A Case Study of High School Chinese as a

Foreign Language Blended Program

By

Yao Tu

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Chairperson: Dr. Manuela Gonzalez-Bueno

Dr. Ron Aust

Dr. Marc Mahlios

Dr. Jennifer Ng

Dr. Paul Markham

The Dissertation Committee for Yao Tu

certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

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Chairperson Manuela Gonzalez-Bueno

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigated a Chinese as a foreign language program composed of three different instructional modes: synchronous instruction with videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction with online tutorials, and physically co-located face-to-face instruction. The study adopted Larry Cuban's multi-layered curriculum framework and investigated the four curriculum layers within the blended program: intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum. This research utilized interviews, observation, and document analysis as the instruments in data collection. The participants consisted of one administrator, eight language teachers, four facilitators and twelve high school students. In addition to teaching site observation, the researcher also traveled to four remote school sites to observe how the curriculum was learned from the students' perspective.

The results of the study indicated that although the intended curriculum reveals the administrator's ideal picture of blended learning design and defines what teachers should teach and what students should learn in each instructional delivery mode, the actual implementation process of blended learning is much more complex. The findings of the study showed that language teachers' specific operation of the daily lessons in a blended context and students' actual learning experiences at the remote sites can be influenced by many other variables; these variables lead the intended curriculum into different versions between the classes of the taught curriculum, learned curriculum and tested curriculum. Therefore, technology integration should not only be focused on the design of the external layer of the curriculum (the intended curriculum), but should also be focused on the implementation through the rest of the curriculum layers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Research Background

  In the past decade, with the recognition of the rapid economic growth and political rise of China, the number of Chinese K-12 language programs has dramatically increased in American metropolitan areas, along with a gradual increase in the heartland states. A survey released by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) stated that in the period between the 2004-05 school year and the 2007-08 school year, student enrollment in Chinese courses had the largest percentage growth among all the foreign language courses in American K-12 public schools, with total student enrollment increasing from 20,292 to 59,860 (ACTFL, 2011). While Chinese programs have nationally increased with the support from federal government and other non-governmental organizations, some issues and challenges have also been discovered in the field; and one of them is the lack of opportunity and access to Chinese Language programs. According to a report published by Asia Society and The College Board, the establishment of Chinese language programs in the United States has always been concentrated on select schools in metropolitan areas, with many urban and rural schools districts experiencing difficulties in either attracting Chinese language teachers or budget issues in hiring a Chinese language teacher on their own (Asia Society and The College Board, 2008).

  In order to provide equal learning opportunity and accessibility for every student, integrating technologies to connect distance language learners has become a practical and attractive solution. Some language institutions are trying to reach distance learners through development of their own language multimedia products or online courses. For instance, the Confucius Institute at Michigan State University has designed and developed a series of multimedia products such as an eTextBook, *Chinese Your Way,* and a Multiplayer Chinese

learning game, *Zon*. Students enrolled in the class learn most of the language content at their own pace, with the support coming from the multimedia products or learning management systems such as Blackboard and Moodle. In addition to the asynchronous self-paced learning experiences, students also have opportunities to communicate with their language teachers in real time through virtual meeting software such as Adobe Connect (http://experiencechinese.com). On the other hand, some institutions like the K-12 Chinese flagship program at Ohio State University, have adopted videoconferencing technology to provide synchronous language instruction to remote school districts. Students can choose to take the videoconferencing class as part of their traditional school day. With the videoconferencing technology, one teacher can provide instruction to students in many different schools as part of a day's lesson schedule (http://chineseflagship.osu.edu).

By allowing accessibility, flexibility, and low cost, establishing distance language programs can benefit students and institutions in numerous ways. However, along with all of these advantages, traditional distance education also faces many criticisms regarding the students' learning experience; one of the major criticisms to distance education is the lack of social interaction. Kirkup and Jones stated that the inability to offer dialogue in the way that traditional face-to-face instruction does is one of the most significant weaknesses of distance education (Kirkup, 1996). In a traditional face-to-face class, teachers can employ a variety of teaching strategies to engage students in communicating, but the physical distance between teachers and learners in an online learning environment brings challenges for teachers trying to create the same communicative environment. Due to the social interactive emphasis of foreign language education, distance language learners face even greater difficulties. The physical separation between teacher and students and students among themselves causes frustration for

language learners who wish to improve their oral proficiency via social interaction. To address students' social needs, some language institutions are trying to blend a small component of face-to-face meetings into their existing distance learning programs. In these blended language programs, students work remotely for the most part, but they also have opportunities to interact with language teachers in person, either through the language teacher's site visits to the remote districts or students taking a field trip to the teaching site. The students also may be provided a native speaker to practice the target language at the remote site.

While the distance language programs integrate face-to-face components in order to provide socialization opportunities to distance learners, some traditional face-to-face language programs have also tried to integrate online technology into their physical classroom to support various pedagogical needs. For example, in order to better prepare students for a global economy and foster cultural understanding between the United States and China, several schools in Oxford, Michigan have utilized videoconferencing technology to build virtual partnerships with Chinese secondary schools. By interacting in the target language with their international partners, Chinese EFL and American CFL students not only can enhance their language skills, they can also develop understanding of each other's culture in an authentic way (www.edweek.org). Technologies also have been integrated in many traditional face-to-face language programs to provide students additional drill and practice opportunities. Students attend the language labs to have individualized oral/aural practice and receive immediate feedback from the computer language lab applications. To meet the market needs, many Chinese language textbook publishers also develop learning DVDs or online learning websites as supplementary learning materials to their hard copy textbook. In this way, students can have extensive individualized language practice sessions after they learn the content from the regular face-to-face class time.

Different institutions integrate technologies in different ways for their own practical or pedagogical reasons. No matter if it is a distance language program combined with face-to-face check-in options, or a face-to-face class that integrates with online learning sessions, their common goal is to maximize the practical and pedagogical effectiveness for both face-to-face instruction and online learning. This type of teaching and learning approach, the combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning, has been defined as blended learning, and it has become a popular course delivery method in American schools (Bonk & Graham, 2006). In the current research literature, interchangeable terms like "blended learning", "hybrid learning", or "mixed-mode learning" are used; all of these terms refer to the same concept, which is combining face-to-face instruction with online learning to deliver the course content.

According to a report published by the North American Council for Online Learning, there are a growing number of online schools and programs implementing blended learning in various ways. Some institutions implement blended learning at the course level; combining both face-to-face instruction and online learning within one subject. Others implement blended learning at an institutional level; online schools gathering their students on a regular, scheduled basis, with the teacher physically present or remaining at a distance. The following chart describes some examples of blended programs for K-12 students in the United States (Watson, 2008):

Blended Learning Continuum

FULLY ONLINE

	WHERE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS FALL:
Fully online curriculum with all learning done online and at a distance and no face-to-face component	KYVS
Fully online curriculum with options for face-to-face instruction, but not required	Commonwealth Connections
Mostly or fully online curriculum with select days required in classroom or computer lab	Odyssey Charter Chicago Virtual School
Mostly or fully online curriculum in computer lab or classroom where students meet every day	Hoosier Academy Cincinnati Virtual
Classroom instruction with significant, required online components that extend learning beyond the classroom and beyond the school day	VOISE
Classroom instruction integrating online resources, but limited or no requirements for students to be online	Omaha PS Community HS KYVS
Traditional face-to-face setting with few or no online resources or communication	

TRADITIONAL FACE-TO-FACE

Figure 1.1 Blended Learning Continuum Chart

The above Blended Learning Continuum chart indicates that there is no single type of blended education and with the development of technology, all the spaces along the continuum from fully online to fully face-to-face will be filled.

Statement of the Problem

Integrating technology in foreign language programs has become a popular trend in American schools, but the types of technologies used in assisting language learning and the pedagogical objectives behind these technologies varies throughout different institutions. Stockwell stated that for an institution, some of the main reasons for choosing a particular technology may include pedagogical objectives, institutional decisions, personal curiosity, and

new trends (Stockwell, 2007). Before following new trends and making a decision on technology investment, administrators and language educators need to consider the following questions:

- **Why to implement?** Is technology integrated for a practical reason or for a pedagogical reason?

- **What to implement?** For example, integrating videoconferencing technology to support synchronous real time learning, or developing online tutorials to encourage students' self-paced learning, or creating a social network to promote cross-cultural communication, or some combination of all of these? There are many different technologies in the field; which one can best support the current language pedagogy?

- **How to implement?** How to integrate the technology to maximize the effectiveness for both face-to-face instruction and online learning? Will teachers and students feel comfortable with this new technology?

A good way to understand these technology integration issues is to learn from the experiences of others. A large amount of research in the field of technology-supported language learning has been conducted in the past decades, but most studies looked at single applications rather than integrated systems (Zhao, 2003). Smith pointed out that these research works may not resemble the real foreign language instructional settings, because they either occur in a theoretical vacuum or are conducted under highly experimental conditions (Smith, 2001). Therefore, studies that investigate systemic large-scale integration of technology in the real language classrooms are needed. In the current educational technology research, terms like "blended learning", "integrated learning", and "hybrid learning", "multi-method learning" are being used with increasing frequency to describe a pedagogical approach that combines traditional face-to-face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities. Subjects on

blended learning research vary over a wide range, but only few focuses on foreign language education. Investigating language teaching and learning in a blended context can provide a holistic view about administrators' practical and pedagogical considerations behind technology integration, language instructors and students' experiences in the process of technology implementation, and their perception toward instances of technology integration.

Due to its socially interactive nature, language learning has been traditionally associated with the necessity of face-to-face instruction. However, for some less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, implementing an exclusively face-to-face program in a K-12 classroom may encounter difficulties such as shortage of qualified teachers and budget issues in hiring teachers. Integrating technology to reduce face-to-face contact hours can be crucial to the survival of the program. Most of the studies on technology-supported language learning focused on English and other frequently taught European languages. Zhao (2003) suggested that research on use of technology in language learning should be expanded to other less commonly taught languages. Furthermore, after examined 156 peer-reviewed articles in the major language education and technology journals, Zhao (2003) also found out that all of these studies were limited to college level language learners, and none of them were conducted in K-12 settings. The K-12 environment is unique; how many of the college level studies on technology-supported language learning can translate to the K-12 level is unknown.

In addition, the current studies on blended learning are mostly quantitative based; either through comparing three different course delivery methods (face-to-face, online, and blended) or examining different instructor and learner variables. What teachers and students experienced in different instructional modes (face-to-face/online) and how they perceive these instructional modes is still unknown. According to Fenstermacher (1986), qualitative research, which strives

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to understand the meaning of action to the participants, can have greater effect on practice. Therefore, qualitative studies investigating teachers and students' experiences in existing K-12 blended Chinese language programs is not only important to improve the current practice but also crucial for establishing new programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of blended learning design and implementation in K-12 foreign language education. In order to gain multiple perspectives on the phenomena of blended language learning and make the data more analytical, this study adopted Larry Cuban's multi-layered curriculum framework to investigate the four curriculum layers (intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum) within an existing blended language program. This multi-layered curriculum framework is not only helpful for the researcher to understand the administrators' practical and pedagogical considerations behind the blended learning design, but also help the researcher to explore how the language curriculum is actually taught, learned, and tested in a blended context from different participant groups' perspective.

Specifically, this study seeks to accomplish five goals. The first goal is to discover the intended curriculum from the administrator's perspective, including the curriculum goal of the blended language program and the practical/pedagogical reasons behind the blended learning design. The second goal is to discover the taught curriculum from the teachers' perspective. The study investigates how the teachers actually implement the language curriculum into their classroom teaching practice, including the specific learning materials they used in each instructional mode and the teaching strategies they used to engage language learners. The third

goal is to discover the learned curriculum from the students' perspective. The study explores what students actually learned in each instructional mode and how they view blended learning based on their experience. The fourth goal is to discover the tested curriculum, including how student learning is assessed in different instructional modes as well as teachers and students' perceptions toward different types of assessment in a blended context. The final goal is to analyze and compare these four curriculum layers, and discover whether there is congruency among the four curriculum layers; if not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design.

In order to achieve these goals, qualitative research methodology using a case study approach was employed in this study. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research studies individuals in their natural setting and asks research questions that start with "how or what", and the purpose of the research is to describe what is going on. Through immersion in detailed and in-depth descriptions of the four different curriculum layers within a blended language program, the study provides a holistic view about how different participant groups perceive blended language learning based on their experience, and it provides new insights about the phenomena of blended learning within the context of foreign language education. The rich, detailed, and descriptive information provided by this study also adds to the body of knowledge of blended learning pedagogy, particularly in the K-12 foreign language classroom, where little research has been focused on blended instruction.

Study Context

The context for this dissertation study is a summer two-week blended language program offered by a Chinese language institute at a large Midwestern university in the United States.

This blended language program is funded by federal government, and is designed to give high school students a jumpstart into the study of Chinese language. This blended language program was selected for several reasons. First and foremost, the researcher's working experience in this blended language program provides appropriate insight into this particular environment, including challenges faced by teachers and the needs of students. Second, the unique structure of this blended language program provides a rich context for the researcher to explore the phenomena of blended learning. This blended language program is composed of three different instructional modes: synchronous instruction via videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction via Blackboard course management system, and face-to-face instruction. Technology integration in this language program is not only used as a supplement to an existing print material based curriculum, but translated into a pedagogical approach and realized in the forms of curriculum (Zhao, 2003). Third, the researcher has complete institutional support for her research, so she can gain access to participants and all the relevant documents.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell defines a conceptual framework as "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research. According to Maxwell (2005), there are four main sources that can be used for the development of the conceptual framework for a study: (1) the researcher's own experiential knowledge, (2) existing theory and research, (3) pilot and exploratory work done by the researcher, and (4) thought experiments. In short, a conceptual framework can be the insights researchers gain from existing literature combined with the implications they find in their data driven studies.

Before conducting the current study, the researcher reviewed literature that is relevant to blended language learning and gained a deep understanding of prior research that had been done, along with understanding of the different views provided by studies that have been conducted in the field of educational technology and foreign language education. Research in the field of technology-supported language learning has been well studied in the past decades, but most studies looked at single applications rather than integrated systems. In addition, topics on blended learning research varies over a wide range, but only few focus on foreign language education and these studies are mostly focused on English and other frequently taught European languages, and are limited to college-level learners. Furthermore, the current studies on blended learning are mostly quantitative based, either through comparing three different course delivery methods (face-to-face, online, and blended) or examining different instructor and learner variables. What teachers and students experience in different instructional modes (face-to-face/online) and how they perceive these instructional modes is still unknown. These gaps in research helped the researcher formulate the initial research questions and defined the study.

In order to gain a basic understanding of the design and implementation issues that are involved in blended language learning, a pilot study was conducted at the same research site. The focus of this pilot study was to investigate the structure of this blended language program, the practical and pedagogical reasons behind the structure, and participants' experience in the blended context. The pilot study results indicate that there are three different instructional modes in this high school blended language program, which include: synchronous instruction via videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction via CourseSites learning management system, and face-to-face instruction. Each of the instructional modes had its unique practical and pedagogical features, and the modes were suitable for different language content. For example,

videoconferencing engaged distance learners in a live real-time communicative way, but it has limitations in time flexibility. The asynchronous online tutorials addressed the time flexibility issues with videoconferencing by allowing students to access the learning materials anytime-anywhere, and it also provided opportunities for students to comprehend the learning content at their own pace. Face-to-face instruction creates opportunities for socialization, and the personal interaction with peers and teachers played an important role in students' learning experiences. Therefore, a good blended learning design should maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of each instructional mode, as well as having the modes support one another.

The findings from the pilot study direct the researcher to pay particular attention to the following issues: (1) how are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals? (2) how is the language curriculum taught, learned and tested in different instructional modes? and (3) how different participant groups' perceive blended learning based on their experiences with the curriculum? In order to investigate the phenomena of blended language learning from multiple perspectives and have the data be more analytical, the researcher decided to employ Larry Cuban's multi-layered curriculum framework to refine the initial research questions.

According to Cuban (1995), there are at least four layers of curriculums that are in use in schools: intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum and tested curriculum The top layer is the intended (official) curriculum: what state and district officials set forth in curricular frameworks and courses of study. In this blended language program, the intended curriculum is the curriculum framework designed by the program director, which addresses the program theme, unit sub-themes, standards and expected outcomes, and specific knowledge and skills. This curriculum framework is closely aligned with the American Council on the Teaching

of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) five goal areas of the National Standards for 21st century foreign language learners, referred to as the 5 Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (ACTFL, 1999).

The second layer is the taught curriculum, which is the curriculum that teachers actually implement in their classroom. In this blended language program, the teacher's choice about what to teach and how to present the language curriculum may be influenced by many variables, such as their familiarity to the technology tools, their personal philosophy of language education, or even their attitude to the students from different remote sites. Therefore, the official curriculum and what teachers teach may overlap in certain key topics, but can differ substantially in actual subject matter and teaching methods. The third layer is the learned curriculum, which is the curriculum that students take away from class. According to Cuban (1995), the learned curriculum overlaps with but differs significantly from the intended curriculum and taught curriculum. What actually happens in the remote sites? How do students learn a new language without the teacher physically present in the classroom? How do the remote site cultural dynamics impact student learning? All of these issues will be explored in this study to understand the "learned curriculum" from students' perspective. The fourth layer is the tested curriculum, which "measures" students' absorption of that specific sub-set of curriculum material. Traditionally, tested curriculum refers to the paper-and-pencil tests that students take in school; how much students have learned is reflected through test scores. However, within a blended environment, assessment can be conducted in new ways. In this study, the researcher will explore how a blended environment allows for new types of assessment and how teachers and students view these assessments based on their experiences.

In summary, according to Cuban (1995), curriculum is a four-layered structure, and there is no one unvarnished curriculum. Investigating the four curriculum layers within an existing blended language program will provide multiple perspectives on the phenomena of blended language learning.

Research Questions

Based on Cuban's (1995) multi-layered curriculum framework and the findings from the pilot study, the following research questions were developed to guide the current study:

Question 1: What are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? How are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?

Question 2: How is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? How do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

Question 3: How is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? How do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

Question 4: How is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? How do teachers and students view different types of assessment in a blended context?

Question 5: Is there congruency among the four curriculum layers? If not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design?

The following figure provides a conceptual framework that supports the research question.

Synchronous instruction

Asynchronous instruction

Face-to-face instruction

The Blended Language Program

Intended curriculum

Taught curriculum

Learned curriculum

Tested curriculum
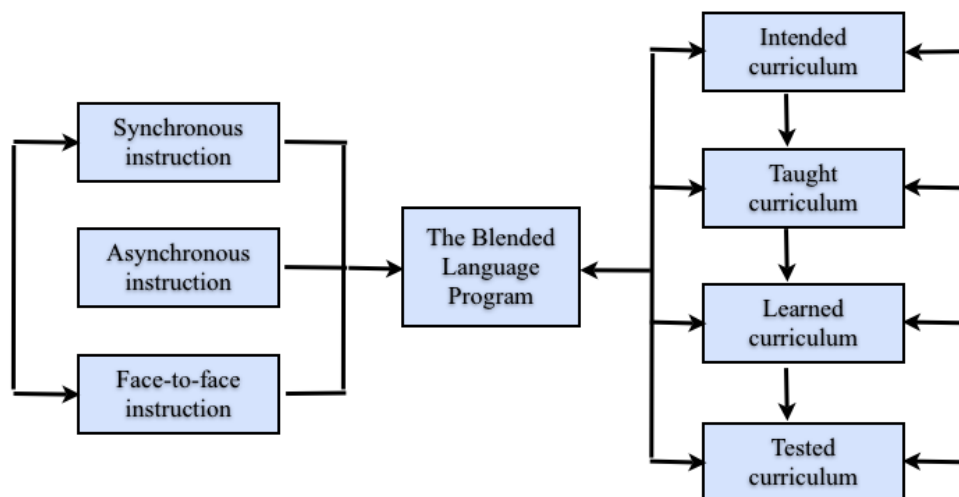
Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework of the Research Topic

Significance of the Study

According to ACTFL's (1999), the communication goal is at the heart of second language study and it encompasses the other four goals (Connections, Comparisons, Cultures and Communities). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of a second/foreign language that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. The purpose of this approach is for students to be able to use their communicative competence to communicate in real situations.

For language teachers, a blended learning approach can enrich the curriculum and let students' learning experiences go beyond the physical classroom. For example, using authentic videos that are available online to introduce the target culture, integrating Web 2.0 tools to connect language learners with native speakers, or developing individualized language form exercises for students to work on outside class, so the valuable classroom time can focus on communicative learning activities. For students, a blended model provides opportunities for them to practice the language in their own time and at their own pace. They can choose their preferred

ways to participate in class discussion. For example, not all of the students like to participate in classroom discussion or present their opinions in public, and the online discussion forum provides a good opportunity for those "shy" students to present themselves and participate. For language institutions, the motivation for promoting blended learning may be focused on increasing accessibility and cost-effectiveness. The available educational resources for individual school districts across the country can be vastly different, but by making use of technologies with blended learning, educational equality can be delivered to a greater amount of students. A blended class reduces the amount of face-to-face meeting time and replaces it with online learning activities. Therefore, for school districts seeking to offer more foreign language education with limited resources, the cost/benefit of blended learning cannot be discounted.

By investigating the four curriculum layers in a blended language program, as well as analyzing the congruency among the four curriculum layers, this research will provide insights into the design and implementation issues involved in blended language learning from multiple perspectives. For language teachers, understanding students' learning experience in a blended context will give them better insight into engaging students with online tools and the development of teaching strategies to improve blended courses to meet student needs. For language learners, knowing the pedagogical considerations behind the blended course design can help them become aware of the most effective way to participate in different instructional modes and maximize their learning experiences. For administrators, this information will help decide future investment decisions regarding technology, and also aid in the design of online curriculums to meet their practical and pedagogical needs.

Definitions of Terms

Several terms are used in this study and are defined here:

Asynchronous: Refers to digital communication in which there is no timing requirement for transmission of information between computers or individuals (email is an example).

Blended Learning: A method of course delivery, which is a combination of face-to-face instruction and online learning.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL): The search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning.

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): All electronic communication between human beings via the instrumentality of computers.

Distance Education: A method of course delivery in which the student and teacher are separated by time and space.

Face-to-Face: Students and teacher are in the same place at the same time.

Learning Management System (LMS): A learning management system is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of e-learning education courses or training programs.

Online: A term referring to the period when a computer is linked to a server connected to the Internet.

Synchronous: Communication which is transmitted at the same time. Videoconferencing would be an example.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate language teaching and learning in a blended context, and this chapter will review the critical theories and research literature supporting this study. This chapter can be divided into five sections. The first section discusses blended learning in general, including the definition of blended learning, characteristics of blended learning, different forms of blended learning and previous studies on blended learning. The second section discusses the theory and application of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). This section will explore different types of CALL as well as learning theories related to CALL. The third section discusses computer-mediated communication (CMC), including characteristics of asynchronous CMC and synchronous CMC, as well as the social presence theory behind different forms of CMC. The fourth section explains why it is necessary to implement blended learning in a foreign language program through discussing conditions for effective language learning. This section also provides some guidelines for effective blended language course design. The fifth section discusses Larry Cuban's multi-layered curriculum framework.

Blended Learning

The Definition of Blended Learning

The three commonly mentioned definitions of blended learning, documented by Graham (2005), are: (1) combining instructional modalities (or delivery media); (2) combining instructional methods; (3) combining online and face-to-face instruction. The first two definitions are not adopted in this study, because most learning systems today involve multiple instructional methods and multiple delivery medias. The third definition more accurately reflects

the historical emergence of blended learning. In this study, blended learning is defined as follows: blended learning is the combination of face-to-face instruction and online learning.

The definition of blended learning looks apparent and simple, but the practical application is more complex. The first issue with this definition is how to combine the face-to-face instruction with online learning. The second issue is what the appropriate configuration is: 10% online, 90% classroom? Or 30% online, 70% face-to-face? Or 50% online, 50% workshop? Cross (2005), who served as a CEO of eLearning Forum, stated that all of the above ratios are not useful blends, because they "oversimplified the concept of blended learning". Blended learning is not as simple as a "face-to-face class + online learning = blended learning" equation, and it involves the redesign of the whole teaching and learning structure. The online learning experience in blended learning is not an addition to the face-to-face experience, it is a "fundamental redesign that transforms the structure of, and approach to, teaching and learning" (Garrison, 2008). Take the usage of the Learning Management System (LMS) as an example. Some instructors only use a small portion of LMS feature, such as uploading materials for students to read before the classes start. In this case, the LMS is only used for purposes of convenience, and it doesn't change the course design. Without LMS, the teacher can still print out the reading materials and give them to students during the face-to-face meeting, and the structure of the course still remains the same. However, some other instructors fully integrate the LMS features into their curriculum; they upload lesson tutorials online, they discuss questions with students through online forums, they provide wikis to allow students to collaborate with each other, and they may also invite guest speakers to present a speech through video conferencing. In this case, the structure of the course is significantly different from the traditional class, and the online session has become an essential part of the students' learning experience.

Dziuban (2004) stated that the definition of blended learning is not "a ratio of delivery modalities"; it should be viewed as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness of online learning and socialization opportunities of face-to-face instruction. Garrison (2009) also stated that "the important distinguishing feature of blended learning concerns the pedagogical possibilities created for specific purposes through the creative integration of face-to- face and online learning". Therefore, blended learning is not focused on the "enabling technology"; rather, it is more about expanding the educational possibilities that technology afford.

What Blended Learning Look Like in American Schools

Along with the rapid development of educational technologies, especially the use of internet and web-based communication, turning to blended learning is currently the new trend in American schools. According to Graham (2006), in the future, blended learning "may even become so ubiquitous that we will eventually drop the word blended and just call it learning" Therefore, what will differentiate institutions from one another will not be whether they have blended learning but rather how they integrate the blending and where they fall on the blended learning spectrum (Ross & Gage, 2006)

Graham (2006) identified four levels of blended learning: activity level, course level, program level, or institutional level. Blending at the activity level occurs when a learning activity contains both face-to-face and computer-mediated elements. Course-level blending entails a combination of distinct face-to-face and computer-mediated activities used as part of a course. Blending at a program level often entails one of two models: a model in which the participants choose a mix between face-to-face courses and online courses or one in which the combination between the two is prescribed by the program. Blended at institutional level occurs when the

institutions have made an organizational commitment to blending face-to-face and computer-mediated instruction.

Today in higher education, there are three major flavors of blended learning: technology-enhanced, hybrid or reduced seat-time, and blended degree programs. Technology-enhanced courses combined an online component with the traditional course without changing the amount of time that students spend face-to-face with instructions. Hybrid class reduces the amount of face-to-face and in-class time and replaces it with online learning activities. A blended program means that a student is not a "traditional student" or "online student" but has the freedom to choose from all types of courses to earn a degree (Ross & Gage, 2006).

In 2011, the Innosight Institute reported a research study that investigated 40 organizations' blended learning programs. Based on the way that students experienced their learning across several dimensions, including teacher roles, scheduling, physical space, and delivery methods, the report generalized six basic models of blended learning (Horn & Staker, 2011):

- **Face-to-Face Driver.** The physical teacher integrates online learning as a supplement to traditional face-to-face instruction

- **Rotation.** Students rotate on a fixed schedule between learning online and traditional face-to-face instruction

- **Flex.** The flex model features an online platform that delivers most of the curricula. Teachers provide on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis.

- **Online Lab.** The program relies on an online platform to deliver the entire course, but in a brick-and-mortar lab environment.

- **Self-Blend.** Students choose to take one or more courses online to supplement their traditional school's catalog. This model is very common among American high school students.

- **Online Driver.** The online-driver model involves an online platform and a teacher that delivers all curricula. Students work remotely for the most part. Face-to-face check-ins are sometimes optional, and at other times required.

Why Blended Learning

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) identified the following six reasons for using blended learning: (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost-effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision Of these six reasons, Graham, Allen and Ure (2003, 2005) found that blended learning was primarily implemented for the reasons of (1) improved pedagogy, (2) increased access and flexibility, and (3) increased cost-effectiveness.

Dziuban (2005) points out that blended courses benefit the institution, the students, and the faculty in numerous ways. Blended course benefit the institution through reducing the use of classroom time, so more course sections can be scheduled into the same classroom. By providing increased choice and flexibility for students in the way that courses and entire programs are delivered, institutions can expand educational access to more students and increase enrollments. This accessibility and flexibility characteristic of blended learning benefits a large number of non-traditional students who need to balance family, jobs, and university life. Without the flexibility, they may not otherwise be able to pursue their degrees. Faculty members also learn instructional design and technology through participation in designing an online course, and it is helpful for their professional development.

Besides taking the accessibility and flexibility feature from online learning, blended learning also has its unique pedagogical effectiveness. A blended model caters to students who prefer face-to-face interaction in addition to students who prefer online learning. Not all of the students like to participate in classroom discussion or present their opinions in public. Some students are more comfortable communicating with their professors in a digital format via e-mail or online discussion posts. Researchers also found that the written discussions are more thoughtful than oral discussion, because students have more time to think about the questions and provide evidences to support their claims. Caverly and MacDonald (1999) stated that "threaded discussion groups foster higher-level thinking and independence as students collect, evaluate, and create their own learning spaces". The Web 2.0 collaboration tools, such as wiki and blog, also provide a good platform for students to collaborate with each other to work on a group project. Traditional methods such as group discussion are restricted by classroom setting; however, these web 2.0 collaboration tools are not limited by space, and they are convenient for students to collaborate with each other outside the classroom.

Previous Studies on Blended Learning

The existing literature on blended learning can be categorized into three different themes. First, researchers compare three different course delivery methods and investigate what is the most effective one. Comparing three different delivery methods has been well studied in both K-12 and university level courses. Some studies have found evidence to support blended learning in terms of learning outcome, and the results indicate that blended learning is more effective than either an exclusive face-to-face or online learning method (U.S Department of Education, 2009; Collopy, 2009; Dowling, 2003; O'Toole, 2003, Riffell, 2004). A few studies found negative results of blended learning in terms of students' satisfaction with the course, and these studies

suggested that students in the traditional face-to-face courses are more satisfied with their learning experience (Utts, 2003; Priluck, 2004). Second, researchers studied learner and instructional variables and investigate their impact on blended learning. Some studies examined the learner variables, including students' age, gender, learning styles, and learners' self-regulation (Lim, 2009; Akkoyunlu, 2008; Dziuban, 2005); some others studied instructional variables, including teaching strategies and technology components (Frazee, 2003; Cox, 2004; Cameron, 2003). Most of these studies used quantitative methods and focused on how different variables influence learning outcome. Third, researchers explore different types of blended learning courses and their effect on student learning. Charles D. Dziuban (2004) examined the three modalities (Web-enhanced, mixed-mode and fully Web-based) of distributed learning at the University of Central Florida, and the findings indicate significant growth accompanied by high faculty and student satisfaction. The report *The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning* published by Innosight Institute, studied 40 organizations that implemented blended learning and generalized six blended learning models based on students' learning experiences (Horn & Staker, 2011).

Most of the studies on blended learning are quantitative based; therefore, what teachers and students experienced in different instructional modes and how they perceive these instructional modes are unknown. Qualitative studies asking teachers and students' experiences and perceptions toward blended learning are needed. Qualitative research "attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participant's perspective" (Merriam, 2002). A qualitative study on blended learning can provide administrators a "richly descriptive" picture of teachers and students' experiences in a blended context, so they can gain a better perspective into the design and implementation issues of blended language learning.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

From the old style audiotape-based language lab to today's web 2.0 communication tools, integrating technology in language teaching and learning has been a popular topic in the recent research studies, including technology innovation and CALL research (Zhao, 2003). The term computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is defined by Levy as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997). Since the early 1960s, along with the development of learning theories, there have been dramatic changes in the ways that languages are taught, and these changes have been characterized as a shift from structural to communicative perspectives on language teaching (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Based on their underlying pedagogical and methodological approaches, Warschauer (2000) identified three historical phases of CALL: structural CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Charles Crook (1994) vividly described these three different types of computer-based educational activities with three metaphors: a tutorial metaphor (computer-as-tutor), a construction metaphor (computer-as-pupil), and a toolbox metaphor (computer-as-tool).

Structural Approaches to CALL (computer-as-tutor)

From the 1950s to the 1970s, CALL programs were designed based on a behaviorist approach to learning, and this approach still influences some of the current CALL programs. Behavioral theorists mainly focus on observable indications of learning and what those observations could imply for teaching. They believe that internal responses which mediate our observable responses can be changed, and learning is the acquisition of new behavior through conditioning. Therefore, for behavioral theorists, the purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities, but to bring about significant changes in the students' pattern of behaviors. Language teaching during this time emphasized the formal analysis of the system

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of structures that make up a given language. In the behaviorists' view, language learning is habit-formation. Therefore, to prevent making bad habits, mistakes are bad and should be avoided (Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

Audio-lingual method was widely used during this time. The audio-lingual method required teachers to check students' language performance constantly, and provide positive feedback while students correctly use the grammar pattern, and when they use the pattern incorrectly, they would receive negative feedback. The same methodology was applied in the design of the CALL programs. To provide additional drill and practice opportunities for students, behavioristic CALL programs are commonly used as a supplement to classroom instruction and learning, where computer presents a stimulus to which the learner had to provide a response. According to Warschauer (1996), there are three major rationales underlying behavioristic CALL:

- repeatedly presenting the same material to students can be a major benefit for their learning
- the computer, unlike a teacher, can implement drills repeatedly and give feedback immediately
- the computer can allow students to learn at their own pace.

The self-paced learning features still have a big influence on the current CALL programs. According to Bloom (1974), if given the right conditions and enough time, all of the students can succeed in learning. Students of lesser aptitude can be given more time and more feedback to process the learning materials. CALL programs can make learning individualized, so students can process the content at their own pace. Today many foreign language textbook publishers include a learning DVD or online learning website login in their hard copy textbook; in that way

students can have extensive individualized language practice sessions after they learn new knowledge from regular face-to-face language class. The online grading system can also help teachers to keep student records and to manage students' progress.

Cognitive/Constructive Approaches to CALL (computer-as-pupil)

Behaviorism was criticized by many educational researchers for being too dependent on overt behavior to explain learning. Cognitive theorist claimed that not all learning is observable and that there is more to learning than a change in behavior. Cognitive theorist view learning as an internal process and it involves the use of memory, motivation, thinking, and reflection. While cognitive theorists focus on what was going on inside the human brain, constructive theorists are more interested in how knowledge gets into the brain. Constructivists see learners as being active rather than passive, for them the best way for students to learn is by having them actively construct their own knowledge instead of passively receiving the information from the instructor. The constructivist model calls for learner-centered instruction. The learner plays an active role in the learning process and the role of the teacher is that of the facilitator.

Under the influence of cognitive and constructive theories, behavioristic approaches to language teaching were being rejected at both the theoretical and pedagogical level. The audio-lingual method, which is based on behaviorism, was also criticized for over-emphasis on repetition and accuracy, and ultimately did not help students achieve communicative competence in the target language. Noam Chomsky (1959) pointed out that a model based on imitation and habit formation can't explain language competence, because a language speaker can produce an infinite number of well-formed utterances. Chomsky's theory shifted language teaching goals from forming accurate language habits to fostering learners' mental construction of a second language system. Language instruction has also been shifted from explicit focus on grammar

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rules to emphasis in providing comprehensible input (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Comprehensible input is language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it. It is described as one level above that of the learners if it can only just be understood. According to Krashen (1987), if a learner's current language ability is at level "i", then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to comprehensible input that belongs to level "i + 1", therefore, giving learners this kind of input helps them acquire language naturally, rather than learn it consciously. Krashen's hypotheses have influenced language education in the past two decades, but they have also received criticisms such as a concern that the hypotheses are untestable, and the separation between acquisition and learning does not in fact exist (McLaughlin, 1990).

Cognitive and constructive theories stressed that learning was a process of discovery, expression, and development. Therefore, the design of the CALL programs during this time also favored a learner centered, explorative approach rather than a teacher-centered, drill-based approach. Popular CALL programs included courseware that provided skill practice for language learners, such as paced reading and text reconstruction programs, and simulations which stimulated discussion and discovery among students working in pairs or groups. One of the typical examples of CALL during this time is the multimedia videodisc program *Á la rencontre de Philippe,* developed by Athena Language Learning Project at MIT Laboratory for Advanced Technology in Humanities. This CALL application incorporates video (filmed in Paris, creating a sense of realism) and story (stimulating the player's interest), allowing intermediate and advanced French learners to walk around and explore simulated environments by following street signs or floor plans (Fuerstenberg, 1993; Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

Sociocognitive Approaches to CALL (computer-as -tool)

Vygotsky (1978) expanded the constructivist leaning theory by arguing that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. In his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky proposed that humans use language to communicate with other people to share experiences and to construct knowledge from those people in a society. Therefore, for social constructivists, the learning process takes place when learners are involved in social interaction. This viewpoint has influenced foreign language learning theoretically and practically. In the 1970s, Dell Hymes (1971) coined the term "communicative competence" and defined it as "a knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and social meaning of language". Savignon (1983) developed the definition of communicative competence from an interactional approach, and defined communicative competence as a dynamic, interpersonal construct that can be examined only by means of the overt performance of two or more individuals in the process of communication. Canale and Swain (1980) believe that what is needed to be taught was not just grammatical competence, but also sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. While cognitive theorists consider language as a private, "in the head" affair, social constructive theorists think language is a socially constructed phenomena; and language instruction is not just about providing comprehensive input, but giving students practice in the kinds of communication they will later engage in outside the classroom.

With an emphasis on meaning and communication, and a goal to develop learners' communicative competence, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach evolved as a popular language teaching method and gradually replaced the previous grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method (Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). CLT is a learner-centered approach, and the purpose of CLT is for students to be able to use their

communicative competence to communicate in real situations. In the book *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Douglas Brown (2007) described four interconnected characteristics of CLT:

- Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of CC (communicative competence) and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
- Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complimentary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
- In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

The Communicative Language Teaching approach was recognized and promoted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a national membership organization dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of languages at all levels of instruction. In 1999 ACTFL published *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, known as "The Five Cs", to describe the five goal areas for 21st century foreign language learners to develop their language competence (ACTFL, 1999):

Communication: communicate in languages other than English.

- *Standard 1.1:* Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

- *Standard 1.2:* Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

- *Standard 1.3:* Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures: gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures

- *Standard 2.1:* Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

- *Standard 2.2:* Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: connect with other disciplines and acquire information available only in the target language.

- *Standard 3.1:* Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

- *Standard 3.2:* Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons: develop insight into the nature of both the target and native language and culture.

- *Standard 4.1:* Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

- ***Standard 4.2:*** Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities: participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

- ***Standard 5.1:*** Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

- ***Standard 5.2:*** Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

In the ACTFL's five Cs standards, communication is at the heart of second language study. The communication standard stresses the use of language for communication in real life situations. It emphasizes "what students can do with language" rather than "what they know about language." Nowadays ACTFL and 5C standards have been widely applied in American schools and play a leading role in foreign language education.

To meet the needs of communicative language teaching, the design of CALL programs has shifted from learners' interaction with computers to interaction with other humans via the computer. Just like what Crook (1994) had pointed out, computer at this time plays a role as a tool that facilitates communication between humans and extends the classroom to the outside world The usage of Web 2.0 tools break the traditional brick-and-mortar walls in the language classroom, reducing the gap between classroom learning and real world practice. With Web 2.0 tools, students can easily communicate with native speakers in order to learn the target language in an authentic and meaningful context. Some language institutions have built cross-cultural projects, so students from different cultures can cooperate together and learn the authentic language and culture from their international partners. For example, in 2009 the University of Oregon developed *My China Village Virtual Chinese Immersion Camp* in Second Life, which is a 3D virtual world, to provide students with opportunities to immerse themselves in the Chinese

culture and interact with native speakers. During this month-long virtual camp, 7 Chinese

learners from the U.S and 16 Chinese students from Su Zhou University in China Teaching

Chinese as a Foreign Language program explored different environmental issues and performed

tasks by communicating only in Chinese (http://casls.uoregon.edu).

Summary

In conclusion, the computer plays multiple roles in language teaching and learning. These

trends can be summarized as follows:

- Structural approaches to CALL: to provide unlimited drill, practice, tutorial

  explanation, and corrective feedback.

- Cognitive/constructive approaches CALL: to provide language input and analytic and

  inferential tasks.

- Socio-cognitive approaches CALL: to provide alternative contexts for social

  interaction; to facilitate access to existing discourse communities and the creation of

  new ones (Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

The historical development of CALL has demonstrated that it is not the computer itself that

determines the pedagogical outcome, but the specific focus of the theoretical approach on the

language teaching and learning. According to Price (1987), different methodological approaches

favor the use of one medium (such as using computers) over another. In a meta-analysis study,

Yong Zhao (2003) examined 156 peer-reviewed articles from 1997 to 2001 and categorized the

technology applications in language education into four groups, which include: (1) access to

linguistic and cultural materials; (2) communication opportunities; (3) feedback; and (4) learner

motivation. The research findings implicate that technology can have a positive effect on

language learning when used properly. To fully take advantage of the power of available

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technologies, technology capacities need to be translated into pedagogical solutions and realized in the forms of curriculum, instead of individual tools that are only used as a supplement to a primarily print-material-based curriculum. Presently, CALL is now assuming a blended composition. This move to a blended model is supported by research, learning theories, as well by actual classroom experiences. In this blended model, multimedia computers are used to provide necessary optimal input and practice activities, and classrooms provide the necessary human interaction that allows socialization opportunities for students.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

From the perspective of Vygotsky (1962), social interaction plays an important role in creating an environment to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. Therefore, ways to increase social interaction within and outside the classroom have caught the attention of language educators. Along with the development of the computer and the rapid growth of internet, the practical and pedagogical benefits of computer-mediated communication in second language learning has become one of the most discussed topics in foreign language education.

