Conference Abstract

- **Blending Learning Opportunities: Outer and Inner Spaces** - [10:20-11:00]
- Paul Beaufait[,] Prefectural University of Kumamoto[,] AV1
- This presentation derives from a university-wide faculty development session on behalf of a blended learning working group at a small public university in Japan. For background, it begins with brief reflections on a previous faculty development session about e-learning, highlighting clusters of challenges, concerns, interests, and risks. These highlights include, for example: challenges of faculty and infra-structural readiness, concerns about time necessary and appropriate paths for development and implementation of plans for e-learning, and the risks of exposure to cyber attacks or violation of intellectual property rights. Next, the presenter proposes two multi-dimensional "compasses" to help orient educators who are interested in exploring opportunities for blending face-to-face and online learning resources. The first compass provides perspectives from educational psychology, namely Bruner's interactions, and the second provides additional perspectives on various learning and teaching options for blended learning. Then, as additional background for illustrations of blended learning activities, the presenter shares statements of purpose, outlines course goals, and points out freely available resources for implementing a learner-centered approach. After providing closer looks at online and computer-based resources, a course wiki and a project blog in particular, the presenter explains purposes, processes, and products of two blended learning activities. One of these activities exploits a wiki, campus email and a free concept-mapping program (FreeMind) for purposes of visualizing vocabulary collections. The second leverages Google Forms and Spreadsheets to elicit students' reading preferences and to produce classroom displays and blog posts. [238 words]

http://conference.jaltcall.org/abstracts-and-schedule/
The purpose of this presentation is to explain and illustrate a work in progress, elaborating, extending, and updating a presentation by Paul A. Beaufait for the Prefectural University of Kumamoto, Media Center, Blended Learning Working Group, January 20, 2011 (PB, 2011.03.17).

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Blending Learning Opportunities: Outer & Inner Spaces

JALT CALL 2011; Kurume University, Mii Campus, Kurume, Japan; June 4, 2011, by Paul A. Beaufait

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Smile-e image © 2009 Paul A. Beaufait
Where I’d like to hope we’re heading, both as teachers and as learners, is a beautiful place – one not to many light years away. I’m looking forward to a voyage of discovery together, if only for a few minutes today. This presentation will introduce you to a learner-centered approach in blending learning opportunities. The question is whether the BANG from exploding stars is powerful enough to move us beyond our own customs and traditions, and to propel us into a new galaxy where we focus on students’ learning, and in particular on goals, resources, and activities to facilitate learning, rather than on teaching.

Where we're going:

From deep background and definitions, to a Big Bang, to Virtual Compasses, to a Learning Galaxy

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I'd like to begin with a few moments of reflection, in particular on a October 28, 2010, faculty development session on e-learning at the PUK.

Background image: "The remains of a massive star that exploded, perhaps ... witnessed by Chinese astronomers in 386 A.D." (Smithsonian Institution's photostream, 2010), about a hundred years after the life of Confucius. No known copyright restrictions (Terms of Use). Retrieved October 28, 2010, from http://www.flickr.com/photos/smithsonian/2941496890/
What we'd heard ...

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Though it may seem confusing at first glance, "The rough map that you see in this screen capture grew out of notes from October 28, 2010, presentations by Professors Kanai, Kozono, and Lavin. / It starts at the pink "e-learning" node [previously] near the center of the screen. / The orange, red, and yellow nodes highlight challenges, risks, and other concerns from the presenters or the audience. / The green nodes represent footprints and [related] interests of a language teacher exploring a galaxy of possibilities, / especially in the creation of blended learning opportunities for students, who live in a rapidly expanding universe" (script). The graphic in this presentation links to a screencast produced from that map and script with TechSmith's Jing ®, vers. 2.4.30037, and published at Screencast.com (My Library, 2010-10-29_2301-ExplainingCmapofeLearning). At present (2011.01.17), it is possible to read and write comments on the Jing viewing page (http://www.screencast.com/users/ltdproject/folders/Jing/media/f9cc83ed-62d8-4dce-8e18-6ca27f8ab282).

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What the problem is:

- E-learning involves "the use of digital technologies and media to deliver, support and enhance teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation" (Armitage & Ros, 2003, p. 4).

- "Blended learning is usually used to define a situation where different delivery methods are combined ... to deliver a particular course. These methods may include a mixture of face-to-face classrooms, online classrooms, and self-paced learning" (HBMEU, What is Blended Learning?, 2010).

The problem with these definitions is they conflate learning with teaching, and emphasize content and course delivery methods and venues rather than learning processes.
What Teachers Need to Do:

• Both "... 'de-skill..."' (Naidu, 2003, p. 71), that is, escape from "ingrained face-to-face [teaching] practices"

  (Kraglund-Guthier, 2011, Shifting Paradigm, slide 9 [emphasis added])

• And re-skill, that is:
  • "... shift from the role of content provider to [that of] content facilitator;"
  • "gain comfort and proficiency in using the [tools and technology] as the primary teacher–student link, and"
  • "learn to teach effectively without the visual control provided by direct eye contact."

