other formats (traditional face-to-face or fully online)
- other _____

How satisfied do you feel with the current setup of your blended courses?

- 5 = Very satisfied
- 4 = Somewhat satisfied
- 3 = Neutral; neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- 2 = Somewhat unsatisfied
- 1 = Very unsatisfied
- Unsure

Blended course materials and technologies

What textbooks and other required materials do your blended courses use?

What technological materials do students use in your blended courses?

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Who selects these materials? (Check all that apply.)

- program administrators
- instructors
- students

Which of the online activities/resources that your students in blended courses use do you think are the most beneficial to them in learning the language? (Check all that apply.)

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Which of the online activities/resources that your students in blended courses use do you think are the least beneficial to them in learning the language? (Check all that apply.)

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Do you discuss the online activities during face-to-face class meetings? If so, for what purpose(s)?

- to give instructions
- to give feedback
- to respond to student questions
- other

I do not discuss the online activities during face-to-face class meetings

Who selected or designed the curriculum? _____

How much influence did you have in setting up the curriculum or selecting materials for your blended course(s)?

- 4 = A lot of influence
- 3 = Some influence
- 2 = Not much influence
- 1 = No influence

How much are your blended courses based on preexisting face-to-face (or fully online) courses?

- 4 = Heavily based on preexisting courses
- 3 = Somewhat based on preexisting courses
- 2 = A small amount of material taken from preexisting courses
- 1 = Newly designed; not based on preexisting courses
- Unsure

What proportion of the materials and technologies in your blended course(s) were developed within your department/program (either by you or others), as opposed to provided by the publisher or other sources (textbook website activities, etc.)?

- 75% or more created within department
- About 50% created within department
- 25% or less created within department
- Other
- Unsure

Which of the following types of interaction are your students using in their online/technology-based work? (Check all that apply.)

- Interaction with instructor
- Interaction with classmates
- Interaction with target language speakers
- Interaction with computer

How comfortable do you or would you feel using each of the following technologies with your classes? (5 = Very comfortable, 4 = Somewhat comfortable, 3 = Neutral; neither comfortable nor uncomfortable, 2 = Somewhat uncomfortable, 1 = Very uncomfortable, Unsure)

textbook website
 other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
 course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
 streaming audio/video
 authentic websites from target language sources
 social media
 student audio/video recording
 discussion boards/forums
 text chat
 voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
 webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
 student blogs
 smartphone apps
 other _____

Assessment and feedback

What kinds of feedback do students receive for their online work? (Check all that apply.)

evaluation of responses as correct/incorrect
 specific corrections
 overall comments
 peer editing
 other _____

How is this feedback provided? (Check all that apply.)

on website, automatic
 on website, provided by instructor/grader
 by email
 on paper
 in person
 other _____

On what skills and topics are students in your courses primarily assessed? (Check all that apply.)

reading
 writing
 listening
 speaking
 culture
 vocabulary
 grammar
 other _____

How are these assessments administered? (Check all that apply.)

- paper-based in-class
- paper-based at home
- face-to-face conversation/presentation
- online at home
- online in a computer lab
- other _____

What formats do your assessments take? (Check all that apply.)

- multiple-choice test questions
- fill-in/short-answer test questions
- essay test questions
- in-class compositions
- out-of-class compositions
- blogs/wikis
- discussion boards/forums
- students record audio/video
- real-time online audio/video conversation exam or presentation
- in-class conversation exam or presentation
- portfolios
- evaluation of in-class participation
- evaluation of online participation
- other _____

Which of these assessments (or rubrics for these assessments) do you design yourself? (Check all that apply.)

- multiple-choice test questions
- fill-in/short-answer test questions
- essay test questions
- in-class compositions
- out-of-class compositions
- blogs/wikis
- discussion boards/forums
- students record audio/video
- real-time online audio/video conversation exam or presentation
- in-class conversation exam or presentation
- portfolios
- evaluation of in-class participation
- evaluation of online participation
- other _____

Training/support for participants

Does your language program or institution offer any training/orientation to instructors on using technology in the classroom?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What kinds of technology training/orientation are available at your institution?

- Online resources to use whenever needed
- Synchronous training sessions conducted via Internet at specific times
- Face-to-face lab sessions on specific topics
- Drop-in hours
- Other _____

Have you taken this technology training/orientation?