The term "Computer-mediated communication" (CMC) was first coined by Hiltz and Turoff in 1978 to refer to computer conferencing, and it is originally defined as "the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages" (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978). This technical oriented definition of CMC has been refined by many researchers, and now it commonly refers to all electronic communication between human beings via the instrumentality of computers (Warschauer, 1999). CMC can be text-based (e.g., email, blog, Wiki), audio-based

(e.g., audiotape, voice-board, voice-chat), video-based (e.g., videotape, podcast, videoconferencing), or the combination of all three. CMC can be one to one, one to many, or many to many; and it can be learner to learner, learner to instructor, or learner to native speaker. CMC can be time and place dependent or independent. Based on whether it supports real time communication, CMC was conventionally divided into two basic modes: asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC) or synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC).

Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (ACMC)

ACMC refers to digital communication in which there is no timing requirement for transmission of information between computers or individuals. By asynchronous it is understood that interaction occurs at different times, not in real time. There are many distance classes using entirely asynchronous instructional modes, where students can access the learning materials at their own pace, controlling the pace of information. Some commonly used asynchronous medias include e-mail, bulletin boards, blogs, Wiki, voice board, podcaster, etc.

Asynchronous communication also allows more time for considered opinions, therefore it is able to promote high-level, in-depth interaction through reflection (Feenberg, 1989). In the book *How We Think*, John Dewey (1933) considered reflection as a critical component of learning, stating, "we do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience". The reflection feature of ACMC has been widely studied by many educational researchers. Caverly and MacDonald (1999) stated that "threaded discussion groups foster higher-level thinking and independence as students collect, evaluate, and create their own learning spaces". ACMC can also benefit slow and shy responders from an equalizing effect that derives from being able to control the pace of one's interaction and communication (Ortega, 1997). Gonzalez-Bueno (1998)

found that using e-mail in and out of foreign language classroom promotes more student-initiated interactions. Some ACMC tools such as e-mail and blogs have been commonly used in language programs to develop students' reading and writing skills. Researchers found that learners engaging in asynchronous interaction have more time for planning and more opportunities to monitor their writing and to edit their spelling and grammar (Sotillo, 2000). Mason (1998) pointed out four advantages of asynchronous media and arranged them in the following descending order of significance:

- flexibility: access to the teaching material (e.g., through Web, or computer conference discussions) can take place at any time and from many locations.
- time to reflect: rather than having to react "on one's feet", asynchronous systems allow the learner time to mull over ideas, check references, refer back to previous messages and take any amount of time to prepare a comment.
- situated learning: because the technology allows access from home and work, the learner can easily integrate the ideas being discussed on the course with the working environment, or access resources on the Internet as required on the job.
- cost-effective technology: text based asynchronous systems require little bandwidth and low end computers to operate; thus access, particularly global access, is more equable .

ACMC benefits teachers and students in numerous ways, but some challenges of using ACMC tools have also been reported by researchers. Dede and Kremer (1999) concluded that asynchronous discussion provided "richer, more inclusive types of interchange", but required more time and provided less social interaction than synchronous chat. Zsohar and Smith (2008) pointed out three disadvantages of using asynchronous learning, which include: loss of direct personal contact such as eye contact or facial expression, loss of spontaneity when responding to

questions and limitations to the type of discussion faculty can pose. In an asynchronous instructional mode, students feel distant or separated from their teachers or peers, and the disconnected feeling may cause lack of motivation. Besides, asynchronous learning is heavily dependent on students' self-regulation, and for students who are not really into self-motivated learning, it becomes very easy to put off doing course work.

Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (SCMC)

SCMC is a real time, online telecommunication system which combines text, audio and video functions so that interlocutors can communicate and interact with each other through a computer and the Internet. In a synchronous instructional mode, lectures, discussions, and presentations occur at a specific time, and it requires all students and instructors to participate simultaneously. Some commonly used synchronous communication tools include text chat (instant messaging), audio chat (telephone), video conferencing, shared whiteboards, and etc.

Traditionally, students learn the knowledge content by interacting with their teachers in a physical classroom setting. The innovation of SCMC has brought new learning possibilities for students to have real time communication with their teachers and peers, regardless of time and geographic boundaries. SCMC involving text, sound, and video allows communicators to experience the context that is similar to face-to-face interactions in the real world. Compared with ACMC, SCMC has the advantages of providing a greater sense of presence and generating spontaneity (Hines & Pearl, 2004). In the book, *Globalising Education: Trends and Applications*, Mason (1998) also described four advantages of synchronous systems, which include:

- motivation: synchronous systems focus the energy of the group, providing motivation to distance learners to keep up with their peers and continue with their studies.

- telepresence: real time interaction, with its opportunity to convey tone and nuance, helps to develop group cohesion and the sense of being part of a learning community.

- good feedback: synchronous systems provide quick feedback on ideas and support consensus and decision making in group activities, both of which enliven distance education.

- pacing: synchronous events encourage students to keep up-to-date with the course and provide a discipline to learning, which helps people to priorities their studies.

Besides the above four advantages, another significant advantage of SCMC in foreign language education observed by researchers was that learners tended to produce more target language output in SCMC than in normal classroom settings. Learners' language output was widely examined in text-based SCMC, which is commonly referred to as "chat". For example, Kelm (1992) used intermediate Portuguese learners' computer-mediated chat messages for a grammar review and found that SCMC was useful in developing students' linguistic accuracy. In a later study of a second-semester French course, Kern(1995) noted that foreign language students communicate more in SCMC environments than they do in large groups in face-to-face classrooms. Kern's finding was also supported by Chun's study of fourth-semester German students. Chun (1994) found that students' use of SCMC promoted increased morphological complexity. Oral interaction via audio chat and videoconferencing tools were also investigated by some researchers. For example, Blake (2005) analyzed the transcripts of a first-year language student's interactions with the course instructor via a bimodal (sound and text) CMC tool that allows exchanges in both synchronous and asynchronous format, and found that the student actively participated in negotiation of meaning and repaired her language errors.

Communication can be characterized in different ways. The approach suggested by ACTFL (2012) is to recognize three "communicative modes" that place primary emphasis on the context and purpose of the communication. These three modes of communication are:

- **Interpersonal.** The interpersonal mode is characterized by active negotiation of meaning among individuals. Participants observe and monitor one another to see how their meaning and intentions are being communicated. Adjustments and clarifications can be made accordingly.

- **Interpretive.** The interpretive mode is focused on the appropriate cultural interpretation of meanings that occur in written and spoken form where there is no recourse to the active negotiation of meaning with the writer or the speaker.

- **Presentational.** The presentational mode refers to the creation of messages in a manner that facilities interpretation by members of the other culture where no direct opportunity for active negotiation of meaning between members of the two cultures exists.

Among the three modes of communication, it is the interpersonal mode facilitated by SCMC. The integration of SCMC tools in foreign language classrooms facilitates negotiation of meaning, regardless of time and geographic boundaries.

Yuping Wang and Nian-Shing Chen (2007) investigated a distance Chinese program supported by synchronous learning management systems, in which students can have real-time audio and video interaction with their language teacher and peers. The researchers found that all participants welcomed synchronous learning with enthusiasm. This positive experience not only increased students' confidence in language learning, but also brought a sense of connectedness among the students.

There are many advantages of SCMC, but teachers and students also encounter some technical and pedagogical challenges in a pure synchronous instructional mode. For example, lacking of time flexibility, students must participate at the time and date selected by the instructor. If teachers and students are in different time zones, there might be more scheduling issues. Lee (2007) also pointed out some pedagogical challenges for implementing SCMC in language education; for example, compared with face-to-face classes, it is hard for language teachers to see learners' facial expressions and body languages in the SCMC mode. Therefore, instructors cannot tell if the student is really following along and it also brought difficulties for the language teachers to critique and correct students.

Social Presence Theory

Social presence refers to the feeling of being together, of social interaction with a virtual or remotely located communication partner. The social presence theory was originally developed by Short, Williams, and Christie in 1976 to explain the effect telecommunications media can have on communication. According to Short *et. al*,(1976), communication media differs in their degree of social presence and that these differences play an important role in how people interact. For example, some media like video has a higher degree of social presence when compared to media like audio and text, which has a lower degree of social presence. Intimacy and immediacy are the two important factors that affect social presence. On a continuum of social presence, the face-to-face medium is considered to have the most social presence, and written, text-based communication the least.

Social presence has received increasing attention in distance education research and has been examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. Most studies of social presence in online environments focus on participants' perceptions (Tu, 2002). For example, Gunawardena and

Zittle (1997) noted that social presence was a strong predictor of student satisfaction. Richardson and Swan (2003) also found that students with high perceptions of social presence had high perceptions of learning and high satisfaction with their instructor.

Distance language educators and researchers have attempted to employ various technologies and instructional strategies to increase students' perceptions of social presence, such as integrating videoconferencing to support real-time communication. However, these SCMC tools cannot satisfy the needs of distance learners in a comprehensive way, and many online programs are still being criticized for their lack of human interaction. For this reason, there has been an increasing movement toward blended learning approaches where students can have opportunities for both online and offline (face-to-face) interaction with their instructors and classmates (Allen & Seaman, 2003). Blended learning has been considered a combination of the effectiveness of online learning (flexibility, accessibility, self-paced, and etc.) and the socialization opportunity of face-to-face interaction.

Implementations of Blended Learning in Foreign Language Programs

Conditions for Effective Language Learning

Learning a foreign language presents different challenges for different people in different contexts. Just like there is no one way to learn a language, there is no one way to teach it (Marsh, 2012). From the previous grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method to today's Communicative Language Teaching approach, language educators and researchers have been seeking ways to improve the quality of foreign language education. Based on research from a variety of literatures, Egbert, Chao, & Hanson- Smith (1999) identified a general list of

conditions for optimal language learning environments, which includes the following eight items:

- Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience.

- Learners are involved in authentic tasks.

- Learners are exposed to and are encouraged to produce varied and creative language.

- Learners have opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning.

- Learners have enough time and feedback.

- Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.

- Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level.

- Learner autonomy is supported.

The above listed conditions are frequently pointed out in the related literature on integrating technology in foreign language education. A technology-rich environment can support all these conditions and thus become an optimal setting for language acquisition, a setting that breaks out of the constricted environment of the typical paper-and-chalkboard classroom (Hanson-Smith & Rilling, 2007).

There are many ways to integrate technology in the language classroom. According to Zhao (2008), a productive approach is to view technology as a tool that enables the conditions for optimal language learning. To fully take advantage of technology, it should not only be used as a supplement to an existing print material based curriculum, but translated into pedagogical solutions and realized in the forms of curriculum (Zhao, 2003). Therefore, blended learning, a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness of online learning and socialization opportunities of face-to-face instruction, becomes a feasible solution for creating an optimal language learning environments for today's language learners (Dziuban, 2004). In the book

Blended Learning: Creating Learning Opportunities for Language Learners, Debra Marsh

(2012) identified the following strengths of blended language instruction:

- provides a more individualized learning experience

- provides more personalized learning support

- supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning

- increases student engagement in learning

- accommodates a variety of learning styles

- provides a place to practice the target language beyond the classroom

- provides a less stressful practice environment for the target language

- provides flexible study, anytime and anywhere, to meet learners' needs

- helps students develop valuable and necessary twenty-first century learning skills

Effective Blended Language Course Design

To provide a guideline for online and face-to-face course design, Garrison and Vaughan (2000) developed the Framework for Community of Inquiry (CoI). The CoI framework represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development of three interdependent elements: social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. Social presence represents a group communication that facilitates collaborative learning, and the community of inquiry will be formed through its presence. Cognitive presence consists of information exchange, connections of ideas, and the creation and testing of the concepts. Teaching presence establishes the reasonable structure and process of the learning and teaching. According to Garrison and Vaughan (2000), the personal educational experience will be enhanced when all teaching, cognitive, and social presences occur at the same time and facilitate each other.

Community of Inquiry

Figure 2.1 The Framework for Community of Inquiry (CoI).

In the article *Blended Learning: Uncovering Its Transformative Potential in Higher Education*, Garrison (2004) stated that "what makes blended learning particularly effective is its ability to facilitate a community of inquiry". A blended environment provides the condition for free and open dialogue, critical debate, and negotiation. For example, in the beginning of a class, it will be easier to build a community through face-to-face contact, but when discussing some complex issues that require reflection, an asynchronous internet discussion forum may work better than face-to-face oral discussion. Garrison (2000) believes "reflection and discourse" are the two most important elements at the heart of a meaningful educational experience, and blended learning design can recognize and maximize such educational experience through: (1) thoughtfully integrating online learning and face-to-face learning for better reflection and discourse; and (2) fundamentally revisiting and rethinking the learning and teaching to optimize students' engagement.

Garrison and Vaughan's Framework for a Community of Inquiry shifted the focus of blended learning from "technology" to "learning", and it can be used as a conceptual tool to help the instructional designers in designing an effective blended course. However, this framework

only provides a guideline for blended course design in general and it is not specifically focused on foreign language education. Foreign language education is distinguished from all other academic subjects due to the social interaction nature. According to Debra Marsh (2012), a good design of blended language course should provide students "an effective and efficient use of classroom time", "increased opportunities for using the target language outside of class", as well as "maximum opportunities for review and recycling for improved learning". In order to help language teachers to create a maximized blended learning experiences for students, Debra Marsh outlined a pathway template and key principles for blended language course design, which include the following four steps:

Table 2.1 A Pathway Template for Blended Language Course Design

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Identify the learning outcomes for your classroom lesson.
FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION **IN CLASS**
2. Identify the activities for student to do **in** class.
Students are prepared online to actively participate in personalized pair- and group-work activities in class.
Student-to-student interaction is maximized in the classroom.
PREPARE FOR CLASS **ONLINE**
3. Identify the activities for students to do online **before** class.
New vocabulary can be introduced and practiced before class.
Students can be prepared for "real-life" native speaker interaction.
Students can develop listening and reading skills in their own time and at their own pace.
REVIEW, EXTEND, AND CONSOLIDATE **ONLINE**
4. Identify the activities for student to do **after** class.
Students can review and consolidate language in their own time and at their own pace.
Students can be motivated and interest can be stimulated through "real-life" online interaction.
Students can develop writing skills in their own time and at their own pace.

The Multi-Layered Curriculum

The complexity of educational programs was reflected in Robert Stake's studies on the connections among antecedents (prior conditions), transactions (processes), and outcomes. In the article *The Countenance of Educational Evaluation*, Robert Stake pointed out that, in formal evaluation activities in education, too little effort is being made to spell out antecedent conditions and classroom transactions, as well as coupling them with the various outcomes. Furthermore, little attempt has been made to measure the match between what an educator intends to do and what he/she does do. According to Stake, the traditional concern of educational-measurement specialists for reliability of individual-student scores and predictive validity is a questionable resource. Thus, he suggested that, curriculum evaluation should emphasize on contingencies among background conditions, classroom activities, and scholastic outcomes rather than individual differences among students (Stake, 1967).

When people use the word *curriculum*, they usually refers to the content chosen to be taught in school, which is the official curriculum, including standards, textbooks, teachers' guidelines and etc. However, according to Larry Cuban (1995), curriculum is a process, not just textbooks and other learning materials. He suggests that there are at least four layers of curriculum that are in use in schools: intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum and tested curriculum.

The first layer is the intended curriculum, which is also called the official curriculum, is what state and district officials set forth in curricular frameworks and courses of study. This is the formal, approved guidelines for teaching content to students that is developed for teachers, and the expectation is that teachers will teach it and that students will learn it. The intended curriculum is often shaped or directed by a nation's goals. For example, the Common Core State

Standards Initiative details what K-12 students should know in English language arts and mathematics at the end of each grade. In the field of foreign language education, the ACTFL 5C standards, which identified communication, cultures, connection, comparison, and community as five goals in foreign language teaching and education, have been widely applied in the K-12 foreign language curriculum and used by teachers, administrators, testers, and policy-makers (ACTFL, 1999). Thus, the official curriculum plays an important role in standardizing the curriculum, and school administrators can use it as management tools to control what is taught.

The second layer is the taught curriculum, which is the curriculum that teachers actually implemented in their classroom. The taught curriculum is a teacher's specific operations of the intended curriculum. The taught curriculum involves the minute-to-minute, and day-to-day events that actually occur in the classroom. While the intended curriculum defines what is supposed to be taught, the taught curriculum is "what teachers, working alone in their rooms, actually choose to teach". Although the intended curriculum defines what teachers are supposed to teach, teachers' choice about what to teach and how to present the curriculum are influence by many variables. These variables may include their knowledge of the subject, their experiences in teaching the content, their affection or dislike for topics, and their attitudes toward the students they face daily. Thus, even the teachers in the same building teach different versions of the same course. According to Cuban (1995), the official curriculum and the taught curriculum may overlap in certain key topics and the same textbook, but can differ substantially in actual subject matter and daily lessons.

The third layer is the learned curriculum, which is the curriculum that students take away from the class. While the intended curriculum defines what is supposed to be taught and the taught curriculum defines what teachers choose to teach, the learned curriculum is the knowledge

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and skills students actually acquire from the class. According to Cuban (1995), the learned curriculum overlaps with but differs significantly from the intended curriculum and the taught curriculum. Educators always try to establish desired learning outcomes in advance of teaching and assess student performance afterward. However, beyond the content learning that reflected by test scores, students also learn many unspecified lessons embedded in the environment of the classroom; they pick up information that is not included in the intended curriculum, and teachers may not even aware they are teaching. For example, in addition to the information and concepts from the lessons, students may also copy their teacher's habit, imitate teacher's attitude, or pick up ideas from their classmates. Thus, the learned curriculum is much more inclusive than the overtly taught curriculum.

The forth layer is the tested curriculum, which is the assessments that developed by administrators and teachers to determine if students learning have met the curriculum goal. The tested curriculum aims to measure students' absorption of a specific sub-set of curriculum materials. Traditionally, the tested curriculum refers to the paper-and pencil tests that student take in school; how much students have learned is reflected through test scores. However, according to Cuban (1995), what students learn does not exactly mirror what is in the tested curriculum; the tested curriculum is a limited part of what is intended by policy makers, taught by teachers, and learned by students.

In summary, according to Cuban (1995), curriculum is a four-layered structure, and there is no one unvarnished curriculum. By investigating the four curriculum layers in a blended language program, as well as analyzing the congruency among the four curriculum layers, this research will provide insights into the design and implementation issues involved in blended language learning from multiple perspectives.

Summary

In the current literature, improved pedagogy is the most common reason for implementing blended learning: BL overcomes the disadvantages of traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning by combining the best components from both worlds. However, the precondition for this to happen is a good design of the blended course. Just like Graham (2005) pointed out, a blended learning environment can also mix the least effective elements of both worlds if it is not designed well. Therefore, for administrators, before making a decision on technology investment or innovating a blended curriculum, it is very necessary to observe the design and development process of existing BL programs. Learning experiences in existing blended language programs is not only important to improve the current practice but also crucial for establishing new programs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to expand the understanding of the design and implementation issues of blended language learning by investigating the four curriculum layers-intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum, in a blended language program, as well as the congruency among these four curriculum layers. In order to achieve this purpose, qualitative research methodology using a case study approach was employed in this study, as it enables to be situated in a naturalistic environment and also provides a holistic understanding of the context and the relationship between the participants in the said blended language program. The following section will discuss research sites, research questions, research design, study participant identification and selection, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Research Site

The blended language program explored in this study is a federally funded two-week summer language institute designed to give high school students a jump-start into the study of Chinese language. Fifty-five high school students from eight different school districts across 4 Midwestern states enrolled in this blended language class. Twelve native Chinese teachers participated in teaching the language course, working full time at the teaching site located in a Midwestern city. In each remote site (i.e. the students' own school districts), a facilitator was physically present in the classroom, and his/her role was to help the distance language teacher in managing the physical classroom. This blended language program used three different instructional modes: synchronous instruction via videoconferencing technology, asynchronous

instruction via CourseSites learning management system, and face-to-face instruction. Students attended eight days of distance classes at remote sites. Each day they had three synchronous classes taught by native Chinese teachers via IDL videoconferencing technology (Interactive Distance learning), and one asynchronous class supported by CourseSites web software(?). After the eight-days of distance classes, students took a two-day field trip with their classroom facilitators to the teaching site to participate in various face-to-face language and cultural activities organized by the language institute. Figure 3.1 presents the basic structure of the blended language program:
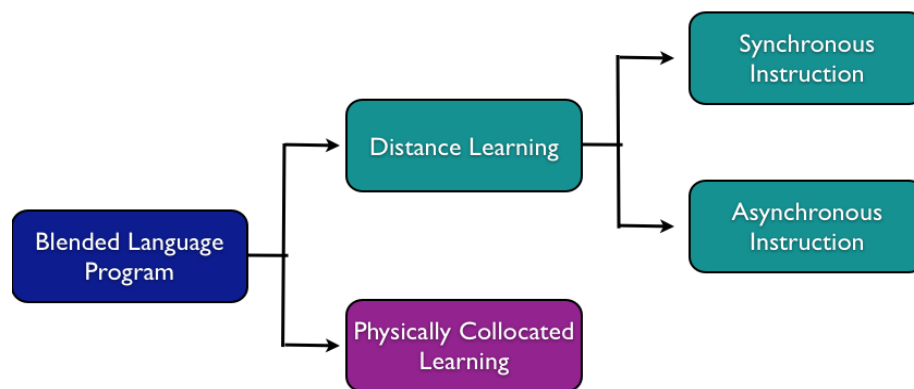
Figure 3.1: The Basic Structure of the Blended Language Program

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? How are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?

2. How is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? How do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

3. How is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? How do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

4. How is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? How do teachers and students view different types of assessment in a blended context?

5. Is there congruency among the four curriculum layers? If not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design?

Research Design

A qualitative case study methodology was used in this study because rather than testing theoretically derived hypotheses, the researcher is more interested in exploring the nature of blended learning phenomena in an existing foreign language education program. As defined by Creswell, qualitative study is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research "attempts to understand and make sense of phenomena from the participant's perspective" (Merriam, 2002). In this study, through investigating administrator, teacher and student's experiences in a blended language program, the researcher will be able to understand the phenomena of blended learning from multiple perspectives.

This study is particularly suitable for a case study design because it is a bounded system, it is contextual, and it is the study of a process (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the boundaries were defined as the beginning and end of the high school blended Chinese language program. Rather than examining student learning outcome or investigating a specific technology

integration instance, this study focused on the teaching and learning process in a blended context. Through investigating how the language curriculum was designed, taught, learned and tested in a blended program, the researcher explored the phenomena of blended language learning in an in-depth, holistic way. In addition, this study is an instrumental case study in terms of having a specific intent. Understanding the four different curriculum layers and the congruency among these layers in this particular blended language program can contribute to the understanding of the nature of blended learning design and implementation in foreign language education.

In order to gain rich and detailed data embedded in context and the information needed to answer the research questions, this study collected data through a variety of techniques, including interviews, observations, and document review. Collecting data from various sources also allowed for triangulation, which guarded the trustworthiness of this study.

Study Participant Identification and Selection

The participants in this research are classified into 4 categories as shown in Table 3.1, including administrators, language teachers, facilitators, and high school students. After an initial series of recruitment attempts, one administrator, eight language teachers, four facilitators, and twelve high school students agreed to participate in this research.

Table 3.1: Interview Participants

Sample Categories	Number of Participants
Administrator	1
Language teachers	8
Facilitators	4
High school students	12

Administrator

One administrator from the blended language program took part in this research: the program director. The program director was actively involved through the initial design to the actual implementation of the blended language program. She had been in charge of the blended language program for five years when the research began. During that time, she performed a variety of important duties including overall project management, budgetary management, curriculum development and supervision of instruction. The researcher approached the program director through personal contact. In this study, the program director was interviewed twice (once before the program started and once at the end of the program) to obtain information related to curriculum design and implementation.

Teacher

Twelve native speakers of Chinese teachers participated in teaching the language course, working full time at the teaching site located in a Midwestern city. All of the teachers were visiting scholars from a university in central China, with a degree in language education and at least two years experiences in teaching Chinese as a second language. They all have received training from the language institute and the State Department of Education, which included: foreign language pedagogy, the national and state standards, and IDL pedagogical practice. Language teachers were approached through personal contact and their participation in the research was voluntary. In this study, 8 language teachers participated in interviews during the week after the program ended.

Student

Fifty-five high school students enrolled in this blended language program, most of them having no experience in Chinese language. These students came from eight different school

districts across four Midwestern states. They participated at their home schools for eight days of synchronous videoconferencing instruction combined with asynchronous self-paced online learning, and then traveled to the teaching site for the two days of culminating activities centered on a student film festival learning activity. To recruit students to participate in the study, the researcher sent fifty-five copies of parent-guardian informed consent statements, consent forms for minors, along with a cover letter written by the program director to the eight school districts. The facilitators in each remote site distributed these documents to students. Students who were willing to participate in the study were asked to take the documents home and get signatures from their parents or guardians. All of the signed documents were collected by the researcher either during remote site visits or during the last two days of face-to-face field trip. The twelve students participated in the interviews at the end of the program.

Classroom facilitator

In each remote site (i.e. the students' own school districts), a facilitator was physically present in the classroom. The facilitator's role was to help the distance language teacher in managing the physical classroom. There were eight different school districts participating in the blended language program; therefore, a total number of eight facilitators worked full time to manage the remote site classrooms. The facilitators performed a variety of duties, including supervising students at the remote site, managing equipment, supporting classroom activities and transporting students during the final two day field trip activity. Classroom facilitators were reached through the contact information provided by the program director and their participation was voluntary. In this study, four facilitators participated in interviews at the end of the program.

Data Collection

Observations

In order to acquire first-hand knowledge of both teachers' and students' behaviors in a blended language program, the researcher observed the course content that was delivered in different instructional modes, as well as observed teachers' and students' interaction in the blended course. Patton (2002) stated that the purpose of observational data is not only to record the activities and people who participate in a setting, but also to describe the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed. In this study, the researcher conducted observations at both the teaching site and remote sites, so she could gain both teacher and student's perspective in how the curriculum was taught and learned. The observation data was used to support the findings from the interviews.

Before conducting the teaching site observations, the researcher first obtained permission from the program director, then contacted language teachers to gain access to the teaching site videoconferencing offices. For remote site observations, the researcher first obtained permissions from the school principals, and then contacted classroom facilitators to gain access to the remote site classrooms. Observations were recorded as written field notes. The content of the field notes included the three components described by Merriam (1998): a description of the setting, participants, and activities; quotations of what the participants said; and the observer's comments.

Observation Site Selection

Purposeful sampling of observation sites was utilized to provide rich contexts for exploration. According to Merriam (1998), purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select samples

from which the most can be learned. There were eight school districts participating in the blended language program, and the student population in these school districts was diverse in terms of socioeconomics, ethnicities, races, and religion. In order to select observation sites that represented a wide range of variation in this blended language program, the researcher used the maximum variation strategy to select school districts for classroom observation. In this study, four school districts were selected; including one inner city urban school, one rural school, one college-town school and one suburban school. For each school district, the researcher conducted observations at both the teaching site and the remote school sites.

Teaching Site Observation

For each selected school district, the researcher observed the videoconferencing class three times at the teaching site; one time at the beginning of the curriculum, one time at the middle, and one at the end. These three observations helped the researcher to understand how the curriculum was taught in a synchronous instructional mode from the teachers' perspective. During the classroom observation, the researcher focused on what specific teaching materials instructors used to facilitate course delivery, what teaching strategies they used to engage distance language learners, and how they assessed student learning and engagement in the videoconferencing class. Most importantly, by observing the videoconferencing classes at the teaching site, the researcher gained perspective from the teacher's position in order to understand the differences between teaching in a traditional physical classroom setting and teaching in a videoconferencing classroom setting. This understanding and perspective helped the researcher to interpret the interview data from the teachers.

In addition to videoconferencing classroom observation, the researcher also observed the collocated face-to-face classes at the teaching site, which took place in the last two days of the

program. During these two days, the researcher paid particular attention to the summative assessment activities, as well as the personal interaction among different participant groups, including teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, student-facilitator interaction, and teacher-facilitator interaction.

Remote Site Observation

In order to understand how the curriculum is learned from the student's perspective, the researcher traveled to the four remote sites to observe how students interacted with their distance language teachers on the TV screen and how they used the online tutorials for self-paced learning. Since the four school districts were purposefully selected to include an inner city urban school, a rural school, a college-town school, and a suburban school, the researcher also paid attention to the unique cultural dynamics in each remote site observation. The observation notes included the classroom setting, the facilitator's classroom management style, and students' interaction with their peers in the physical classroom. Remote site observations took place in the middle of the program and the researcher spent half a day (3 videoconferencing classes and 1 self-paced online class) at each remote site. By observing the classes at remote sites, the researcher gained perspective from the student's position in order to understand how the curriculum is learned without the language teacher physically present in the classroom.

Interviews

The purpose of the research interview is to obtain information from an individual that could not be directly observed by the researcher. Patton stated that the purpose of interview is to allow researchers to access another person's perspective and it "begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002). Four participant groups were interviewed in the study, including administrators, language

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teachers, students and facilitators. Interviews with the language teachers were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, because findings from the pilot study indicated that those interview participants who were native speakers of Chinese shared more information when the conversation was in their native language. Interviews with the administrators, facilitators and students were conducted in English. Through interviewing different participant groups in the blended language program, the researcher was able to explore the design and implementation issues of blended learning from multiple perspectives. After gaining IRB approval and the initial participation agreement from the interviewees, the researcher conducted the interviews in person. All interviewees were provided with an informed consent form prior to their participation. In this study, two types of interviews were used: informal conversations and structured in-depth interviews.

Informal Conversation

Informal conversations with teachers and students took place immediately after every observation, so the researcher could ask relevant questions when the participants still had a fresh memory about their experiences. According to Merriam (1998), informal conversations are particularly useful when the researcher does not know enough about a phenomenon to ask relevant questions, and the interview is essentially exploratory. The informal conversations in this study serve two purposes: clarify questions raised from the observation, and ask interview questions that relate to the specific context. Informal conversations were recorded as written field notes.

In-depth Interview

The in-depth interviews with participants included structured and unstructured questions and the length ranged from 30-60 minutes. Before the interview, participants were asked if they

would allow their interviews to be digitally recorded. Participants' names were changed for anonymity. The researcher also compiled personal reflective notes of each interview immediately after each interview was given.

In this study, the program director was interviewed twice, once before the program started and once at the end of the program. Interviews with language teachers, facilitators and students were scheduled at the end of the blended language program (i.e., after they had experienced all three instructional modes), so they could share their perceptions toward blended learning in a holistic way.

The first interview with the program director focused on the design of the blended language program, and interview questions covered the following areas: historical background, curriculum goal, stages of curriculum development, structure and composition of the blended language program, and practical and pedagogical considerations behind the program design. Interviewing the program director before the program starts helped the researcher to be familiar with the study's setting and in having a clear picture of the intended curriculum before exploring how the curriculum was taught, learned and tested. The second interview with the administrator took place at the end of the program. Interview questions at this time focused on the implementation issues of the blended language program, including what difficulties were encountered during the implementation process and how this program can be improved in the future.

Interviews with language teachers, facilitators and students were scheduled at the end of the blended language program (i.e. after they experience all of the three instructional modes), so they could share their perceptions toward blended learning in a holistic way. Interview questions for language teachers focused on what teaching strategies they used in each instructional mode to

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achieve the curriculum goal, what difficulties they had encountered, and how the blended

language program could be improved in the future. Interview questions for students focused on

their learning experiences in each instructional mode and how the blended language program

could be improved to address their needs. Interview questions for facilitators focused on how

they managed the class at the remote site and their suggestions on improving the blended

language class.

Document Review

During the study, several sources of data were collected and analyzed, including the

National Standards for Foreign Language Education, the curriculum framework, unit plans and

lesson plans for the blended language program, materials that teachers used in the classroom,

online tutorials, and assessment materials and tools. The researcher reviewed all of these

documents in order to understand the curriculum goal of the blended language program, how the

curriculum is taught and learned in different instructional modes, and how student learning is

assessed. Reviewing these documents also brought a supplemental insight into the information

gained from the interviews and helped the researcher to confirm interviewees' experiences and

perceptions toward blended learning. The following are the descriptions of these documents:

- **National standards:** The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (NSFLL),

  informally known as the "Five Cs", describe what students of foreign languages should

  know and be able to do in the areas of Communication, Cultures, Connections,

  Comparisons, and Communities. The Standards for Chinese Language Learning, which

  is part of a series of nine language-specific standards document that complement the

"Five Cs", will be used as a guideline to analyze the curriculum goals in this blended language program.

- **Curriculum framework**: The curriculum framework addresses the program theme, unit sub-themes, national standards and expected outcomes, and specific knowledge and skills.

- **Unit plans:** A unit is a thematic organizer of a subset of the curriculum to be completed in a specific period of time. A unit usually consists of a series of lessons which include instruction, practice, application and assessment.

- **Lesson plans:** A lesson is a building block of a unit that has clearly defined objectives to be achieved within a specified time frame.

- **Teaching materials:** The teaching materials are specific materials that instructors used in the classroom to facilitate delivering the course content, such as authentic cultural materials and multimedia.

- **Online tutorial**: The online tutorials in this blended language program are designed to facilitate the videoconferencing class. Its content is organized by days to coordinate with the schedule of the videoconferencing class.

- **Assessment materials and tools:** Materials and tools for both formative assessment and summative assessment were collected in this study, including but not limited to: student homework, student individual projects, student group projects, LinguaFolio self-assessments, and rubrics that teacher used to evaluate student performance.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the study, beginning with the transcription of audio interview records and the researcher's field notes. Interviews that were conducted in Mandarin Chinese were transcribed and translated into English. Transcriptions were coded based on the emerging themes or patterns.

The first research question (what are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? how are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?), focused on the "intended curriculum", which is the curriculum that the administrator expects the teacher to teach, and assumes that students are learning. To answer the research question, the researcher first analyzed the relevant course documents, including the curriculum framework of the blended language program, and the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, which this program aims to address. Then the researcher reviewed the curriculum content in the synchronous/asynchronous/face-to-face instructional modes, along with the technology strategies to deliver this content, using ACTFL 5C standards as a guideline to analyze the curriculum goals for each instructional mode. The document analysis data was cross-referenced with the administrator's first interview response concerning the curriculum design of the blended language program. Based on the document analysis data and interview data, the researcher provided a rich description of the curriculum goal of the blended language program and how the blended language program was designed to achieve the curriculum goal.

The second research question (how is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? how do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?) focused on the "taught curriculum", which is the curriculum that

teachers actually implemented in their classroom. Data to answer this research question came from four different sources: lesson plans, classroom observations, informal conversation with the language teachers following the observations, and in-depth interviews with the language teachers about their perception on blended learning. Through teaching site classroom observation, the researcher was able to investigate how the teachers teach in synchronous/asynchronous/face-to-face instructional modes, including the specific learning materials they used in each instructional mode and the teaching strategies they used to engage language learners. The written field notes of each teaching site classroom observation were cross-referenced with the relevant lesson plans and the notes from the informal conversations. The researcher also cross-compared the taught curriculum among the four selected school districts to explore whether teachers implement curriculum differently.

The third research question (how is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? how do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?) focused on the "learned curriculum", which is the learning that students take away from class. This research question was answered with triangulated data, including classroom observations, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews with the students and facilitators. Students' responses about their learning experiences in the remote site were correlated with facilitator's response about their classroom management experiences. The researcher also cross-compared students' learning experiences among the four different school districts.

The fourth research question (how is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? how do teachers and students view different types of assessment in a blended context?) focused on the "tested curriculum", which are the assessments developed by administrators or

teachers to determine if student's learning had met the curriculum goal. Through classroom observations and interviewing language teachers, the researcher explored different types of formative assessment activities that were conducted in the videoconferencing class and the summative assessment activities that took place during the two days of the collocated face-to-face field trip experience.

After collection and analysis of data pertaining to the first four research questions, the researcher investigated the congruence and incongruence of the four layers towards the overall blended language learning design (is there congruency among the four curriculum layers? if not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design?) The researcher first cross-compared the administrator's ideal picture of blended learning design with the language teacher's actual classroom implementation, then compared the teachers' classroom practice with the students' actual learning experiences. Table 3.2 describes the research questions and data source to answer these research questions:

Table 3.2 Research Questions and Data Source

Research Question	Data Source
1.What are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? How are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?	•Document review: The National Standards (or the NSFLL),the curriculum framework, unit plans •Administrator interview
2.How is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? How do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?	•Document review: lesson plans, online tutorials, teaching materials •Teaching site observation for both videoconferencing class and face-to-face class •Teacher interviews

3.How is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? How do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?	•Remote site observation •Teaching site observation for face-to-face class •Student interviews •Facilitator interviews
4.How is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? How do teachers and students perceive different types of assessment in a blended context?	•Document review: lesson plans, assessment materials and tools •Teaching site observation •Remote site observation •Teacher interviews •Student interviews
5.Is there congruency among the four curriculum layers? If not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design?	•Data analysis from the first four research questions

Validity Issues

Validation of data in this study was achieved by triangulation, participant feedback, and peer review. Triangulation is a tool to enhance the validity of qualitative research by combining multiple sources of data and multiple methods of data collection to ensure cross-data consistency. The aim of triangulation is to "guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias" (Patton, 1990). Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. In this study, triangulation was used by comparing multiple sources of data including interview, observation and document review, as well as comparing multiple perspectives from administrators, language teachers, facilitators and students. Participant feedback was gained by providing a summary of all interview transcripts and final analysis of the data to the participants in the study. The researcher discussed with the participants her own interpretations and conclusions for verification and

insight. Peer review was conducted by discussing the researcher's interpretations and

conclusions with language educators and educational technology researchers from academic

organizations, such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

and Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT).

Ethics

This study was conducted with adherence to ethical guidelines for case study

methodology. Human subject forms were completed before data collection. All of the

interviewees were provided with an informed consent form prior to their participation. The

interviews were digitally recorded with permission from the participants. Gaining permission to

observe class interaction and permission to review course related documents was also addressed

before conducting the study.

Pilot Study

Before the present study was conducted, the research procedures and materials had been

piloted in a pilot study. The pilot study served two purposes: first, for the researcher to gain a

basic understanding of the design and implementation issues that are involved in blended

language learning; second, to test the data collection instruments. Based on the results of the

pilot study, some changes were made to the present study. For example, a discussion about

computer-mediated communication (CMC) was added to the literature review, because the pilot

study indicated that the characteristic of CMC tools have a great impact on students' learning

experiences. Interview questions were also revised and improved based on the experiences

learned from the pilot study. For example, a Chinese version of interview protocol was added to

the present study, because the researcher found that those interview participants who were native speakers of Chinese shared more information when the conversation was in their native language, therefore adding validity to the study. Another lesson learned from conducting the pilot study was to recognize the importance of asking follow up questions during the interview. When analyzing the interview data from the pilot study, the researcher found that some important information was missed because there was no appropriate follow up questions asked during the interview. These shortcomings of the pilot study were addressed and fixed in the present study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents a detailed description of the four curriculum layers, intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum, in the blended language program explored in the study. The findings are organized and presented in the following order based on the specific questions:

1.**The Intended Curriculum:** What are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? How are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?

2.**The Taught Curriculum:** How is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? How do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program.

3.**The Learned Curriculum:** How is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? How do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

4.**The Tested Curriculum:** How is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? How do teachers and students view different types of assessment in a blended context?

5.**Summary and Discussion:** Is there congruency among the four curriculum layers? If not, what are the discrepancies among the four layers in regards to the blended learning design?

1. The Intended Curriculum

Introduction

The *intended curriculum*, which is also called the *official curriculum*, is what State and District officials set forth in curriculum frameworks and courses of study. The expectation is that teachers will teach it and that students will learn it (Cuban, 1995). The curriculum framework of the blended language program studied in this dissertation is developed using backward design process; it addresses the program theme, unit sub-themes, standards and expected outcomes, and specific knowledge and skills. The curriculum goals are articulated in terms of the ACTFL 5C standards, which identified *Communication*, *Cultures*, *Connections*, *Comparisons*, and *Communities* as the five goal areas for 21st century foreign language learners to develop their language competence (ACTFL, 1999).

In order to understand how the blended language program is designed to achieve the curriculum goals, the researcher reviewed the curriculum content in each of the instructional modes (synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face), and used ACTFL 5 C standards as a guideline to analyze the curriculum goal for each instructional mode. The researcher also interviewed the program director to understand the practical and pedagogical reasons behind the blended learning design. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from course documents, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews of the program director, this section will provide a rich description of the curriculum goal of the blended language program and how the blended language program is designed to achieve the curriculum goal.

Curriculum Development: Backward Design

In this blended language program, high school students learn to express their preferences in music, sports, hobbies, movies and other areas, and then compare their likes and dislikes with those of their classmates in the United States and their peers in China. According to the program director, the curriculum framework was developed using backward design process, which is a method of designing educational curriculum by setting goals before choosing instructional methods and forms of assessment. Backward design of curriculum typically involves three stages: (1) identify the results desired; (2) determine acceptable levels of evidence that support that the desired results have occurred; (3) design activities that will make desired results happen (Wiggins & Mctighe, 1998). The following section will discuss how the language curriculum was developed based on the three stages of backward design process.

