Blended Synchronous Program Delivery

This info sheet offers LINC service providers and other settlement and integration programs terminology, equipment examples, visual set ups, and successes / challenges to help understand options for simultaneous in-person & online program delivery.

Introduction

In 2020, COVID-19 forced settlement & integration programs online. Service providers are now finding ways to hybridize the best of both pre-pandemic and remote instruction worlds. AMSSA has been working with Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) providers and other educators to understand the concerns, questions and benefits of adopting a new blend of in-person and simultaneous (live) online language instruction. Please note that AMSSA is not endorsing any delivery method but instead supporting information sharing on this new program delivery approach.

Terminology

In the LINC program to date, the term Blended Learning has been used to refer to a blend of in-person classroom learning with the addition of a Learning Management System (LMS) like Moodle or Google Classroom for asynchronous reinforcement of language learning. Please see our Info Sheet LINC and Online Learning for a glossary of online learning terms.

Nowadays, things are becoming more complicated especially when repurposing words like “blended” or “hybrid”. AMSSA’s webinar Exploring HyFlex-Blended Synchronous Service Delivery defines Hybrid Learning, HyFlex and Blended Synchronous delivery methods. Below is a summary of those terms.

Blended Synchronous or Synchronous Hybrid delivery first emerged in 2013 through the work of an Australian team of educational technologists. It focuses on merging face-to-face and online synchronous learning environments.¹

To exemplify Blended Synchronous, the chart shows a laptop connected to a SmartBoard on the wall. Solid red lines indicate cables. There is a webcam above the SmartBoard that captures the image of the in-person students. The laptop connects to a webconferencing platform and is connected through Bluetooth (dotted red line) to a speaker/microphone that picks up the classroom audio. As in the photograph below, the laptop is placed on a cart on wheels for ease of movement in front of the SmartBoard. There is a smartphone on a tripod behind the laptop for a teacher close-up because the built-in laptop camera is not used. A fill light sabre on a tripod lights up the teacher’s face to highlight their pronunciation cues.

HyFlex or Hybrid Flexible was developed in 2007 by Brian Beatty and provides choice for students among three options: face-to-face (F2F), online synchronous or online asynchronous (through a LMS that may include recordings or live synchronous options)² Unlike HyFlex, Blended Synchronous does not provide a choice of course modality to students. Depending on available physical space and/or access to tech equipment (laptops) and connectivity, students may, however, be given the choice of participating F2F or remotely.

According to recent research, the term Hybrid Learning is being used to refer to both consecutive and concurrent modality mixing. Consecutive requires learner participation in both F2F and asynchronous online components. Concurrent delivery merges in-person & online remote learners simultaneously.¹ Ultimately, the best term for a new form of LINC delivery may be “Blended Synchronous”. This is because a LMS is not required and tracking attendance is a funder requirement.

References

² 7 things you should know about the HyFlex Course Model. (2020) EDUCAUSE
Optional Specifications for Blended Synchronous Delivery

### Successes
- Enables LINC programming to continue during disturbances such as health crises, natural disasters & other disruptions
- Allows LINC providers to accommodate both in-class and online learners including their accessibility requirements
- Allows for physical distancing in smaller classrooms
- Creates flexibilities and accessibility to support a diverse community including both in-class and online learners
- Removes traditional geographic barriers and gives the ability to serve students outside of service areas
- Provides platform to interact with F2F and online learners; a community of learning among students is possible
- Setting up is brief when room and technology are shared with other classes and/or programs
- Using a fill light on the instructor allows learners to see facial expressions & mouth close-ups for pronunciation cues
- It’s easy to field questions from both sets of students

### Challenges
- Cost of paid hours for instructor upskilling and prep time
- Cost of paid hours for digital navigators and program assistants to support learners before and during class
- Cost of acquiring high-speed Internet and hardware (laptops, webcams, microphones, tripods, lights & software)
- Adjustments required by teachers (new lesson plans, skill-building and skill-using activities) to support learning
- Pace of learning is slower than with F2F only
- Multi-sensory learning is absent (online learners cannot do field trips nor join potlucks and other in-person activities)
- Set-up and delivery takes a lot of time and practice
- Requires a high level of multi-tasking from the instructor
- Teachers must have strong classroom management routines already in place
- Incorporating breakout rooms across both modes is possible yet reported as noisy and distracting to the instructor

Join the Blended Synchronous LINC Delivery Discussion Group to discuss equipment costs & set ups. Tutela login required.

See all issues of Migration Matters: [https://www.amssa.org/all_resources/info-sheets/](https://www.amssa.org/all_resources/info-sheets/)