Chapter 1.7
Teaching Online:
What Does Blended Learning Require?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an argument endorsing blended learning and teaching for foreign language (FL)/second language (L2) courses, in lieu of total online learning and teaching or total face-to-face learning and teaching (FFLT). Two main arguments are posed, citing concrete examples. First, that in total online learning and teaching, one of the greatest challenges is to reduce the psychological and social distance between teacher and student that leads to a dysfunctional parser (a mental language processor) for FL/L2. And secondly, online learning and teaching encourage more input, hence clarify communication—-by making not only currently incomprehensible input comprehensible but also hard-to-be-comprehended output easy-to-comprehend—— through "self-negotiation of form and meaning," and the parser's strategy of being "first (prosodic phrase) come, first interpreted/processed." This chapter proceeds to strongly recommend that FL/L2 teachers make simple audio files to provide their students with spoken input to prevent students from employing the L1 strategy of "first come, last interpreted/processed." Furthermore, this chapter shows what kind of spoken input is to be recorded in audio files for students in Elementary Japanese II and Intermediate Japanese I.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the field of computer assisted language learning (CALL) like Hauck and Sticler (2006) and Colpaert (2006) raise an intriguing question: What does it take to teach online? Due to the fact that our main concern is not total online learning but blended learning (BL), this chapter modifies their question as follows: What does it take to teach online for BL? Omaggio (1984) opens her chapter with the following provocative question:

The question addressed in this chapter is as old as the language-teaching profession itself: *How do we help students learning a second language classroom setting become proficient in that language?* Historically, the responses to this question have been as varied as… those who have tried to answer it. (p. 43, the italic I mine)

It is not the purpose of the present chapter to tackle this question, but to make the question more specifically focus on the issues of input and output: *How can we help students in a second language classroom setting make incomprehensible input comprehensible, and hard-to-be-comprehended output easy-to-comprehend, such that they eventually become proficient in that language?* As this modified question indicates, this chapter's answer to the question in the title "what does BL require (to make it work)?" is "to design an online FL/L2 learning & teaching in order to make not only currently incomprehensible input comprehensible, but also currently hard-to-be-comprehended output easy-to-be-comprehended."

This chapter has two purposes. One is to argue that for FL/L2 classes, blended learning and teaching (BLT) are more effective than total online or totally face-to-face learning and teaching (FFLT). The other is to demonstrate simple ways of scaffolding students in the second and third semester of Japanese language courses, by making currently incomprehensible input more comprehensible, and hard-to-be-comprehended output easy to comprehend under a memory efficient approach (MEA) issuing from human parser learning theory (HPLT). Kang (2007a) has demonstrated how to blend technologies in an advanced Japanese class. The present chapter, however, shows how to blend online learning in Elementary Japanese II (JA102) and Intermediate Japanese I (JA201).

BACKGROUND

Comprehensive Input and Output in L2 Acquisition

Krashen (1985) proposes an Input Hypothesis claiming as follows: "humans acquire language in only one way—-by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input" (p. 2). In other words, speaking has nothing to do with L2 acquisition. This is an extreme way to look at the L2 acquisition process. Swain (1985, 2005) claims as an Output Hypothesis that an "incomprehensible output" that is "pushed" to generate comprehensible output for the listeners also facilitates L2 acquisition.

In this section, two pitfalls of input comprehension are described; the third pitfall will be shown in the section for Case Description. Input comprehension is achieved not only through interactive or task-related conversation, but also in the context of one-way communication such as radio, TV broadcasting, and reading newspapers or magazines. Research has been conducted regarding the specific ways that interaction helps learners make incomprehensible input comprehensible (e.g., Gass 1997; Pica et al., 1987; VanPatten, 1996). However, when it comes to processing written input, the Japanese language learner whose L1 (first language) is English may understand a sentence by processing it as "first come, last interpreted." This development may occur in a case like the following, where the learner, in order to comprehend a sentence using their L1 syntactic knowledge, does not process the sentence in the order of "first come, first interpreted":

(1) kono kuruma-o ka-oo to omou
    this car-Acc. buy-will that think (Acc. = accusative)
    'I think that I will buy this car '

The challenge taken up by the present study is to avoid the above type of (written) input comprehension and thereby not repeat the failure common to traditional grammar translation. This chapter will endorse the solution of providing audio files for reading comprehension material. This technique can enable learners to process according to "first come, first interpreted" (Kang, 2008). In the reading comprehension questions of VanPatten (1996), there are many complex sentences in the reading materials. His Input Processing and Grammar Instruction fails, as the traditional grammar-translation approach did, for those students whose L1 is a language like Korean or Japanese. This is because Spanish is a

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