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

The first stage is to identify the results desired; in other words, what students will know and be able to do in the target language and culture. In this blended language program, curriculum goals are articulated in terms of the ACTFL 5C standards. The target learners for this curriculum are primarily Novice Low in Chinese, and at the end of the program they will be able to perform language tasks characterized in Novice Low standards: how to greet people, express likes and dislikes, talk about current physical/emotional state, how to invite others to do things, and other simple phrases in Chinese. These language performance tasks are defined by a list of "can-do" statements, which indicate what learners should be able to do at the different proficiency levels and within each communicative mode. These "can-do" statements are described in the curriculum framework as follows (See Table 4.1):

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Table 4.1: ACTFL Guidelines Description of Novice Low Level of Proficiency

Interpersonal Communication	•I can greet adults and peers appropriately in classroom and social settings. •I can introduce myself, ask others' names, and address others appropriately in a school setting or informal social setting. •I can ask for the location of a person/ classroom item, and respond appropriately •I can ask where a person comes from and tell someone where I am from (country, town, and school). •I can ask about someone's physical/emotional state and express an appropriate verbal reaction about self. •I can inquire about others' likes and dislikes in sports/hobbies/music/movies, and respond appropriately. •I can comment on someone else's general appearance and personality, and ask about someone's appearance and personality. •I can report my age and grade and ask for others' ages and grades. •I can offer and reply to invitations/ suggestions.
Interpretive Listening	•I can understand and respond appropriately to teacher direction in a classroom setting. •I can react to statements by my teacher or my classmates with one or more words or memorized phrases.
Interpretive Reading	•I can pronounce Chinese words written in pinyin; I can remember how to pronounce some common Chinese words written in characters. •I can recognize my name and some common Chinese words written in Chinese characters. •I can recognize some common Chinese words, e.g. names of sports, written in Chinese characters with hints from images.
Presentational Speaking	•I can give a short presentation about myself or another (name/age/grade/location/mood/status/preferences in sports, movies, and music).
Presentational Writing	•I can write my name in Chinese characters and in pinyin. •I can label a poster about me in Chinese characters and pinyin with information such as the sports and music I like. •I can use Chinese characters and pinyin from the program curriculum, word bank cards and the dictionary to create brief messages. •I can complete a form (poster) about myself.

Students with previous Chinese training experience are offered differentiated instruction with challenging options, and they will be able to perform language tasks characterized in Novice Mid to Novice High proficiency levels at the end of the program. Challenge option materials are designed based around the unit sub-theme, but integrate more advanced linguistic content and present more complex performance tasks typical of Novice High. As the program director recalled, the curriculum was first designed only for zero beginners in Chinese. However, in 2011, they made a decision to integrate differentiated instruction into the curriculum, allowing people with different levels of Chinese to participate in the program. She explained that the advanced students can always use the program for review, but by incorporating the challenge option into the program, you can push their language proficiency to a higher level (Intermediate Low). She said this has worked very well; the advanced students take leadership roles in the group activities, such as leading their group in the film festival at the end of the program.

In addition to three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive and presentational), the curriculum also addresses the ACTFL standards related to cultures, connections, communities, and comparisons. In addressing the culture standards, students interact with authentic language and cultural materials in class, online, and participate in various culture activities during the last two days of face-to-face residential camp, demonstrating an enhanced understanding of Chinese cultural products, practices, and perspectives, such as Chinese classroom etiquette and some traditional and modern music/arts/hobbies/sports popular in China. In order to address the comparison standards, students are also able to compare Chinese high school life with their high school life in the United States, as well as compare preferences in music/arts/hobbies/sports of Chinese teenagers with their own. The community standards are addressed at the end of the program, where students are able to interact with

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members of the local Chinese community, including local artists, musicians and college students

from China. The curriculum has a heavy emphasis on exposing students to the music and arts of

China, which aims to fulfill the connection standards. Figure 4.1 illustrates how ACTFL 5C

standards were integrated in the curriculum framework.
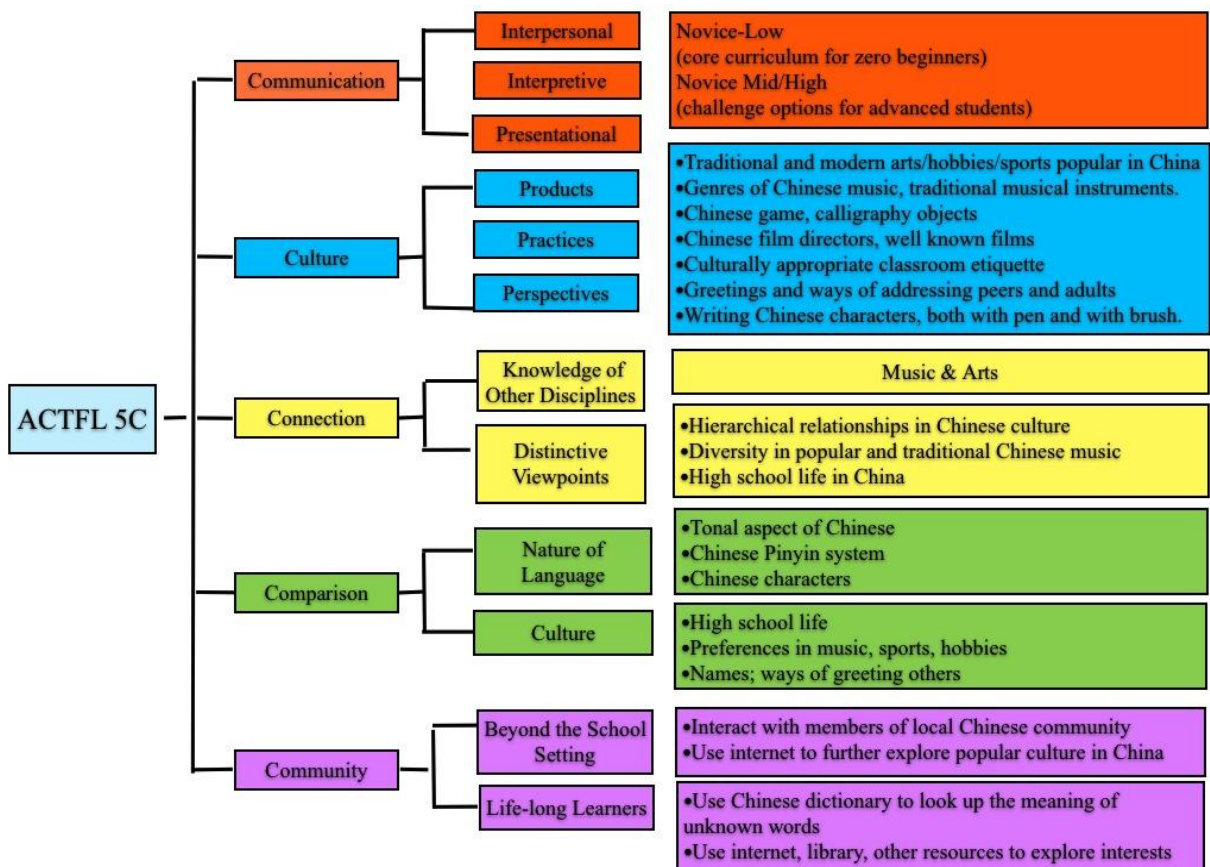
Figure 4.1: ACTFL 5C Standards and the Curriculum Goal

Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence

After identifying the curriculum goals in stage 1, the second stage is to determine real-

world assessment tasks that allow students to show their abilities with the language. In this

blended language program, summative assessments are conducted during the last two days of a

residential camp, taking the form of a series of culminating performance activities surrounding a

film festival of student group produced short films with additional "red carpet" style interviews.

These culminating activities assess students' performance in each mode of communication, providing evidence that students have achieved the curriculum goal. The major summative performance assessments are described in the curriculum framework as follows (See Table 4.2):

Table 4.2: Summative Performance Assessments

Interpretive Task	•Extract information from other student films (to be used in critique discussions). •Extract information from classmate poster talks (to be used in discussions).
Interpersonal Task	•Interview a Chinese-speaking "mystery guest" to obtain information on their name, current emotional/physical state, preferences in music, sports, hobbies, and movies. (Students will compete in teams to interview native speaker "mystery guests" and then make presentations on the interview results (the team who reports accurately on most "facts" about mystery guest wins.) •Interview others and be interviewed on the "red carpet" at the film festival.
Presentational Task	•Use writing skills and visual material to make a poster about self (modeled after social networking pages, assessed with a rubric and prizes awarded for best posters) and give an oral presentation about personal preferences in music, hobbies, etc. (to be videotaped and assessed by instructional team using a rubric). •Working in teams, prepare script for video using language functions covered in class, make video with hand held FLIP cameras, edit and show videos at the class "Film Festival." (to be assessed by peers and by instructional team using a rubric).

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experience and Instruction

Once identifying the curriculum goals and forms of assessment, the third stage is to plan learning experiences that will allow students to develop the knowledge and skills, including specific linguistic, culture and other subject matter knowledge, so that they can perform the summative tasks identified in stage 2. In this language curriculum, these specific knowledge and skills will be delivered in three different instructional modes: synchronous instruction with IDL videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction with online tutorial, and co-located

face-to-face activities. All of the curriculum content and activities in the first eight days of

distance learning (synchronous and asynchronous) will be delivered in six units of curriculum

content, designed to prepare students to perform the culminating activities during the final two

days of face-to-face residential camp. The culminating activity consists of a film festival, where

students demonstrate content mastery through student team-produced short films. Figure 4.2

presents how the curriculum content is distributed in the three different instructional modes.
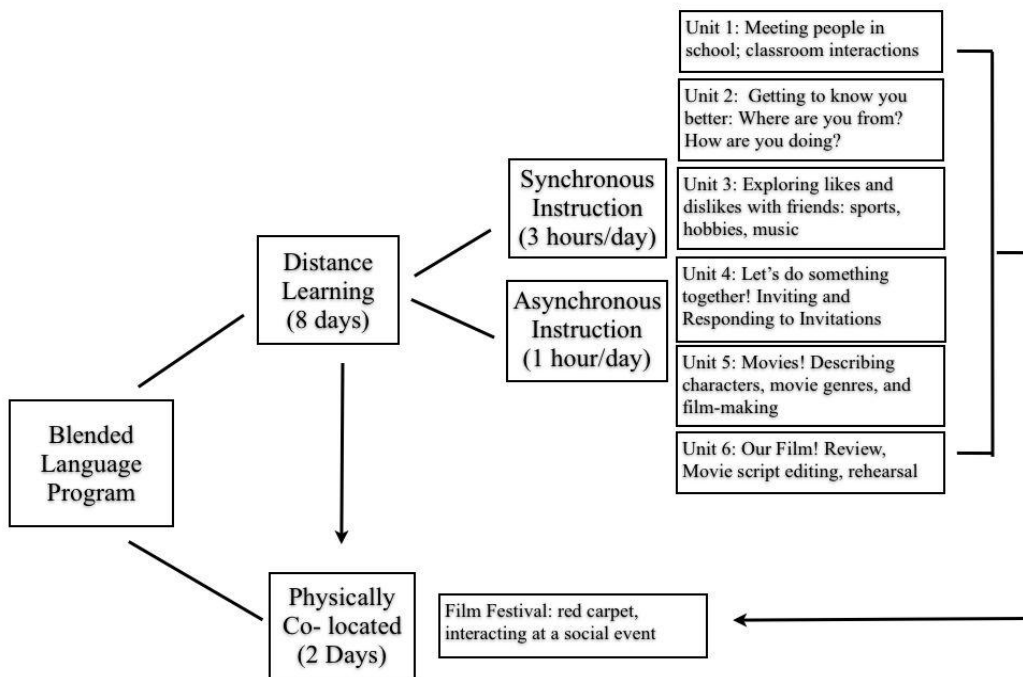
Figure 4.2: Curriculum Content in Different Instructional Modes

Curriculum Delivery: A Blended Learning Approach

A blended learning approach was utilized to deliver the curriculum content, combining synchronous videoconference instruction with asynchronous online materials, followed by a co-located face-to-face experience. During the interviews, the program director explained her motivation for using a blended learning approach to deliver the curriculum as follows,

> I really feel that blended learning has many advantages, because I think that there are some materials that can be learned best on an individual, self-paced basis, and I think there are other things that we really need to have live interaction. Having a blended learning approach really allows you to have the best from both worlds. You can take some of those things that you just need to practice by yourself, like listening to tones, or practicing writing Chinese characters, or reading characters, or some of the other components, or maybe doing some extended reading of related background materials in English. Those kinds of things you can accomplish best by yourself. But when it comes to actually testing and using the language to communicate, that is probably best done in a live situation, where you can be spontaneous, where you can react immediately to the input that you are given; and so, for that, the videoconferencing and the face-to-face experiences are best in our opinion.

According to the program director, a blended model can introduce the foreign language in many different ways, so that students can find the best ways that work for them. In this blended language program, each of the instructional delivery modes has its unique practical and pedagogical features, and the modes are suitable for different language and culture content. Therefore, according to the program director, selecting appropriate content for different instructional delivery modes plays an important role in blended learning design. She stated,

> I think it is really important to think through carefully which content is best suited to which medium of instruction. For example, you don't need to repeat everything you did in the class on the online course, the things don't need to mirror each other. I think it is much more useful to think about which type of content is best delivered in an asynchronous environment, the online CourseSite, and which type of activity should be reserved for that precious interpersonal interaction time that you have in class with the teacher, and which kind of activity you want to do face to face after the kids all come together.

The following section will discuss in detail about the practical and pedagogical considerations behind each instructional mode, the curriculum content delivered in each instructional mode, and how these three instructional modes integrate to achieve the curriculum goals.

Synchronous Instruction via Videoconferencing Technology

Synchronous instruction occurs in real time and requires the simultaneous participation of all students and instructors. The synchronous instruction in this blended language program is supported by an Interactive Distance Learning Network (IDL) based in a Midwestern state. The IDL network connects interactive videoconferencing classrooms located in different school districts and offers classes that are not normally available in the district's schools. According to the program director, the practical need for engaging distance language learners is the main reason for the implementation of videoconferencing. Most of the schools they served are not able to hire a Chinese teacher on their own, either due to budget reasons or because there is no licensed Chinese teacher available at their location; therefore, distance learning is a good solution for providing language access to students. However, social interaction plays an important role in foreign language education. The current communicative language teaching approach emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Therefore, among all of the distance learning tools, they chose videoconferencing, because it supports live, real-time interaction. Furthermore, with videoconferencing technology, not only can one teacher teach multiple school districts, but also one school district can receive language instruction from multiple teachers. In this blended language program, each school district receives Chinese instruction from two to three different native speaking teachers, giving students exposure to different voices and accents.

In the videoconferencing class, language teachers are required to use the target language a minimum of 90% of the time. In addition, language teachers use their body gestures as well as various visual aids (e.g. puppets, PowerPoints, video, etc.) to help students comprehend the curriculum content and use the target language. According to the program director, the curriculum for the videoconferencing class focuses on oral language, because it is best learned through real daily life interaction. Other form activities, such as writing exercises, are done by students at their own pace outside the classroom. The program director explains that they want to make sure that they are using the class time to give students comprehensible input and opportunities for teacher-student and student-student interactions. This is seen as "golden time", so they want to take full advantage of every minute and don't waste time on anything tedious that they know students can better do by themselves. Therefore, the synchronous instructional mode primarily focuses on the ACTFL communication standards, and it addresses all of the three communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive and presentational) through integrating a variety of instructional activities, including TPR, pair interaction, peer survey, role play, games, and other student-centered activities. All curriculum content is introduced in more than one way, to allow for different learning styles.

While the program requires instruction using the target language, how to use the target language to introduce culture to the novice learners became a challenge for the language teachers. In this blended language program, culture is not explicitly taught in the IDL videoconferencing class, rather it is embedded in the language curriculum, either through the specific language content taught in class, or through authentic materials used in class, or even through daily class routine. For example, the program director explained in detail about how cultural comparison can be embedded in the language content, with the following example:

They learn to use the formal "you", the second person pronoun. They learn to distinguish the difference between 你 (you) and 您 (formal "you"). They learn to address their teacher appropriately, addressing their teacher as 老师 (teacher) or 涂老师 (Teacher Tu), or 王老师 (Teacher Wang), which is different from American custom. That is an example of both linguistic and cultural comparison for them. They also learn and become aware of the differences in other cultural practices, particularly related to the classroom.

In the videoconferencing class, culture components are integrated into every unit of the language curriculum. Take unit 3, "Exploring likes, and dislikes in music", as an example. Rather than explaining in depth about traditional Chinese music in English, culture is integrated in the curriculum as new linguistic content, introduced to students in the target language, such as the word 京剧 (Peking opera), and the names of some traditional Chinese instruments, such as 二胡 (Two-stringed Chinese fiddle). Furthermore, in the videoconferencing class, culture is also incorporated into the class routines. For example, one important component of the program is that they teach the students to follow certain procedures at the beginning and closing of each class period: for each class, a rotating class monitor is assigned from amongst the students; at the beginning of the class, he/she leads students in standing up and greeting the teacher, and at the end of the class, he/she leads them in standing up and saying good bye to the teacher. This is an example of Chinese classroom culture that students can compare with their own.

Cultural comparison is also embedded in the language curriculum through a variety of authentic materials used in class, including realia, multimedia, and printed materials. For example, one of the language tasks in unit 3 is to interview classmates about their music preferences and then compare this information with surveys collecting music preferences from teenagers in China. Through using these authentic materials, students not only learn the language needed to express music preferences, but they are also able to compare their preferences with their peers in China.

Asynchronous instruction via CourseSites learning management system

By asynchronous it is understood that interaction occurs at different times, not in real time. During the first eight days of distance learning, each day the students have one hour to work on asynchronous online tutorials with a laptop computer provided by the classroom facilitator. As the program director recalled, the asynchronous instruction was not included in the program until recent years; before that, students had to sit in class for four and half hours interacting with their language teachers on TV. She stated that even though IDL videoconferencing is interactive, four and half hours without much variation is still too tiring for the high school students. Therefore, an asynchronous instruction mode was implemented in 2010 to provide a break from the intensive real-time interaction in the videoconferencing classes. Students can have the opportunity to learn the curriculum content at their own pace and explore some additional language and culture materials based on their personal interest. The program director stated,

> We want to have a part of one hour, one period, where it is not really teacher led, it is student controlled, self-paced time, and that time is used for interacting with online materials at your own pace, and they also have some choices with these online materials, they can also do some group work on their film project, and it is also time that they can get some individual help [from the teacher].

The asynchronous online tutorials in this blended language program were developed using several different educational software and online applications: SoftChalk, a content authoring software for educators to create interactive e-learning content; GoAnimate, an online application that allows teachers to make animated videos for the class; Voki, an online application that allows teachers to record their voice and create speaking avatars; iMovie and GarageBand, Apple applications for video and audio production. All of the asynchronous online tutorials were posted on CourseSites.com, which is a learning management system powered by

Blackboard. Each students at the remote site was be provided with a laptop, a set of headphones and a unique username and password to login to the online course website, and their learning progress was traced in the Grade Center.

In this blended language program, the asynchronous online tutorials were designed to facilitate the videoconferencing class; therefore, the online learning content was organized by days to coordinate with the schedule of the videoconferencing class. For example, when students login to the CourseSites, they will see a navigation bar showing Day 1 to Day 8. By clicking on Day 1 button, the website will display all of the language and cultural content that relates to Day 1's unit theme, which is "Classroom Interaction". Figure 4.3 shows the course website, with navigation bar on the left and course content in the main window.
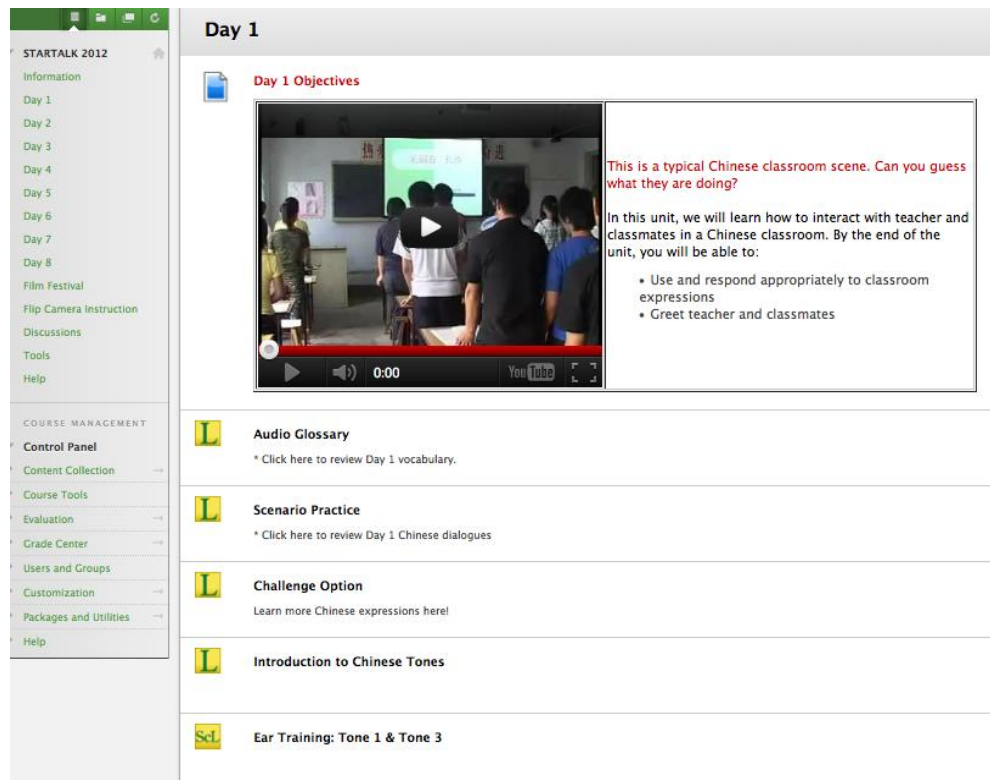
Figure 4.3: The Course Website

Based on different learning purposes, the self-paced online learning materials can be generalized into five categories, which include the following:

1. Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are resources (both written and oral) created by native speakers of the target language for native speakers of the target language. Nunan and Miller (1995) define authentic materials as those which were not created or edited expressly for language learners. The authentic materials used in asynchronous instruction mode includes videos, pictures, screen captures, and scanned images from printed surveys, magazines, and books. These authentic materials are used for three different purposes:

(1) Establish the unit theme. Each day's online tutorial begins with a short authentic video clip reflecting the unit theme for the day. For example, the unit theme for day 1 is classroom interaction, and the kickoff video was filmed in a real Chinese high school classroom, showing a scenario of a Chinese classroom's opening procedure. In day 2 the unit theme is self-introduction, and the kickoff video is a short video clip from a famous Chinese dating game show "非诚勿扰" ("If You Are the One"). In this reality TV show, all of the male contestants need to introduce themselves in front of the audience before they can have interaction with the female contestants. These authentic video clips can motivate students' language learning interests by showing them examples of how the language they are learning in the classroom is actually used in the target culture.

(2) Use as interpretive assessments. A variety of scanned images from printed materials are used as interpretive reading assessments. These include surveys conducted by local Wuhan (a city in central China) high school students about their likes and dislikes, from which language learners can extract information and compare the results with their own classroom survey;

chapters from Chinese magazines and comic books, where advanced students can recognize some of the characters and interpret the story with hints. Some authentic videos are used as interpretive listening assessment; for example, an interview with local Chinese students about their preferences in music and sports.

(3). Use as out of class resource to help students gain insights into the culture. Each day's online tutorial integrates a variety of authentic culture materials reflecting the unit theme for the day. For example, the unit theme for day 1 is classroom interaction, and the culture materials include pictures of Chinese schools, video clips of an English class in China, and videos clips of morning exercises and eye exercises in Chinese schools. These authentic materials immerse students in the real-world of the target culture while they are still in their classroom. Most of these authentic culture materials follow with an out of class culture discussion forum (written), where students are asked to compare the two different cultures and share their thoughts with their peers and teachers. According to the program director, the culture discussion forum allows students and teachers to explore reactions to Chinese culture through conversations in English, without using the synchronous class time, which should be reserved to use Chinese exclusively.

These authentic language and cultural materials used in the asynchronous instructional mode not only address the ACTFL culture and comparison standards by presenting culture excerpts from the target culture and inviting students to compare and discuss in the online forum, it also address ACTFL communication standards with interpretive listening and reading tasks.

2. Form-Focused Materials

Form-focus instruction is an approach to language education in which learners are made aware of the grammatical form of language features that they are already able to use

communicatively (Ellis, 1993; Long, 2000). According to the program director most of people use the term "form-focus instruction" to refer primarily to grammar explication, but in this blended language program, the term was used in a broader way, not limited to grammar, but also to include "those kinds of things that are really all about rule based, tools of language", such as ear training in Chinese tones, the pinyin spelling system, and introduction to Chinese characters.

(1) *Ear training tutorials for Chinese tone recognition.* This tutorial was developed based on research by Wang et al. (1999) on training American listeners to perceive Mandarin tones and mastery learning theory, which believes if given the right conditions and enough time, all of the students can succeed in learning. In this tutorial, the four tones are presented pairwise; for example, Tones 1 and 2, Tones 1 and 3, Tones 1 and 4, Tones 2 and 3, Tones 2 and 4, and Tones 3 and 4, and the order of tone pair presentation is from easiest to most difficult. Therefore, the ear training materials consist of six sections. Each section begins with a description and five audio examples of the tone pair, followed by 30 multiple choice questions, where students are asked to listen to the audio and choose the right tone. By clicking the "Check Answer" button below each multiple choice question, students receive immediate feedback, which reinforces their awareness of the tone differences. At the end of each section, students are asked to take a listening test consisting of 10 multiple choice questions, and the grade will be recorded in the CourseSites Grading Center. Each item in the test is 1 point, and in order to pass the test, students need to get at least 8 points. If they don't pass the test, they are expected to go back to the practice materials and listen to the audios again. All of the audios in the ear training tutorials are recorded by native speakers from different age levels, with different genders and different regional accents, so that students' judgments on tone differences will be based on the key feature (e.g. pitch) rather than other irrelevant variables (e.g. accent).

(2) Exploratory tutorial of the Chinese pinyin system. Pinyin, or Hanyu Pinyin, is the official phonetic system for transcribing the Mandarin pronunciations of Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet. This exploratory tutorial explained the Chinese pinyin system in great detail, by integrating a variety of videos, audios, images, quizzes and interactive games. Each section begins with a video instruction in English, followed by audio recordings of different syllables, with images and English descriptions of how to pronounce the syllable. Afterwards, students will take quizzes or play games to reinforce what they have learned.

(3) Self-discovery tutorial of Chinese characters. This tutorial was developed based on inductive thinking theory, which believes that the best way to increase knowledge is to emphasize the "acquisition, understanding, and use of ideas and concepts rather than facts". In this tutorial, all the concepts and rules related to Chinese writing, including radicals in a character, structure of a character, and stroke order in writing a character, are not directly taught or explained; rather they will be discovered and generalized by students through analyzing a variety of character data.

The character data and instructional activities in this tutorial are carefully selected and organized in appropriate sequence. Take the tutorial about character structure as an example: the tutorial begins with a guessing activity, where students need to analyze four groups of Chinese characters, and find a character in each group that has a structural difference from the others; then a brainstorming activity presents students a group of Chinese characters with the same structure, and students need to discover the pattern and label them in their own words; after the brainstorming activity, the next activity is "try it", where students need to label more character groups with a given structures list (e.g. left-right, top-bottom, etc.); finally, students will be introduced to the concept of character structures and complete more exercises, such as finding a

character with a given structure from a natural sentence, or sorting the characters into the right categories.

Tutorials about radicals in a character and stroke order of writing are also designed based on inductive thinking theory. For example, rather than directly explain what the "氵" radical means, students are asked to analyze the following characters with their English meaning: 河river, 清clear, 湖lake, 流flow, so that they can find the common component in these characters and predict the meaning of the "氵" radical in a character. For stroke order, rather than directly explain the rules, such as "top before bottom" or "left before right", students will be presented with different groups of animated Chinese characters (in gif format) and asked to discover these writing rules by themselves.

While the videoconferencing classes focus on developing students' language fluency through communicative learning activities, the form-focused materials help students become aware of the linguistic features of the language and address the accuracy aspect of language learning. In addition, these form-focused materials are designed to address the ACTFL comparison standards by allowing students to explore the nature of the target language and compare it with their own language. According to the program director, the form-focused materials were better introduced to students as individualized, self-paced exercises, rather than a group in class exercises, because learning these materials doesn't require student-teacher interaction or student-student interaction. More importantly, in order to fully understand these form-focused materials, different students take different amounts of time. She explained,

> These are things that a person can do at their own pace, you don't need to interact with your classmates or with the teacher to learn them, and in fact, people probably can be more successful at their own pace, because some people need to hear those examples of tones many, many times, and some people only need to hear them a few times before they can hear the difference. There is a lot of individual variation there, and so it really makes more sense for people to learn that in an individualized pace, and so that it is one

category of material that we wanted to put in the online system, instead of everybody doing it en-masse as a group in class, when you do it as a group in class, and that is something very tedious, so that is one category.

3. *Cultural Background Materials in English*

As the program director mentioned earlier, the IDL videoconferencing class is the "golden time" for live interaction, and teachers are required to deliver the curriculum to students in the target language. In the IDL videoconferencing class, some simple cultural information is embedded in the language curriculum, either through the specific language content taught in class, or authentic materials used in class, or through daily class routine. However, most of the cultural background knowledge is quite sophisticated, and it is almost impossible to introduce to novice learners in the target language. This issue can be addressed by integrating the cultural background materials in the online platform. The program director shared the following example,

> For example, we have on our blackboard site a website on the history of rock and roll in China. This is not something that they can read in Chinese, because they are novice low beginning learners, but this information is very interesting to them and relevant to our curriculum content. There is also a lot of materials there on different types of music, Chinese musical instruments, and other things that they can read about in English. That means we don't have to spend time on these in class, we don't speak English in class and discuss it, but they can explore these materials in English on their own.

These cultural background materials are distributed based on the unit topic, and each of them follows with a culture discussion forum in English, where students can compare the two different cultures and share their thoughts with their peers.

4. *Lesson Review Materials*

This category includes core vocabulary and structures introduced in the IDL videoconferencing class to be used by learners who need/want extra review. The program directors explained,

> These are materials that really just reinforce things that are already introduced in class. I am thinking things like the audio glossary: we introduced vocabulary in class, here is a

reference, if you are not completely certain how to say that word, go back and look it up in audio glossary online, listen to it one more time.

As the program director mentioned, if students are not clear with specific language content in the videoconferencing class, they can go back to the audio glossary, look up the word or the sentence, and practice the language content with the audio recorded by native speakers. Some other lesson review materials require more productive use of core content; such as scenario practice, which are video clips of conversations between two or three native speakers in a real world situation, followed by one or two interpretive listening tasks. Students watch the scenario video clips and then do the multiple choice questions to check their understanding of the dialogue. By interacting with these lesson review materials, students can reinforce the language content learned in the IDL videoconferencing class at their own pace and develop their interpretive communication skills.

5. *Challenge Option Materials*

This category introduced additional vocabulary and sentence structures for students who have already mastered the core curriculum, or just want to learn more. Challenge option materials are designed for students who require greater challenges in the program, including students with previous Chinese learning experiences as well as heritage speakers. The challenge options materials expand the learning content in the IDL videoconferencing class by introducing students to additional vocabulary and sentence structures related to the unit topic and integrating advanced learning tasks. The program director provided more details as follows,

> There is a whole bunch of additional vocabulary there related to the categories that we were teaching. For example, sports: there is a whole bunch of sports. In class, we don't need to teach twenty sports, six or seven is good enough, because the idea is to teach the language function, not to teach every type of sports and know what it means, but if students want to know an additional sport, here is an opportunity. So those challenge options are open to all the students, not only the advanced students. If we have a zero beginner who just has a burning desire to learn more words for different kinds of sports,

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or different kinds of music, or different kinds of hobbies, it is there for them. You allow for individual choice.

As mentioned by the program director, challenge option materials were originally designed for advanced students. However, the experiences from previous years indicates that the challenge option materials are not only beneficial for advanced students who have studied some Chinese, but also provides an opportunity for language beginners to explore more language materials based on their own needs and interests (e.g. use some advanced vocabulary in their final group film project).

Face-to-face co-located experience

Since established in 2008, the summer language program always starts with eight days of distance learning and ends with two days of face-to-face co-located activities on campus, in order for the videoconferencing community of learners to have an opportunity to get together physically in real life. According to the program director, the main reason for implementing a face-to-face component is to create socialization opportunities for language learners. The following statements drawn from the interviews with the program director exemplified this sentiment:

> First of all, it is exciting for the students, they know that at the end of the program, they are all gonna go to [Midwest university's name], the college campus, which is kind of an attraction for high school students to go to a college campus. They are going to meet lots of other kids, because, after all, teenagers are far more interested in meeting each other than they are in adults. They are curious about each other, they want to meet the other kids from the other schools or other programs, so this is a powerful motivator for them. Particularly since we started this film festival, they are curious about the films made by other schools. They want to compare themselves with the other schools, so they are very interested in their peers both in China and other American schools, and this kind of creates a community of learners. They are curious about the rest of that community.

Rather than introducing students to new language content, the last two days of the face-to-face learning focused on culminating activities. These activities include mystery guest, poster

writing/talk, and a film festival of student group produced short films with "red carpet"

interviews. The students apply the language and culture content that they have learned in the IDL

videoconferencing class and the self-paced online learning materials in a real life situation. These

culminating activities also served as summative assessments for the program.

1. Mystery Guest

Mystery Guest is an activity designed to assess students' interpersonal communication

performance. In this activity, students will compete in teams to interview a Chinese-speaking

"mystery guest" and then make presentations on the interview results. The team that reports

accurately on the most "facts" about the mystery guest wins. The program director described the

game as follows,

> The last two days are all about using the content learned in a new context; testing it out in
> a new context. A great example is the mystery guest activity that we do. We divide
> students into teams, and have them interview the college students from China, to get
> information. The competition is getting as much accurate information out of the mystery
> guest as possible, so they have to ask and understand the answers for questions from the
> curriculum content they have learned so far. They ask the mystery guest things like what
> kind of sports do you like, do you like tennis, do you like hip hop, do you like music,
> what kind of movies, what kind of activities, how old are you, what is your name, what
> grade are you in, and all of those things. They are very motivated to use the language for
> communicative purpose in that context. At the same time, they are also learning about
> someone pretty close to their age from China.

2. Poster Writing/Talk

This activity consisted of two components: poster writing and poster talk. In this activity,

students first need to use their writing skills and visual materials to make a poster about

themselves. These posters would then be assessed by peers and by the instructional team using a

rubric. Then students will stand by their poster and give an oral presentation in front of the class

about their personal preferences in music, sports and hobbies; these oral presentations would also

be assessed by the instructional team using a rubric. Finally, all of these posters would be

displayed on a wall, and students will write notes in each other's posters. In this way, the poster

activity is not only able to assess students' presentational writing and speaking performances, but

also able to assess students' interpersonal writing. The program director stated that,

> One of the cool things we do in the last two days is that we not only do interpersonal modes orally, which is what most people do, we also have something that really becomes kind of interpersonal writing. In the posters that we make, we have an activity where students write notes in each other's posters, we call it "great wall chat space". It is a block space on the poster that they make, and they go around a room and write on each other's posters. Some of the students just write the same thing on everybody's posters, but many of the students actually look at what other people have written and respond to it. When they do that, what they are really doing is an interpersonal writing exercise, which I think is really cool.

3. Film Festival

The film festival is the most important final culminating performance project for this

blended language program, and the curriculum content and activities in each unit all lead toward

this event. In this activity, students would work in teams using language functions they learned

in class to prepare a script for their final film project. They would then use a hand held FLIP

camera to make a video, edit it, and show the video to all the students. The students' film

projects would be assessed by their peers and by the instructional team using a rubric. The

program director recalled the evolution of the film festival as follows,

> It almost started like an add on, a little final project where they can talk about likes and dislikes and make a little video of themselves. That evolved into "wow we could do this really cool film festival", and that eventually became for the last three years' culminating event and sort of the thread that ties everything together. And I am really pleased with that, I think it works really well, I think the kids really enjoyed making movies and we love watching the movies, and we have seen a lot of really interesting creative ideas.

Before the FLIP camera was introduced to the program, poster talks and skits were the

two main presentational performance tasks. Now skits are only used as formative assessments in

the IDL videoconferencing class; its summative assessment function is replaced by the students'

film products. The program director explained,

> Doing it on camera means you could do a much better presentational mode piece, because you can redo it, keep doing it until you are satisfied with it, and you can also edit it into something that is more of a complete whole.

In addition to the film production, students also need to promote their film in a "red carpet" event and each film production group would be interviewed by MCs (usually the advanced students). While the film project aims to assess students' presentational communication performance, this "red carpet" interview activity can assess students' interpersonal communication performance in regards to the ACTFL 5C standards.

Besides participating in culminating activities to demonstrate their communication performance in all three modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational), students also attended various cultural activities during the last two days of the face-to-face residential experience. These included a Chinese calligraphy workshop, a music workshop, and culture stations. According to the program director, having students try some physical, hands-on activities to increase cultural engagement is the other reason for implementing the two days of face-to-face co-located activities. She explained,

> For the calligraphy workshop that we do, we have an art teacher to teach how to hold a brush pen, so they have a chance to hold a brush pen and use it. For the traditional music workshop that we do, the students do not just get a lecture in music, which in theory they can do online in another way. The point of doing it in person is that they get to touch and try out the instrument. That is not really something that we can do in videoconferencing; the instruments are precious and expensive, and there is no way that we can send them out to the schools. It is just not practical.

In addition, these culture workshops also provide opportunities for students to interact with the local Chinese community. During the interview, the program director stated that integrating the ACTFL community standards into the curriculum has been a big challenge for the program, because most of their students live in small towns or other places where there isn't a large Chinese community, and they don't have many opportunities to interact with a local Chinese

community. By inviting local artists to deliver culture workshops, students not only learn culture but also have a chance to interact with the local Chinese community, the program director explained,

> We have artists from our local [city name] community come, give workshops, we have one of them give us a calligraphy workshop. Another group of Chinese musicians, they live here in [city name], do workshops for students every year, they talk to the students about Chinese music. They let the kids come out and try the instruments and talk to the students about what is like to live here in [city name].

These cultural workshops are not only designed to address the culture and community standards by allowing students to interact with local Chinese communities, including musicians and artists, but it also addresses the connection standards by connecting the curriculum to other disciplines, such as music and art.

Summary

This section investigated the first research question, the *intended curriculum*: What are the curriculum goals for this blended language program? How are the three instructional modes, synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face, integrated to achieve the curriculum goals?

The findings of the study showed that the curriculum framework of this blended language program is developed using backward design process, with curriculum goals articulated in terms of the ACTFL 5C standards. Each of the instructional modes had its unique pedagogical features, and the modes focused on different language and culture content (See Table 4.3). By selecting appropriate content for different instructional delivery modes, the curriculum goal can be achieved in a structured and organized way.

Table 4.3 Summary of Each Instructional Mode

Instructional Mode	Pedagogical Features	Curriculum Content	Curriculum Goals
Synchronous	•Accessibility •Real-time interaction	•Oral language •Culture	Focuses on the communication standards; culture standards are embedded in the language curriculum.
Asynchronous	•Accessibility •Time flexibility •Self-paced	•Authentic materials •Form-focused materials •Cultural background materials in English •Lesson review materials •Challenge option materials	Address the culture and comparison standards by presenting culture excerpts from the target culture and inviting students to compare and discuss in the online forum; address the communication standards with interpretive listening and reading tasks.
Face-to-Face	•Socialization	•Summative assessment •Cultural workshops •Community activities	Focuses on summative assessment, where students demonstrate their communication performance in all three modes through participating in a variety of culminating activities; culture, comparison, connection and community standards are also addressed by allowing students to participate in various cultural workshops and interact with local Chinese communities.

2. The Taught Curriculum

Introduction

The *taught curriculum* is a teacher's specific operations of the intended curriculum. The taught curriculum involves the minute-to-minute, and day-to-day events that actually occur in the classroom. While the intended curriculum defines what is supposed to be taught, the taught curriculum is "what teachers, working alone in their rooms, actually choose to teach" (Cuban, 1995). In this blended language program, among the three instructional delivery modes, the videoconferencing classes requires the most teacher operations, and the teacher's choice about what to teach and how to present the language curriculum are influenced by many variables; such as the teacher's usage of technology to present the content, their communication strategies to engage distance learners and improve student-teacher relationship, as well as their philosophies toward classroom activity design and classroom management. The asynchronous online tutorials focuses on students' self-paced learning, and it is predesigned before the program begins; therefore, compared with the videoconferencing classes, the asynchronous instructional mode requires less teacher operation. Most of the instructional activities in the face-to-face instructional mode are designed to assess students' final performance, and it overlaps with the *tested curriculum*, which will be discussed in a later section.

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the course documents, classroom observations, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews of the seven language teachers, this section will describe how language teachers actually implement the curriculum in this blended language program through the three different instructional modes, and how they perceive blended learning based on their experiences.

Reaching Through the TV Screen: Engaging Distance Learners with Videoconferencing

This section will describe how the curriculum is taught in the videoconferencing class in great detail, including: (a) a description of the physical setting at the teaching site; (b) the teacher's usage of technology in the videoconferencing class; (c) communication strategies to engage distance learners; (d) strategies to improve the student-teacher relationship in a distance learning context; (e) classroom activity design for the videoconferencing class; (f) classroom management issues in a videoconferencing class.