  (Kraglund-Guthier, 2011, Instructor Role, slide 12, from Fein & Logan, 2003, p. 46)
An inkling of why:

- "... [S]tudents who studied in online learning environments performed modestly better than peers who were receiving face-to-face instruction."
  
  (Kessler, 2010, 1. Online Education "Doesn't Have to Suck", ¶4 [emphases added])

- "The modest difference ... was larger for those students who learned through a blend of online and physical classroom conditions."
  
  (Kessler, 2010, 6. The Virtual Classroom Can Make the Physical Classroom More Effective, ¶2).

Meta-analytical reviews of studies of online learning by the U.S. Department of Education suggest that ...

References

To help us chart a course among virtually unlimited possibilities, I'd like to propose two compasses, or rough models of a few dimensions of learning, because "... [t]he provision of models is important for discovery," as hypotheses against which to examine one's findings, and as guides for precision of inquiry (Driscoll, 2000, pp. 230-231).

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Virtual Compasses

As we continue, please keep in mind that these compasses represent only a few of the directions that teaching and learning may take us.

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From here onward, I would like to lead you outward, away from the former center, "Content," which is too small to see in the deep background of this image, and beyond "Study/Teaching" as well, from which to imagine yourselves drifting backwards virtually at the speed of light towards a learning galaxy.

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As reverberations from the exploding content star diminish, I hope you'll get a fresh, new sense of who is at the center of a learning galaxy. Here, for instance, we see a thin slice of the academic "backdrop against which [formal learning] interactions play" (Driscoll, 2000, p. 229).

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Blended Learning @ the PUK: A Bit of Background

- Prefectural University of Kumamoto
- Administrative studies faculty
- 2nd year students taking
- **English** as an additional language
- A required course

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What you see here is a clipping from a syllabus making it clear that student learning—blended, e-, or neither, is our goal. Teaching is just part of the backdrop for learning processes.

"The purpose of English 5 and 6 is to help students improve their English reading skills' (General Education Committee resolution, December 10, 2008)."

Syllabus, 英語 V(c), 概要及到達目標, 11 (2011 [emphasis added])

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Amplification of Purpose

The syllabus goes on, online and still also in print, and becomes part of a blend of resources for Day One homework in each course. Yet the emphasis remains on students.

The aims of these ... courses, both required for graduation, are to develop students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills with respect to reading purposes and processes, communicative competence, autonomous language learning, and vocabulary development."

Syllabus, 語V(c), Aims and Overview, ¶1 (2011)
In a nutshell, this 2nd-year course sequence entails near-term, long-term, and global goals, which extend and refine the focus on students’ learning in and through blended learning environments, while both in and outside of class, and off- or on-line. Though reading and vocabulary comprehension may be near at hand, extensive writing in the target language is still far off – light years away from current curricula. Nevertheless, autonomy, satisfaction, and success may come hand in hand at any time, some now, and hopefully more in the future.

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Now, before turning to the two main examples that I'd like to share with you today, please let me introduce you briefly to a few resources available for use offline, online, or both. The two lists on this slide show what is mainly for either students' or for teachers' use offline. Please note that classroom presentations are already an audio-visual blend with chalkface, overhead video camera, and computerized displays, and that a textbook is still a core resource.

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This list shows more resources available for student access and use online. Please note that, as yet, few classroom presentation resources are online. Getting students’ regular, one-to-one, class-time access to networked computers in a lab that would accommodate 40 or more students was a challenge I faced for years after deciding that students could and should learn more with computers and online resources at their fingertips.

The resources in green are core for the main examples for today, but these too are blended in terms of use in-class or between classes, a distinction Mr. Lavin suggested on Oct. 28, 2010, as well as blended with other online resources such as a blog and a wiki.

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These two web snapshots show where students can find online assignments, feedback, and other resources. The first is of an automatic table of contents on a wiki page; the second is of automatic listings in a Language Learner Development Blog sidebar.

Blended Learning: Resources (2a) – a Closer Look

- English V-VI Wikispaces (Resources page TOC)
- The LLD Project Blog (sidebar elements)

These two web snapshots show where students can find online assignments, feedback, and other resources. The first is of an automatic table of contents on a wiki page; the second is of automatic listings in a Language Learner Development Blog sidebar.

Blended Learning: Resources (2b) – a Closer Look

Here we have two screenshots showing online resources for vocabulary development. Both in class and online, I provide models. The model on the right is from an in-class demonstration, saved as a graphic image, and posted on the course wiki (English V-VI, Assignments V-VI). Students get templates from the course wiki or via email, and use the same software (SourceForge, FreeMind, 2010) to make, share, and review their own vocabulary collections. Over the past few years, students' creation of concept maps has shifted from free-hand, pencil and paper maps, to free-hand computer-based maps, and then to use of ready-made templates such as the one on the left. For now, that is today's first main example of blended learning resources. Perhaps a demonstration of mind-mapping software will be possible at a later date.