- Yes
- No

How relevant was this training to your teaching of blended courses? (5 = Very relevant, 4 = Somewhat relevant, 3 = Neutral; neither relevant nor irrelevant, 2 = Somewhat irrelevant, 1 = Very irrelevant, I have not taken/used this training)

- Online resources to use whenever needed
- Synchronous training sessions conducted via Internet at specific times
- Face-to-face lab sessions on specific topics
- Drop-in hours
- Other _____

What (if anything) did you gain from this training? _____

Do you, or does your language program or institution, provide any training/orientation to students to help them familiarize themselves with how to use the blended learning components or other technologies in your courses? (Check all that apply.)

- I provide it
- The department/program provides it
- The university provides it
- I don't know of any training provided

Do you have any knowledge about a methodology course offered by your language program or institution for teaching assistants/graduate students in your program?

- Yes
- No

Have you taken this methodology course?

- Yes
- No

Does this methodology course cover blended learning or other technology topics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What technology topics does the methodology course cover?

Do you collaborate (or stay in communication about blended courses) with other instructors of blended courses while teaching your course?

- Yes, instructors at my institution
- Yes, instructors at other institutions
- Yes, both
- No

What forms does this collaboration take? (Check all that apply.)

- meetings
- sharing/collaborating on resources
- sharing/collaborating on lesson plans
- comparing experiences
- helping each other solve problems
- grading together
- other _____

Final questions

Is there anything else that you would like for me to know about your blended course(s)?
(Optional) _____

Do I have permission to contact you with follow-up clarification questions and/or to arrange a Skype interview to get more information?

- Yes
- No

(If “Yes” is selected) Please provide your email address: _____

Would you be willing to share the syllabus from your blended course(s)?

- Yes
- No

(If “Yes” is selected) Please send it to: handerson@email.arizona.edu

Survey of Administrators

Please answer the following questions about your professional background and the blended course(s) that you oversee. At the end, there will be a box for additional comments (optional), as well as information about how to get in touch with me if you have materials that you would like to share (also optional). I really appreciate your participation in this survey.

About you

What is your role/What are your roles at your institution? (Check all that apply.)

- tenured/tenure-track faculty
- visiting faculty
- adjunct faculty
- graduate student instructor/teaching assistant
- program director/coordinator
- other _____

What language's (or languages') blended courses do you oversee?

At what institution(s) (colleges or universities) do you oversee blended second/foreign language courses? _____

Have you also taught blended second/foreign language courses?

For how many years have you been...

- teaching or overseeing a second/foreign language course? _____
- overseeing blended second/foreign language courses? _____

Have you taught the language in a traditional (not blended) classroom before?

- Yes
- No

Have you taught the language in a distance (fully online) course before?

- Yes
- No

In what field(s) do you have academic background or degrees? (Check all that apply.)

- second language acquisition
- language pedagogy
- linguistics
- literature
- academic work related to the language that you currently teach
- academic work related to other languages
- other _____

Have you ever used computer technology to study a language?

- Yes
- No

Did you use computer technology to study a language...

- ...as part of a course that you took?
- ...on your own?
- ...both?

Your program and its blended courses

What formats of courses are offered in your program? (Check all that apply.)

- face-to-face
- blended
- fully distance

What level(s) of blended courses does your institution offer in the languages that you oversee? (Check all that apply.)

- first year
- second year
- other _____

In your program's blended courses, how many hours, per week, are the students:

- in a face-to-face classroom session: _____
- in a face-to-face computer lab session: _____
- in a synchronous online class session (video conferencing, text chat, etc.): _____

_____ expected to work on their own time (doing online activities, forums, homework, etc.): _____

Did you or your team initiate the blended courses in your program?

- Yes
- No

In what courses' development have you been involved? _____

Why did your program choose to initiate blended courses? _____

- Student interest
- Instructor interest
- At the request of the institution
- Department's interest in technology
- Department's interest in new teaching methodologies/formats
- Other _____
- Unsure

Who selected or designed the curriculum for the blended courses?

How much influence did you have in setting up the curriculum or selecting materials for your program's blended course(s)?

- 4 = A lot of influence
- 3 = Some influence
- 2 = Not much influence
- 1 = No influence

How much are your blended courses based on preexisting face-to-face (or fully online) courses?