(a) The Physical Setting at the Teaching Site

The teaching site was composed of 7 videoconferencing classrooms, located in a Midwestern university campus. A basic physical set up of a teaching site videoconferencing classroom included the following equipment: camera, monitor, an audio system with microphone and speakers, a control to place the call and adjust volume, and a codec device that formats the audio and video signals for transmission over the IDL network. In a teaching site videoconferencing classroom, the language teacher usually sits or stands behind a desk, facing a TV screen that displays live video from the remote site classroom, allowing the teacher to see and hear students' interaction in real time. The language teacher speaks to a camera installed right next to the television monitor, and their teaching activities are recorded by the camera and transmitted to the remote site. Each teaching desk is equipped with a desktop computer, and the computer monitor presents the curricular materials prepared by the language teacher. These materials include PowerPoint, internet web pages, and videos. The teacher can use a remote control to control volume, or to control which content will be present on the remote site TV screen.

In the remote site, students attend the language class in an interactive videoconferencing classroom located in their own school district. The classroom settings in the videoconferencing class look the same as a traditional classroom, except the teaching platform is equipped with a camera and one or several TV screens. Students sit behind their own desks and interact with their language teachers on the TV screen. In each remote site, a facilitator is physically present in the classroom, and his/her role is to help the distance language teacher in managing the physical classroom. Figure 4.4 presents the basic physical set up of the videoconferencing class at both the teaching site and remote site:
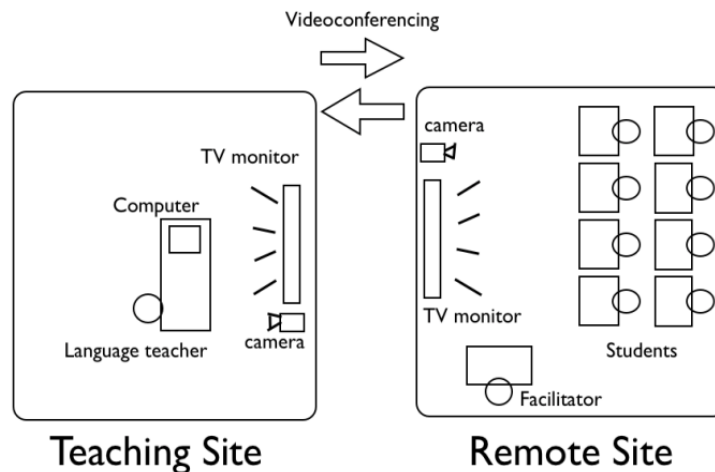
Figure 4.4: The Basic Physical Set up of the Videoconferencing Class

(b) Usage of Technology

By using the remote control, language teachers in the IDL videoconferencing class can control which content will be present on the students' remote site TV screen. For example, if selecting the "camera" setting, the school site will be able to see the teacher's performance captured by the teaching site camera. With the remote control, teachers can adjust the camera to focus on different angles of their office, and they can zoom in and zoom out. If selecting the "computer" setting, the remote control signal will connect to the teaching site computer, so

teachers can present PowerPoint slides, videos, animations, websites or other multimedia

curriculum materials on the remote site TV screen. If selecting the "projector" setting, the school

site will be able to see whatever the teaching site projector is focused on. The teacher can either

show printed materials or write on a small white board under the document camera. Figure 4.5

shows what the remote site TV screen looks like when the teacher chooses each of the three

different modes ("camera", "computer", and "projector").
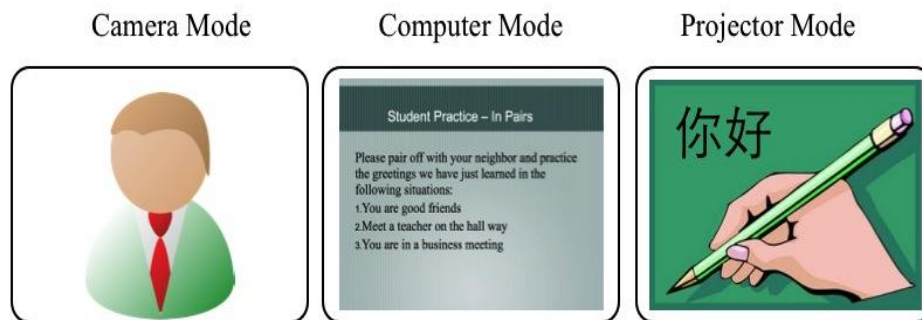
Figure 4.5: Remote Site TV Screen in Three Modes

Different from teaching in a face-to-face context, where students can see both the teacher

and the curriculum materials on the computer or projector, in the videoconferencing class,

language teachers have to make a choice among the three technology options ("camera",

"computer" or "projector"), because most of the students' remote site TV screens only allow

presenting one part of the content at a time. Some remote sites may support a "picture in picture"

function (e.g. when presenting PowerPoint, the teacher's face will also be displayed in the corner

of the screen). However, the teacher's image in the "picture in picture" mode is very small, and

students can hardly see the teacher's body movements or facial expressions. Therefore, in the

videoconferencing class, language teachers are not only responsible for designing instructional

activities, but also need to have a basic idea about using picture switching; such as when to

introduce curriculum through PowerPoint, how long the PowerPoint should be present on the TV

screen, and when to switch back to camera, allowing the teacher's image to reappear on the TV screen.

The following section will discuss how language teachers deliver the curriculum content in these three technology modes ("camera", "computer", and "projector") and what strategies they used in each mode to make the content engaging on the remote site TV screen.

b.1. Technology Mode 1: Camera

When teachers want their own image present on the remote site screen, they can select the "camera" option. The camera was preset by the IT staff to focus on 12 different angles of the teaching site office, and teachers can also use the remote control to adjust the camera angle during teaching. For example, when teaching vocabulary about emotions, teachers can choose a close up shot to emphasize their facial expressions; or when teaching vocabulary about different sports, teachers can choose a medium shot or panorama shot to emphasize their body movement; or adjust the camera to focus on the wall of the side of the teaching site office, so they can write or draw things on a big whiteboard. The teaching site TV screen is usually on "picture in picture mode", where the main content is the live video from the remote site classroom, and the small corner content is the image that is being displayed on the remote site TV screen. In that way teachers can not only interact with the distance students in real time, but also keep themselves aware of the content displayed on the students' remote site TV screen. During interviews, language teachers described the following teaching strategies to make the learning content more engaging in the camera mode:

1. Appropriate use of teaching props

In order to help students to understand the learning content in the target language, the teachers used different props to facilitate their teaching performance on the TV screen, including

a variety of realia and puppets. In the teaching site, each videoconferencing office has a big box containing a variety of puppets and realia related to the curriculum. For example, when teaching Unit 3, covering likes and dislikes in sports, the teacher can take basketballs, footballs or ping pong equipment out of the box, and use these realia as props to act out playing different sports. In the videoconferencing class, language teachers are required to use the target language a minimum of 90% of the time. Therefore, the appropriate use of teaching props allows language teachers to describe new language content without using English, and students can interpret the meaning of new words from the teachers' visual dramatic acting on the students' remote site TV screen.

Puppets are usually used to demonstrate a dialogue. Teachers can either hold a puppet and talk to the puppet to demonstrate a conversation, or zoom-in the camera and let two puppets demonstrate a conversation. By taking advantage of the camera angle, a lively puppet show can be presented on the students' remote site TV screen. Figure 4.6 shows what the remote site TV screen looks like when teachers use puppets.
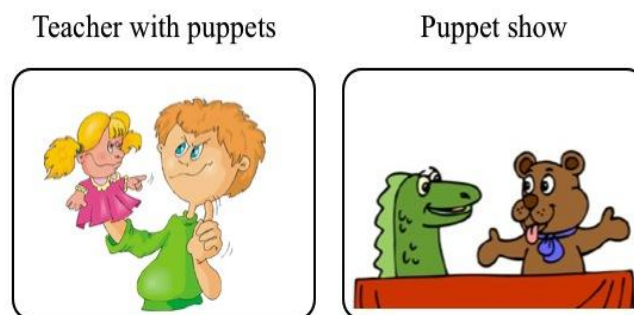
Figure 4.6: Teacher use puppets

Besides demonstrating dialogue by using puppets in a creative way, teachers can also explain some abstract language points using puppets. For example, how to teach concepts about "space" has always been a challenge for IDL teachers, because they are not physically present in

the same space with the students. During interviews, teacher B shared her strategy of teaching the concept "here" and "there" with puppets,

> In day 3, we were teaching "在这里(it is here)" and "在那里 (it is there)". So I have two bear puppets, and I told students "他叫小熊, 他在这里(His name is little bear. He is here.)". Then "shoo", I throw the bear to a corner behind me. Students were shocked by my action, saying "oh, no!". Then I ask them, "小熊在哪里(Where is the little bear)?" They say, "在那里(it is there)!" Because the bear is far away from me, and it looks even further from the students' perspective, so it is " 在那里 (there)".

Teacher B continued by explaining why she thought this is a good way to explain this language point:

> You are on the TV screen in the remote site classroom, so if you point out "这里(here)" or "那里(there)" for the remote site classroom, students' can't tell the difference. So, as a teacher, when you try to teach a new concept, you need to take into consideration students' perspective. For example, explaining " 这里 (here)" and " 那里 (there)" from the teaching site might be easier for students to understand, because they can notice the differences on the TV screen. So you throw the bear to a place that is far away from you, create a contrast between "这里(here)" and "那里(there)".

Teacher B believed that when designing an activity, teachers should always put themselves in the students' place to think about the problem, because what the teacher demonstrates at the teaching site and what students perceive on the remote site TV screen might be different. According to Teacher B, her surprising action with puppets engaged all of students in learning the new language concept.

2. Exaggeration of gestures and speech when acting

In the videoconferencing class, all of the teacher's body movements or facial expressions are presented on a TV screen. However, the size of the TV screens varies among different school sites, and in some school sites the TV screen is only 28 inches wide. In order to enhance the visual impact and attract the attention of students, the teachers' acting in the videoconferencing classroom must be more exaggerated than teaching in a face-to-face context. These exaggerated performances not only include the teachers' body language but also their facial expressions and

pronunciation, including intonation. During interviews, Teacher A explained why she thinks the teachers' performance needs to be exaggerated in the videoconferencing class,

> When you deliver the curriculum in the videoconferencing class, you can use your body language, facial expressions or body movements in the screen space. I think you need to use a more exaggerated gesture to express things, in that way students can see it better on a small TV screen. I think when delivering the curriculum, some subtle performance may not have that strong of a visual impact to the students, so it is hard to get their attention. Maybe it is because of the TV size, and also I think there is an obvious difference between expressing things for a TV camera and expressing things in a real life. For example, in a TV talk show, the host's facial expressions and the body language are exaggerated. When you pause for 1 second in real life, you may have to pause 2 to 3 seconds on TV, to make the audience notice that you actually made a pause on purpose.

Teacher B thought exaggerated performances also helps the teacher to build a better relationship with the students. She stated that,

> My students told me that they started to like me from the lesson about making comments about other people. In that lesson, I used exaggerated facial expressions to teach words like "很酷 (very cool)" or "很帅 (very handsome)". My acting is very exaggerated, and students love it. So I think body language is really important, not only in helping students to comprehend the content, but also to make them to think the teacher is their friend, lively and full of energy, rather than a rigid authority.

3. Managing facial expressions

In the videoconferencing class, what the teacher sees on the teaching site TV screen is the panorama view of the whole remote site classroom, so some details about individual students may not be noticed. However, what students see on the remote site TV screen is usually a medium shot or close-up shot of the language teacher, and every detail about the teacher's body movements or facial expressions will be captured by the camera for distance audience. Teacher A believed it is very important for language teachers to pay attention to their facial expressions on the TV screen, because any incautious, negative facial expressions may cause misunderstanding between a teacher and students. She explained,

> In the IDL videoconferencing classroom, the camera will capture all of your facial expressions; especially when the remote site TV screen presents a close up shot of the

teacher's face. Students are watching the TV screen all the time. Sometimes students' performance in class may make you upset or frustrated, and in a face-to-face classroom, the teacher may be able to hide this sign of teacher frustration by turning around or covering it by your hand gesture; so that students may not notice anything. However, in the videoconferencing class, every subtle expression on the teacher's face will be captured and amplified by the camera, and there is no way for you to hide it. When students watch the TV screen, they can feel everything, even though your negative expression might be insignificant, it still causes the misunderstanding between the students and the teacher.

Teacher A thought once the misunderstanding happens between the language teacher and students, it is difficult to resolve the problem and rebuild the relationship; in the IDL videoconferencing class, teachers can only see students within the 50 minutes class time (when the two sites are connected), and there is no other time for them to make personal contact with students to enhance their relationship. Therefore, Teacher A stated, "with this rigid time, little negative expressions today, and little negative expressions tomorrow, cause the misunderstanding, and it can't be resolved." For Teacher A, the mutual trust between a teacher and students is extremely important in a foreign language classroom, because students will be more brave to speak out in class and not feel shamed when they make mistakes.

b.2. Technology Mode 2: Computer

When selecting "computer" setting, the language teachers can either present PowerPoint slides or show students other multimedia materials on the teaching site computer. Most of the TV screens at the remote site schools can only present one mode at a time; therefore, when presenting a PowerPoint, the teacher's own image disappears from the TV screen and it is replaced by the PowerPoint. The content of the PowerPoint slides mainly consists of two parts: either introducing new learning content with Chinese characters and images, or explaining rules of a classroom activity in English. From interviewing with the language teachers, the researcher discovered that the language teachers' opinions about PowerPoint usage in the

videoconferencing class differ from one another. Some teachers believe that using PowerPoint is very necessary for their classes, because not every new word's meaning can be explained to the students with the teacher's acting or demonstration. Therefore, in order to deliver the curriculum in the target language, language teachers have to use a large amount of pictures to help students comprehend the learning content. For example, Teacher C shared her opinion about when to use PowerPoint in the videoconferencing class,

> I think you should use PowerPoint when you need to present a lot of pictures or words, because first it is not practical for you to hold that many big pictures in your hand, and PowerPoint can be used as a picture presentation; you can add as many pictures on the slides. Second, PowerPoint can serve as a blackboard or whiteboard; we only have a small physical whiteboard in the teaching site office, and we can't write too many words on it, so you can show PowerPoint instead. For example, when there is a long paragraph, you have to use PowerPoint. If it is a short sentence, you can write it on the whiteboard under the projector. I think the convenience of PowerPoint is that you can have a long paragraph and a large amount of pictures prepared ahead of time, so there is no time consumed for preparation in class. It is a shortcut.

During interviews, Teacher B indicated that using PowerPoint to describe activity rules in English is a clever strategy to get around the requirement of target language instruction. She explained her reason as follows,

> You are facing a complete beginner. If you have to give the instruction for an activity without speaking English, how am I supposed to explain the game? No matter how fantastic my body language is, they still can't understand. Many classroom activity rules are very abstract, and it is impossible for me to explain in the target language. So I think PowerPoint is a media that, on one hand explains the content by showing pictures, on the other hand, is a clever strategy to meet the requirements of using target language, but also to allow the students to understand what I want them to do. It is a clever strategy, so I think PowerPoint is very necessary.

However, some other teachers thought that the over-usage of PowerPoint may kill the language classes, because it decreases the teacher's social presence in the classroom. Teacher A stated her opinions as follows,

> PowerPoint is just pictures and characters, and the teacher constantly explaining and repeating the content with PowerPoint. I think on one hand, this is very boring, and on

the other hand, the teacher's social presence to the students becomes weaker and weaker. Students may feel that they are reading a book, or maybe listening to an audio book...this is just an audio book for them, they think they can do something else at the same time.

The researcher's remote site observation supported Teacher A's opinion. From sitting in the remote site classroom and observing the curriculum content presented on the TV screen, the researcher noticed that, if a teacher presented PowerPoint on the TV screen for too long and not switching back to their own image, the class became less engaging. Teacher D also doesn't like to use PowerPoint too often in the class, and she stated that,

If you show students PowerPoint, all they want to do is to write down everything on the PowerPoint slide, take notes. They spend a lot of time on writing notes, and I don't think it is necessary; they already have the handouts, and they can just use that for notes.

Teacher G noticed that the students' ability to pay attention to the PowerPoint is related to their age. She thinks younger students are more easily distracted from the PowerPoint, because it is hard for them to pay attention to the word and pictures on the PowerPoint slides. Younger students are more engaged with the puppet shows and the teacher's dramatic gesturing.

By selecting the "computer" setting, language teachers can also present videos, animations, websites or other multimedia materials on the remote site TV screen. For example, when teaching movie genres, teachers can present trailers of different types of Chinese movies to help students to comprehend the meaning of "戏剧电影 (comedy film)" or "动作电影 (action film)". By integrating these authentic multimedia materials in the videoconferencing class, students not only comprehend the learning content in the target language environment, but are also able to learn about the target culture. In addition, by selecting the "computer" setting, language teachers can also show students animations that they created with GoAnimate or Voki. These animations can be either used as kickoff materials in the beginning of the class or used as formative assessments (e.g. interpretive listening) at the end of the class.

b.3. Technology Mode 3: Projector

The projector used in the videoconferencing class usually serves the following two purposes: First, to demonstrate some printed materials to the students, such as non-digital paper copies of classroom exercises or other authentic materials; second, for error correction or detailed explanations. For example, Teacher D explained when to use the projector setting as follows,

> We mainly used the projector for error correction in the classroom, or explaining details about Chinese characters and pinyin, things that you want to emphasize or errors that need to be corrected in class. You can mark error corrections on the physical whiteboard under the projector; this is more suitable for short sentences. It can either be used for teaching or for providing feedback to students. When there is a long paragraph of words or grammar points, we don't usually write it on the whiteboard under the projector, but if they are short sentences, or grammar patterns, or a radical of a Chinese character, we will use the projector and the whiteboard to highlight that content.

b.4. The Importance of Switching

In this study, the researcher conducted classroom observations at teaching sites and remote school sites. Through the observations, the researcher discovered that although all of the teachers used the same set of lesson plans, their usage of remote control in content switching among the technology modes led to widely varied teaching results. However, this varied teaching effect could only be observed at the remote sites, and it was hardly noticed during the researcher's observations at the teaching sites. During the remote site observations, the researcher also noticed that the experienced language teachers were better at using remote control to switch curriculum content, so that the content presented on the TV screen was dynamic and diverse. When asked how the language teachers make decisions about content switching during teaching, Teacher C stated that,

> When we design the curriculum we will try to balance everything. In other words, when learning a new word or a new grammar point, we would like to have a variety of options. For example, the teacher might demonstrate the content first, and then use the puppets to act it out, or demonstrate with pictures, or use a piece of authentic material at the end. We

hope to use different forms to help the students to comprehend the content. Sometimes you need to guide students to practice the same language point many times, and it gets boring if you always repeat the same thing, so you can use different forms to help them practice. When you use different forms, the learning results are different, but it is for the same purpose, which is letting students to repeatedly review and memorize the same content.

New teachers switch the curriculum content relatively less than the experienced teachers. For example, some of them might present PowerPoint on the TV screen for too long and forget to switch back to the camera mode; the consequence is, no matter how passionate their teaching performance is at the teaching site, their social presence at remote site is very low, because all the students can see on the remote site TV screen is the PowerPoint, and they can only feel the teacher's presence through the audio accompanying the PowerPoint. During the interviews, the teachers pointed out that the reason that they don't like to switch is the signal delay. When they click on the remote control to switch from one mode to a different mode, there is a two second signal pause on the teaching site TV screen, and this pause makes them feel that their teaching was interrupted. However, through the remote site observations, the researcher found that the two second signal pause isn't noticeable on the remote site TV screen. For the remote site audience, the switch is instant and immediate, because during the two second pause period, the remote site TV screen still presents the previous signal. Teacher E suggested that during the two second signal pause time, teachers can keep talking and repeating the sentence structures, so that students won't notice the pause and still stay focused during the signal transition period.

(c). Communication Strategies to Engage Distance Learners

Although in the videoconferencing class teachers and students can see and hear each other, in terms of communication, compared with the face-to-face context, this distance communication in a 2D screen-based context still has limitations. For example, in a face-to-face classroom, many teachers will use some nonverbal cues to deliver classroom instructions; such

as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, touches, or physical spacing. For example, if a student didn't pay attention to the class, the teacher can either stare at the student, or walk toward the student, or knock the student's desk, to deliver a warning message; or if a teacher forgot a student's name, he/she can still use hand gestures to point out that particular student to answer a question. However, in the videoconferencing class, because the camera is focused on a static wide-angle view of the classroom, it is difficult for the teacher to use eye contact to give hints to individual students, and the 2D feature of the TV screen also makes it impossible for teachers to use hand gesture to engage a single student or a specific group. For example, Teacher A stated,

> It is almost impossible to use eye contact to communicate, because when you stare at the camera, students don't know who are you staring at, or if you use hand gestures to point at the camera, students don't know who are you pointing to, so it is impossible to use eye contact, or body language, or other nonverbal cues in teaching.

Therefore, in the videoconferencing class, using clear and detailed verbal instruction is extremely important. Based on the teacher interviews, detailed verbal instruction includes the following strategies:

1. Address student by name in individual exercises

For individual exercises, the teacher should always address the individual student's name to point out the responder for the question. For example, rather than trying to make eye contact and asking "你今天怎么样? (how are you today?)", an appropriate way to ask questions in the IDL videoconferencing classroom is: "Sarah, 你今天怎么样? (Sarah, how are you today?)" or "Nick, 你今天怎么样? (Nick, how are you today?)". In that way, without eye contacts or body gestures, students will still know who the teacher is referring to.

2. Describing group features in group exercises

When addressing groups in group exercises, since it is impossible to use eye contact or body gestures, the teacher can point out a specific group or divide students into different groups

by describing group features, such as: the first row of students, the second row of students, or the boys, the girls, or 14 years old students, or the long haired students.

3. Detailed activity instruction

For every classroom activity, instructions and rules need to be described to students in detail. The program requires that teachers use the target language to deliver the course content, so these activity instructions are usually listed on PowerPoint's in English rather than explicitly explained by the teacher in class, thus allowing the teacher to continue using the target language.

4. Immediate and individualized feedback

After a student gives a response to a question, no matter if the answer is correct or wrong, the teacher needs to give immediate feedback and also make sure to address the student's name as part of the feedback. For example, rather than saying "good job", an appropriate way to give feedback in the IDL videoconferencing classroom is: "Sarah, good job!"

Furthermore, in a face-to-face classroom, teachers can check whether students understand the course content by observing their facial expressions. When a student shows a confused face, the teacher immediately knows that the student may not understand the content. Teachers can also observe whether students are not paying attention in the class. However, according to the language teachers, this type of observation didn't work as well in the videoconferencing class, because the remote site camera can't capture individual student's facial expressions unless they walk in front of the camera. Teacher A described her experience in teaching a videoconferencing class as follows,

> When you ask a question, you can't see the student's facial expression very clearly, so you are not sure if the student is confident with the question or not; and you don't know if the student is willing to share his answers in front of the class. When you teach new content, you can't tell if the student understands it or not from observing their facial expressions, you have to rely on oral language to check with students over and over again. It causes difficulties in teaching. The teacher cannot use observation to make

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judgments, because the digital video is not as accurate as real face-to-face communication.

Therefore, according to the language teachers, in the videoconferencing class, rather than relying on observing student's facial expressions to make judgments, teachers should constantly give students performance tasks and check students' progress based on their performance in these tasks. All of these performances must be observable by the language teachers. If there is a non observable performance task (e.g. writing Chinese characters on paper), the teacher needs to check the progress with students orally.

(d). Improving Student-Teacher Relationships

In a face-to-face class, the communication between teacher and students is not limited to the 50 minute classroom time. For example, students can have personal chats with their teacher before or after the class to enhance understanding about each other. However, in the videoconferencing class, teachers can only interact with their students within this 50 minute classroom time. Teacher C pointed out that, compared with face-to-face classes, IDL teachers need to place greater emphasis on establishing relationships with students during the class time, letting students feel that their teacher is a real person, not just a video recording on the TV screen. During the teacher interviews, language teachers provided the following suggestions for improving student-teacher relationships in the videoconferencing class:

1. Create student portfolios

Teacher C and Teacher E both kept a portfolio for each student in their classes, recording a student's learning progress in the class, as well as some personal information about the student. Teacher E stated,

> In my class, I have detailed information about my students, such as what grade he is in, where he comes from, how old is he, when is his birthday, what color does he like, what

sports does he like, how many siblings does he have, and etc. I have records for all of this, and I will make a chart about them.

Teacher E believes that students are more concerned about their own life, and they are willing to share aspects of their life with others and they want attention from others. Therefore, rather than using celebrities as examples to practice the language, with this student portfolio, language teachers can create questions in class that are relevant to students' real life. By using students' portfolio information to practice the language, language teachers can also reduce the usage of PowerPoint and make the teacher-student interaction more personal and engaging. Teacher E also suggested that whenever there is opportunity for site visits, the teacher should learn more about the physical setting at the remote site, as well as the school cultures. During the class, teachers can use some of the remote site physical information or cultural information to practice the language; then students will feel that their teacher knows about their learning environment and is connected to them.

2. Let students know who you are

Both Teacher C and Teacher E believe that language teachers should also be willing to share their own information with the students in class. For example, Teacher C always shared her personal information; such as her age and her hobbies with students during language practice. She believes that when students learn Chinese with a native speaker, they want to know more personal information about a real Chinese person. "Mind reader" was one of her popular classroom activities, where students guess information about the teacher with the sentences patterns they have learned in class. According to Teacher C, students were very engaged in this activity, and every correct guess they made let them know more about the teacher and to personalize the teacher for them.

3. Establish positive classroom atmosphere

Teacher B thought a positive classroom atmosphere is very important for students' language learning, and her strategy was to make jokes in class using the students' currently learned sentence patterns, so that students could comprehend the new content in a fun and casual way. She shared her experiences as follows,

> For example, when we were learning "likes and dislikes", I asked my students, "[student name]喜欢 Lady Gaga, 对吗？ ([student name] likes Lady Gaga, is that right?)" I used Chinese to asked them that question, but they thought it was very funny; how come [student name] (the only boy in the class) likes Lady Gaga? Another example is that, I knew all of the students in my class hated Justin Bieber, so I would ask them questions like "你觉得 Justin Bieber 帅吗? (Do you think Justin Bieber is handsome?)", they will say, " ew, 不帅(not handsome)". You can use the language they have learned in class to make these kind of small jokes, and it is not only helpful in adjusting your classroom atmosphere, but also to make you get closer to your students.

Teacher C shared a different strategy for establishing a positive atmosphere among the students in her classroom; a peer support system. She stated that if there is one student who can't finish a task in her class, rather than having the teacher provide support, she will assign a student who had already finished the assignment to provide support. In this way, students would know more about each other, and the relationship between students would be improved in the class by helping each other.

4. Pay attention to individual feedback

During interviews, Teacher A, C and E all mentioned the importance of feedback in building relationships with students. For example, Teacher A stated that,

> In the classroom, for every little good performance students made, you should provide a very clear positive feedback. If it is in a face-to-face class, you may say, "very good", "not bad", or even just a smile. But in the IDL class, you should make clear by repeating this "very good", or raise your volume, or even use an exaggerated praise gesture to reinforce the positive feedback. This helps the students realize that the teacher is praising them, so that they will have a better motivation to stay engaged for the rest of the curriculum.

Teacher C believes that, even if a student has a wrong answer, in addition to error correction, teachers should still find a positive point in order to encourage that student. Both Teacher A and Teacher E mentioned that the teachers' written feedback on students' homework is a great way to enhance the student-teacher relationship, and it makes up for the time limitation in the IDL class. Teacher A stated,

> Normally, when you review students' homework, you will give a score or write "good job". But in the IDL classroom, you should try to write more words when you give feedback to students. In that way, students can read your words so that it makes up for the lack of before/after class time. You can leave more words on students' assignments to communicate with them, letting them know that the teacher likes you, and wants to see better performance from you, or the teacher has a very positive attitude to your learning, and hope you also build trust with your teacher, and accomplish things with the teacher in this new language class. This makes students feel that they are not learning the language by themselves at the remote site; they have a teacher to support them and help them, to learn the new language with them.

(e). Classroom Activity Design

According to Teacher B, classroom activity design is the biggest challenge for IDL language teachers. She stated,

> I think it is very difficult to design a good game that is suitable for the IDL videoconferencing context. Maybe you can easily implement a game, but is this game really suitable for the language points? Will your students be interested in the game? Will this game get everyone involved in the class? Is it easy to manage? For this special IDL videoconferencing context, is it easy to manage? These are all the things that you need to think about when you design a classroom activity. It is much more complicated than teaching in a face-to-face context.

Teacher B continued to explain why she thinks designing activities for the videoconferencing class is more complicated than designing activities for a face-to-face classroom. According to her, in a face-to-face class, language teachers can walk around the classroom, guiding individual students to accomplish the activity step by step; with hints from body gestures, eye contact, showing students realia, or even letting students touch the realia. However, in the IDL videoconferencing class, students can only receive oral guidance or on-screen visual guidance,

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and most of the time they have to use their own imagination to understand the games and scenarios in the activity.

Designing a good classroom activity is difficult in an IDL videoconferencing class, but it is not impossible. During the interview, language teachers provided the following suggestions about how to design activities in the IDL videoconferencing class:

1. *Activities should follow in proper sequence*

The sequencing of the classroom activities played an important role in a foreign language environment. Beginning with increasing student understanding through interpretive listening activities, the teacher then goes to interpersonal and presentational speaking tasks, making sure that students have comprehended the language input before they can produce language output. In the IDL videoconferencing class, language teachers are required to use target language at least 90% of the time; and they are not allowed to use English to explain any linguistic content to the students. Therefore, any sequencing mistakes will cause students' confusion in understanding the curriculum content. The following chart shows an example of some instructional activities in one of the IDL classes (See table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Instructional Activities in the IDL Videoconferencing Classes

Curriculum Goal	I can ask about someone's physical/emotional state and express an appropriate verbal reaction about self
IDL Classroom Activities	1. Introduce the state of being words by displaying pictures and modeling facial expressions and body language.
	2. TPR: teacher says the words and the students react by "acting out" the mood or state of being.
	3. Draw it! Teacher says the words and the students sketch faces showing the appropriate expressions on sheets of paper.
	4. Learn to say it: the teacher says the words, accompanied by pictures and asks the students to practice saying them.
	5. Shout it out! The teacher acts out a mood or state of being and the students guess what it is.
	6. Use short video clips to show people asking and answering the question: "How are you today?"
	7. Use puppets or models with a partner to demonstrate question and response.
	8. Pair work: students practice asking each other and responding 你今天怎么样？How are you today? 很好、马马虎虎、不好、很累、很无聊、很困、很开心、不开心 Good, So-so, not good, tired, bored, sleepy, happy, down.
	9. Use pictures (of celebrities, anyone) to introduce "he/she." "He/she is tired," depressed, happy, etc.
	10. Pair work: students ask and answer the question, then report when called upon about the current state of their partner.

2. Activities should be within the camera focus

Teacher F pointed out that any activities that require large movements in the classroom are not suitable for an IDL videoconferencing class, because students may easily walk outside the camera focus; if that happens, the teacher will lose control of the classroom, because the teacher cannot see what students are doing off-camera.

2. Activity rules should be simple and clear

The program requires target language instruction, and all of the activity rules are presented on PowerPoint in English. Therefore, the activity rules should be simple enough for students to understand without a teacher's oral explanation in English. The activities rules should also be straight forward, so that students can accomplish them without the teacher being physically present in the classroom to give them extra guidance.

3. Activities should be interesting and engaging

Teacher C believed that compared with face-to-face classes, activities in the IDL videoconferencing class should be more interesting and engaging, to reduce students' feeling of fatigue from staring at the TV screen. Teacher B pointed out that teachers should always stand in the students' perspective when thinking about the activity design. She stated,

> I think the teachers should put themselves in the classroom to think about the activity design: if I am a student who is playing this game, what is the interesting point about this game? I know the game can help me practice the language, but I am sleepy and tired. You (the teacher) told me this is a game, but from my perspective, this is very boring, and I have no interest to play it.

Teacher B believed that the "game essence" in the classroom activity is as important as the language material, and without the "game essence", any classroom activity is just a boring language drill and practice. During interviews, Teacher B described the game "hot potato" as an example to explain the concept of "game essence". Hot potato is an activity where students pass a book around; when the music stops, the person holding the book must stand up and speak in Chinese about new content they have learned. Then the student sits down, the music starts, and the students start passing the book around again until the music stops again. Teacher B explained why she thinks hot potato is a good activity with a "game essence",

> The music we used is 快乐崇拜(Happy Worship). This fast music quickly wakes up students and makes them excited. In addition, there is an uncertainty in this game. As a

teacher, you can actually have certain students to participate in the activity by the teacher controlling the music. You can stop the music when he/she has the book, but students don't know that. Therefore, there is a game essence within this activity. Every activity should have a game essence. You may not be able to design every activity to be as exciting as "hot potato", but with each activity, you should at least have something to make students laugh, or wake them up, or good music, or an interesting concept, or just a little bit of uncertainty.

According to Teacher B, "uncertainty" is when students participate in the activity and they don't know when it will be their turn to talk. Teacher B believed that the element of "uncertainty" in a classroom activity is what makes the difference between a boring language drill and an exciting language game.

(f). Classroom Management

In the videoconferencing class, because the language teachers are not physically present at the remote site classroom, facilitators play an important role in classroom management. The facilitator roles are usually served by teachers or staff from the school districts. The basic responsibility for a facilitator includes: turning on/off the equipment, collecting student homework, handing out instructional materials that are assigned by the language teacher, and helping with classroom management. From interviewing with the language teachers, the researcher discovered that all of the teachers agree that the facilitators should have these logistic duties in the videoconferencing class, but their perceptions toward the facilitators' responsibilities in classroom management are conflicting.

For example, Teacher A believed that, during the videoconferencing class, the language teacher is responsible for curriculum delivery, and the facilitator is responsible for classroom management. She stated that,

I think in the IDL videoconferencing classroom, it is actually like you split a teacher into two copies. If it is a face-to-face class, the teacher is not only the content delivery person, the person who teaches the foreign language, but also the person who is in charge of the classroom discipline. However, in the IDL videoconferencing context, the teacher's role

is limited to language instruction on the TV screen, and their role in classroom discipline management has been shifted to the facilitator; so the facilitator plays an important role in videoconferencing class.

However, Teacher F didn't agree with this view point, and she stated that over-relying on the facilitator to take charge of the classroom discipline used to be one of her misconceptions when she first started teaching,

> In the beginning I thought that I am only responsible for teaching, and the facilitator is responsible for classroom management. I wasn't familiar with the discipline at his school site, so he should be in charge of the students' attendance or making sure that the students would pay attention to the class, and all I need to do is curriculum delivery. I thought I was just a teaching robot, but actually that is a wrong conception about my role. After I had more experience in teaching the videoconferencing classes, I realized that the facilitator only plays a supporting role in classroom management, and I am the one who plays the leading role.

Teacher C and Teacher E both agreed with Teacher F in that the language teacher plays a leading role in classroom management, and the facilitator is only responsible for a partial limited classroom management at the remote site. They believe that language teachers can still manage the classroom by giving students commands orally, and the facilitator only needs to be involved in classroom management when there are discipline issues that require a teacher to be physically present in the classroom, such as taking a student to the principal's office, or taking away a student's cell phone.

For Teacher B, facilitators' intervening for classroom discipline doesn't matter to her, because she believes that learning is all about interest, and if students are not engaged in the class, it is the teacher's failure in teaching. She believes that rather than counting on the facilitator to force students to participate in class, language teachers should try to design a better curriculum to attract students' attention, because students can only learn when they are interested in the content. Facilitators' intervening in classroom discipline may force students to sit still and watch the TV screen, but it doesn't guarantee that students are actually absorbing the curriculum

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and not thinking about, for example, some movies they watched with their friends the previous day.

For facilitators, one of the main challenges is when to intervene in the class, because the curriculum is delivered in the target language; most of them have no previous knowledge about the target language. Even though Teacher A expected facilitators to be more responsible for classroom management, she also admitted that the facilitator's role in classroom management is not easy. She explained that,

> If the facilitator doesn't know what the language teacher is teaching, then the facilitator doesn't know what the next procedure for the class is: are students supposed to listen to the teacher and keep quiet? or should students practice language with their partner? or should they follow the classroom activity instruction to move around the classroom? If the facilitator doesn't know this procedure, they don't know when to participate or intervene in the class for discipline issues.

Therefore, most of the teachers think a facilitator should only intervene in the class when the language teacher asks them to do so, and it is not necessary for them to intervene in the class on their own initiative. In this case, the communication between the language teacher and the facilitator is very important.

Beyond the TV Screen: Integration of Self-Paced Online Learning Materials

A typical distance learning day in this blended language program consists of four periods: three synchronous classes taught by native Chinese teachers via IDL videoconferencing technology (period 1, 2, and 4), and one asynchronous class, where students can access the online tutorials developed by the language institute and explore the curriculum content using a laptop (period 3). The following chart (See table 4.5) presents the daily class schedule for the first eight days of distance learning.

Table 4.5: A Typical Distance Learning Day (Day1-Day8)

Period 1: 8:30-9:20am	IDL Videoconferencing: "Homeroom Teacher" introduces new material, review of previous materials
Period 2: 9:30-10:20am	IDL Videoconferencing: Rotate teachers, expansion of new material
Period 3: 10:30-11:20am	Flex (self-paced) period: Supervised by "Homeroom Teacher" Students use self-paced online materials, with instructor guidance, get tutoring online, and work on FLIP camera projects and other assignments.
Period 4: 11:30-12:30	IDL Videoconferencing: Rotate teachers, transformative and assessment activities

The asynchronous online tutorial aims to provide a break from the intensive real-time interaction in the videoconferencing classes; so that students can have opportunities to learn the curriculum content at their own pace and explore some additional language and culture materials based on their personal interests. During this flex period, language teachers do not teach any curriculum content, but the remote site classrooms are still connected with the teaching site via IDL videoconferencing. If students have questions regarding the online tutorials or other assignments, they can still interact with their teachers in real time.

All of the language and cultural materials posted online were developed by the instructional designer before the program begins; therefore, compared with the videoconferencing classes, the asynchronous instructional mode requires less teacher operations. In addition, before the program begins, a guideline for each day's flex period learning tasks is mailed to the school facilitators, so that they can monitor students' online learning performance at the remote sites. Table 4.6 shows an example of flex period tasks for Day 4.

Table 4.6: Flex Period Tasks

Day 4 Lesson 3 Tasks

A: Required Tasks:

- Review Day 4 vocabulary with **Audio Glossary**
- Review Day 4 dialogues with **Scenario Practice**
- Explore authentic video clips and websites related to the unit theme, and share your thoughts on **Culture Discussion Forum**
- Go to **Wuhan Student Survey** folder, work on Wuhan Sports Survey task (you can use the glossary to look up new words)
- Go to **Chinese Characters** folder, read **Radicals**
- Finish **Character Assignment 2**
- Go to **Ear Training** folder, listen to tone 1 and tone 2 audio files recorded by native speakers, then finish **Ear Training Section 4**
- Go to **Chinese Pinyin System** folder, read **Finals Lesson 1**
- Work on your **Poster**: sports

B: Optional Task:

- If you want to learn more Chinese expressions related to this unit, you can check out the materials in **Challenge Options** and finish the Challenge Option tasks in the Discussion Board

Based in part upon the formative assessment and observation/analysis of the needs of the class as a whole, language teachers can make adjustments on each day's flex period learning tasks. For example, if the teacher thinks all of the students have mastered the core curriculum in class, the teacher would encourage them to spend more time to explore the challenge option materials online. Language teachers can also adjust the flex period learning tasks based on individual needs. For example, if the teacher thinks a student needs to improve pronunciation, the teacher would ask the student to check out the ear training tutorial or the pinyin tutorial.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Integration of Online Learning Tutorials

From interviews with the language teachers, the researcher discovered that all of the teachers hold positive attitudes toward the integration of the self-paced online learning tutorials in their language classrooms. The perceived benefits can be summarized as follows:

1. Supporting Differentiated Instruction

During interviews, language teachers pointed out that integrating the self-paced online learning materials is a great way to support differentiated instruction in a language classroom. For example, Teacher D stated that students' language proficiency levels are different, and by

providing the challenge option materials online, students can adjust their learning based on their

own needs; if they think the class is too easy for them, they can explore the challenge option

materials to learn some additional content. Teacher C believed that different students have

different learning styles; while some students quickly master the curriculum content in class,

others might draw inspiration at home from reviewing the online materials by themselves.

For Teacher E, integrating self-paced online learning tutorials provides equal

opportunities for every student to practice the language in class, especially for the ones who need

extra time. She explained her reasons as follows,

> If you ask students to do the exercises like ear training together, what most likely will
> happen is that, there are always some students that are most participative, and they will
> directly speak out the answers in class. In the meantime, some other students might need
> more time to process the materials and think about the answer. For this group of students
> (students who need more time), the self-paced learning materials work better for them.
> Although they might have to spend more time on the materials, it is much better than just
> hearing someone else speak out the answer in class. I want every student to have the
> opportunity to practice the language in class.

2. Promoting Culture Exploration and Discussion

Due to the target language instruction requirement, teaching culture to novice learners

has always been a challenge for language teachers. However, this issue can be easily addressed

by introducing the cultural materials in the asynchronous online platform, including authentic

language and culture materials as well as cultural background materials in English. During

interviews, Teacher F pointed out that,

> It is not easy to use the target language to explain the target culture to the novice learners.
> In the IDL videoconferencing class, we mainly focus on teaching the language, and I feel
> like it is very difficult to explain the culture to students clearly. For example, how can I
> use Chinese to explain to students what is 古筝(a 16–26 stringed musical instrument), or
> what is 二胡(a two-stringed bowed musical instrument), or how to play them?
> However, for this kind of cultural information, if students watch the video clip by
> themselves, they can get the feeling visually and aurally, and it gives them a deep
> impression about the instrument.