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Now let us turn to today's second main example. This particular learning activity starts in class with textbooks, and then moves online. The wiki assignment (left) and mail reminders point out an online survey form for collecting students' responses, in particular, their choices of units to read each semester.

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Statement of Purpose (2)

Engl_V-VI: Unit Preferences and Reading Habits Questionnaire

This questionnaire is to collect your preferences for units to study in coming months, along with general information about your reading habits. There are three pages:

1. Student ID,
2. Unit Preferences, &
3. Reading Habits.

If you review the front matter of the textbook (Contents & ff.), choose units you’d most like to study from now on, and prepare explanations for your choices in advance, I estimate that 20-30 minutes may be necessary for careful completion of all items online.

Please read and respond carefully. You must respond to required (starred) items on pages 1-2, before you can go to the next pages.

+ Avoid choosing units that we’ve already studied, or started to study, already;
+ Type accurately, without entering any line returns; and
+ Submit the form only once per person.

This slide shows the statement of purpose and general directions, as revised in March 2011. The assignment calls for a preview of the whole textbook, 1st semester, and a review, 2nd semester. For students, it is an opportunity to express and explain their reading preferences, and to help make course reading selections. For the teacher, it is a much easier way to gather such information from students than collecting paper forms, and tabulating responses on a spreadsheet by hand.

Google spreadsheets, with additional markup, become online resources for use in the classroom and beyond. For example, the red marks give feedback on inappropriate unit choices for the 2nd semester. On these two sheets, I've red-flagged units that students had studied during 1st semester, and shouldn't have chosen for 2nd semester.

Publication of Findings (1)

- In-class displays
- 2nd semester data (2010)
- Cumulative

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Whence we've come just now

These two lists sum up the resources and venues, both off-line and on-, that students and I have used for one blended learning activity, the Unit Preferences and Reading Habits survey. This slide brings the second main example and our short journey together today to an end. Thank you for attending.

Whence we've come just now

• Inner Space
  • In-class resources:
    • Textbook front matter (Anderson, 2007, pp. 4-10):
      • Table of Contents
      • Reading and vocabulary tips
    • Google Docs displays
  • Online survey (homework):
    • Assignment on wiki
    • Survey form:
      • in mail messages, &
      • at Google Docs
    • Results posted on blog

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Got (more) questions?
Want slides, references, and notes?

If you would like the slides, references, and notes from this presentation, please send me an email message with the subject heading, "Blended Learning, 2011.06.04" (without quotation marks), and let me know in the body of the message who you are. My address is pab@... (university email address). I would also appreciate hearing any concerns or questions you may have about blended learning.

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Thank you again for your attention. PB

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Odds and Ends

With references on individual slides
Benefits of e-Learning

- Engenders "a strong sense of community";
- Supports effective, inclusive, and responsible group work;
- Scaffolds "collaborative constructivist learning";
- "Mode doesn’t matter! It’s more about effective teaching practices."

(Kraglund-Gauthier, 2010, Pedagogical benefits, slide 21).

Reference
Balance for Learning

- "School is no longer just one learning place. Teachers must balance teaching applications in their lessons plans with technological information that evolves from the wider learning community. The anticipated result should be students’ deeper learning on how to learn — from content, with respect to both critical thinking and desirable character dispositions" (Jacobs, 2003).

Reference

Example: Group Discussions

- The basic elements of **small group discussions**, focused on fundamental questions of meaning, grounded in the history of arts, literature, politics, and science, and **promoting imaginative approaches** to general and expert knowledge, skills, abilities, and values can be offered in a **combination of venues**. These include seminars, lectures, and on-line approaches, such as "blended" courses, in colleges of all types, community organizations, and adult education programs.

- ... 

- Nevertheless, it seems likely that the “unbundling” of credentials and curricula, and the authority to certify credentials, and ever more strategic partnerships between campuses and companies, will lead inexorably to **new opportunities for flexible, convenient, accessible, just-in-time, relevant and certified education and training in ways not now imaginable**, but built on the foundations now visible.

  (Scott, 2010 [emphasis added])

Reference

Teachers Need Support!

- Often there are few educational designers available to assist educators, so only a small percentage of educators benefit from their assistance in creating pedagogically rich and engaging teaching and learning experiences. This problem exists not only at the level of educational institutions, but even at the level of whole country education systems where there is a recognized need to adopt pedagogically richer teaching and learning approaches, but relatively few expert educational design[er]s who can assist the huge educator workforce towards new approaches.

- ... Rather than immediately introducing complex and advanced pedagogical structures (such as role plays), ... reflective questions and template libraries could be [developed and] configured to support incremental advances from current practices and culture. In this way, the introduction of new pedagogical approaches could be carefully staged relative to existing and evolving practice within the educator workforce.

(Dalzier, 2008, p. 385 [emphasis added])

Reference