- 4 = Heavily based on preexisting courses
- 3 = Somewhat based on preexisting courses
- 2 = A small amount of material taken from preexisting courses
- 1 = Newly designed; not based on preexisting courses
- Unsure

Blended course materials and technologies

What textbooks and other required materials do your program's blended courses use?

What technological materials do students use in your program's blended courses?

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Who selects these materials? (Check all that apply.)

- program administrators
- instructors
- students

What proportion of the materials and technologies in your blended course(s) were developed within your department/program (either by you or others), as opposed to provided by the publisher or other sources (textbook website activities, etc.)?

- 75% or more created within department
- About 50% created within department
- 25% or less created within department
- Other
- Unsure

Which of the online activities/resources that your students in blended courses use do you think are the most beneficial to them in learning the language? (Check all that apply.)

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Which of the online activities/resources that your students in blended courses use do you think are the least beneficial to them in learning the language? (Check all that apply.)

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

How comfortable do you or would you feel using each of the following technologies with classes that you were teaching? (5 = Very comfortable, 4 = Somewhat comfortable, 3 = Neutral; neither comfortable nor uncomfortable, 2 = Somewhat uncomfortable, 1 = Very uncomfortable, Unsure)

- textbook website
- other grammar/vocabulary practice websites
- course management system (such as Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, or Google Sites)
- streaming audio/video
- authentic websites from target language sources
- social media
- student audio/video recording
- discussion boards/forums
- text chat
- voice/video chat (such as Skype or Google Hangout)
- webconferencing software (such as Adobe Connect)
- student blogs
- smartphone apps
- other _____

Assessment and feedback

What kinds of feedback do students receive for their online work? (Check all that apply.)

- evaluation of responses as correct/incorrect
- specific corrections
- overall comments
- peer editing
- other _____

How is this feedback provided? (Check all that apply.)

- on website, automatic
- on website, provided by instructor/grader
- by email
- on paper
- in person
- other _____

On what skills and topics are students in your courses primarily assessed? (Check all that apply.)

- reading
- writing
- listening
- speaking
- culture
- vocabulary
- grammar
- other _____

How are these assessments administered? (Check all that apply.)

- paper-based in-class
- paper-based at home
- face-to-face conversation/presentation
- online at home
- online in a computer lab
- other _____

What formats do these assessments take? (Check all that apply.)

- multiple-choice test questions
- fill-in/short-answer test questions
- essay test questions
- in-class compositions
- out-of-class compositions
- blogs/wikis
- discussion boards/forums
- students record audio/video
- real-time online audio/video connection with students
- face-to-face conversation/ presentation
- portfolios
- evaluation of in-class participation
- evaluation of online participation
- other _____

Who writes the assessments? (Check all that apply.)

- each section's instructor
- a team of instructors who teach the course
- graduate student assistants (who are not necessarily also instructors)
- other _____

Administration

How have your program's blended courses been evaluated? (Check all that apply.)

- student evaluations
- teaching observations by administrators
- external evaluation by third party
- comparing student assessment measures between blended and face-to-face, or blended and distance, sections
- instructor feedback
- other _____

What sort of financial or technical support (if any) has your program gotten from the college or university, or other sources, for implementing blended courses?

How successful do you consider the blended courses in your program to be?

- 5 = Very successful
- 4 = Somewhat successful
- 3 = Neither successful nor unsuccessful
- 2 = Somewhat unsuccessful
- 1 = Very unsuccessful
- Unsure

On what basis are you measuring the success of the blended courses? (Check all that apply.)

- student grades or other direct assessment measures
- indirect assessment/observation of students
- your own satisfaction with teaching (if you have taught these courses)
- feedback from instructors
- feedback from other administrators
- students' comments about or evaluations of courses
- a comparison with courses in other formats (traditional face-to-face or fully online)
- other _____

How satisfied do you feel with the current setup of your blended courses?

- 5 = Very satisfied
- 4 = Somewhat satisfied
- 3 = Neutral; neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- 2 = Somewhat unsatisfied
- 1 = Very unsatisfied
- Unsure

Training/support for participants

Does your language program or institution offer any training/orientation to instructors on using technology in the classroom?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What kind of technology training/orientation is it?

- Online resources to use whenever needed
- Synchronous training sessions conducted via Internet at specific times
- Face-to-face lab sessions on specific topics
- Drop-in hours
- Other _____

What needs is it intended to address? _____

Does your language program or institution provide any training/orientation to students to help them familiarize themselves with how to use the blended learning components or other technologies in your program's courses? (Check all that apply.)