Teacher A also agreed with this viewpoint, and she stated that, in the IDL

videoconferencing class, what a language teacher can do is to permeate some basic idea of the

target culture in the curriculum content, but for other in-depth culture information that requires

explicit introduction, it should be posted online for students to explore by themselves. In this

way the same topic can be presented to students from different angles.

For Teacher B, introducing the cultural materials online can help her save time in the

classroom. She stated that every minute in her videoconferencing class is valuable, and she wants

to use this precious time to help her students to practice the target language as much as possible;

there is no extra time for her to use English to discuss the cultural information in class. In

addition, Teacher B is also concerned that once students start to use English to discuss the

cultural issues in class, it would be very hard for the teacher to push them back to the target

language mode.

In this blended language program, most of the cultural materials posted online are

followed with a culture discussion forum (written format, in English), where students are asked

to discuss a variety of cultural topics and share their thoughts with their peers and teachers.

Teacher D believes that compared with in-class discussions, the online cultural discussion forum

allows more time for students to think about the topic; thus it promotes high-level, in-depth

reflection. From reviewing the online materials, the researcher also discovered that, not only the

students, but the language teachers were also very participative in the cultural discussion forum.

They replied to most of the students' comments, sharing their personal cultural experiences.

During the interviews, Teacher E indicated that by interacting with students on the culture

discussion forum, language teachers not only share the target culture information with students,

but also improve their relationship with the students, because "students like to receive attention

from their teachers". Teacher E believes that a good student-teacher relationship motivates students to learn the new language and encourages participation in class.

3. Information availability and accessibility

Information availability and accessibility is another benefit of integrating asynchronous online tutorials perceived by the language teachers. With the online platform, students can access the language and culture materials anytime-anywhere. During the interviews, Teacher A pointed out,

> If you ask students to find these resources by themselves, on one hand, they don't have enough time; on the other hand, they don't know where to search. I think as a language teacher, I am a native speaker and I came from the target culture, so it is much easier for me to find these authentic materials. However, if you ask a language learner to search for the same resources from the target culture, they don't really know where to start. Therefore, by providing students' this online platform with all the available resources, you actually helped them to save a lot of time, so that they can take the time to do something else, such as explore the authentic materials provided by the teacher, or to practice listening and to reading.

Teacher A also stated that, compared with the intensive videoconferencing classes, the self-paced online learning materials provides comprehensible language input to students in a less stressful way. She explained,

> In the IDL videoconferencing classroom, students are reinforced to produce language output in a very intensive way, especially oral language output; and the CourseSite emphasizes on providing comprehensible language input, and this input was delivered to students in a fun and casual way, where students don't have to deeply concentrate on the learning content throughout the class, or intensively pay attention to every detail of the teacher's words or body movements. The CourseSite strike a proper balance between work and rest, it is more relaxing, and it is more about students' self exploration.

During the interviews, Teacher G pointed out that the online platform not only makes the information available and accessible to the students, but also to the parents, especially the ones who want to keep track of their children's learning progress.

4. Increasing students' learning motivations

The self-paced online learning materials in this blended language program include a variety of authentic language materials related to the unit topic. Teacher A believed that these authentic materials can increase students' confidence in learning the new language, which motivates further learning. She explained,

> After they have learned something in class, they can immediately understand some authentic materials, such as a short video clip of a Chinese TV show, or a short conversation from a Chinese drama. I think this is a good motivation for them, and it promotes their further language learning.

Teacher G also confirmed this viewpoint. She stated that,

> The online materials can help the students to practice and apply what they have learned in class. These are the authentic language and cultural materials that students can see everywhere in real life in the target culture. Students need to have a motivation in order to have persistence in learning, and the materials online, especially the authentic materials; it promotes their interests in learning.

In spite of generally positive attitudes towards the integration of self-paced online learning materials in class, some teachers also express their concerns during the interviews. These concerns can be summarized as follows:

1. Sense of losing control in teaching

From interviews with language teachers, the researcher found that some teachers were not comfortable with shifting all of the learning responsibility to the students, and they felt they had to give up control of their students' learning when they replace the synchronous instruction with asynchronous online learning materials. For example, during the interviews, Teacher G stated that,

> The biggest challenge for me is that it (the asynchronous online learning) is not under my control. I can see students staring at their computer screen, but I don't know what they are doing. If their facilitator is not responsible, or if the students are playing computer games, I would have absolutely no idea.

Teacher D also expressed the same concerns during interviews, and she stated that,

> For the teachers, you don't know whether students were really using the online tutorial at the remote sites. For example, I know they have clicked the audio glossary, but are they really listening? I can't see their computer screen, and I don't know what they are doing. They clicked the culture videos, but did they watch the whole clip, did they really pay attention to the content? We have so many authentic materials online, but do they really understand them?

2. Lack of detailed, in-depth feedback on students' learning progress

With the Grade Center in the online software platform, language teachers can keep track of a students' learning progress, such as whether a student has submitted an assignment, or what scores a student earned for each individual assignment/activity/test. However, some language teachers pointed out that this quantitative data (e.g. a final score listed in the Grade Center) is not sufficient to reflect students' learning progress. For example, during the interviews, Teacher H stated that,

> I don't know whether students have done all the tasks listed online. I hope there is something that shows me whether students have done it or not, but it is not something like a score on a test, but something with more feedback from the students. I hope they actually went through all of the online materials, and actually had some thoughts on these materials.

For Teacher A, rather than knowing the students' learning "result", she was more interested in their learning "process", which are the "how" and the "why" questions. She explained as follows,

> There is a grade center in the CourseSites, showing students' performance for some required online activities, but what we see is the final result. In other words, it is the score. There is no way for us to know how the student gained that score, why he/she made a mistake in a question, or why he/she got the other question correct. Rather than the result, I am more interested in the process: why did the students answer the question right/wrong.

During interviews, language teachers also provided some suggestions on how to improve the asynchronous online tutorial to meet their teaching needs. These suggestions can be

identified as: (1) integrate more learning tasks with online materials; (2) integrate the online materials with in-class discussion.

In order to help the language teachers to gain more detailed information about students learning progress, Teacher D suggested that the online tutorial should integrate more learning tasks; each piece of language/culture content (e.g. a video clip, an audio, and etc) should follow with at least one learning task, and require students to submit their responses or feedback to the teacher. In this way, teachers can check whether students have understood the online materials or not. Teacher D also suggested that if the online responses indicated that most of the students do not understand the materials, teachers can discuss the particular material in class.

Teacher B also expressed a similar sentiment from a different perspective. According to Teacher B, the asynchronous online learning materials in this blended language program emphasize providing students comprehensive language input; however, in order to make the language input meaningful, the online platform should provide more opportunities for students to produce the language output. For example, Teacher D suggested that after students heard a large amount of Chinese tone samples online, in addition to the existing learning tasks of identifying the tonal difference, there should be an output task, where students can record their voices and evaluate their own pronunciation. During the interviews, Teacher B also indicated that some form-focused materials, such as Chinese characters, should not only be introduced as a set of asynchronous online tutorials to the students, but also be taught by the language teachers in the videoconferencing classroom. In this way, students not only receive language input (e.g. knowledge of Chinese characters) online, but also have an opportunity to practice writing the characters with the teacher's guidance, to "produce output", and make the received input more meaningful.

Jumping Off the TV Screen: Meeting Students in Real Life

After the eight-day distance learning classes, students take a two-day face-to-face field

trip with their classroom facilitators to the teaching site. They meet with their language teachers

and peers in-person, and participate in various language and cultural activities. The following

chart (See table 4.7) presents the daily schedule of the face-to-face field trip.

Table 4.7: Daily Schedule for the Face-to-Face Field Trip (Day 8 evening to Day 10)

Day 8 (evening)	7:30 p.m. -10:00 p.m. Ice-breaking activities, poster decoration contest, mystery guest game, seal-making
Day 9 (full day)	8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Poster talk rehearsal/final filming/group interview filming/ film editing and polishing 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. Film Editing 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Calligraphy Workshop/Traditional Chinese Music Workshop 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Poster talks
Day 10 (full day)	9:30 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Red Carpet Rehearsal 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Red Carpet Interviews, followed by Film Screenings 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. After Festival Party, with culture stations – abacus, chess, go, Jianzi, calligraphy, paper cutting, etc. and GreatWall Chatspace writing

In the face-to-face instructional mode, language teachers don't teach any new curriculum

content. Each teacher is assigned to a group of students, and their role is to assist the students to

accomplish the final projects. For example, before students shoot their group film with a hand

held FLIP camera, language teachers first help the students to practice the script in an office;

either helping them to look up a new word, proofreading grammar, or giving them feedback on

pronunciation. During the filming process, language teachers also help students to rehearse their

lines before each scene, so that students can present their best pronunciation in the film.

Although language teachers don't directly teach students any new curriculum content, from working on the group film projects, students still learn some additional language content. Teacher D explained in her interview,

> Students expanded their vocabulary, because the language content we learned in class isn't enough to cover the plots in the films. Students didn't study the new content consciously; however, from working on the group film project, students learned more new vocabulary and sentence patterns.

Students' pronunciation also improved from the film making process. During the interviews, Teacher D stated that before students shoot a scene for their film project, they practice their lines over and over again, making sure that they have pronounced every word correctly.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the last two days of the face-to-face learning focuses on culminating activities. These activities include mystery guest, poster writing/talk, and a film festival of student group produced short films with red carpet interviews. Since the culminating activities also serve as summative assessments for the program, more details about each activity will be discussed in the later chapter, the *tested curriculum*. The following section will discuss language teachers' experiences and perceptions toward the face-to-face instructional mode from an overall perspective.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Physical, Face-to-Face Meeting

From interviewing the language teachers, the researcher discovered that all of the teachers think that the two days of the face-to-face field trip is the most significant component of this blended language program, and the program wouldn't be the same without this component. The perceived benefits of integrating a physical, face-to-face meeting in this summer language program can be summarized as follows:

1. Bridge the video world to the real world

During the interviews, Teacher A pointed out that, although with the videoconferencing technology, the language teacher and students can see and interact with each other in real time, the physical separation can still lead to feelings of isolation and unreality. She explained,

> It (IDL videoconferencing class) feels like you are playing a computer game or watching a TV program. It is still different from interacting with people in a real physical world. Although you can see the teacher every day, for eight days, four hours a day, I think the feeling of isolation and unreality still exist.

In the face-to-face instructional mode, language teachers jump off the TV screen and interact with students in real life. Therefore, according to Teacher A, the integration of a physical, face-to-face meeting brings the students from the video world to the real world. During interviews, Teacher A stated that, by interacting with language teachers and peers in person, students will realize that the videoconferencing classes are just as "real" as other traditional face-to-face classes in school; their language teacher is a real person, not just a video image on the TV screen. Teacher A believes this confirmation (the feeling of reality) will help students to build a positive attitude toward their future distance learning experiences.

2. Demonstrate language skills through accomplishing real-world tasks

In the face-to-face instructional mode, students need to cooperate with their peers, using the language content they have learned in class to complete some real-world tasks; such as interviewing native speakers of their age (i.e. Chinese undergraduate students at the university) , producing a short film, etc. During the interviews, Teacher G indicated that these real-world tasks can help students to apply their language skills to real-life communication. She stated,

> The activities we have, such as film making and poster talk, emphasize application and communication, and it provides a better opportunity for the students to apply the language in real life, not just learning the language or reciting a script. These activities can give students a basic idea about how to apply the language in their life, because they have to use the language in order to finish these activities.

Teacher C also expressed the same viewpoint in her interviews. According to Teacher C, the curriculum design for the two days of the face-to-face field trip resembles a final project exhibition. Through accomplishing the final projects, students will realize what they can do with the language they have learned in the previous eight days' distance learning experiences. Teacher C believes that this student self confirmation helps them to build confidence and self esteem in learning a new language.

3. *Promote comparison and competition among peers*

In the face-to-face instructional mode, students not only meet their language teachers in person, but also meet their peers from other school districts and interact with them in real life. During interviews, Teacher C indicated that by collaborating and interacting with their peers, students not only confirm their own language ability, but also gain knowledge on how other people learn the language and what they can do with the language they have learned during the program. Teacher C thinks this peer comparison will have a positive influence on promoting students future language learning.

For Teacher B, competition always creates better motivation. Most students are naturally competitive. Therefore, the competitive nature of the final projects (e.g. poster talk is an individual competition, film production is a group competition) provides a strong motivation for students to practice the language. During the interviews, Teacher B explained,

> They (students) know they are going for a competition. They want to show their best performance in front of their peers...In order to present a better performance, they will take initiative to ask the teacher questions, and try their best to improve their language skills.

4. Foster cultural exchange and exploration

During the interviews, Teacher B indicated that the biggest significance of integrating

face-to-face activities is in fostering cultural exchange and exploration. In this blended language

program, all of the language teachers are native speakers from China; according to Teacher B,

each teacher also represents the target culture. Although the online platform integrates a variety

of images and videos about Chinese culture, learning the target culture from interacting with a

real Chinese person in a real life context still feels different. Teacher B shared the following

example,

> When we have lunch together, we talked about the meaning of hand gestures in different cultures. Students told me what are the bad hand gestures in their cultures, and I told them what are the bad hand gestures in Chinese culture...so there is a cultural interaction between the teacher and the students, which brings a cultural comparison. In this way, students will learn more about your culture.

In the face-to-face instructional mode, students also had opportunities to try some

physical, hands-on activities to increase cultural engagement; such as holding a brush pen to

write Chinese characters in the calligraphy workshop, touching and trying out some traditional

Chinese instruments in the music workshop. During the interviews, Teacher F shared her

experiences in teaching students how to play Chinese shuttlecock, *jianzi*, during the culture

station activities in the two days of face-to-face meeting:

> There are some physical, hands-on activities that can only be done in the face-to-face instructional mode. For example, in the culture stations I am in charge of *Jianzi* . You can't really teach students how to play *Jianzi* in the videoconferencing class. On the CourseSites, all he/she can see is how other people play it, and they can't experience that by themselves. In the culture station, I taught students how to play *Jianzi*, and they learned it very fast.

Teachers' Perspectives on Blended Learning

At the end of the interviews, language teachers were asked to share their perceptions toward the combination of the three different instructional modes (synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face) in their language classroom. The findings showed that all of the language teachers acknowledge the positive effect of blended learning on developing students' language communication skills and cultural awareness. They expressed a positive impression of blended learning and appreciated its accessibility and flexibility, as well as its role in pedagogy improvement.

1. Accessibility and flexibility

Increasing language learning accessibility is the main practical benefit of blended learning identified by the language teachers. While the videoconferencing technology bridged the geographic barriers and expanded language learning access to students from rural districts and other schools that cannot offer Chinese, the asynchronous online tutorials allow students access to the language and cultural materials anytime-anywhere. Teacher F stated in her interview,

> Implementing IDL videoconferencing and online learning can utilize educational resources and bring great benefits to school districts, especially the ones that are located in remote rural areas, lack teaching resources, or limited by budget.

Time flexibility is another practical advantage of blended learning identified by the language teachers. Due to the budget limitation, many schools can not afford to hire a full-time foreign language teacher, especially for a less commonly taught language like Chinese. To keep the full-time employment status, some language teachers had to teach more than one school district. During the interviews, Teacher D indicated that by integrating videoconferencing technology and self-paced online learning tutorials, language teachers don't have to physically

travel to different school districts to deliver the curriculum; thus, for language teachers, a

blended learning model offers convenience and time efficiencies. She stated,

> We don't have to run to different schools to teach the classes. Compared with some other
> teachers who have to spend a lot of time and energy on transportation, rushing to
> different schools and classrooms, it (the blended learning model) is a great advantage for
> us.

During the interviews, Teacher D also pointed out that by saving time on transportation,

language teachers can spend more time on designing the curriculum and improving their

teaching skills.

2. Pedagogy improvement

In addition to the practical advantages, most language teachers also expressed that they

have experienced pedagogical improvement in this blended language program. They found that

by combining the best components from the three different instructional modes (synchronous,

asynchronous and face-to-face), a blended learning model can overcome the disadvantages of

each single instructional mode. For example, Teacher A explained in her interviews,

> I think the integration of the three different instructional modes is better than any single
> mode, either face-to-face only, or online only, or IDL videoconferencing only. The
> integration of three modes, 1+1+1 is absolutely bigger than 3. This is not just a simple,
> mechanical add-on. I think the integration maximizes the advantages and minimizes the
> disadvantages of each instructional mode, having the modes support one another.

Teacher F used the online discussion board as an example, explaining how the disadvantages of

one instructional mode can be addressed by the advantages from another instructional mode:

> I really like the online discussion board in our website. I think it addresses the
> shortcomings of IDL videoconferencing teaching. In the IDL videoconferencing class,
> the teacher and the students can't interact with each other after the class is over, but with
> the CourseSites, we can interact with students on the discussion board.

Teacher H also expressed the same sentiment from a different perspective,

> The instructional modes support each other. For example, I can't spend all day with a
> student, speaking Chinese with him/her. There should be something that students can

explore by themselves... I think the online platform is a good solution. With the online platform, the teacher can guide students to explore things by themselves, and then give them feedback. In this way, it (student learning) is not totally controlled by the teacher, but it is still guided by the teacher. I think the online platform is a good supplement for the things that we can't do in a regular classroom.

In this blended language program, each of the instructional modes has its unique pedagogical features, and they are suitable for different language learning content. Therefore, according to Teacher H, a blended model can address different aspects of language learning and meet the needs of different learning styles. She explained her sentiments as follows,

> For example, the online activities are very helpful for basic language form practice, such as grammar drill and pronunciation drill, and these kinds of activities are better done through online practice. The videoconferencing is very effective; teachers can employ various instructional methods to interact with students and create a communicative classroom environment. In the last days of the face-to-face instruction, students learn how to apply the language in real life, and they can hear more accurate and authentic Chinese pronunciations.

Teacher D also expressed a similar sentiment in her interviews,

> For a brand new concept, of course, it requires the teacher's delivery, teaching in the videoconferencing class. For the lesson review, or some challenging content that pushes students learning to a higher level, students can explore online by themselves. The brand new content is not suitable for self-paced online learning. The content that requires a strong sense of participation is suitable for face-to-face instructional mode, I mean the activities that students can only understand through physical participation.

During the interviews, Teacher E indicated that integrating a variety of instructions and delivery modes can diversify the language classroom and enhance student engagement in learning the new language. She explained her reasons as follows,

> We have classroom teaching, and we also give students some time for self-paced learning, letting them review the content and explore some new content by themselves. Then they come here for the residential camp, and experience real and live Chinese culture...It (blended learning) diversifies the language classroom and makes language learning more engaging. If I have to teach four videoconferencing classes in a row, even the teacher would feel exhausted. So it (blended learning) diversifies teaching methods as well as students' learning experiences.

At the end of the interview, language teachers were asked to provide some suggestions on how to improve a blended course in the future. These suggestions can be identified as:

1. Carefully select learning content

In order to make the blended learning design more effective, Teacher A suggests that language teachers need to carefully select learning content for each of the instructional modes, maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages of each instructional mode. She explained,

> First we need to identify the desired results; what we expect students to be able to perform at the end of the program. Then we can divide content into videoconferencing and online activities, and determine which content is suitable for videoconferencing and which content is better for uploading online for students to practice at their own pace. The face-to-face instruction also needs to be closely tied into the videoconferencing and online activities; in that way, students' performance will better meet the teacher's expectations.

Teacher A also suggested that language teachers should have a good theoretical understanding of each instructional mode. For example, knowing some basic theories about mass-media communication would be helpful for engaging the distance audience in the videoconferencing classes, and knowledge about game design theories would be beneficial for developing the self-paced online tutorial, making the content more appealing to high school students.

2. Collaboration and teamwork

During the interviews, Teacher F pointed out the importance of teamwork and peer collaboration in implementing blended learning in a foreign language program. For example, Teacher F said in her interviews,

> It (blended learning model) requires the language teachers to spend more effort on planning the curriculum, and it also requires great teamwork and collaboration. Effective communication is also important, such as the communication skills with school facilitators...This is something that can't be accomplished by one person.

Teacher H also mentioned the importance of peer support in her interviews. She suggested that new language teachers can be paired with experienced classroom facilitators, because facilitators play a very important role in the videoconferencing classes; with their help, new language teachers can learn how to manage the classroom as well as how to effectively communicate with the students.

Summary

This section investigated the second research question, the *taught curriculum*: how is the curriculum taught in different instructional modes? How do language teachers view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

Among the three instructional delivery modes, the videoconferencing classes require the most teacher operations. Although the language teachers used the same set of lesson plans (the intend curriculum), their actual teaching performances presented on the remote site TV screen were widely varied. Table 4.8 presents some specific instructional strategies that language teachers used in the videoconferencing classes to engage distance learners.

Table 4.8 Instructional Strategies in Videoconferencing Classes

Usage of technology	•Appropriate use of teaching props •Exaggeration of gestures and speech when acting •Managing facial expressions •Appropriate curriculum content switching among the three technology modes (camera, computer and projector)
Communication strategies	•Address students by name in individual exercises •Describing group features in group exercises •Detailed activity instruction •Immediate and individualized feedback

Improve student-teacher relationship	•Create student portfolios •Let students know who you are •Establish positive classroom atmosphere •Pay attention to individual feedback
Classroom activity design	•Activities should follow in proper sequence •Activities should be within the camera focus •Activity rules should be simple and clear •Activities should be interesting and engaging
Classroom management	•Manage the class by giving students commands orally •Collaborate with classroom facilitators for discipline issues that require a teacher to be physically present in the classroom

Compared with the videoconferencing classes, the asynchronous instructional mode requires less teacher operation, because the online tutorials focus on the students' self-paced learning, in addition to being predesigned before the program began. However, language teachers can still make adjustments to each day's flex period learning tasks, with the adjustments based in part upon the formative assessment and observation/analysis of the needs of the class as a whole, or based on individual student needs. In the face-to-face instructional mode, language teachers didn't teach any new curriculum content; rather, each teacher is assigned to a group of students, and their role is to assist and guide the students to accomplish their final project. Most of the instructional activities in the face-to-face instructional mode are designed to assess the students' final performance, and it overlaps with the tested curriculum, which will be discussed in a later section.

3. The Learned Curriculum

Introduction

The *learned curriculum* is the curriculum that students take away from the class. While the intended curriculum defines what is supposed to be taught and the taught curriculum defines what teachers choose to teach, the learned curriculum is the knowledge and skills students actually acquire from the class. According to Cuban (1995), the *learned curriculum* overlaps with but differs significantly from the intended curriculum and the taught curriculum. In the blended language program under analysis, learning and teaching don't occur in the same location. In addition to the language teachers' instruction on the TV screen, the students' learning experiences in the remote site classrooms are influenced by many other factors. For example, in the synchronous instructional mode, students' learning experiences can be influenced by the physical setting of the remote site classrooms (e.g. the videoconferencing equipment), as well as the classroom atmosphere in the remote sites. The students' effective usage of the asynchronous online learning tutorials at the remote sites is also related to many variables, such as the computer configurations used at the school, the internet speeds, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulations in online learning, or even the facilitator completing certain logistic duties.

In order to understand how the curriculum is learned from the students' perspective, the researcher traveled to four remote sites to observe how students interact with their distance language teachers on the TV screen and how they use the online tutorials for self-paced learning. Based on the classroom observations, as well as informal conversation and in-depth interviews with the facilitators and the students, this chapter will describe how students actually learn the curriculum in different instructional modes, and how they perceive blended learning based on their experiences.

The Four Remote Sites

There were eight school districts across four different Mid-western states that participated in the blended language program. The student population in these school districts were diverse in terms of socioeconomics, ethnicities, races, and religions. In this study, four school districts, representing a wide range of variation in this blended language program, were selected as classroom observation sites to provide rich contexts for exploration. The districts include one inner city urban school, one college-town school, one suburban school, and one rural school. The following section will introduce some basic information about the four participating remote school sites.

Remote Site 1

Remote site 1 is a four-year college preparatory Magnet School located in the urban area of a large mid-western city. The total high school student population is around 600, with more than 80% minority enrollment (including 58% African American students and 21% Hispanic students) and more than 60% of economically disadvantaged students. Before enrolling in the school, students are required to take an entrance exam. The high school currently offers five foreign language courses during the academic year, including Spanish, French, German, Latin and Chinese. All of the foreign language courses are taught in a face-to-face classroom setting.

Six students from remote site 1 enrolled in the summer blended language program, and all of them had had at least one year of Chinese learning experience in a face-to-face context before the summer program began. All of the students were recruited by Facilitator A, who also works as the Chinese language teacher during the academic year at the Magnet School. Among all of the participating schools, remote site 1 is the only school that currently offers Chinese during the academic year in a face-to-face classroom. As a non-native Chinese-speaking teacher,

Facilitator A indicated in his interviews that the summer blended language program gives his students a chance to interact with multiple Chinese native speakers and it is not an opportunity they would normally have with him as their teacher. Therefore, while all of the other participating schools consider accessibility to a Chinese language program as the most important reason for implementing blended learning, for students from remote site 1, who already had Chinese offered during the academic year, being able to practice the target language with native speaking Chinese teachers was the primary reason for enrolling in this summer language program.

Remote Site 2

Remote site 2 is a four-year high school located in a Midwestern college town. The high school has a student population around 1000, with 21% minority enrollment and 23% economically disadvantaged students. The high school currently offers five foreign language courses during the academic year, including Spanish, French, German, Latin and Chinese. All of the foreign language courses are taught in a face-to-face setting, except Chinese. The Chinese courses are delivered by native Chinese-speaking teachers from the same language institute that offers the summer program via IDL videoconferencing technology. According to Facilitator B, who also works as a school counselor during the academic year at remote site 2, the high school has been partnered with the language institute for more than six years; the implementation of distance learning maximized educational resources and expanded students' language learning access. She explained,

> There are a lot kids interested in learning foreign languages, and I think that the distance learning is a good way to bring a language that we don't have regular teachers available to teach. I know that our teacher serves both high schools in [city name], so that we are maximizing our resources, which is very good. I think that our kids are part of a world that is multilingual, and that they need to have the opportunity to expand the languages, so I think it is preparing them for their future.

Six students from remote site 2 enrolled in the summer blended language program; including three zero beginners, one heritage speaker, and two students with one year of Chinese learning experience. During the interviews, Facilitator B indicated that the students from their school enrolled in the summer language program for various reasons: some of them are just generally interested in the language and culture; one student was adopted from China and is now living in an American household, so she wants to know about the culture from where she came; one student is a heritage speaker, fluent in speaking the language, but she wants to practice reading and writing. In addition, among the six students who signed up for the summer blended language program, four of them also enrolled in the academic year Chinese program in the coming fall. Thus, participating in the summer camp gave them opportunities to get a jump start on learning the new language.

Remote Site 3

Remote site 3 is a four year high school located in a suburban area of a mid-sized mid-western city. The high school has a student population around 1500, with 21% minority enrollment and 14% economically disadvantaged students. Due to budget cuts, the high school currently only offers three foreign language courses during the academic year, including Spanish, French, and Chinese. The Spanish and French courses are taught in a face-to-face classroom setting, while the Chinese courses are delivered by native Chinese-speaking teachers from the same language institute via IDL videoconferencing technology. According to Facilitator C, who works as a school IT technologist, as well as being the classroom facilitator during the academic year Chinese program at their school, their high school has been partnered with the language institute for five years. She believes that the implementation of distance learning gives students

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extra opportunities to learn a new language when the high school can't afford to hire a regular teacher.

Nine students from remote site 3 enrolled in the summer blended language program, including seven zero beginners, and two students with one year of Chinese learning experience. All of the nine students also enrolled in the academic year Chinese program during the following Fall; thus, the language learning experiences in the summer camp helped the students to be better prepared and more competitive for their academic year Chinese courses.

Remote Site 4

Remote site 4 is a four year high school located in a small mid-western town. The high school has a student population around 500, with 20% minority enrollment and more than 50% economically disadvantaged students. Currently the high school only offers two foreign language courses during the academic year; Spanish and Chinese. The Spanish courses are taught in a face-to-face classroom setting, and the Chinese courses are delivered by native Chinese-speaking teachers from the same language institute via IDL videoconferencing technology. The high school has been partners with the language institute for four years. In this small, rural, and isolated mid-western town, this partnership is the only opportunity that students have to access a less commonly taught foreign language like Chinese.

Among all of the participating schools, remote site 4 has the lowest student enrollment number. Only two students enrolled in the summer language program, and both of them are zero beginners. Neither of the students had enrolled in the academic year Chinese program in the coming fall. The students were recruited by Facilitator D, who also works as a Spanish teacher during the academic year.

Observations of the Videoconferencing Classes

From classroom observations at the four remote sites, as well as informal conversation and in-depth interviews with the facilitators and the students, the researcher found that the students' learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes are influenced by many variables. All of the variables, including the physical setting of the videoconferencing classroom, the language teachers' instructional styles on the TV screen, and the classroom atmosphere in the remote sites, had an impact on the students' learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes.

The Physical Setting of the Remote Site Classrooms

In the remote sites, students attend the language class in an interactive videoconferencing classroom located in their own school district. A basic set up of a videoconferencing classroom at the remote school sites should include at least the following equipment: a camera that captures the interior of the classroom, a monitor that presents the live video of language teacher's performance as well as the instructional materials, and an audio system with microphones and speakers. However, different remote school sites vary widely in terms of the specific videoconferencing equipment used in the remote site classrooms, such as the type of the monitors (e.g. LCD, CRT), the size of the monitors, the quality of the sound systems, or whether the videoconferencing system supports presenting both the teacher's image and the instructional materials at the same time on separate video screens,. The following section will describe the physical setting of each remote site classroom in great detail and how it influenced the students' learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes.

In remote site 1, the summer IDL videoconferencing classes took place in a distance learning lab located in the school facilities. During the academic year, the distance learning lab is

used to enable students to access upper level courses that might not be offered at their school due to limited enrollment. These classes are taught by instructors located at other high schools in the district via videoconferencing technology. The distance learning lab is a large-sized theater style multimedia classroom with three rows of desks on tiered levels. The teaching platform in the distance learning lab is equipped with two large Smartboards (each about 80" W × 50" H, hanging on the front wall): one presents the live video of the language teacher's image captured by the camera at the teaching site office, and the other one presents the teaching materials displayed on the teaching site computer screen, such as PowerPoints and other multimedia instructional materials. The size of the language teacher's image on the Smartboard is close to their actual physical size, and it is displayed in high resolution. The distance learning lab is also equipped with a surround sound system, so that students can hear clear and realistic sound from the teaching site in every corner of the learning lab. On the top of the front wall in the learning lab, a camera is placed between the two Smartboards. The camera captures the interior of the remote site classroom, with the signal being sent to the teaching site and displaying on the teaching site TV screen. In addition to the two large Smartboards on the front wall of the learning lab, there are also four 32 inch flat screen TVs hanging on both of the sidewalls; two of them present the teacher's video image, and the other two present the multimedia teaching materials. Figure 4.7 presents the basic physical set up of the distance learning lab:
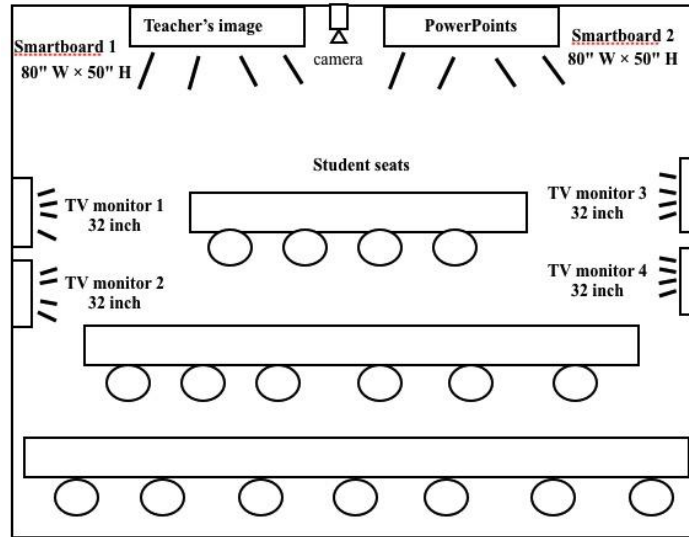
Figure 4.7 Remote site 1

In remote site 2, the summer IDL videoconferencing classes took place in a medium-sized regular classroom located in the school facilities. The same classroom is also used for the IDL Chinese language program during the academic year. The physical layout of the videoconferencing classroom looks the same as any other traditional high school classrooms. The classroom has three rows of desks; each student's desk is equipped with a microphone to capture the student's voice, with the audio signal being sent to the teaching site. The interior of the classroom is decorated with various Chinese cultural crafts, cultural posters, as well as language projects (e.g. vocabulary chart) that students made in class during the academic year. The videoconferencing classroom at remote site 2 is equipped with eight 32 inch flat screen TVs, with four hanging on the front wall in the classroom and the other four hanging on the back wall in the classroom. Only one TV screen (hanging on the left side of front wall) is actually being used in class to present the curriculum content, and the rest of the TV screens do not support signals from the teaching site. All of the flat screen TVs are hanging on the upper wall near the ceiling, so that students have to raise their head to watch the curriculum content that is presented

on the video screen. A camera is placed on the top right corner of the front wall, capturing the

interior of the remote site classroom, with the video signal being sent to the teaching site and

displaying on the teaching site TV screen. The facilitator has her own work station in the left

corner of the classroom, and this area is not captured by the camera. Figure 4.8 presents the basic

physical set up of the videoconferencing classroom:
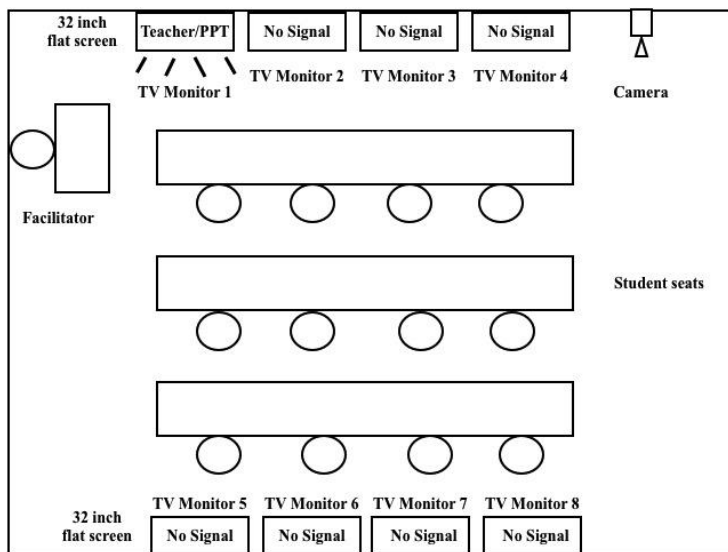
Figure 4.8 Remote site 2

In remote site 3, the summer IDL videoconferencing classes took place in a very outdated

multimedia classroom that has not been updated for more than 13 years. In the past few years,

the multimedia classroom was used to enable students to access some of the core curriculum

(e.g. English, Sociology, Psychology etc) that was taught by instructors located in a regional

state university. Currently, the multimedia room is only used for the IDL Chinese program

during the academic year. The videoconferencing classrooms in remote site 2 and remote site 3

are very similar to each other in classroom size, interior decoration, and the physical layout.

However, compared with remote site 2, the videoconferencing equipment used at remote site 3 is

more outdated. The teaching platform in the multimedia classroom is equipped with four old

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style CRT (cathode ray tube) TV screens; each TV screen is about 27 inches wide, hanging on

the ceiling against the front wall. Just like remote site 2, the students at remote site 3 also have to

raise their heads to watch the curriculum content that is presented on the video screen. Among

the four CRT TV screens, only the one on the left side is actually being used in class to display

the live video from the teaching site, and the rest of them do not receive video signals. Because

the multimedia room was also used in the past as a sending site for teachers to project the courses

out to the other schools in the district, there are also four CRT TV screens hanging in the middle

of the ceiling, facing the teaching platform. Figure 4.9 presents the basic physical set up of the

multimedia room:
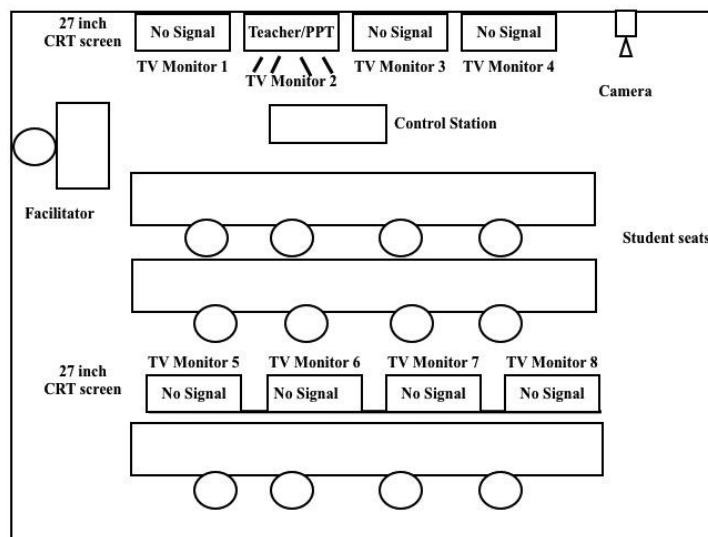
Figure 4.9 Remote site 3

In remote site 4, the summer IDL videoconferencing classes took place in a distance

learning lab located in the school facilities. Similar to remote site 1, the distance learning lab at

remote site 4 is also a large theater style multimedia classroom with three rows of desks on tiered

levels. The same classroom is also used for the IDL Chinese language program during the

academic year. The teaching platform in the classroom is equipped with a 42 inch flat screen TV,

hanging on the ceiling against the front wall in the classroom. Different from the other three

remote sites, the curriculum content is not displayed in full screen on the TV at remote site 4, rather it is displayed in a 27 inch inset window, along with another small window in a corner of the screen showing a live video of the interior of the remote site classroom (captured by the camera at the remote site). Thus, although there is a large monitor at remote site 4, students can only perceive the curriculum content in a 27 inch inset picture in the 42 inch flat TV screen. Figure 4.10 presents the basic physical set up of the multimedia room:
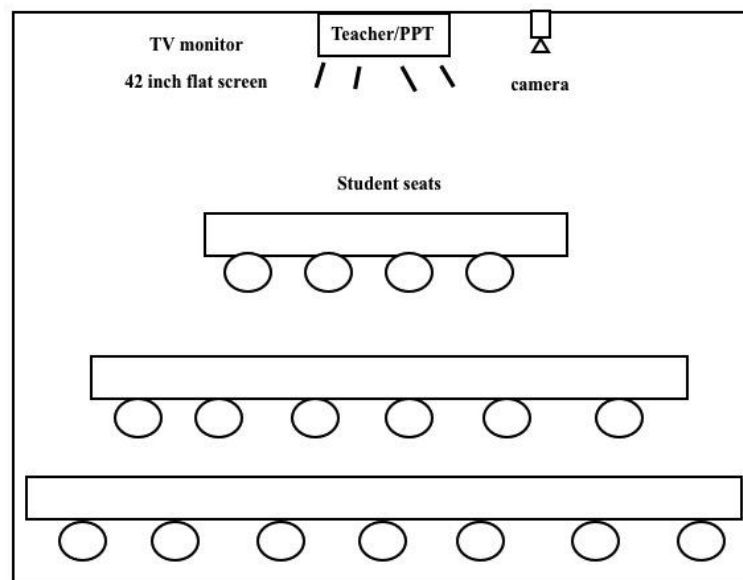
Figure 4.10 Remote site 3

From the classroom observations at the four different remote sites, the researcher discovered that, even though the curriculum was delivered by the same language teacher, the physical setting and the specific technology used in the remote site classrooms, had a large impact on students' learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes. Among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, remote site 1 had the best physical classroom environment as well as the most advanced videoconferencing equipment. It is also the only videoconferencing classroom that supports presenting both the teacher's image (captured by the teaching site camera) and the instructional materials (displayed on the teaching site

computer) at the same time on different video screens; so that language teachers don't need to worry about content switching when delivering the curriculum to the students at remote site 1. Thus, for the students from remote site 1, with the two large-size high resolution Smartboards, surround sound system, theater style seating, as well as the language teachers' dramatic performance and the integration of various engaging multimedia materials, the learning experiences in the videoconferencing class almost resembled the experiences of engaging in an interactive presentation in a theater.

Unlike remote site 1, the TV screens at remote site 2 and remote site 4 only allow presenting one part of the content at a time: when the teacher's image appears on the TV screen, the students are not able to see the PowerPoint or any other multimedia materials; when presenting the PowerPoint on the TV screen, the live video of the teacher's image disappears on the TV screen. Therefore, when delivering the curriculum to the students at these two remote sites, language teachers need to have a basic idea about using picture switching, such as when to introduce curriculum materials through PowerPoint, how long the PowerPoint should be present on the TV screen, and when to switch back to camera, letting the teacher's image reappear on the TV screen. Due to this technology restriction, the language teachers' usage of picture switching had a significant impact on students' learning experiences at these remote sites. More details will be discussed in the later section about the teachers' instructional style on the TV screen.

Among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, remote site 3 has the most outdated videoconferencing equipment. Students have to raise their heads to watch the video content displayed on a 27 inch CRT TV hanging on the ceiling against the front wall. Thus, although the videoconferencing system at remote site 3 enables the language teachers to use a "picture in picture" function (i.e., when presenting PowerPoint, the teacher's face will also

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be displayed in the corner of the screen), due to the small screen size, the researcher found from the classroom observations that the "picture in picture" function has no practical use at remote site 3. The language teacher's image in the inset window was very small, so that students can hardly see the teacher's body movements or facial expressions. Through classroom observations, the researcher also noticed that the students who sat on the third row in the classroom could hardly see the classroom activity instructions on PowerPoint because of the small font size. In addition, the large amount of text in the PowerPoints also led to a very tiring reading experience for the students.

Language Teachers' Instructional Styles on the TV Screen

In each remote site, students received language instruction from three different language teachers. Although all of the language teachers used the same set of lesson plans, their performance on the remote site TV screen widely varied. From classroom observations at the four remote sites, the researcher found that the language teachers' different instructional styles, especially their usage of remote control in content switching among the technology modes, had an impact on the students' engagement in the videoconferencing classes.

For example, among the three videoconferencing classes the researcher observed at remote site 2, the first and the third teacher successfully engaged all of the students in learning through integrating a variety of well designed, appropriately sequenced classroom activities, as well as proficient picture switching between camera mode, computer mode, and projector mode for different instructional needs. Both of them delivered the curriculum using the target language throughout the whole class, and every student in class was able to follow the instruction and complete the classroom activities. However, in contrast with the active participation in the first and the third videoconferencing classes, the second language teacher failed in engaging the same

group of students in class, and most of her classroom activities turned to chaos. During the 50 minute class time, she has to constantly use English to get students' attention; most of the students were still confused with her classroom directions. Through observations, the researcher noticed that the second language teacher lacked experience in using picture switching; she left the remote site TV screen on PowerPoint mode most of the time and forgot to switch back to the camera mode. Therefore, compared with the other two language teachers, her social presence at remote site 2 was very low, and the students could only feel the teacher's presence through her voice behind the PowerPoint. Without seeing the language teacher's presence and supervision on the TV screen, the students became less motivated in participating in the classroom activities. The findings from interviews with students from remote site 2 also support the researcher's observations. During the interviews, Student 4 pointed out that when the language teacher left the PowerPoint on the TV screen for too long, "the class gets boring", "the students get tired of staring at the TV screen", and "they would stop paying attention to the class". Student 3 also expressed the same sentiment during the interview. She stated that,

> I prefer the teacher (on the TV screen), because they would explain it better than the PowerPoint. PowerPoint is just pictures, but if you have someone talking to you, it is more fun doing it.

Student 3 also mentioned in the interview that when she didn't understand the new curriculum content, some language teachers would immediately switch from the computer mode (PowerPoint, etc) back to the camera mode (teacher's video image) and explain the content to her "face-to-face". As one of the zero beginners in class, Student 3 appreciated what the teachers did to help her learn the new language, and she thought it felt more personal than just explaining the content with PowerPoint presentation.

The same scenario also happened in remote site 3 and remote site 4. By dramatic performances with the teaching props, creative usage of camera angles, as well as appropriate picture switching, some language teachers successfully engaged every student in participating in the language curriculum, and the learning experiences in these classes was like engaging in an interesting TV show. However, some other teachers failed in engaging the same group of students in class. They left the remote site TV screen on PowerPoint mode most of the time, so that the learning experiences in their classes was just like listening to a boring and dull audiobook. Students from these two remote sites also indicated that compared with PowerPoint instruction, they preferred to see the language teacher's video image on the TV screen. For example, during the interviews, Student 6 stated that,

> I like the fact that when they keep their faces there, it is kind of reassuring, since you can't see your teachers because they are not physically there. If their faces are there (on the TV), it is like I can ask her questions or she can explain things to you; I like it better that you can see her...If there is just a voice and a slide show, I would be dead in that class. I like it that they show their faces and their presence.

In addition to appropriate usage of picture switching, language teachers' communication strategies also played an important role in engaging the distance students in learning the language curriculum. From classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher found that the students are more participative in classes where the language teachers' presence on the TV screen is personal and friendly. For example, among the 12 videoconferencing classes (3 classes at each of the four remote sites) that the researcher observed for the study, students were most engaged in Teacher E's class. Through observations, the researcher noticed that compared with other teachers, Teacher E is particularly good at making personal connections with students. For example, she always began the class with greeting each individual student with a smile, which immediately focuses the distance students' attention to the TV screen. Whenever she talks to an

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individual student in class, she would lean her body toward the camera, look at the student (by staring at the camera in the teaching site office), and always has a smile on her face. After the student gives a response to a question, she would immediately provide positive and individualized feedback to the student, by addressing the student's name as part of the feedback (e.g. "Sarah, good job") as well as using a very exaggerated praise gesture to reinforce the positive feedback (e.g. thumb up).

Interestingly, this varied teaching effect can only be observed at the remote sites from the students' perspective, and it was hardly noticed during the researcher's observations at the teaching sites. Furthermore, due to the various technology conditions among different remote sites, these varied teaching effects was less noticeable in remote site 1, but more prominent in the other remote sites, especially the ones with the small sized and single working TV screens.

The Classroom Atmosphere at the Remote Sites

From the classroom observations at the four remote sites, the researcher discovered that compared with the classroom scene that is displayed on the TV screen at the teaching site office, the actual classroom atmosphere at the remote sites is much more active and engaging. For the language teachers, their perceptions of viewing the remote site classroom on the teaching site TV screen is similar to watching a surveillance video; the remote site camera only captures a static wide-angle view of the classroom. However, for the students at the remote sites, with the language teachers' dramatic performance, the integration of various engaging multimedia materials, the creative usage of camera angles, as well as appropriate picture switching, the learning experience in the videoconferencing classes is like engaging in an interactive TV show.

In terms of the specific learning atmosphere in the videoconferencing classes, different remote school sites vary. For example, in remote site 1, students are particularly engaged in

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language games. Rather than sitting still in chairs, listening to the lectures, and writing notes, students participated in the classes through playing different games; they have to constantly imitate and repeat the target language with the teacher, as well as making hand gestures, body movements, and facial expressions. During the interviews, Student 1 described his language learning experiences in the videoconferencing classroom as follows,

> When we learn the names of different sports, you have to act out which sport they are talking about; or when we learn the word "horror film", you have to pretend that you are scared.

Student 1 also explained why he liked these activities in his interview,

> You will remember the game when you think about the word, and you will recognize it faster, and the games are also fun.

In contrast with the active participation in the language games, the researcher noticed from the classroom observations that the students from remote site 1 are less engaged in the language activities that lack a "game essence", such as peer work, where students are divided into pairs and asked to practice the language with their partner. In this activity, some students are either not responding to their partner, or chatting in English with their partner. Whenever this happens, the facilitator's authority in the classroom management and discipline becomes important. During the classroom observations, the researcher noticed that whenever there is a student not paying attention in the class, or not following the language teacher's directions, the facilitator would immediately warn that student, either through eye contact (staring at the student), or walking toward the student and standing right in front of the student. These warning messages are delivered to the students silently without interrupting the language teacher's instruction in the videoconferencing class.

Compared with remote site 1, students from remote site 2 and remote site 3 were more self-disciplined in participating in the videoconferencing classes. Without the language teachers'

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physical presence in the classroom or the facilitator's active involvement in classroom management and discipline, students from these two remote sites were still actively involved in learning the language curriculum. They were attentive and responsive in most of the classroom activities, not just the activities with a "game essence". Differently from remote site 1, where the facilitator always had to walk around the class and be actively involved in classroom management, the facilitators at these two remote sites were less involved in classroom discipline issues; rather, they sat at their own work stations most of the time, working on logistics, such as preparing the printed instructional materials, uploading students' video projects to the computer, organizing students' homework, etc. However, their work stations are outside the camera focus at the remote sites classrooms; thus, during the researcher's classroom observations at the teaching sites, these two facilitators were almost "invisible" on the teaching site TV screen.

Among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, remote site 4 had the least active learning atmosphere. Through observations, the researcher discovered that the lack of active engagement in the remote site 4 videoconferencing classroom is mainly caused by the small number of enrolled students. On the day of the researcher's site visit, only one student attended the class (only two students enrolled in the program). Thus, without peer communication, no matter how passionate the language teacher's presentation was, it was difficult to create the same positive classroom atmosphere in remote site 4 like the other three remote sites had. Due to the low class attendance, most of the group activities planned in the curriculum could not be accomplished at remote site 4; the student could only practice the language through repeating and imitating from the language teachers, and she/he did not have the opportunity to apply the language in communicating with peers in class.

Students' Usage of the Self-Paced Online Learning Materials

After two 50 minute videoconferencing classes, students returned to their seats, opened the laptops on their desks, and were guided by their language teachers to login to the CourseSite, where they explored the self-paced online learning materials. Table 4.9 shows an example of the online tasks that students were expected to complete during the 50 minutes' flex period:

Table 4.9: Online Tasks

Day 4 Lesson 3 Tasks

A: Required Tasks:

- Review Day 4 vocabulary with **Audio Glossary**
- Review Day 4 dialogues with **Scenario Practice**
- Explore authentic video clips and websites related to the unit theme, and share your thoughts on **Culture Discussion Forum**
- Go to **Wuhan Student Survey** folder, work on Wuhan Sports Survey task (you can use the glossary to look up new words)
- Go to **Chinese Characters** folder, read **Radicals**
- Finish **Character Assignment 2**
- Go to **Ear Training** folder, listen to tone 1 and tone 2 audio files recorded by native speakers, then finish **Ear Training Section 4**
- Go to **Chinese Pinyin System** folder, read **Finals Lesson 1**
- Work on your **Poster**: sports

B: Optional Task:

- If you want to learn more Chinese expressions related to this unit, you can check out the materials in **Challenge Options** and finish the Challenge Option tasks in the Discussion Board

From the classroom observations, the researcher discovered that although all of students used the same set of online tutorials, the actual learning effect among the four different remote site classrooms were widely varied. In addition to the design of the online tutorials, the students' self-paced online learning experiences in the remote site classrooms were influenced by many other variables. All of these variables, including the technology availability in the school districts, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulation in online learning, or even the facilitator completing certain logistic duties, had an impact on the students' effective usage of the self-paced online learning tutorials.

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Technology Availability

Just as important as how the physical set up and the specific videoconferencing equipment used in the classroom impact the students' learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes, the technology availability in each school site, including the computer configurations used at the school, the internet speeds, and the use of headphones, also had a direct influence on students' self-paced online learning experiences.

Computer configuration. In order to enable students to access all of the content posted online, an email request with a list of the specific computer configuration information was sent from the language institute to all of the classroom facilitators before the summer program began; they were asked to consult with the school IT departments about using the configuration requirement provided to setup the laptops for students' self-paced online learning. These configuration requirements included changing the school firewall settings for internet access, allowing students to access all of the authentic language and culture videos posted online, and installing certain web browser plugins, such as audio player and flash player, so that all of the multimedia content could be displayed on the laptops appropriately.

From classroom observations at the four remote sites, the researcher discovered that, except for remote site 1, the online tutorials worked as they were designed on the curriculum; students were able to view all of the learning content posted online and to explore the content at their own pace. As mentioned above, due to the configuration issues, some components of the online learning tutorials didn't work as expected in remote site 1. For example, the school firewall blocked students' access to the online video content, which is an essential component of the *Scenario Practice* tutorial and the *Cultural Discussion Forum*. During the classroom observations, the researcher noticed that only one student at remote site 1 was able to view the

online videos on his laptop; the rest of the students had no access to any of the authentic language or cultural videos on their laptops. In order to enable students to participate in the *Scenario Practice* tutorial and the *Cultural Discussion Forum*, the language teacher transformed these two sections of online learning tutorials into in-class group activities during the flex period. She presented the videos to the students from the teaching site computer, and then guided students to respond to each of the questions that were associated with the videos. Therefore, in remote site 1, the teacher took control of the classroom during the flex period, and the online tutorials were used as teacher-controlled classroom activities, rather than as "self-paced" , "student-centered" activities, as they were originally designed for the curriculum.

Internet speed. The internet speed in the remote school districts also had an impact on students' learning experiences with the self-paced online learning tutorials. From the classroom observations, the researcher noticed that most of the students had no patience for a web page that takes too long to load; some of them hit the keyboard in a very hard manner, seemingly trying to make the web page load faster, and others immediately abandoned the web page on slow load times and chose to explore something else. Among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, remote site 1 had the slowest internet speed. It took almost five seconds for students to load a web page, and even longer if the web page included a large amount of audio files (e.g., audio glossary on the course website). Compared with remote site 1, the internet speed at the other three remote sites was much faster; therefore, students could easily explore the online learning content as it was designed without wasting time on loading web pages.

Use of headphones. The usage of personal headphones allows students to review the audio glossary and watch the online videos at their own pace and in a private manner. From the classroom observations, the researcher discovered that only the students from remote site 2 and

remote site 3 used headphones during the flex period. For example, on the day of the researcher's site visit to remote site 1, none of the students were prepared with a set of personal headphones or earphones for the online tutorials. Therefore, when one student played an audio file using the laptop speaker, everyone else in the class could hear. The speaker noise disturbed other students from their own online learning experiences, conflicting with the concept of self-paced learning.

Students' Computer Proficiencies

From the classroom observations, the researcher discovered that students from different remote sites had a wide variation in their computer proficiency; and the variation in proficiencies in using the computer and navigating the learning management system directly impacted students' effective usage of the online learning tutorials. For example, among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, students from remote site 2 and remote site 3 were more accustomed to the format of self-paced online learning. During the researcher's class visit, none of the students from these two remote sites had problems with using the laptop or navigating the course websites; all of the students were able to follow the instructions and complete all of the required online learning tasks. The interview data also indicated that students from these two remote sites had extensive previous experiences with the use of computers, both at home and in school. For example, in remote site 3, during the academic school year, the school teachers use the same learning management system (i.e. Blackboard) as a supplementary to their face-to-face classes; therefore, most of the students from this school district had experiences in using the learning management system for self-paced study before they enrolled in this summer blended language program.

Compared with remote site 2 and remote site 3, students from remote site 1 and remote site 4 were less familiar with the format of self-paced online learning. For example, a student

from remote site 4 indicated in her interview that the reason she didn't participate in *Cultural Discussion Forum* was because she didn't know how to post a reply to the discussion board thread. In remote site 1, some students still needed the facilitator's step by step guide to login to the course website. After login to the course website, students also struggled with navigating the online tutorial. For example, during the classroom observations at remote site 1, the researcher noticed that two students didn't know how to close a web page. Rather than closing the current tab in the web browser, they closed the entire web browser application, which entailed the facilitator coming over and helping them start the web browser again and find the course website. From interviews with the students, the researcher found that some students from remote site 1 did not have a computer at home, and they only had limited opportunities to use a computer in school. These computer proficiency factors caused wasted time during the flex period that should have been spent learning the online tutorial.

Students' Self-Regulation in Online Learning

Through the TV screen at the teaching site, the language teachers could see whether the student are using the laptops, but they had no control on how the students use the laptops (because they couldn't monitor the students' computer screens). Without the language teachers' supervision, students could either use the laptops to explore the required the online learning materials, or they could play video games and visit websites that are irrelevant to the language class. Therefore, during the 50 minutes' flex period, the students' self-regulation in online learning was extremely important for effective usage of the online learning tutorials.

Among the four remote sites that the researcher visited for the study, students from remote site 2 and remote site 3 were more self-regulated in completing the online tasks. For example, in remote site 2, after giving students simple instructions on the day's online learning

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objectives, the language teacher left the TV screen on PowerPoint mode with a description of the day's online tasks without interfering in class or interacting with the students during the flex period. The facilitator in remote site 2 also stayed at her own work station most of the time during the flex period, working on other tasks on a computer, and was only involved in class upon the students' requests. During this 50 minute flex period, the classroom was very quiet. Every student in the class was concentrated in their activities on the laptop, self-regulating and following the instructions to work on the required online learning tasks. The only sound that could be heard in the class was from the students' typing on the keyboards, flipping pages, writing notes, or repeating the vocabulary quietly with the *Audio Glossary*. From the classroom observations, the researcher discovered that students from these two remote sites actually followed the day's online task description step by step: first reviewing the day's vocabulary with *Audio Glossary*, and then reviewing the day's dialogues with *Scenario Practice*, and so on. Some students left the *Culture Discussion Forum* activities until the end, after they finished all of the other required online learning tutorials, so that they could watch these authentic culture videos as entertainment. Students from remote site 2 even used a printed copy of the online learning task descriptions (provided by their facilitator) as a checklist, marking each task that they have completed, and then proceeding to work on the next one.

Compared with students from remote site 2 and remote site 3, students from remote site 1 were more easily distracted when using the online tutorials. For example, the researcher noticed from the classroom observations that when the facilitator was not paying attention, some students at remote site 1 would play computer games or visit websites that were not part of the online tutorials. Therefore, in remote site 1, the facilitator had to walk around the classroom, monitoring students' computer screens and making sure that everyone was using the online learning tutorials

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during the flex period. In addition, unlike remote site 2 and remote site 3, where the students actually followed the online instructions step by step, completing all of the online tasks, students from remote site 1 were only engaged in the tutorials that they were interested in. For example, from the classroom observations, the researcher noticed that, students from remote site 1were especially interested in playing the interactive games integrated in the *Chinese Characters* tutorials, such as games based around labeling, sorting, drag and drop, and flash cards. Thus, students spent most of the time working on this part of the curriculum content during the flex period. While most of the other online learning tutorials were not used as designed, the students in remote site 1 were able to follow the instructions in the *Chinese Characters* tutorials and complete all of the required activities.

Facilitator's Logistic Duty

The responsibility for facilitators in completing certain logistic duties also had an impact on students' self-paced online learning experiences. For example, in remote site 2, although the facilitator was not actively involved in the classroom management and discipline, she completed every logistic duty that was necessary for facilitating the students' self-paced online learning experience. For example, before the program began, she coordinated with the school IT department and had all of the laptops and headphones prepared and configured for the self-paced online learning tutorials. She checked equipment again before the day's flex period, making sure each laptop was ready and worked correctly. She also prepared all of the printed learning materials for the students, such as the checklist for the day's online learning tasks, the Chinese character writing assignments, etc, so that students could follow the instructions and complete all of the required learning tasks listed in the online curriculum. Some online learning tasks, such as the *Character Assignment* tutorial, required the facilitators to print out the worksheets at the

remote sites and give them to the students, so that students could follow the online instructions to practice writing Chinese characters on the worksheets during the flex period. However, during the site visit, the researcher found that some facilitators at the remote sites didn't prepare the Chinese character worksheets for the students, so students were not able to complete the *Character Assignment* tutorials during the day's flex period.

Meeting Teachers and Peers in Real Life

After the eight-day distance learning in the remote sites, students travelled to the teaching site with their classroom facilitators, meeting with their language teachers and peers from other school districts in person, as well as participating in various language and cultural activities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the last two days of face-to-face meeting focuses on culminating activities, where the students applied in real life situations the language and culture content that they have learned in the IDL videoconferencing class and the self-paced online learning materials. These culminating activities included mystery guest, poster writing/talk, and a film festival of student group produced short films with red carpet interviews. Although the culminating activities were designed as summative assessments for the program, the classroom observations indicated to the researcher that students' participation and performance in these face-to-face activities were not only influenced by their language proficiency levels; some other variables, such as the students' teamwork and collaboration skills, public speaking skills, and the language teachers' facilitating styles, also had an impact on students' experiences in participating in the final projects.

Students' Language Proficiency Levels

Students participating in the summer blended language program came from different language proficiency levels; some students were zero beginners, while others had previous Chinese language learning experiences before they enrolled in the program. Through observing students' participation in the final collaborative projects (i.e. film festival), the researcher discovered that the advanced students always took leadership roles in these final collaborative projects; such as playing the leading actor/actress (with more lines) in the group film projects, or serving in the MC team during the red carpet interview activities. The advanced students were also more participative in the language activities that had a competitive nature, such as the mystery guest activity, where the students competed in teams to interview a Chinese speaker, i.e. "mystery guest". When facing the peers with much higher language proficiency levels, some zero beginners showed lack of confidence in participating in the same group activities. Compared with the advanced students, who always took the initiative in the group projects, some zero beginners only participated in the group activities when the language teachers gave them specific instructions.

Students' Teamwork and Collaboration Skills

The students' teamwork and collaboration skills were mainly reflected in how they worked together to produce the group film project. After arriving in the teaching sites, students were divided into different groups, guided by the language teachers and the classroom facilitators, to work on their group film projects. Each film group consists of 4 to 5 members, mostly from the same school districts. From observing students' participation in the film-making process, the researcher found that the students' teamwork and collaboration skills varied among different groups. Every student had their own opinion about how to make the movie; when

disagreements arose, some groups were able to seek the common ground and solve the problem, while others didn't know how to deal with a disagreement nor how to develop a conflict resolution. For example, during the interviews, Facilitator A (from remote site 1) admitted that the biggest difficulty his students encountered during the face-to-face meeting were the disagreements about how to make the movie. Some students became emotional when their opinion was not accepted by the other group members; thus, the language teacher and the facilitator had to spend a lot of time helping the students to solve the conflict as well as calming students' emotional issues. For example, a student from remote site 1 became tearful after a disagreement with her fellow students regarding the film, and she demanded to go home, requiring the facilitator and the language teacher to stop activities and comfort her.

Language Teachers' Facilitating Styles

In addition to the students' language proficiency levels, teamwork and collaboration skills, the language teachers' facilitating styles also had a direct influence on the students' participation in the group film production process. From reviewing the students' final film projects, the researcher found that most of the student groups were able to apply the learned language functions to create a story; for example, students from remote site 3 filmed a story about a dating show, integrating all of the sentence structures learned in class (e.g. greeting, self-introduction, personal preferences, invitation, and etc). However, due to the lack of appropriate guidance from their assigned language teachers (usually their homeroom teacher from the videoconferencing classes), a few of the student film groups failed to integrate the learned language functions. For example, students from remote site 1 almost produced a show with no dialogue as their final film project; the film was composed of a lot of intense actions and special effects but with characters that barely talked (each group member only contributed one or two

simple lines in the movie). In the meantime, some other student groups were trying to produce films with very dramatic and intricate plot structures, and the story lines were way above their current language proficiency level (novice low-mid); thus, rather than applying the learned language functions, they had to mechanically memorize the complicated sentence structures that were never addressed in the curriculum.

For most of the students, making a film was just "something fun to do"; they didn't care about the learning purposes behind the film project. Therefore, it became the language teachers' responsibility to guide the students in approaching the film in the right direction. When the students pursued dramatic plot structures, intense action themes, or special effects, and ignored the learning purpose, language teachers needed to give students appropriate guidance, or even intervene when it was necessary.

Students' Public Speaking Skills

From interviews with the students, the researcher found that among all of the activities during the two days of face-to-face meetings, students most struggled with the *PosterTalk*. In this activity, students were asked to stand by their poster (a Chinese character writing project with graphics) and give an oral presentation in front of the class about their personal preferences in music, films, sports and hobbies. Therefore, in addition to the language proficiency, this *PosterTalk* activity also required students' public speaking skills. Through observations, the researcher noticed that many students showed lack of confidence in speaking in front of the audience; however, students with previous training experience in Chinese or public speaking were more comfortable in participating in this activity. Although many students expressed in the interview that they were "nervous" and "scared" in presenting themselves in front of the

audience, most of them appreciated the challenge, because public speaking is something that they "will have to encounter in the future".

In addition to the above mentioned variables, students' previous culture experiences, as well as their preferences in music and arts, also influenced their participation in the culture activities during the two days of face-to-face meeting. For example, students with musical instrument learning experiences showed a much more engaging response to the music workshop, especially the lecture about oriental music; and students with art backgrounds were more participative in the calligraphy workshop. As mentioned in the previous chapters, most of the face-to-face activities were designed as summative assessment for the blended language program, with more details about each activity discussed in the later chapter, the *Test Curriculum*.

Students' Perspectives on the Individual Instructional Modes of Blended Learning

The following paragraphs present detailed discussions of students' perspectives toward this blended language program, including their perceived benefits and challenges of each instructional mode, as well as their perspectives on the combination of the three instructional modes.

Perceived Benefits of Synchronous Instruction

Accessibility. In response to questions about what aspects of videoconferencing they liked the best, most interview participants pointed out accessibility as the primary benefits of the videoconferencing class. Videoconferencing technology bridged the geographic barriers and expanded language learning access to students from rural districts and other schools that cannot offer Chinese. For most students who participated in the summer blended language program, the

IDL videoconferencing class was the only opportunity that they had to access a less commonly taught foreign language such as Chinese. During the interview, Student 12, who came from an area in a Midwestern state with a very low population density, stated that,

> It is not really necessary to have the teacher there (at the school district), which is really nice. Not many people in [state name] actually know Chinese well enough to teach it, so it is a great opportunity for learning.

Real-Time Interaction. Among all of the distance learning tools, the primary advantage of implementing videoconferencing is supporting real-time interaction, and this is especially important in foreign language education. In an interview, Student 12 compared the videoconferencing class with other traditional asynchronous online classes he had taken before and stated that he liked videoconferencing classes better, because in the videoconferencing class he can see and talk to the teacher in real time, "just like having the teacher in the class". Student 7 also indicated in her interview that she found no difference between learning in a traditional face-to-face setting and learning in a videoconferencing class. She states,

> I never had a class (videoconferencing) like this before, but it didn't seem much of a difference, because you are still looking at teachers, you are still learning from that teacher, just facing the screen.

Multiple Teachers. With videoconferencing technology, not only can one teacher teach multiple school districts, but also one school district can receive language instruction from multiple teachers. In this blended language program, each school district received Chinese instruction from two to three different native speaking teachers, giving students exposure to different voices and accents. When asked the question "what aspects of videoconferencing you liked the best", Student 11 expressed her viewpoints as follows:

> The fact that we can have more than just one teacher everyday...They all spoke a little differently, so you get used to the different ways things were said, and making sure that they understood you. I thought that was really cool. That definitely helps me.

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Student 4 also expressed similar sentiments during the interview:

> It takes me a while to realize this, but they were saying the same thing over and over again. I just realized that each teacher was saying the same thing [with different accents], but I thought that was a good idea [saying the same thing], because it really installed what they were saying into your mind, so you will remember it the next day.

As mentioned previously, students from remote site 1 already had a full-time Chinese teacher available in a face-to-face classroom; thus, while all of the other participating schools considered accessibility to a Chinese language program as the most important reason for implementing blended learning, for students from remote site 1, who already had Chinese offered during the academic year, being able to practice the target language with multiple native speaking Chinese teachers was the primary reason for enrolling in this summer language program. As Facilitator A, who also served as the Chinese teacher at remote site 1 during the academic year, stated:

> It gave my students a chance to interact with 3 different Chinese native speakers and it is not an opportunity they would have normally with me as their teacher.

In addition to helping students become accustomed to different voices and accents, having multiple teachers can also increase students' interest in participating in the videoconferencing class. For example, some students indicated in the interview that "different teachers have different methods of teaching"; thus, having multiple teachers can help them gain exposure to different aspects in learning Chinese.

Perceived Challenges of Synchronous Instruction

Lack of Time Flexibility. While videoconferencing allows teachers and students to see and interact with each other in real time, it also brought challenges such as lack of time flexibility. The videoconferencing classes in this blended language program were designed to be 50-60 minutes for each session. The videoconferencing call automatically disconnects after the preprogramed time, no matter if the language teacher had finished the teaching tasks or not. This

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lack of time flexibility not only caused pedagogical challenges for the language teachers, but also

discouraged the students from learning. For example, Student 13 expressed his feelings in the

interview as follows,

> They (the teachers) could not really help you with extra-curricular activities. If you have
> trouble, they can't really stay after class to help.

Although each remote school site had a facilitator physically present in the classroom, their roles

were limited to classroom management and other logistic issues. Most of the facilitators had no

knowledge about the target language taught in class; thus, they were not able to answer any

student questions that were related to the language curriculum.

Lack of Personal Contact. Due to the physical distance as well as the lack of time

flexibility, it is more difficult to create a personal relationship between the students and the

language teachers in the videoconferencing classes in the same way the face-to-face classes do.

For example, Student 5 indicated in her interview that in the face-to-face class she could come

early to the class and have a personal chat with the teacher before the class starts; however, in the

videoconferencing class, the teachers "don't usually come on to the TV until the class time, so

you don't really get a chance to know them as much". When asked why she thought this personal

contact outside the class time is important, Student 5 explained,

> I always have wanted to talk to my teachers. You just start talking and eventually you
> know something about them that you will never know otherwise. I think that will make
> us, to the kids, less afraid to ask questions [in class] if they know they can confide to the
> person [teacher] like this, they know this person. It is a lot harder to ask someone about
> something I don't understand if you don't know that person at all.

Lack of Teacher Authority. During the interview, some students admitted that the

language teachers' authority from the TV screen was less strong than if they were physically

present in the classroom. For example, when asked the question "how is it (videoconferencing

classes) different from having a teacher in your physical classroom", Student A expressed his

experiences in the videoconferencing class as follows,

> They still feel like teachers, but if they are face-to-face, you feel more threatened by them, you will feel more scared, you will know that you shouldn't do anything bad. It is the same thing in videoconferencing, but not as much.

Facilitator A from remote site 1 also expressed the same concern during his interview:

> The teachers are not actually there. They can't really be a disciplinarian in the same way that a teacher who is physically present can...They don't have the same power that you get by just standing over them and being in the room.

Thus, for Facilitator A, being the adult presence in the classroom became his responsibility.

During the interview, he described his role in the classroom management and discipline as

follows,

> I think that becomes the classroom facilitator's job, to be that presence, that adult presence, that lets students know that they will be held accountable for their actions, and make sure they treat this as a legitimate class.

> ***Technical Issues.*** During the interviews, students also reported various technical

problems that they had encountered in the videoconferencing classes; sometimes there were

sound or image issues, either due to bad weather or the quality of the digital equipment. For

example, Student 9, who came from remote site 4, a school district that encountered the most

technical problems during the program, described her experiences as follows:

> The screen in our classroom, the sounds would go in and out and you would put together [the teacher's dialogue] in a completely wrong sentence. Sometimes you would hear it, and sometimes you wouldn't. Sometimes the image will actually freeze physically, and you couldn't really see what movement they did with their hands.

Students from remote site 3 also experienced some technical issues during the program. On the

first day of class, the IDL network was completely cut off at their school district, so that students

had to use the laptop for self-paced learning rather than interact with the language teachers on

TV. Student 5 recalled her experience during the interview:

The first day we couldn't see them [the teachers] at all. If there had just been a person there [in the physical classroom], we could just continue the class and we are fine, but instead we were losing time, so we fall behind. And then we have to rush to catch up, so we would not be able to get the chance to learn everything quite as well...I think that kind of made it harder for the [school name] kids, but we still hold through.

Perceived Benefits Asynchronous Instruction

Self-Paced Learning. In response to questions about what aspects of the asynchronous online tutorials they liked the best, most of the interview participants indicated that they liked the opportunity to learn at their own pace. While videoconferencing technology provides opportunities for real-time interaction with native speaking teachers, the asynchronous online tutorials allow students to practice the curriculum materials at their own pace. For example, two students shared their experiences with the online audio glossary as follows:

Sometimes I forgot how to say things correctly, so it is nice just to go back to the vocabulary, click on the audio and practice by myself. You can say it over and over again. (Student 4)

Those [audio glossary] help me get the words that I didn't learn or didn't understand...I kept playing them again and again, pick up a syllable ,and write it down, pronounce it. (Student 9)

By allowing self-paced learning, the online tutorials provides equal opportunities for every student to practice the language, not only for the ones who need extra time in class, but also for the students who already had previous experiences in the language and think the class is too easy for them. During the interview, Student 3, a zero beginner in Chinese language, and Student 11, who already had two years of Chinese learning experiences before enrolling in the blended language program, explained how they used the online tutorial to practice the language:

I used the audio glossary all the time. I review when I am at school and coming home I review it...I want to keep it fresh in my brain, because the people in my class, it is kind of intimidating, because they all have experience in Chinese, and I am just fresh out of the box. (Student 3)

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I used a lot of the challenge ones, where they give you the challenge words and phrases, because it was stuff that I hadn't learned yet, and I thought it was really cool to have this stuff, I can learn to say different things...I really appreciated that they gave us the stuff that we might not know, or that we might use every day. (Student 11)

Information Availability and Accessibility. Another primary benefit of the online tutorial perceived by interview participants is information availability and accessibility. While the videoconferencing supported real-time communication between language teachers and students within a specific time, the integration of the asynchronous online tutorial allowed students access to the learning materials anytime at their convenience, which addressed the pedagogical challenges that were caused by the lack of time flexibility in the videoconferencing classes. During the interviews, students mentioned that when they missed some content in the videoconferencing classes, the online tutorials helped them to easily catch up for the next class. For example, Student 1 and Student 8 shared their experiences as follows:

If you have to catch up on something, maybe you didn't understand it very well, then you can go to the course website, you can find the day and the activity on the list and the videos. (Student 1)

The fact that all of them are on the computer, if I don't remember something, I can just go back online and review [the course content]. If I wanted to, I can print it out, and just look at it again. (Student 8)

The integration of the asynchronous online tutorial also allowed students access to the learning materials anywhere at their convenience; in addition to using the online tutorial during the flex time in school, students could also explore the course website at home or any other places with internet access, either with their home desktop computers, laptops or other mobile devices. From interviews with the students, the researcher found that most of the students had used the online tutorial at home for different purposes; however, the amount of time spent and the specific content explored varies among individual students. For example, Student 8 indicated in her

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interview that she spent about two and half hours a day to review the online tutorials at home.

She explains:

> Since it takes me a while to do the characters, like the actual vocabulary, I usually work it a little bit at school, then finish it at home. I do scenario practice and ear training at home, and I usually try to do the culture discussion questions at school.(Q:how often do you use the online tutorial at home?) I use it every day, but at various times. It depends on when I actually get started, but I guess two and half hours maybe. I go over things again and again until I get them.

The online platform not only makes the information available and accessible for students, but

also for the parents, especially the ones who want to keep track of their children's learning

progress. For example, Student 11 shared her experience during the interview:

> I used it a few times at home when I was trying to describe it to my mom what we were doing during the day, and it surprised her. My mom she is like, every day when I get home, "so what did you do today?" So I would go to the audio glossary. I did it at home a few times trying to speak out how something was said when trying to describe something to my mom, and I find it really helpful.

By allowing students to access the learning materials anytime-anywhere, a learning community

can be developed beyond the physical classroom. During the interviews, more than half of the

students mentioned that they have shared the online tutorials with their siblings at home. Some of

them shared the authentic cultural materials with their siblings as entertaining, while others may

study the online tutorial together and compete with each other. For example, Student 1 shared his

experience as follows:

> I have an older brother, he is 17, he took Chinese too, and he is going to go to college this year, he is going to minor in Chinese. So we have conversations in Chinese. I showed him the music, and I showed him some of the activities; he will recognize them faster, because he took more Chinese classes than me, but it is still good, I have new things to say to him when we talk in Chinese. I showed him the scenario practice and the Chinese character [tutorials], and he did pretty well at them.

The availability and accessibility feature of the asynchronous online tutorials also promotes life-

long learning. During the interviews, Student 10 suggested that it would be helpful if the

language institute allowed students to access the course website even after they have completed the summer program. He explained:

> After we leave this program, we may not study Chinese at all until we get to our next school year. Keep us updated, some more videos or something, so keep us in the Chinese learning mood, because some people would take the program, and then a month later, they would forget a lot of it, because it is not constant repetition, it is not involved in their everyday life. Just have public access [to the website], or even give people accounts, so they can watch Chinese videos, they can know more about the Chinese culture, have links to wiki, or other sites from China.

The student performance data on the learning management system also supports this sentiment. The online data indicated that some students have accessed the course website after the summer program was over.

Real-World Language Application. The online tutorial integrated a large amount of authentic language materials related to the unit topic. These authentic language materials were not only helpful for students to practice the language, but also in helping them to apply what they had learned in class to a real-life conversation. During the interviews, students expressed their appreciation to these authentic language materials and indicated that being able to understand the learned phrases in a real-world scenario motivated their interest in learning the target language. For example, Student 5 and Student 8 shared their experiences with the *Scenario Practice* tutorial as follows:

> The scenario shows you how it would actually apply, because I mean there are some things about school classes; a lot of times they just teach you, but they don't show you how it would actually apply to life. So I thought the scenario practice is very good. (Student 5)

> Those [scenarios] actually help me hear it as they would be normally, just like in a regular day to day conversation, rather than someone reading over a script..I think they are helpful and beneficial, because we actually get to hear them in a conversation. (Student 8)

Student 1 and Student 11 also explained in their interview about how they were able to recognize

the learned phrases from the authentic music videos posted online:

> I like the one with the music, that one was really good, because you can see they talk a lot, they talk fast, but if you go slowly, you can see that you can recognize what they are saying. Like the music video, sometimes you can hear what they say when they sing, you will be surprised when you can understand. Like *The Voice of China* [a Chinese reality talent show], you can recognize some of it [the singing], and if you remember the characters, you can read it in the subtitles. (Student 1)

> It was nice to be able to watch the videos and say, oh, I know what they are singing. You just like pick up little phrases you have been taught, it is just really cool. (Student 11)

> ***Culture Exploration.*** In addition to the extensive language tutorials for students to

practice at their own pace, the authentic cultural materials that are available online also provides

opportunities for students to explore the target culture based on their own interests. During the

interviews, students indicated that they liked to watch the video clips that related to Chinese

culture, so they can learn what high school life is like in China. For example, Students 10 stated,

> I used the culture videos a lot more, because it showed the difference in Chinese culture. Culture is what interests people the most, what makes them take to the language...so by seeing the differences, this is how American schools start out their day and this is how Chinese schools start out their day, it makes you want to learn the language a bit more. I like those, I watched most of them.

Student 1 pointed out in his interview that the integration of the online cultural materials is what

makes this blended language program distinguished from any of his previous language learning

experiences. He explained:

> Some Chinese classes you won't learn as much of the culture, but you will learn a lot of the language, and sometimes it is the other way around. In this program, with the course site, you can learn both the language and the culture.

With the culture discussion forum, students could compare the target culture with their home

culture and share their thoughts with peers and teachers. During the interview, Student 8

indicated that she liked the collaboration atmosphere of the cultural discussion forum, because she was able to discuss cultural topics with the teachers and peers.

Perceived Challenges of Asynchronous Instruction

In spite of generally positive attitudes toward the online learning tutorials, students also experienced some challenges during the self-paced learning period. The classroom observation data (discussed in the previous section) indicated that students's learning experiences with the asynchronous online learning tutorials were influenced by many variables, which included: the technology availability in the school districts, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulation in online learning, and the facilitator completing certain logistic duties. The findings from interviews with students also support this sentiment. During the interviews, students identified the following challenges that they encountered with the asynchronous online tutorials:

Technical Difficulties. Students reported various technical issues with the asynchronous online tutorials; these technical problems were mainly caused by the conflict between the configuration requirement of the course website and the specific computer configurations used at the remote school districts. During the interviews, Student 1 and Student 5 shared some of the technical difficulties they experienced with the online tutorials as follows:

> Our school blocked YouTube videos, so we couldn't really see the videos, but if we could get around that, it would be fine. I made it work at home, I have a computer, but maybe if someone doesn't have a computer or internet access, then they can't see it. (Student 1)

> The computer I used at school, I don't know if it is just the computer, but I had to use Google Chrome to get the audio part of the audio glossary, then I have to use internet explore to get the Chinese characters, neither would give me both, so I had both up at the same time, and it didn't work very well.... (Questions: any difficulty at home?) No, not at home. Everything works at home, and that is why I think it is the laptop. It didn't seem like there were other people who were having difficulties with it too, it could just be the school district doesn't have the right laptop. (Student 5)

Students' Computer Proficiency. In answering the question "what difficulties did you encounter in the online learning experience", Student 9 indicated in her interview that the reason she didn't participate in Cultural Discussion Forum is because she didn't know to post a reply to the discussion board thread. She explained:

> I don't know how to use it [the cultural discussion forum]...I wrote something down, what was supposed to appear in the thread and it wasn't appearing. I am not usually on the computer, because my dad has the computer locked, and I don't have that lock key.

Students' Self-Regulation. During the interviews, some students expressed their concern about their' peers' self-regulation in participating in online learning. For example, Student 5 expressed her opinion about minimum involvement in the culture discussion forum as follows:

> There should be a minimal for what you do. On the one [a video clip] that was showing little Chinese kids learning English, the question is to do the comparing and contrast. I wrote a list of comparing and contrast, while some person just said "they look like 2nd graders". Technically, that is a comment, but that doesn't really mean anything.

Student 10 also expressed the similar sentiment from a different perspective,

> I feel some of students who are a little bit lazy about the program would not do it, because for some of the online materials there is no submit button to show the teachers to see that you did this, you did that; there is no way to tell.

Perceived Benefit Face-to-Face Instruction

Personal Interaction with Teachers. The findings showed that most interview participants considered personal interaction with the language teachers as a very important benefit of the physical, face-to-face meeting. In the face-to-face instructional mode, language teachers jump off the TV screen and interact with students in real life. During the interviews, Student 1 expressed his feelings about meeting the language teachers in person as follows:

> It was nice getting to meet everyone, because in the videoconference it is hard to actually think they are teaching you. Once you meet them, you will get to know them better, and you get to see what they are really like, and it is also nice to see where they worked.

By interacting with the teachers in person, a better sense of trust can be built between students and teachers, which makes language teachers not just instructors for the students, but friends. For example, in answering the question "what is your general impression of the two days of face-to-face field trip", Student 12 stated in his interview as follows:

> I thought it was fun, because you get to meet people, and you get to meet your teachers. You can actually interact with them. They can actually talk to you personally if they like something about you, instead of saying it over videoconferencing where the whole class can hear.