Some instructors might provide it individually

The department/program provides it

The university provides it

I don't know of any training provided

Do you have any knowledge about a methodology course offered by your language program or institution for teaching assistants/graduate students in your program?

Yes

No

Does this methodology course cover blended learning or other technology topics?

Yes

No

Unsure

What technology topics does the methodology course cover?

Final questions

Is there anything else that you would like for me to know about your program's blended course(s)? (Optional) _____

Do I have permission to contact you with follow-up clarification questions and/or to ask to arrange a Skype interview to get more information about your program?

Yes

No

(If "Yes" is selected) Please provide your email address: _____

Would you be willing to share the syllabus from your program's blended course(s)?

Yes

No

(If "Yes" is selected) Please send it to: handerson@email.arizona.edu

Appendix B: Survey of Students

Why did you choose to take your [language] class in the hybrid format, as opposed to fully face-to-face or fully online? Please select all that apply.

- There were no purely face-to-face classes for my language and level
- There were no purely online classes for my language and level
- I prefer a combination of independent work and classroom instruction
- I didn't want to be on my own with a purely online class
- I wanted the schedule flexibility of a hybrid class
- I have had positive experiences with other hybrid classes
- Other (please specify): _____

How helpful were each of the following resources to you in learning [language]? Please leave blank any that you did not use.

1 = Not helpful 2 3 4 5 = Extremely helpful

- [Textbook] website
- Blackboard website
- Practice websites other than
 [Textbook] or Blackboard
- Listening to audio in
 [language]/watching video in
 [language]
- Authentic [language] websites
- Using [language] on social media
- Smartphone apps
- Other (please specify):

What kind(s) of feedback did you receive from the online activities in your course? (Please select all that apply.)

- Automatic feedback from website
- Instructor feedback on website
- Instructor feedback on paper or in person
- Peer feedback on website
- Peer feedback on paper or in person
- Other (please specify): _____

How useful was the feedback?

1 = Not useful 2 3 4 5 = Extremely useful

- Automatic feedback from website
- Instructor feedback on website
- Instructor feedback on paper or in person
- Peer feedback on website
- Peer feedback on paper or in person
- Other (please specify):

Were you provided with any orientation/training to help you familiarize yourself with how to use the technologies in your course?

- Yes
- No

How was the training provided? (Please select all that apply.)

- During class time
- Online as an assignment
- Online as a self-access option if needed
- Other (please specify): _____

How useful was each type of training?

1 = Not useful 2 3 4 5 = Extremely useful

- During class time
- Online as an assignment
- Online as a self-access option if needed
- Other (please specify):

What, specifically, did you want to learn in this class? _____

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- I learn best on my own.
- I learn best in a classroom.
- I take my time on homework and make sure I understand before moving on.
- I can generally figure out technological tools on my own.
- The technology in this course was easy to use.
- This course helped make me a more independent learner.
- This course helped me meet my goals that I stated above.

Would or wouldn't you recommend a hybrid language course to other students, and why?

Is there anything else that you would like to add about your [language] class that would be useful for developing other hybrid language classes?

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me more about the setup of your blended classes.
2. You indicated being [level of satisfaction] with the current setup of your blended courses, and rated them as [level of success]. To what do you attribute this result? What would you change about the courses?
3. What are the learning goals in your blended classes? Who determines them?
4. Could you tell me more about how assessment works in your blended classes? How are students assessed? Who determines the assessment types and content?
5. Have you created any online materials yourself for language classes? If so, what were they? How did students use them?
6. What do you think are the best uses of class and homework/study time for students to acquire a second language? How do these views impact how you teach blended courses?
7. Are the blended courses in your department based on any particular type of pedagogical theory?
8. What are the advantages to teaching a language in a blended course?
9. What are the disadvantages to teaching a language in a blended course?
10. How did your program begin developing blended courses? Why were these courses created? Did faculty or graduate students use grant funding or release time to develop them?
11. What kinds of training or support have you received on issues of technology in language learning (classes, training/orientation sessions, conference presentations, workshops)? Who has run them? Have you received hands-on experience with language technology in these sessions?
12. Would you be willing to share the syllabus, sample assessments, or other materials from your blended course(s)? If so, please send them to handerson@email.arizona.edu