Peer Comparison. Another important benefit of the physical, face-to-face meeting identified by most interview participants is peer comparison. During the two days of residential camp, students not only met their language teacher in person, but also met their peers from other school districts. By interacting and sharing language learning experiences with peers in person, students would realize that they are not alone in this language learning journey, as Student 11 stated in her interview:

> I think it is really cool to meet other people that study the language and had the same difficulties. You can sit there and go, "yeah, I am not the only one that sucks at finding tones, or can't really write Chinese characters really well"...It makes you feel a little comforted that you are not alone.

From collaborating with peers in group projects, as well as evaluating peers' performance in the language projects, students were able to know how other people learn the language and what they can do with the language. During the interviews, most students indicated the film festival as one of their favorite activities during the two days of face-to-face meeting; not only because they can apply the new language to create a story, but also being able to see what other people can do with the language learned from the same program. For example, in answering the question "what did you like the most about the face-to-face class", Student 1 stated that,

> You can see other people's films and you can see how they use their sentences, their structures and how they use what they learned, in using it on conversations in the movie.

Student 2 also expressed the same sentiment in his interview:

> I wonder what other people are filming, and what they have done, and how theirs is different than ours.

Real-World Language Application. Being able to apply the language learned in the classroom to accomplish real-world tasks is another benefit of the physical, face-to-face meeting identified by interview participants. For example, Student 3 and Student 11 shared their experiences with the group film project as follows:

> Our movie is very funny, we enjoyed it. We did it all (the script) in Chinese, and we even learned how to say some new stuff; the new words we reviewed with the teacher, then we figured out by ourselves. (Student 3)

> I really liked working on the film project, I thought since the storyline can be so different, you can learn things, but you still have fun learning them, and you can apply everything you have been learning. (Student 11)

Connecting with the Local Community. The interview data also indicated that students appreciated the opportunity to interact with local Chinese communities during the two days of face-to-face instructional mode. Student 1 shared his experience with the *Mystery Guest* activity as follows:

> I like the mystery guest, you get to ask them questions and they will respond to you about what they like, so you can learn about other people. Since they are native speakers, you can distinguish the difference between your pronunciation and their pronunciation.

Students also gain confidence in learning the new language from interacting with the native speakers from local communities in person. Student 5 stated in her interview that,

> Just getting to hear about the hobbies and the stuff with other people is so exciting. Every time someone speaks in Chinese and you can understand them. You have heard someone talking in Chinese before, and you had no clue about what they are saying, now you can hear a little piece of it, and know it, you know that now. So, it is really cool to be able to know what they are saying.

Physical, Hands-on Cultural Activities. From interviews with the students, the

researcher discovered that more than half of the interview participants had previous experiences

in playing musical instruments; thus, when asked their perceived benefits of taking the two-day

face-to-face field trip, these students all expressed their appreciation for the opportunities to learn

about oriental music, as well as the opportunities to touch and try out the traditional Chinese

instruments. The following are statements drawn from the interviews with students about their

experiences in the music workshop:

> I like the music workshop, because at school I am in band. I played the chamber, so you
> get better background on Chinese instruments, and it was fun getting to actually touch
> them or try to play them. (Student 1)

> I used to play piano and I used to play flutes, but not anymore. I still appreciate music,
> because I think music is one of the biggest ways to express feeling and what cultures are
> like. It is a good idea to search the cultures in that way. (Student 4)

> I thought the calligraphy was cool, but being a musician, with the music workshop, I
> think I connected a little bit more...I played the cello and piano. It was cool holding the
> erhu, because it was similar to holding a cello. You sat down, hold it right here, using the
> bow, but you hold the bow in a completely different way...I was like, wow, I never knew
> I would hold it like that. It takes a lot of skill, and that make me appreciate that music
> even more. (Student 5)

> I played the cello, so I am kind of music biased. I played "twinkle twinkle little star" on
> the erhu, because I played cello, so it is sort of the same, it is the same fingering, but it is
> so tiny, and the cello is a lot bigger. (Student 8)

All of the students expressed positive attitudes towards the face-to-face session, although

one student mentioned that she felt more pressure in the face-to-face instruction, because she was

nervous about responding to the teacher and if her response was correct or not.

Students' Perspectives on Blended Learning as a Whole

At the end of the interviews, students were asked to share their opinions on the

combination of the three different instructional modes (synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-

face). The finding showed that all of the students expressed a positive impression of blended learning and appreciated its advantages in addressing different aspects of language learning and meeting the needs of different learning styles. The identified advantages are presented as follows:

Addressing Different Aspects of Language Learning. Students indicated in the interviews that each of the instructional modes in this blended language program emphasized different aspects of language learning. For example, while videoconferencing and face-to-face instructional mode emphasize developing students' language fluency through communicative activities, the form-focused materials posted online address the accuracy aspect of language. During the interview, Student 2 explained about how he learned different aspects of the new language from each of the three instructional modes as follows:

> From the computer, we can learn the tones, how to pronounce words; and coming here [face-to-face field trip], we can use it, use what we have learned, speak face-to-face with our teachers and other people; and in the class we learn that going over things, so that we can use it for later on.

In answering the question "what do you think of blended learning?", Student 12 also expressed a similar sentiment during the interview:

> I think it (a blended learning model) works very well, especially for learning the language; the videoconferencing helps you learn the basics, the online activities help you perfect it, and the face-to-face gives you that extra little push to give you confidence.

The learning experiences in each instructional mode add to each other, helping the students to build comprehensive knowledge in the new language, as Student 3 stated in regards to the question "what do you think of blended learning?" in her interview:

> I think everything adds to each other, because you learn when the teacher says it, and then you hear it again online, then you hear it from the students saying it. It just adds on to what you are learning, and building your knowledge in Chinese language.

Meeting the Needs of Different Learning Styles. With a blended model, a foreign

language can be introduced to students in many different ways, so they can find the best ways

that work for them. During the interview, Student 10 expressed his satisfaction with the variety

of language learning experiences in this blended language program. He stated that,

> It is always nice to have a self-paced learning, self pacing yourself to study. At the same
> time, it is always good to have someone there to tell you if you are wrong, or tell you new
> information. And then meeting people in person, you are used to that teacher online, and
> it is easier to listen to them in person.

He continued to explain why a blended learning model can meet his language learning needs:

> You don't feel like you are being rushed, because you are able to self-pace yourself, with
> someone also being there to teach what you need to know, so you get taught, then you
> have a program where you can just take it easy and learn, and then step three is coming
> here and having your hands on experience with the teacher.

Student 8 also confirmed this viewpoint. She stated in her interview that learning a new language

in multiple ways can help her retain the information better. She explained,

> Since I do like to mix different ways of learning, I think it is very interesting, and I can
> actually retain the information...In this program, you get to mix it, you can experience
> new things, mix the ways of learning. I like new experiences...The way they taught us,
> and we got to study on our own, then we came here, face-to-face. I thought that was
> really interesting and helpful too.

> ***Socialization Opportunities.*** Students also appreciated the socialization opportunities

provided by this blended language program. During the interview, Student 1 expressed his

impression toward this aspect of the blended learning method as follows:

> I think this method is really interesting and I think it is a good method; you are not
> limited to one place, because there are students here from other states, and you will never
> think you will meet anyone from these states if you can't travel or anything. You can
> practice with each other, you will compare what you both know and also you can learn a
> lot more than what you would from normal class. I learned a lot more new things here
> than in normal school. I think it is a good idea.

While videoconferencing and the asynchronous online learning tutorials allow the students'

learning experiences to not be restricted by geographic locations, the face-to-face field trip

creates opportunities for students from different school districts to meet and interact with each other.

Summary

This section investigated the third research question, the *learned curriculum*: how is the curriculum learned in different instructional modes? how do students view blended learning after they have participated in the blended language program?

The findings of the study showed that although the language curriculum was implemented by the same group of teachers using the the same curriculum framework, students' learning experiences in the different remote school sites were widely varied. Most of these variations were only observable when the researcher was physically present in the remote site classrooms, and they were hardly noticed during the researcher's classroom observations at the teaching site. Table 4.10 presents a summary of factors that influenced students' learning experiences in each instructional delivery mode.

Table 4.10 Summary of Factors that Influenced the Learned Curriculum

Synchronous	•The physical setting of the videoconferencing classroom •Language teachers' instructional styles on the TV screen •The classroom atmosphere in the remote sites
Asynchronous	•Technology availability in the school districts •Students' computer proficiencies •Students' self-regulation in online learning •Facilitator completing certain logistic duties
Face-to-Face	•Students' language proficiency levels •Students' teamwork and collaboration skills •Language teachers' facilitating styles •Students' public speaking skills

4. The Tested Curriculum

Introduction

The *tested curriculum* are the assessments developed by administrators and teachers to determine if students' learning have met the curriculum goal. According to Cuban (1995), what students learn does not exactly mirror what is in the tested curriculum; the tested curriculum is a limited part of what is intended by policy makers, taught by teachers, and learned by students. As discussed earlier, the curriculum framework of this blended language program was developed using backward design processes, which calls for teachers to operationalize the curriculum goals or standards in terms of assessment evidence as they begin to plan a unit or course. In this blended language program, formative assessment was conducted in all of the three instructional modes (synchronous, asynchronous and face-to-face); and summative assessment took place during the two days of physical, face-to-face meetings, and it was developed based on the the ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment prototype (ACTFL, 2003). A variety of technological tools were integrated in both the formative and summative assessments, including GoAnimate, Voki, Flip handheld video cameras and etc.

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the course documents, classroom observations, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews with the administrator, language teachers, and students, this chapter will describe how students' learning is assessed in the three different instructional modes, as well as language teachers' and students' perceptions toward different types of assessment in a blended learning context.

Formative Assessment

The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. In this blended language program, formative assessment was conducted in all of the three instructional modes and continued from the beginning of the program to the end, but mainly took place in the videoconferencing classes and during the students' self-paced online learning period; in the face-to-face instructional mode, formative assessment was conducted in a less systematic and indirect way.

In the videoconferencing classes, language teachers check students' learning performance through daily classroom activities, such as TPR, pair work, and skits, demonstrating students' language skills in the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational). During the interviews, Teacher B described her experiences in conducting formative assessment in videoconferencing classes as follows,

> I conducted formative assessment through classroom activities. My judgments on students' understanding of certain curriculum content was based on their performance in these activities, such as their responses to the questions, the correct rate, and how long it took for the response. If the students' performance showed that they didn't understand the content very well, then I would guide them to review the curriculum content again.

Teacher C shared similar sentiments in her interview, and she noted that all of these classroom activities should be observable on the TV screen; if not (i.e. a writing assignment), language teachers need to constantly check on students' progress orally. From classroom observations, the researcher found that the classroom activities in the videoconferencing classes always follow in proper sequence, beginning with interpretive listening activities, then interpersonal and presentational speaking tasks. This sequencing ensures that students comprehend the language input before producing the language output. At the end of each lesson, language teachers also

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guide students to check-off a list of can-do statements that associate with the day's lesson objectives. These can-do statements were developed based on the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2013), the self-assessment checklists used by language learners to assess what they "can do" with language in the Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication. These can-do statements were written in the curriculum framework before the program began, indicating what learners should be able to do at the different proficiency levels and within each communicative mode. In addition to the daily classroom activities and the can-do statements, language teachers also take turns to observe their peer's language classes, using an observation protocol, which was developed before the program began, to identify individual students or general issues requiring attention. These general issues would be discussed during the daily instructional team meeting, so that language teachers could adjust their subsequent lessons to address the problems.

During the self-paced online learning period, students could check their own learning progress by completing the online assignments and quizzes on the course website, thereby receiving immediate feedback. The grade center integrated in the learning management system allowed the language teachers to gain sufficient data on students' performance on certain language tasks, so that they can adjust their subsequent lessons to meet students' needs. For example, if most of the students in class had difficulties passing the quiz on differences between tone 2 and tone 3, then the language teachers could take some time to work on this specific content during the next class period. If there is only one or two students that had difficulties, language teachers could also tutor them individually during the flex period.

In the face-to-face instructional mode, the formative assessment was conducted in a less systematic and indirect way. The culminating activities during the last two days served as

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summative assessment for the program. However, before students present their final product to the large audience, they received coaching from their language teachers. Language teachers helped the students to rehearse their presentations, red carpet interviews, and story lines in their group film projects, giving them feedback on pronunciations or sentence structures.

Integrating Technology in Formative Assessment

In addition to the above mentioned traditional formative assessment methods, this blended language program also integrated some new technological tools in formative assessment, such as GoAnimate, Voki and Flip handheld video camera.

Assessing Students' Interpretive Listening Performance with GoAnimate

GoAnimate is an online application that allows users to create animated stories. Users can use their creativity to design characters, backgrounds, props, and add text in speech bubbles to tell a story. In this blended language program, language teachers created a variety of GoAnimate videos with language functions covered in the curriculum, using them in the videoconferencing classes as a formative assessment method to evaluate students' interpretive listening performance. For example, in one of the GoAnimate videos, students were asked to listen to two girls' gossiping with each other in a school lobby and then answer questions related to their dialogue. These GoAnimate videos were usually used at the end of the lesson to check students' understanding of the day's curriculum content.

During the interview, Teacher E described her experience in integrating GoAnimate videos in formative assessment as follows:

> We usually use GoAnimate to create some short animated stories and use them in the videoconferencing classes as interpretive listening tasks. We play these videos at the end of each lesson and use them as part of formative assessment. These videos usually include some simple dialogues that are related to the day's lesson or language content

from the previous lessons. Students need to listen to these dialogues and then answer questions related to what they hear.

Teacher C pointed out in her interview that the integration of GoAnimate videos in formative assessment can enrich the language classroom, as well as attract students' attention in class. She shared her experience as follows:

> We used GoAnimate in different ways. First, we can use it as a kick off activity. These videos usually covered language content from the previous day's lessons as well as some new language content that students will learn from the day's lessons. From the story setting, the characters' body movements and facial expressions, students can predict the topic for the day's new lesson. Second, we can use it for review purposes. We can make videos that cover all of the language points from the day's classes, and play the video at the end of the lesson as a comprehensive listening task.

> From classroom observations and interviews with students, the researcher found that

most of the students showed interest in GoAnimate videos and they think these animated videos helped them review the language content in a less stressful way. As Student 2 indicated in his interview, compared with the PowerPoint slides, which only contain words and still pictures, he liked these animated videos better, because they are more fun, the characters can move and talk. However, a few students held negative opinions towards these animated videos. For example, during the interview, Student 9 pointed out that she was very used to looking at lips while people are talking; however, the lip movement of characters on these animated videos isn't synchronized with their voices. She explained:

> It is hard to comprehend what they are saying, because I got so used to look at their lips and trying to listen to what they are saying, but the lips wouldn't go with the word, and it just brought me off...It is annoying. I was so focused on that [lips], and I don't know what they are saying sometimes.

Thus, Student 9 stated in her interview that she was least engaged in class when the teachers were playing the GoAnimate videos.

Assessing Students' Presentational Speaking Performance with Voki and Flip

Voki is an educational tool that allows users to create their own speaking avatar. Users can record their voice through a microphone, using a dial-in number, or uploading an audio file. After finishing their Voki characters, users can also share their avatars through email, social media, or post on Voki Classroom, which is a classroom management system for Voki. In this blended language program, Voki was used in the videoconferencing classes as a formative assessment method to evaluate students' presentational speaking performance. For example, in one of the Voki assignments, students were asked to use the language functions they learned in the previous five days to give a self introduction speech to the whole class. The students' Voki projects were uploaded to Voki Classroom, where the language teachers could review them and give students feedback.

Flip video camera is a pocket-size tapeless camcorder for digital video. Before the program began, the Flip video cameras were mailed to each of the school districts. Students were guided by their language teachers, using the Flip handheld video cameras, to record their classroom skits, music projects, and group film rehearsals. After they completed these video projects, the classroom facilitators would upload these videos to the FlipShare software, where students' videos can be shared either publicly (i.e. social networking) or privately with selected friends. These student-produced video projects were used in the videoconferencing classes as a formative assessment method to evaluate students' presentational speaking performance.

According to the program director, the motivation for integrating Voki and FlipShare videos in formative assessment is to help the language teachers to collect audio recordings of students' pronunciation, so that they can go back and listen carefully to these audio recordings,

catching details of students' pronunciation, and then adjust their subsequent lessons to address

the problems. She explained in her interview as follows:

> In those little Flip videos, the teachers are able to catch some details, particularly about things like pronunciation, that they may not see or hear as clearly when they watch the kids in class, and they can really focus on a particular student, and play the video a couple of times and get a little more detailed information about where that student is at that moment, and that is very useful formative assessment. The Voki was also very useful, very much like the FLIP camera, but you don't have the visual as you do the FLIP video, you have the audio recording, and so the teacher can go back and listen to it, repeatedly if they need to, to really listen carefully to the student's pronunciation. That is also an excellent way of doing formative assessment in the presentational mode.

Language teachers also expressed similar sentiments during the interview. The following

statements were drawn from the interviews with Teacher G and Teacher H:

> For the language teachers, integrating these technology tools not only enriched the classroom, but also helped you to gain more detailed information about the students' language learning progress. These student products are also helpful for the language teachers to improve their future teaching practice, or in doing research in the field. (Teacher G)

> If it is just a presentation in class, it disappears right away, so you can't conduct any in-depth research on students' oral performance, to find a pattern or something else. So I think it is better to have the audio recording. (Teacher H)

> In addition to collecting audio recordings of students' pronunciation, integrating these

technology tools also promoted students' self-evaluation and it makes students actively

participate in their own education. The program director explained in her interview that,

> When students are going to record something, even if it is just an audio recording, not a video recording, they might put a little effort to rehearsing and polishing, because they know that it is going to be permanent, and the teacher is going to listen to it over and over again. It might be worth it to put in a little more effort into it rather than just something you are going to do once in class.

Thus, compared with the other traditional formative assessment methods, such as making a

presentation in class, having students to produce an audio or video project can allow better

learning results. During the interview, Teacher C also expressed the same viewpoint, and she

stated that,

> The products (i.e. Voki or Flip video project) you see is the final version. Before presenting this final product, students have practiced the language many times, and this is what we expect them to do, we want a product that has already been polished by the students...Compared with a traditional classroom presentation, where the teachers evaluate students' performance, these technology tools provide opportunities for students' self-evaluation. Students can listen to their own recordings as many times as they want. If they think there is a word that they didn't pronounce well, or they made a grammatical mistake in a sentence, they can always improve it and record it again, so this is a process of students' self-evaluation.

From the old style tape recorders to the current pocket sized digital recorders, voice

recording has always been used in foreign language classrooms. However, compared with the

traditional audio recording methods, the new technology tools such as Voki allows students to

record their voices in a fun, stimulating, and engaging way. In her interview, Teacher D

explained why she thinks Voki engages students better than the other traditional audio recording

methods:

> The working principle of Voki is really simple. Most of the computers already have the audio recording function: you record your voice and then you can listen to it. But this is so boring. With Voki, after students record their voice, they can see a speaking avatar, with their own voice. For the students, this (the avatar) is really funny. Furthermore, all of these avatars are created by the students themselves. They can also operate these avatars, keep them under their control, or improve them if they think it (the avatar) is defective.

For most the students, making a Voki avatar or filming a group dialogue is simply "something

fun to do". Just as Student 2 indicated in his interview that,

> I like Voki, because it is more of a fun way, because you can make a character of it, we can have it talk, that is kind of fun than just talking yourself. You can see what you said, you can go over to see if you did it right or wrong, see what you need to correct.

Voki can also reduce some students' anxiety in speaking the target language. For example,

Student 4 stated in her interview as follows:

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Voki was really easy, I like that. I think it is a good way of practicing Chinese, because nobody was watching you while you are saying anything, you were just speaking into the microphone.

Although integrating Voki and Flip video in formative assessment can benefit language teachers and students in different ways, some challenges with these technology tools were also identified, such as students' computer proficiency and the facilitator's completion of their logistic duties. During the interviews, Teacher A expressed her concerns regarding the students' computer proficiency as follows:

Our teachers are not in the same physical classroom with the students, so they can't really sit by individual students and guide them to operate the computer. Some students have better computer skills, or maybe the facilitators in the school districts are relatively familiar with computer technology, so that they can guide the students to compete these online tasks. However, if the students are not familiar with computers, and the facilitator in their school district didn't realized the importance of these computer assignments and didn't give students appropriate guidance, then the students might have trouble to complete these projects by themselves.

The findings from the classroom observations also confirms Teacher A's concern about students and facilitators' technology usage in the remote sites. For example, each school site has different technological set ups; different equipment, different access to internet, and different kinds of firewall protections. Thus, for some school sites, it is very easy for the facilitators to upload the Flip videos and share them with the language teachers through FlipShare software; however, for some other school sites, the facilitators encountered various difficulties with the FlipShare software, and it requires more effort for them to upload the Flip videos.

Summative Assessment

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate students learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard or benchmark. In this blended program, summative assessment was developed based on the the ACTFL IPA prototypes. The Integrated

Performance Assessment (IPA) is a cluster assessment featuring three tasks, each of which reflects one of the three modes of communication--Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational. All of these tasks are standards-based and performance-based, aligned within a single theme or content area, reflecting the manner in which students naturally acquire and use the language in the real world or the classroom. Table 4.11 presents a summary of the summative assessment for the blended language program.

Table 4.11. Summative Assessment for the Blended Language Program.

Interpretive Task	•Extract information from other student films (to be used in critique discussions). •Extract information from classmates poster talks (to be used in discussions).
Interpersonal Task	•Interview a Chinese-speaking "mystery guest" to obtain information on their name, current emotional/physical state, preferences in music, sports, hobbies, and movies. (Students will compete in teams to interview the native speaker "mystery guests" and then make presentations on the interview results (the team who reports accurately on thes most "facts" about mystery guest wins.) •Interview others and be interviewed on the "red carpet" at the film festival.
Presentational Task	•Use writing skills and visual material to make a poster about self (modeled after social networking pages, assessed with a rubric and prizes awarded for best posters) and give an oral presentation about personal preferences in music, hobbies, etc. (to be videotaped and assessed by instructional team using a rubric). •Working in teams, prepare script for video using language functions covered in class, make video with hand held FLIP cameras, edit and show videos at the class "Film Festival." (to be assessed by peers and by instructional team using a rubric).

The target learners for this curriculum were primarily zero-level beginners in Chinese, and at the end of the program they were expected to be able to perform language tasks characterized in novice low standards, such as: how to greet people, express likes and dislikes, talk about current physical/emotional state, how to invite others to do things and other simple

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phrases in Chinese. Summative assessment was conducted during the last two days of the face-to-face meetings. The students' performance in each mode of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational) were assessed through a series of culminating performance activities surrounding a film festival of student group produced short films with additional "red carpet" interviews. In order to ensure the validity of the assessment, similar performance activities were also practiced during the first eight days of distance learning, so that students could be familiar with the format of these summative tasks.

Film Festival

The film festival was the most important summative performance assessment in this blended language program; all of the curriculum content and activities in each unit lead toward this event. The film festival consist of the following four components:

(1) Film Production. Students worked in teams using the language function they learned in class to prepare a script for their final film project. Each team consisted of 3 to 5 students, usually from the same school district. After rehearsing the script with the language teachers, students act out the scenes, using a hand held Flip camera to record videos, and then editing it into a complete film story. Each film needs to be five to seven minutes long. This activity aims to assess students' presentational speaking performance as well as interpersonal speaking performance.

(2) Talk Show. After finishing the film production, each film group is asked to pretend they are on a talk show promoting their movie. Students need to use the language functions they have learned in class to interview each other. These interview videos are recorded by the language teachers with Flip cameras and added at the end of each film

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project as bonus features. This activity aims to assess the students' interpersonal speaking performance.

(2) Red Carpet Interview. In this "red carpet" event, student film production teams take turns to walk on the stage, introduce themselves, and promote their group film projects to the audience. Each student will also be interviewed by the MCs about their roles in the film production team (i.e. director, photographer, etc), as well as some other personal information. MCs are usually played by advanced students; all of the interview questions are derived from language functions that students have learned in class. This "red carpet" interview activity is designed to assess students' interpersonal speaking skills.

(3) Showcase. Students get together in an auditorium and watch all of the film stories produced by their peers. Students need to extract information from their peer's film stories, fill out a ballot, and vote for their favorite films. This activity focuses on assessing students' interpretive listening skills.

Thus, with these four activities integrated in the film festival, a complete evaluation system was formed, and students' performance in all of the three modes of communication was assessed.

During the film festival, nine student group film projects were produced and presented in the auditorium. Students applied the same language function they learned in class in a variety of ways to complete the plots in their stories. Stories created by students were spread across a variety of genres, including action, drama, horror, comedy, and reality shows. The following chart (See Table 4.12) shows examples of how students integrated the language functions they learned into their film stories:

Table 4.12. Students' Final Film Projects.

Name of the Film	Film Genres	Plots Summary	Language Application
Death Note	Horror	A serial killer committed crimes based on the personal information he found on social networks.	Interactions between the killer and the victims.
Dream	Reality Show	A girl dreamed herself participating in different reality shows.	The talk show host asks guests questions.
Misfortune	Drama	A guy found a threatening note in a fortune cookie and decided to leave the family and move to another state.	Conversations between the guy and his family members.
Monster Smash	Action	Three boys fight a monster in school.	Interactions between the monster and the boys.
Nathan and Lia	Drama	A young girl can predict people's age based on their interests and hobbies.	The girl asked the old man different questions.
No Way out	Horror	Students fight zombies in school.	Conversations between students.
Scary Dating	Reality Show	All of the contestants participating in a dating show were reported as missing after the show.	Contestants introduced themselves to the audience and answer interview questions from the show host.
The Dog Thief	Drama	A girl's dog was stolen by a dog thief, so she started a dog searching journey with her friends.	Conversations between the girl and her friends.
The Mustache Man	Comedy	A weird mustached man showed up in a high school.	Conversations between the students and the mustached man.

Storytelling has been described as the oldest technique in foreign language classes. Neuroscientists contend that our minds are literally wired to comprehend best the world through narrative. Benefits of storytelling in teaching and studying second languages include increased development of language skills, improved comprehension and classroom interaction (Tsou &

Wenli, 2012). According to the program director, storytelling is a powerful motivator to

encourage students to apply language that they have learned in class; and this is one of the main

reasons that the program chose film production as a summative assessment method. She stated in

her interview that,

> I think story telling is very powerful, very engaging for human beings of all backgrounds. Everybody loves a good story, and so I think that making a film, making a movie, or telling a story is very engaging, very interesting for the students. I think it is a powerful motivator, trying to use the language that they have learned.

In addition to storytelling, the program director also believes that the collaborative nature of the

film making process can promote student-centered, project-based learning; and the flexible

context also allows students to apply the language in a variety of ways. She explained:

> It is a group project, so this is going to require interaction among students. It is structured enough but also flexible enough, so that it is very student centered. Students do it themselves, because the context is flexible, it allows for them to use the language in a different context. In other words, they can have a dialogues in the film, they can have someone give a speech in the film, and they can have someone give order or instructions in the film, call for help, all kinds of different, and many opportunities to use languages in a rich, variety of ways.

Language teachers also expressed similar sentiments during the interviews. For example,

Teacher B indicated in her interview that story telling is a great way to inspire students'

creativity in using the language they learned in class. She stated:

> Students not only need to think about the plots, but also need to think about how they can use their limited language knowledge to complete these plots, so this is a very creative process. Students need to discuss with their peers about how to use their limited vocabulary to tell the story, as well as how to make the audience to understand their story....So I think this is a great opportunity for students to apply the language, to be creative with the language.

The following statements drawn from the interviews with Student 12 also exemplified this

sentiment:

> You would set yourself up in kind of a realistic situation, and you could also learn new phrases that you would actually use in real life. I thought it is interesting how you got the opportunity to put it in the way how real life would work, and put your own phrases,

being able to speak the language by yourself. You could just memorize the line, know what it means and say it. I thought it was really fun, and it also helps me learn.

Different from performing a skit in the classroom, where students can only do it once, the film medium allows the language teachers to keep a permanent record of students' performance, and it also provides opportunities for students to go back and edit or polish their story. During the interview, the program director explained why she chose the film medium as follows:

> The nice thing about the film medium is that you can have a record of it. Then you also have opportunity to go back to edit and polish, so if you do something once and you didn't like it, you can reshoot that scene, you can cut parts of it, you can re-record your scenes. The editing is also an additional opportunity for students to think about their story and think about the language that they used in the story, and whether or not it makes sense to the audience.

Both Teacher D and Teacher E indicated in their interviews that the film medium can motivate students to practice the language and rehearse their story lines, because they want to present their best performance on camera. The following are statements drawn from the interviews with Teacher D and Teacher E about their perspectives on student film production:

> The film production process provides great opportunities for students to practice the language. As their guiding teachers, we all know that before we film a scene, students will rehearse their lines at least five times, sometimes even more than ten times. Because of the film medium, students are not bored of this kind of rehearsal, and they are fully motivated in completing the project. (Teacher D)

> Students will need to practice the language many, many times before presenting on camera, and we only select their best performance to add to the film. (Teacher E)

During the interview, Teacher D also indicated that students can expand their vocabulary and learn some additional language content from participating in the film production, because the language content they learned in class is usually not enough to cover the plots in their films. Most students also mentioned in interviews that they have learned additional language content from the film production process. For example, when asked about their perspectives on the film production, Student 8 stated as follows:

There is a lot of vocabulary we had to learn for our movie, and I unfortunately understood 60% percent, but there is a lot more. We filmed it in takes, so we can use cue cards. We also have it in pinyin and characters. So, it has been a long process before we present. I think I actually used a lot of things that we talked about in class, and I also used vocabulary that we didn't learn, like希望(hope).

However, Teacher B disagreed with this viewpoint about introducing additional language content in the film festival, and she stated in her interviews that language teachers should limit their involvement in students' film production process and not teach students too much additional language content, so that students' real language performance can be assessed. She expressed her concern as follows:

Language teachers should limit their involvement in the film production. They shouldn't extend their language classroom to the students' film projects...The beauty of the film festival is that students can use their limited vocabulary to create a short and simple video story, not something with rich plots or complicated sentence structures, because that is the teacher's language performance, and it is not the students' real language ability.

The findings from reviewing students' film projects also confirmed Teacher B's concern about students' language usage in their film production. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most student groups were able to apply the learned language function to create a video story; however, a few student film groups failed to do so due to the lack of appropriate guidance from their guiding teachers, so they either produced a film with minimal dialogue, or a film that over-emphasized on dramatic plot structures, with story lines that were too advanced above the students' current language proficiency levels to understand. Thus, from the viewpoint of summative assessment, these student projects were not able to fully demonstrate the students' language performance after the instructional unit.

Poster Presentation

Poster presentation is another important summative performance assessment in this blended language program, and it consists of the following two components:

(1) Poster Writing. Students use their writing skills and visual materials to make a poster about themselves. The design of the poster is modeled after a social networking page, including five categories: personal information, hobbies, friends, a drawing space for students to decorate their poster with visual materials, and a chat space for friends leaving written messages. All of the finished posters are displayed on a wall, and students are asked to write notes in each other's posters and vote for the best poster. These poster projects will also be assessed by the instructional team using a rubric. This poster writing activity is designed to assess the students' presentational writing performance.

(2) Poster Talk. Students prepare a short talk (two to five minutes), introducing themselves in front of the whole class, based upon their social networking poster. The content of the presentation should include name, current mood, friends, likes and dislikes in sports, hobbies, music, and movies. These oral presentations were video-taped and assessed by the instructional team using a rubric. Students received a copy of the video tape and graded rubric as evidence of their achievement in this blended language program. This poster talk activity aims to assess the students' presentational speaking performance.

Compared with the film festival, which is open-ended and gives students a wide range of choice on topics, the poster presentation is more prescribed, so that language teachers can compare students' learning performance across the board. During the interviews, the program director explained the differences between these two summative assessment methods as follows:

> The poster talk is more prescribed, they are asked to give a talk specifically about themselves, and they are actually covering the materials that are in the poster. That means for that exercise, everybody is going to have very similar content, the basic structure, the categories of content are going to be the same. The film festival exercise is much more open-ended, in terms of the linguistic and cultural content. They have a wider range of

choice, a lot of freedom, and so we don't expect to see something that we can compare across the board [with the films] as you can with the PosterTalk.

Although the poster activity aims to assess students' presentational communication skills, some aspects of the activity also addressed the other two modes of communication (interpersonal and interpretive) in a less direct way. During the interviews, the program director explained how the students' interpersonal writing can be assessed within the poster activity:

> In the posters that we make, we have an activity where students write notes in each other's posters, we call it "great wall chat space". It is a block space on the poster that they make, and they go around a room and write on each other's posters. Some of the students just write the same thing on everybody's posters, but many of the students actually look at what other people have written and respond to it. When they do that, what they are really doing is an interpersonal writing exercise, which I think is really cool.

Teacher A also expressed similar sentiments. During the interview, she explained how the poster activity can serve as an interpretive reading and listening exercise:

> Students need to look at their peer's poster writings before they vote for the best one, so this is a kind of a comprehensive input process. Students have chances to look at their peer's hobbies and some other personal information, comparing to those of themselves, and to find commonalities and differences...Furthermore, being in an audience while other people are presenting their poster is also a great exercise for interpretive listening.

From interviews with the students, the researcher found that for most of the students, the poster presentation activity is not as fun as the film festival, not only because they have to remember a much longer script (in film production students can have takes), but also they have to overcome the fear of public speaking. During the interviews, many students indicated that they were "nervous" and "scared" in presenting themselves in front of the audience. The following statements were drawn from interviews with students:

> I just don't like to talk in public, which is my problem. When I go to the posters, I don't know what to do. I know I am going to mess up, because I don't know everything. (Student 3)

I liked it much better in small groups, because I was so scared, in a room with 40 people, but if it is in small groups, [it is] not as overwhelming. (Student 8)

In addition, Student 4 indicated in her interview that the videotaping aspect also increased her anxiety during the poster presentation.

Although many students felt public speaking anxiety, most of them appreciated the challenge. Student 10 stated in his interview that,

It is definitely a good step to help make students get better at Chinese, and getting in front of people, because if you just say it to yourself, or to one person, you kind of get it, but if you are confident enough to get up in front of a bunch of people and talk in a language that isn't your first language, that helps a lot.

Teacher A also agreed with this viewpoint, and she indicated in her interview that the poster talk activity not only assessed students' presentational communication skills, but also addressed the Connection aspect that is described in the ACTFL 5C standards. She explained:

I think this [public speaking] is the ability students will need for their future life, and this is also the "connection" standard that ACTFL outlined in 5C. Language is just a tool, students will need to use this tool in different occasions. I think this kind of format [public speaking] will be beneficial for the students in the future. Students might be very nervous this time, but what we hope is that after they had this experience, their anxiety in public speaking will gradually decrease in the future.

In addition to the film festival and poster presentations, some other summative assessment activities were also conducted in a less formal way during the two days of face-to-face meeting, such as the *Mystery Guest* and *Song Requesting* activities. The *Mystery Guest* activity is designed to assess students' interpersonal communication performance. In this activity, students are divided into teams and interview a Chinese-speaking "mystery guest" to obtain information on name, current emotional/physical state, preferences in music, sports, and hobbies. These mystery guests are usually college students from China. Students compete in teams to interview Chinese-speaking "mystery guests", and then make presentations on the interview results. The team who reports accurately on the most "facts" about the mystery guest

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wins. In the *Song Requesting* activity, students are asked to read a music selection form, indicating their music preferences as well as whom they want to dedicate the song to. These music selection forms were reviewed by the instructors and the selected songs were played during the film festival after party. This activity aims to assess students' interpretive reading skills.

Summary

This section investigated the fourth research question, the *tested curriculum*: how is student learning assessed in different instructional modes? how do teachers and students view different types of assessment in a blended context?

In this blended language program, formative assessment was conducted in all of the three instructional modes, and it continued through the beginning to the end of the program. Formative assessment in each instructional mode focused on different aspects of language learning. For example, while most of the activities in the videoconferencing classes were designed to assess students' listening and speaking skills, students' reading and writing performance were assessed during the self-paced online learning period. Summative assessment also took place during the two days of face-to-face meetings. Students' performance in each mode of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) were assessed through a series of culminating performance activities surrounding a film festival of student group produced short films with additional "red carpet" interviews. A variety of technological tools were integrated in both the formative and summative assessments, including GoAnimate, Voki, Flip handheld video camera and etc. The integration of these technological tools in assessment not only engaged students in

language learning, but also helped the language teachers to document the students' language learning process so that they can adjust their subsequent lessons to address any problems.

5. Summary and Discussion: The Multi-Layered Curriculum

Based on the findings from the first four research questions, this section will discuss the congruence and incongruence of the four layers towards the overall blended language learning design.

According to Cuban, there are at least four layers of curriculum that are in use in schools: intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum and tested curriculum. The first layer is the intended curriculum, which is also called the official curriculum; it is the formal, approved guidelines for teaching content to students that is developed for teachers, and the expectation is that teachers will teach it and that students will learn it. The curriculum framework of this blended language program is developed using backward design process; it addresses the program theme, unit sub-themes, standards and expected outcomes, and specific knowledge and skills. The curriculum goals are articulated in terms of the ACTFL 5C standards curriculum goals, with a list of "can-do" statements indicating what students will be able to perform at different proficiency levels and within each communicative mode. Summative assessments are conducted during the last two days of a residential camp, taking the form of a series of culminating performance activities surrounding a film festival of student group produced short films with additional "red carpet" interviews. The specific knowledge and skills of the curriculum are delivered in three instructional modes: synchronous instruction with IDL videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction with online tutorials, and physically co-located face-to-face activities.

The second layer is the taught curriculum, which is the curriculum that teachers actually implemented in their classrooms. The taught curriculum is a teacher's specific operations of the intended curriculum. Although the intended curriculum defines what teachers are supposed to teach, the teachers' choice about what to teach and how to present the curriculum are influenced by many variables. In this blended language program, among the three instructional delivery modes, the videoconferencing classes require the most teacher operations, and the teacher's choice about what to teach and how to present the language curriculum are influenced by many variables; such as the teacher's usage of technology to present the content, their communication strategies to engage distance learners and improve the student-teacher relationship, as well as their philosophies toward classroom activity design and classroom management. From the classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher found that although all of the teachers used the same set of lesson plans, their actual teaching performances presented on the remote site TV screen were widely varied. Some language teachers successfully engaged the distance learners through their dramatic performances using the teaching props, their creative use of camera angles, appropriate picture switching, as well as their excellent communication strategies. For the distance learners, the language learning experience in their videoconferencing classes is like engaging in an interesting interactive TV show. However, some other teachers failed to engage the same group of students. During the classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher noticed that a few language teachers forgot to switch the pictures, and they had left the remote site TV screen on the PowerPoint slide for most of the class time. Thus, for the distance learners, the learning experience in their videoconferencing classes is just like reading and listening to a boring and dull audio-book. The asynchronous online tutorials focus on the students' self-paced learning, and they were predesigned before the program began. Compared

with the videoconferencing classes, the asynchronous instructional mode requires less teacher operation; however, language teachers can still make adjustments to each day's flex period self-paced learning tasks, with the adjustments based in part upon the formative assessment and observation/analysis of the needs of the class as a whole, or based on individual student needs. In the face-to-face instructional mode, language teachers don't teach any new curriculum content; rather, each teacher is assigned with a group of students, and their role is to assist the students to accomplish their final project.

The third layer is the learned curriculum, which is the curriculum that students take away from the class. While the intended curriculum defines what is supposed to be taught and the taught curriculum defines what teachers choose to teach, the learned curriculum is the knowledge and skills students actually acquire from the class. According to Cuban, the learned curriculum overlaps with, but differs significantly, from the intended curriculum and the taught curriculum. In this blended language program, learning and teaching doesn't occur in the same location. In addition to the language teachers' instruction on the TV screen, the students' learning experiences in the remote site classrooms are influenced by many other factors. From the classroom observations at the four different remote sites, the researcher discovered that, even though the curriculum was delivered by the same language teacher, the physical setting, the specific videoconferencing equipment used, and the unique classroom atmosphere in different remote sites, all had a large impact on students' learning experience in the videoconferencing classes. For example, some remote sites have large-sized high resolution TV monitors, surround sound systems and theater style seating, so the learning experiences in these videoconferencing classes is like immersing in a movie theater. However, other remote sites have much more outdated videoconferencing equipment, where students have to raise their heads to watch the

video content displayed on a very small CRT TV monitor. From the classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher also found that the students' effective usage of the asynchronous online learning tutorials at the remote site classrooms is also related to many variables; these variables include the computer configurations used at the school, the internet speeds, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulations in online learning, or even the facilitator completing certain logistic duties.

The fourth layer is the tested curriculum, which are the assessments that are developed by administrators and teachers to determine if students' learning has met the curriculum goal. As discussed earlier, the curriculum framework of this blended language program was developed using backward design process, which requires language teachers to operationalize the curriculum goals or standards in terms of assessment evidence as they begin to plan the course. In this blended language program, summative assessment took place during the two days of physical, face-to-face meetings, and it was developed using the ACTFL IPA (Integrated Performance Assessment) prototype, a cluster assessment featuring three tasks, each of which reflects one of the three modes of communication--Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational. According to Cuban, what students learn does not exactly mirror what is in the tested curriculum; the tested curriculum is a limited part of what is intended by policy makers, taught by teachers, and learned by students. From classroom observations and reviewing students' final projects, the researcher also found that students' performance in final summative activities were not only influenced by their language proficiency levels; some other variables, such as the students' teamwork and collaboration skills, public speaking skills, and the language teachers' facilitating styles, also have an impact on students' performance in the final summative projects.

In summary, according to Cuban, curriculum is a four-layered structure, and there is no one exact curriculum. Although the intended curriculum reveals the administrator's ideal picture of blended learning design and defines what teachers should teach and what students should learn in each instructional delivery mode, the actual implementation process of blended learning is much more complex. The findings of the study showed that language teachers' specific operation of the daily lessons in a blended context and students' actual learning experiences at the remote sites can be influenced by many other variables; these variables lead the intended curriculum into different versions between the classes of the taught curriculum, learned curriculum and tested curriculum.

Along with the rapid development of educational technologies, especially the use of internet and web-based communication, turning to blended learning is currently the new trend in American schools. However, in many cases, this education innovation only occurs in the external layer of the curriculum (the intended curriculum). Administrators make a decision on technology investment and hire instructional designers to redesign the curriculum. They expect that teachers will teach it, students will learn it, and the test scores will mirror the improvements. In this top-down decision making process, how the teachers implement the technology and how the students experience the technology are usually not considered. According to Cuban, and as it was observed in this study, much confusion over educational reforms are caused by this discrepancies within and between the multi-layered curriculum.

A good way to understand complexity of blended learning design and implementation process is to learn from the experiences of others. Therefore, by investigating the four curriculum layers in an existing blended language program, as well as analyzing the congruency among the four curriculum layers, this study provides a holistic view about how different participant groups

perceive blended language learning based on their experiences, which brings new insights into

the design and implementation issues involved in blended language learning.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this chapter is to summarize the findings and to draw relevant conclusions. Recommendations will be provided for the sake of improving curriculum and instruction in a blended language program, and for further research on integrating technology in foreign language classrooms.

Summary of the Study

This qualitative case study explored the nature of blended learning design and implementation in an existing high school's Chinese as a second language program. The study is important because most studies in technology-supported language learning only look at single applications rather than integrated systems; in addition, these studies are mostly focused on English and other frequently taught European languages, and they are limited to college-level learners.

The context for this dissertation is comprised of the study of the elements of a blended language program offered by a Chinese language institute at a large Midwestern university in the United States. This two-week summer blended language program was funded by the federal government, and was designed to give high school students a jumpstart into the study of Chinese language. This program was chosen because its unique structure provides a rich context for the researcher to explore the phenomena of blended learning. This blended language program was composed of three different instructional modes: synchronous instruction with videoconferencing technology, asynchronous instruction with online tutorials, and physically co-located face-to-face activities. Technology integration in this language program was not only

used as a supplement to an existing print material based curriculum, but also translated into a pedagogical approach and realized in the structure of the curriculum.

In order to gain multiple perspectives on the phenomena of blended language learning and to make the data more analytical, this study adopted Larry Cuban's multi-layered curriculum framework to investigate the four curriculum layers within the blended language program. This multi-layered curriculum framework allowed the researcher to understand the administrators' practical and pedagogical considerations behind the blended learning design, as well as to understand how the language curriculum was actually taught, learned, and tested in a blended context from different participant groups' perspectives. Figure 5.1 provides a conceptual framework that supports the research question:
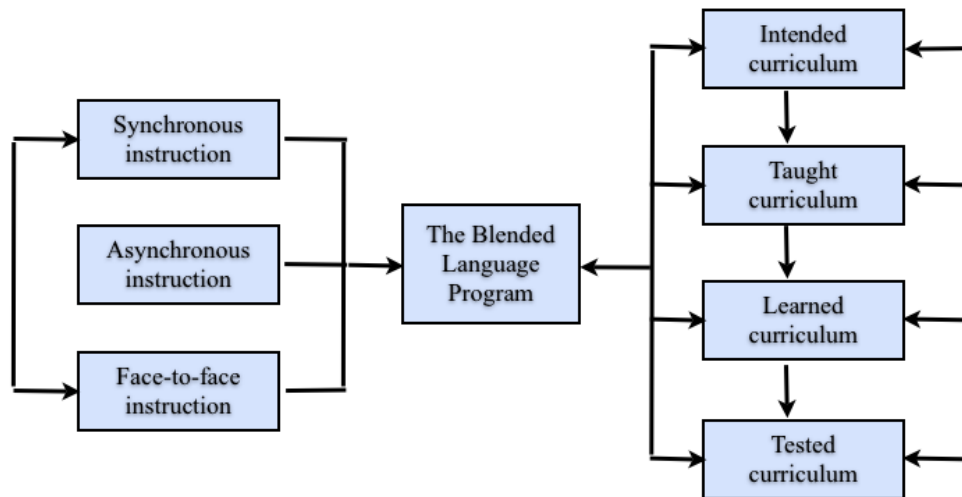
Figure 5.1: Conceptual Framework of the Research Topic

Synchronous Instruction

Findings in the study revealed that the need for a practical method of engaging distance language learners was the main reason for the implementation of videoconferencing. Differing from some other commonly taught languages, such as Spanish and French, implementing an exclusively face-to-face Chinese language program in a K-12 classroom can encounter numerous

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difficulties; such as low population density, shortage of qualified teachers, and budget issues in hiring qualified teachers. Therefore, with the previously described difficulties in mind, integrating technology to reduce face-to-face teaching hours is crucial to the survival of a Chinese language program. With the implementation of videoconferencing technology, students from eight school districts across four different mid-western states were able to participate in this blended language program. Amongst the various distance learning tools, videoconferencing technology was chosen to deliver the language curriculum, because it supports live, real-time interaction, which corresponds with the socially interactive nature of foreign language education as well as the current communicative teaching approach. The curriculum for the videoconferencing classes focused on oral language, because it is best learned through daily life interaction. In the videoconferencing classes, language teachers were required to use the target language a minimum of 90% of the time. In order to help students comprehend the curriculum content and use the target language, language teachers used their body gestures as well as various visual aids, which included puppets, PowerPoints, videos, and etc.

Although videoconferencing technology was implemented in this blended language program to address the practical needs, from classroom observations, as well as in-depth interviews with the language teachers, the researcher found that, contrasting with the popular opinion that videoconferencing is just a video-feed replication of a face-to-face classroom, there are many opportunities for teacher creativity in delivering the language curriculum through this technology. With appropriate production and execution, videoconferencing can more resemble a popular TV show that would engage teenagers in watching it. For example, during interviews, Teacher A used an interesting metaphor to describe her teaching experiences in videoconferencing. She stated that,

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I think teaching in a videoconferencing context is just like producing a TV show, but it is a show where you can have a real-time interaction with the distant audience. If you want the audience to spend a long time watching a TV screen or a computer screen, there must be something that can attract their attention on the screen; such as presenting the person on the screen, or presenting videos, or presenting the combination with some other content. If a language teacher wants to attract their audience, which is the students in the remote site classroom, it is also like attracting the audience through producing a popular TV show; teachers need to make the show attractive, either through their body language, or facial expressions, or using props.

The producing of a TV show provides a great metaphor to explain how the curriculum can be taught effectively in the videoconferencing class. If the intended curriculum is the screenplay, then the teachers' different specific presentations of the screenplay would lead to different produced versions of the final TV shows. In the production process, language teachers first play the role of an actor. For example, they need to use different props to act out the lines written in the script (the curriculum content). In order to attract the audience's attention, they also need to exaggerate their gestures and speech as well as manage their facial expressions when acting. In addition to acting out the script, language teachers also need to apply various communication strategies to make the distance audience feel connected and engage them in participating in different classroom activities. In the production process, language teachers also play the role as a film director, visualizing the script through acting, choosing different camera angles, or using picture switching. For example, most of the remote site TV screens only allow presenting one aspect of the content at a time, so the language teachers need to have a basic idea about using picture switching on the TV screen, such as when to introduce curriculum through PowerPoint, how long the PowerPoint should be present on the TV screen, and when to switch back to camera, letting the teacher's (actor's) image reenter the TV screen.

During the interviews, Teacher B also described a similar viewpoint. She pointed out that the audience's rating metric for a TV show is similar to how well the students pay attention to the IDL videoconferencing class. She explained her reason as follows,

> I think every class is like the teacher producing a TV show, and your audience's rating is the students' attention to the class. If students are chatting, playing cell phone, that means you get a low audience's rating, your TV show is not good. You can't force students to pay attention to the class, like how CCTV (Chinese Central Television) forces the audience to watch their TV show (i.e. CCTV requires a lot of local TV channels to broadcast a government program at 7 p.m. every night). When the facilitator intervenes for classroom discipline, forcing students' to pay attention, there is no effect. Even though students are polite and look at the screen for a couple of minutes, they will lose attention again.

The researcher's classroom observations at remote sites also support Teacher B's viewpoint. Although all of the teachers used the same set of lesson plans (i.e. the screenplay), the final TV shows that were presented on the remote site TV screen were widely varied. For example, by dramatic performances with the teaching props, creative use of camera angles, as well as appropriate picture switching, some teachers gain a high audience rating, and the learning experience at the remote site is like watching an interesting and engaging TV show. However, some others might fail to switch the pictures, and leave the remote site TV screen on PowerPoint mode most of the time. When this happens, the learning experience at the remote sites is just like reading a boring and dull audio book, and the audience's rating (engagement) decreases.

Just like a different director's specific vision of the same screenplay can lead to various versions of TV shows, the same TV show presented in a different setting also can result in the audience's various viewing experiences. From the classroom observations at different remote sites, the researcher found that, even though the curriculum was delivered by the same language teacher, the physical setting and the specific technology used in the remote site classrooms led to students' different learning experiences. For example, some remote sites had much larger TV screens , better sound system, and theater style multimedia classroom, while others had very

outdated videoconferencing equipment, where students had to raise their heads to watch the curriculum content that is presented on very small TV screen hanging on the ceiling against the wall. The specific learning atmosphere also varies among different remote school sites. Students from some remote school sites were more self-discipline. They actively participate in all of the classroom activities, and their classroom facilitators only need to work on logistic issues and don't have to involve in classroom management and discipline; while in some other school sites, students only engaged in activities with a "game essence" and less participative in some other regular classroom exercise. Thus, in these remote sites, the facilitator's authority in the classroom management and discipline played an important in the success of the videoconferencing classes.

Asynchronous Instruction

Asynchronous instructional mode was implemented in the program to provide a break from the intensive real-time interaction in the videoconferencing classes. While videoconferencing classes focused on developing students' language fluency through communicative learning activities in target language, the asynchronous online learning tutorials allowed students to learn the curriculum content at their own pace and explore some additional language and culture materials based on their personal interest. Based on different learning purpose, the asynchronous online tutorials in this blended language program can be generalized into five categories, including: (1) authentic materials, (2) form-focused materials, (3) cultural background materials in English, (4) lesson review materials, and (5) challenge option materials. All of these online tutorials were predesigned by instructional designers before the program began and focused on students' self-paced learning. Thus, compared with the videoconferencing classes, the asynchronous instructional mode requires less teacher operation.

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The findings of the study showed that integrating self-paced online learning materials is a great way support differentiated instruction in a language classroom. For example, the challenge option materials expended the learning content in the videoconferencing classes by introducing students to additional vocabulary and sentences structure related to the unit topic and integrating advanced learning tasks. These materials were not only beneficial for advanced students who have studied some Chinese, but also provided opportunity for language beginners to explore more language materials based on their own needs and interest, such as using some advanced vocabulary in their group film project. Some form-focused materials, such as Chinese tone training and character writing, was also introduced to students as individualized , self-paced exercises rather than as a group in class exercises, because different students takes different amount of time to understand these materials, and learning these materials doesn't require student-teacher interaction or student-student interaction. Furthermore, the asynchronous online tutorial also addressed the time flexibility issue of videoconferencing classes. In this blended language program, the videoconferencing classes were designed to be 50-60 minutes for each session; the videoconferencing call automatically disconnects after the preprogramed time, no matter if the language teacher has finished the teaching tasks or not. Thus, the integrations of the asynchronous online tutorials addressed this time flexibility issue with videoconferencing by allowing students to access the learning materials anytime-anywhere.

Although all of the students used the same set of online tutorial, from classroom observations, the researcher found that, students' actual learning experiences among different remote site classrooms were widely varied. In addition to the design of the online tutorials, some other variables, including the technology availability in the school districts, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulation in online learning, or even the facilitator completing

certain logistic duties, had an impact on the students' effective usage of the self-paced online learning tutorials. For example, due to the computer configuration issues, some components of the online learning tutorial didn't work as expected in one of the remote site. To address the problem, the language teacher had to transform the self-paced learning activities into in-class group learning activities, which conflicted with the original design intention of the asynchronous online tutorial. Furthermore, students' computer proficiencies and self-regulation in online learning were widely varied among the different remote school sites. While some students had extensive previous experience with the usage of computers and well accustomed to online learning, others had very limited opportunities to use a computer and struggled in navigating the online tutorials.

Face-to-Face Instruction

Findings in the study revealed that face-to-face instruction was implemented in the program to create socialization opportunities for language learners. After the eight-day distance learning in the remote sites, students travelled to the teaching site with their classroom facilitators, meeting with their language teachers and peers from other school districts in person, as well as participated in various language and cultural activities. Rather than introducing students to new language content, the face-to-face instructional mode focused on culminating activities, where the students applied in real life situations the language and culture content that they have learned in the videoconferencing classes and the self-paced online learning materials. These culminating activities, including mystery guest, poster writing/talk, and a film festival of student group produced short films with additional red carpet interviews, served as summative assessment for the language program, where students' performance in each mode of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational) were assessed.

From interviews with language teachers and students, the researcher found that, all of the participants think that the two days of physical face-to-face meeting is the most significant component of this blended language program, and the program wouldn't be the same without this component. Although with videoconferencing technology, the language teacher and students can see and interact with each other in real time, the physical separation can still lead to feelings of isolation and unreality. The integration of a physical, face-to-face meeting bridges the video world to the real world, where language teachers jump off the TV screen and interact with students in real life. In addition to meeting the "real teacher" behind the TV screen, students also meet their peers from other school districts during the two days of residential camp. From collaborating with peers in group project, as well as evaluating peer's performance in the language projects, students were able to know how other people learn the language and what they can do with the language. By interacting and sharing language learning experiences with peers in person, students would also realize that they are not alone in this language learning journey, and a learning community beyond language classroom can be formed. Furthermore, most of the students participated in the program were from small towns or other places where there isn't large Chinese community, and they didn't have many opportunities to interact with a local Chinese community. By participating in various cultural workshops during the two days of face-to-face meeting, students had chance to meet local Chinese communities, including musicians, artists, and peers from China, where they can applied the language they have learned in the classroom and communicate with native speaker in person.

Although the culminating activities were designed as summative assessments for the program, the findings of the study indicated that students' participation and performance in these face-to-face activities were not only influenced by their language proficiency levels; some other

variables, such as the students' teamwork and collaboration skills, public speaking skills, and the language teachers' facilitating styles, also had an impact on students' experiences in participating in the final projects. For example, the film festival was the most important summative performance assessment in this blended language program; all of the curriculum content and activities in each unit lead toward this event. From reviewing students' film projects, the researcher found that, most student film groups were able to apply the learned language function to create a video story. However, due to the lack of appropriate guidance from the language teacher, a few of the students groups failed to integrate language functions; they either produced a film with minimal dialogue, or over-emphasized on dramatic plot structures, with story lines that were too high above students' current language proficiency level to understand. Thus, from the viewpoint of summative assessment, these student projects were not able to fully demonstrate the students' language performance after the instructional unit.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the summary and discussions above, more efforts can be done by the administrators, language teachers, instructional designers, and other researchers in order to address the issues involved in blended learning design and implementation, and improve curriculum and instruction in a blended language program.

Improving Teaching and Learning in Synchronous Instruction

Theory connection. Findings of the study showed that videoconferencing is not just a video version of face-to-face classroom; with appropriate production and execution, it can be more resemble a popular TV show that teenagers would be engaged in watching. Therefore, for researchers and educators interested in design and developing videoconferencing classes, , rather

than focusing on creating a simulating face-to-face experience to distance learners, it would be helpful to look into theories related to TV production, for example, psychology in mass media audience, and learn about what strategies TV producers or directors would use to keep the audience focused on a TV show.

Technology training. From the remote classroom observation, the researcher found that, language teachers' usage of remote control in content switching among the technology modes (camera, computer and projector) led to widely varied teaching results: either an engaging TV show with high audience's rating or a boring audio book with low audience's rating. Therefore, technology training for the language teachers should not limited to the basic steps of using videoconferencing equipment (i.e. turn on/off the equipment). In order to present a successful TV show, language teachers should also practice how to utilize different camera angles to present different curriculum content, as well as how to use picture switching to attract distance audience's attention, such as when to introduce curriculum through PowerPoint, how long the PowerPoint should be present on the TV screen, and when to switch back to camera, letting the teacher's image reenter the TV screen.

Pedagogy Training. The unique 2D screen -based context also requires additional pedagogy training for the language teachers. For example, when teaching in the videoconferencing context, language teachers should always use clear and detailed verbal instruction rather than relying on nonverbal cues as they always used in traditional face-to-face classes, because the camera installed the remote site classroom is focused on a static wide-angle view of the classroom, and it is difficult for the teacher to use eye contact or body gesture to give hints to individual students. Classroom activities that require large body movement in the classroom is not suitable for the videoconferencing classes, because students may easily walk

outside the camera focus. Thus, pedagogical workshops such as communication strategies to engage distance learners and improve student-teacher relationship, rules for classroom activity design, will be helpful for language teachers to improve their teaching practice in the videoconferencing context.

Acting Training. In order to enhance the visual impact and attract the attention of students, language teachers' acting in the videoconferencing classroom must be more exaggerated than teaching in a face-to-face context. These exaggerated performances not only include the teachers' body language but also their facial expressions and pronunciation, including intonation. Thus, for administrators, in addition to providing technology and pedagogy training, it would be also helpful to invite experts from the theater or acting filed to introduce some basic acting techniques to the language teachers, so that they can have a basic idea about how to be dramatic in front of the camera and make their performance exciting and engaging for the distance audience.

Remote site visit. The finding of the study showed that the physical setting and the specific technology used in the remote site classrooms were widely varied; and this variation led to students' different learning experiences in the videoconferencing classes. The more teacher know about the remote site, the better they can prepare the curriculum and instruction to meet students' various needs. For example, some remote sites had much smaller TV screen compared to the others. Thus, when preparing instructional materials (e.g. PowerPoint or any other course related documents) for the students at these remote sites, language teachers need to be very cautious in selecting font size or colors. In order to help the language teachers gain more knowledge about their students' learning environment, a remote site visit before the program began would be helpful. If it is possible, some of the teacher training workshops can be

conducted at the remote site classrooms, so that language teachers can stand at the learner's perspective to observe their peer's videoconferencing classes and have a direction impression about how different instructional strategy can impact on their actual teaching performance on the remote site TV screen.

Improving Teaching and Learning in Asynchronous Instruction

Integrate more learning tasks. Finding of the study showed that some language teachers were not comfortable with shifting all of the learning responsibility to the students, and they felt that they had to give up control of their students' learning when they replace the synchronous instruction with asynchronous online learning materials. In order to help language teachers to gain more detailed information about students' learning progress, the online tutorials can integrate more learning tasks. For example, each piece of language/culture content can follow with at least one learning tasks, and require students to submit their responses or feedback to the teachers. In this way, teacher can check whether students have understood the online materials or not.

Integrate more interactive games. From classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher found that students' self-regulation in online learning were widely varied among different remote sites. Some students were able to follow the instruction and complete all of the online tasks, while others easily get distracted and only engaged in interactive activities with a game essence. Therefore, in order to motivate students' interests and engage all of the students in online learning, instructional designers can redesign the some of the online activities, making the online language practice more interactive and contains a game essence.

Simplify website layout for low computer proficiency user. In addition to self-regulation in online learning, students' computer proficiency was also varied among different remote sites.

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Some students had extensive previous experiences with the use of computers and online learning, while others had very limited computer access. From classroom observations at the remote sites, the researcher found that some students encountered difficulties in navigating the learning management system, and a few of them didn't even know how to close a web page. In order to enable students with low computer proficiency in using the online tutorials, the design of website layout should be simple and clear.

   Optimize website for slow internet environment. The finding of the study showed that, the technology availability in each school site were widely varied. Some school sites had much slower internet speed compared to others. In one of the remote school site the researcher observed for the study, the researcher noticed that it took almost 5 seconds for students to load a webpage, and even longer if the webpage included a large amount of audio files. In order to enable the website work smoothly in a slow internet speed environment, instructional designer should compress audio or image files, reduce file size and optimize them for the website.

Improving Teaching and Learning in Face-to-Face Instruction

   In this blended language program, the face-to-face instructional mode focused on summative assessment, where the students applied in real life situations the language and culture content that they have learned in the videoconferencing classes and the self-paced online learning materials. However, the finding of the study showed that, due to the lack of validity of summative assessment, some students were not able to fully demonstrate their language performance after the instructional unit. The validity of summative assessment is not only a matter of using the language function learned in class, but also using the same format. In order to increase the validity of the summative assessment activities, language teachers can integrate similar activities during the first eight days of distance learning, so that students can be prepared

for the format of assessment. Furthermore, for most of the students, the culminating activities were just "something fun to do". Therefore, language teachers should set up clear expectations and guide the students in approaching the final projects in the right direction. For example, when the students pursuing dramatic plot structures, intense actions, or special effects, and ignore the learning purpose in their group film projects, language teachers should give students appropriate guidance, or even intervene when it is necessary.

Conclusion: Blended Learning Design and Implementation

As Randy Garrison stated, blended learning is not focused on the "enabling technology", rather, it is more about expanding the educational possibilities that technology affords (Garrison, 2009). In an era of rapid technology development, being able to strip off the external covering and extract the key pedagogical feature of a new technology is extremely important in blended learning design. For example, in addition to accessibility and availability, compared with other distance learning tools, the key pedagogical feature of videoconferencing technology is supporting real-time interaction. This real-time interaction feature corresponds with the socially interactive nature of foreign language education as well as the current communicative language teaching approach. A learning management system, such as CourseSite, Blackboard, or Moodle, provides opportunities for students to learn the curriculum content at their own pace and explore some additional course materials based on their personal interests. This self-paced learning feature reflects the cognitive and constructive approach to CALL (computer assisted language learning), which views learning as a process of discovery, expression, and development, and in which the learner plays an active role in the learning process. By recognizing the key pedagogical features of a new technology, language educators can decide what types of learning

content can be best delivered by certain instructional mediums, and redesign the language course to meet the students' needs.

Once designer have identified the key features of the technology, another important step is to think about how these features can be translated into pedagogical solutions and realized in the forms of curriculum. As mentioned earlier, supporting live, real-time interaction is the key pedagogical feature of videoconferencing technology. To fully take the advantage, the design of the curriculum content for the videoconferencing class should focus on oral language, because it is best learned through real daily life interaction. Other form-focused materials, such as Chinese character tutorials, are better to be introduced to students as individualized, self-paced exercises, because learning these materials doesn't require student-teacher interaction or student-student interaction. More importantly, in order to fully understand these form-focused materials, different students take different amounts of time. Thus, a learning management system with self-paced learning features is a better platform in which to place this type of curriculum content. Opportunities for socialization is the key pedagogical feature of the face-to-face component in a blended learning design, so curriculum content with a collaborative nature is best delivered in this instructional mode. In summary, different instructional delivery modes have their unique practical and pedagogical features, and the modes are suitable for different language and culture content. Thus, selecting appropriate content for different instructional delivery modes plays an important role in blended learning design.

In addition to appropriate curriculum content selection, the design of the specific instructional activities should also correspond with the characteristic of the technology medium, maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantage of each instructional mode. For example, by using videoconferencing, language teachers can take advantages of illustrative

capabilities: they can step off camera, can step back on camera, can show pictures and slides, and switch things up quickly. Rather than the popular opinion that videoconferencing is just a video version of the face-to-face classroom, there are many opportunities for teachers' creativity in delivering the curriculum through this technology. As discussed earlier, supporting self-paced learning is the key pedagogical feature of a learning management system. In order to maximize this advantage, the design of the instructional activities in the asynchronous instructional mode should emphasize on developing students' self-discovery ability. Rather than directly teach or explain something to students, the instructional activities can be presented to students based on inductive thinking theory, where students discover and generalize concepts and rules through analyzing a variety of raw information.

A well designed blended language program doesn't guarantee a successful learning result. The findings in this study indicates that students' learning experiences in the remote site classrooms are influenced by many other variables, such as the classroom atmosphere, the specific videoconferencing equipment and the computer configurations used at the school, the internet speeds, the students' computer proficiencies and self-regulations in online learning, etc. Therefore, the more information the teachers know about the students and the remote site classroom, the better adjustment they can make to meet students' different needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

It should be acknowledged that there are some limitations to this study. This study adopted a case study approach to investigate a blended language program with a particular structure; therefore, it has limitations in generalizability. Since there are many blended language programs with different compositions and structures, a multiple case study approach can be used

in the future research and explore the differences within and between cases to gain multiple perspectives of language teaching and learning in a blended context. For example, study another case that has face-to-face field trip before the videoconferencing. Does this help with classroom management and teacher-student relationship issues described in the interviews of this case? In addition, the blended language program explored in this study is a two-week summer language course, and it only involved beginning language learners. Further study should include academic year programs with learners from all levels of foreign language experiences.

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APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board

KU RESEARCH &
GRADUATE STUDIES
The University of Kansas

4/22/2013
HSCL #20800

Yao Tu
1819 Norland Drive
Dubuque, IA 52002

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL) has received your response to its expedited review of your research project

20800 Tu/Gonzalez-Bueno (C & T) A Case Study of High School Blended Language Program

and approved this project under the expedited procedure provided in 45 CFR 46.110 (f) (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Office for Human Research Protections requires that your consent form must include the note of HSCL approval and expiration date, which has been entered on the consent form(s) sent back to you with this approval.

1. At designated intervals until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the HSCL office.
2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the Committee immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform HSCL when this project is terminated. You must also provide HSCL with an annual status report to maintain HSCL approval. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from HSCL one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dyson Elms
Coordinator
Human Subjects Committee Lawrence

cc: Manuela Gonzalez-Bueno

Human Subjects Committee Lawrence
Youngberg Hall | 2385 Irving Hill Road | Lawrence, KS 66045 | (785) 864-7429 | HSCL@ku.edu | research.ku.edu

APPENDIX B: University of Kansas Consent Form

PARENT-GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

A Case Study of High School Blended Language Program

INTRODUCTION
The Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not allow your child to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw your child from this study, it will not affect your child's relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to your child, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to maximize the understanding about the design and implementation issues of blended language learning by investigating the four curriculum layers--intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum, in a blended language program, as well as the congruency among the four curriculum layers. In order to achieve this purpose, qualitative research methodology using a case study approach will be employed in this study, as it enables this study to be situated in a naturalistic environment and also enables a holistic understanding of the context and the relationship between the participants in the blended language program.

PROCEDURES
Interview
An interview will be conducted to collect your child's feedback of the blended language program. After you sign this form and allow your child to participate in this study, the investigator will ask your child questions about their learning experience in different instructional modes (videoconferencing, online, and face-to-face). The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes and, with your permission, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If you and your child does not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, they cannot participate in this study. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time. Your child may choose not to answer particular questions if they do not want to. Your child may ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any point during the interview, if there is something that they do not want to have recorded. The audio recording will be heard and transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the recording and transcript of this interview. Any information your child provide will remain strictly confidential, and all notes, audio recordings of the interview, and other related transcripts will be destroyed after the study is completed.
Observation
Classroom observations will be conducted to investigate your child's participation in the blended language classes. I will observe the videoconferencing class three times at the teaching site and travel to the school site to observe how students interact with their distance language teachers on the TV screen and how they use the online tutorials for self-paced learning. I will also observe students' physically located learning activities at KU Edwards campus. I will take notes about your child's participation in the class. Any information from the class observation will remain strictly confidential, and all notes will be destroyed after the study is completed.

RISKS
No risks are anticipated.

BENEFITS
There are no anticipated benefits.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS
There are no payments to participants.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY
Your child's name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about your child or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your child's name. Your child's identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or unless you give written permission.
Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

CANCELING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Yao Tu, online material designer at Confucius Institute at University of Kansas, tuyao@ku.edu
If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION
Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:
I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____   _____
     Type/Print Participant's Name   **Date**

_____
     Parent/Guardian Signature

[If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]

Researcher Contact Information
Yao Tu   Manuela Gonzalez-Bueno
Principal Investigator   Faculty Supervisor
Confucius Institute   Department of Curriculum and Teaching
Regnier Hall Suite 270   Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm 342
University of Kansas   University of Kansas
Overland Park, KS 66213   Lawrence, KS 66045

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT (for teachers)

A Case Study of High School Blended Language Program

INTRODUCTION
The Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

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PROCEDURES
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An interview will be conducted to collect your feedback of the blended language program. After you sign this form, the investigator will ask you questions about your teaching experience in different instructional modes (videoconferencing, online, and face-to-face). The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes and, with your permission, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer particular questions if you do not want to. You may ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any point during the interview, if there is something that you do not want to have recorded. The audio recording will be heard and transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the recording and transcript of this interview. Any information you provide will remain strictly confidential, and all notes, audio recordings of the interview, and other related transcripts will be destroyed after the study is completed.
Observation
Classroom observations will be conducted to investigate your teaching activities in the blended language class. I will observe your videoconferencing class three times at the teaching site and your facilitation of students' physically located learning activities at KU Edwards campus. I will take notes about your teaching activities in the class. Any information from the class observation will remain strictly confidential, and all notes will be destroyed after the study is completed.

RISKS
No risks are anticipated.

BENEFITS
There are no anticipated benefits.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS
There are no payments to participants.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information, excluding your name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

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I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____   _____
   Type/Print Participant's Name   **Date**

[If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]

Researcher Contact Information

Yao Tu   Manuela Gonzalez-Bueno
Principal Investigator   Faculty Supervisor
Confucius Institute   Department of Curriculum and Teaching
Regnier Hall Suite 270   Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm 342
University of Kansas   University of Kansas
Overland Park, KS 66213   Lawrence, KS 66045

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT (for administrators)

A Case Study of High School Blended Language Program

INTRODUCTION

The Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to maximize the understanding about the design and implementation issues of blended language learning by investigating the four curriculum layers--intended curriculum, taught curriculum, learned curriculum, and tested curriculum, in a blended language program, as well as the congruency among the four curriculum layers. In order to achieve this purpose, qualitative research methodology using a case study approach will be employed in this study, as it enables this study to be situated in a naturalistic environment and also enables a holistic understanding of the context and the relationship between the participants in the blended language program.

PROCEDURES

Interview

An interview will be conducted to collect your feedback of the blended language program. After you sign this form, the investigator will ask you questions about your perspectives on blended language learning. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes and, with your permission, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer particular questions if you do not want to. You may ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any point during the interview, if there is something that you do not want to have recorded. The audio recording will be heard and transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the recording and transcript of this interview. Any information you provide will remain strictly confidential, and all notes, audio recordings of the interview, and other related transcripts will be destroyed after the study is completed.

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Regnier Hall Suite 270   Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Rm 342
University of Kansas   University of Kansas
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INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT (for facilitators)

A Case Study of High School Blended Language Program

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Confucius Institute   Department of Curriculum and Teaching
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Overland Park, KS 66213   Lawrence, KS 66045

Assent Text for Minors

Dear students:

My name is Yao Tu, a graduate student from the University of Kansas. I am working on my PhD dissertation on blended learning (defined as the combination of face-to-face instruction and online learning). I am interested in investigating high school students' experiences and their perceptions on blended learning, therefore, I would like to interview some of you and observe your participation in this blended language program. I will ask you questions about your learning experience in different instructional modes (videoconferencing, online, and face-to-face).

The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes and, with your permission, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer particular questions if you do not want to. You may ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any point during the interview, if there is something that you do not want to have recorded. The audio recording will be heard and transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the recording and transcript of this interview. Any information you provide will remain strictly confidential, and all notes, audio recordings of the interview, and other related transcripts will be destroyed after the study is completed.

You may not be able to answer all of the interview questions, but that is ok. This interview is not a test! You will not get a grade and this will not have any impact on your grade in your Chinese class. I will use the data collected from the interview and observation for my dissertation, but none of your personal information will be mentioned in my dissertation. If you change your mind about participating, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you have concerns about the study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Yao Tu, email: tuyao@ku.edu. Are you willing to take part in this project?

APPENDIX C: Sample Interview Questions

Sample interview questions for administrators

1. What is the goal of this BL program? What kind of learning experience do you intend to provide to students with this blended instruction?

2. Why do you use videoconferencing?

3. What type of content will be taught in the videoconferencing classes?

4. How are you going to address the ACTFL 5C standards in the videoconferencing classes?

5. How do you plan to assess student learning in videoconferencing classes?

6. Why do you want students to work on asynchronous online activities?

7. What type of content will be available in the asynchronous instructional mode?

8. How are you going to address ACTFL 5C standards in this asynchronous instructional mode?

9. How do you plan to assess student learning in the asynchronous instructional mode?

10. Why do you ask students to make the field-trip here at the end of the program?

11. What type of activities will be available during the two-day residential camp experience?

12. How are you going to address ACTFL 5C standards in the face-to-face instructional mode?

13. How do you plan to assess student learning in the face-to-face instructional mode?

14. What difficulties/challenges did you encounter during the implementation process?

15. What do you think are the key factors that contribute to the success of BL program?

16. Do you think blended learning will be the trend of the future language education? Why?

17. If you have chance to redesign this program, what changes will you make? Why?

18. If some other schools want to establish a similar program, what suggestions will you give?

Sample interview questions for teachers

19. What are your teaching goals and objectives in the videoconferencing class?

20. How do you interact with your students in the videoconferencing class? What strategies do you use to engage the distance learners?

21. How do you assess student learning in videoconferencing classes?

22. What type of activities work the best in the videoconferencing classes?

23. What type of activities do not work well in the videoconferencing classes?

24. What are your teaching goals and objectives in the asynchronous online class?

25. How do you interact with your students in this online platform?

26. How do you assess student learning in the asynchronous online class?

27. What type of activities work the best online?

28. What type of activities do not work well online?

29. What are your teaching goals and objectives in the face-to-face class?

30. How do you interact with your students in the face-to-face class? What strategies do you use to engage the students?

31. How do you assess student learning in the face-to-face classes?

32. What type of activities work the best in the face-to-face classes?

33. What type of activities do not work well in the face-to-face classes?

34. What do you think of blended learning?

35. What are the difficulties you encountered in this blended teaching experience?

36. If the director wants to redesign the program, what suggestions will you give to her?

37. If you have chance to teach this course again, what changes will you make?

38.

Sample interview questions for students

39. What is your general impression of the videoconferencing class?

40. How did you learn the language and culture from the videoconferencing class?

41. How did you interact with you Chinese instructor in the videoconferencing class?

42. In what circumstances are you most engaged in a videoconferencing class?

43. In what circumstances are you least engaged in a videoconferencing class?

44. What is your general impression of the online tutorial?

45. How did you learn the language and culture from the online tutorial?

46. What did you like the most about the online activities?

47. What did you like the least about the online activities?

48. What is your general impression of the two days of face-to-face field trip?

49. How did you learn the language and culture from the face-to-face class?

50. What did you like the most about the face-to-face class?

51. What did you like the least about the face-to-face class?

52. Do you think the combination of videoconferencing, asynchronous online activities and the two days of physically located learning activities helped you learn the language and culture?

53. What are the difficulties you encountered in this blended learning experience?

54. If your teacher wants to redesign the course, what suggestion will you give to him/her?

55. If your friends want to take the course, what suggestions will you give to him in order to gain an effective learning experiences?

Sample interview questions for classroom facilitators

56. What is your general impression of the videoconferencing class?

57. How did students learn the language and culture from the videoconferencing class?

58. How did students interact with their Chinese instructor in the videoconferencing class?

59. In what circumstances are students most engaged in a videoconferencing class? Why?

60. In what circumstances are students least engaged in a videoconferencing class? Why?

61. What is your general impression of the online tutorial?

62. How did students learn the language and culture from the online tutorial?

63. Did students participate in all the online activities?

64. What did you like the most about the online activities?

65. What did you like the least about the online activities?

66. What is your general impression of the two days of face-to-face field trip?

67. How did you learn the language and culture from the face-to-face class?

68. What did you like the most about the face-to-face class? Why?

69. What did you like the least about the face-to-face class? Why?

70. What do you think of blended learning?

71. What are the difficulties you encountered in this blended teaching experience?

72. If the director wants to redesign the program, what suggestions will you give to her?

APPENDIX D: Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Focus	Describing reactions to movies
	
	Students Can say…
	    Good/bad/boring/so so/cool
	    好看/不好看/无聊/马马虎虎/酷
	
	Ask and answer questions about general impression of movies:
	    Do you like No.1 movie? Yes, I like it.
	    你喜欢一号电影吗？ 是，我喜欢。
	    What do you think of No.1 movie?
	    你觉得一号电影怎么样？
	    I think it's very cool.
	    我觉得一号电影很酷。

Time Suggested	60 min
Materials needed	Powerpoint showing images of different person and instructions for games; puppets
Objectives can do…	Ask and answer questions about the general impression of movies
Opening Routine/Activities	Classroom opening procedure

Main Learning Activities	1. <u>New words</u> Show pictures of different types of movies to review the genres of movies, and introduce lesson vocabulary (Good/bad/boring/so so/cool) (Note: All except haokan and buhaokan have been introduced in previous lessons in different contexts, and haokan and buhaokan are very similar to previously learned haoting/buhaoting, haowan/buhaowan). Teachers repeat the words "好看/不好看/无聊/马马虎虎/酷" Ask the students to repeat in chorus. 2. <u>Puppets</u> Use puppets to demonstrate the conversation: 你觉得这个电影怎么样? 它很……。 <u>What do you think of this movie?</u> Show slides with pictures of movie posters. Ask students Ni juede zhege dianying zenme yang? Ask students to respond in chorus or individually, depending upon the level of the students. 3. <u>Movie critics review</u> Show slides with instructions: You are a movie critic, and you have a movie to review today. Make a comment stating whether you like it or not, and how you feel about it. 4. <u>Skit - Let's gossip! (performance)</u> Show slides with instructions: You and your friends just saw a movie in a theater. You are on the way home and talking about it. The teacher will show you the pictures of the movies. Create a short conversation about how you feel about the movie generally and how you feel about the actors and actresses or directors. Use the sentences we've learned. Practice with your group and prepare to perform for the class when the teacher calls on your group. (Show slides of pictures.) 5. <u>Share Your Own Movie Collection (performance)</u>: List two movies you have seen before. Tell us the genres of the movies and how you feel about them. (e.g. "Avengers is an action movie. I like it. It is very cool."). Show voki example if needed. Give a report to the class when your teacher calls on you.

Closure	Shows slide: I can now : ☐ Ask and answer questions about the general impression of a movie
Checklist for lesson Plan	☐ Communicative activities:, yes ϒ Comprehension before production?: yes ϒ Differentiated instruction? yes ϒ Includes all students? yes ϒ Intro <u>new material</u>/<u>Expansion</u>/Review/<u>Transformative activity?</u>
Additional Planning Decisions	

APPENDIX E: Sample Lesson Evaluation

Lesson Focus	
Time Used	
Materials useful? Need add/subtract?	
Objectives appropriate?	
Activities	□ Communicative activities: □ Ample opportunity for students to hear new language content? □ Speaking tasks AFTER comprehension achieved? □ Differentiated instruction? □ Includes all students? □ Intro new material/Expansion/Review/Transformative activity?
Staying in the target language	Sequencing of material and activities conducive to staying in the target language?
Student Assessment (complete after lesson delivered)	□ Overall, students achieved goals. □ Overall, students still need work on _____. □ Overall, students are confused by _____. □ _____ □ Overall, students appear engaged?

Additional Planning Decisions	
Post-Lesson Follow-up **(complete after lesson delivered)**	☐ What went especially well? ϒ Suggestions for improvement of the lesson:

Judging Rubric for Film Festival Entries					
Achievement Level	**Grammar/ structures/ vocabulary**	**Pronunciation**	**Participation and Teamwork**	**Production Values**	**Wow factor**
Oscar Winner	Creates new phrases using structures covered in class in meaningful way; Uses vocabulary beyond that covered in class; Extensive dialogue	Most of the lines are delivered with accurate tones; Very understandable speech, even to non-sympathetic native speaker	Everyone on the team has a major speaking role; Everyone contributes to the production of the movie; Creative process is shared, with smooth teamwork	Movie is 5 to 7 minutes long; All dialogue is spoken clearly and loud enough to be heard easily; Props are used effectively to enhance the entertainment value of the film; Setting and background relates to the content of the film in an engaging way; Camera angles are used in engaging ways	Takes risks with grammar, vocabulary, makes us laugh! Creative reinterpretation of material
Oscar Nominee	Uses structures covered in class in culturally and linguistically appropriate context; Uses vocabulary taught in class in appropriate context; Significant quantity of language used	Most of the pronunciation, including tones, by most of the actors in the film is correct or nearly correct; All understandable by sympathetic native speaker	The lines are generally well distributed , but some members of the team still have fewer lines than others	Movie is 5 to 7 minutes long; Most of the dialogue is spoken clearly and loud enough to be heard easily; Props are often used effectively to enhance the entertainment value of the film; Setting and background may not relate well to the story line	Conveys enthusiasm; Interesting story line

Critics Choice	Some errors in structures used by mostly understandable in context; Uses vocabulary taught in class primarily in appropriate context but with some errors; Misses opportunities to use language in script	There are some errors in tones and general pronunciation by most or all of the actors, but the lines are mostly understandable by sympathetic listener	Whole team participates in creative process, but speaking roles dominated by one or two team members	Movie is 5 to 7 minutes long; Dialogue is often hard to decipher; Props related to the story line but not necessarily in an engaging way; Setting may not relate well to the story line	A little predictable, but makes us smile…