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DESIGNING BLENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND SHARING FOREIGN BRIDES LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND COMPUTER SKILLS

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ABSTRACT
This paper reveals the idea of an ongoing project. The project focuses on how to teach those foreign brides the second language (Chinese) and improve their computer skills (Image Processing Software) at the same time. Besides teaching them language and computer skills, this project also wants to create a sharing environment in which not just giving knowledge to those foreign brides but also learning different thinking ways from them, whom came from different countries. The significant differences in designing the blended learning activities for this project are we teach language/characters and share culture/thoughts in class; students learn image processing software and do homework via PC and Internet at home.

KEY WORDS
Blended Learning, Second Language, Internet, Interactive Multimedia

1. Motivation and Backgrounds

In Taiwan, currently there are more than 240,000 foreign brides. Because of the huge immigration, our society becomes more culturally diverse, but also has the problems of society adaptation and culture shock in foreign brides' living. This metamorphosis within our communities, presents a challenges in our society, especially in rural areas.

With the estimation made by government, there will be one of four children whose mother or father is foreign in 2010. That is an amazing number, which means we should have some teaching strategies to help these foreign wives/husbands to adapt themselves to our traditions, customs, language, and culture quickly.

Before this ongoing project, we had proceed a project via telling the stories of the festivals/holidays and doing the cards and printmaking to teach a small group of the foreign brides the Chinese traditions, customs, characters, and culture based on the Situated Learning. [1][2]

Be notable is all of three brides whose husbands come with them all feel this kinds of learning would be very helpful for their relations. That is really a good result that we didn't expect when we decided to apply Situated Learning to our curriculum design.

When we executed the Situated Learning project last semester, we also established a website to display the curriculum and their works on Internet. At the end of course, we did a questionnaire to the learners, including "Do you like to learn about Taiwan culture and environment on Internet?", "Will you surf the Internet to review the content we've taught?", "Is the Information Technology helpful for you?", "Does the website help the community to understand foreign brides?", "Is the website helpful to communicate with other communities between foreign brides?".

The answer we got from foreign brides is all "Positive" and "be willing to learn". Besides, Ministration of Education in Taiwan also plans a Lifelong Learning Program for foreign brides in order to help them adapt to our society. Therefore, we propose a new project in which we apply Blended Learning Model to teach those foreign brides the second language (Chinese) and improve their computer skills (Image Processing Software) in the same time.[3] Options for blended learning go beyond the classroom. They're formal and informal, technology-based and people-based, independent and convivial, and directive-oriented and discovery-oriented.[4] With blended Learning, learners participate in the learning activities that designed to help them learn language and improve learning skills in a no-pressure environment.

Section 2 will describe the goals of the ongoing project and the thoughts of the learning activities we've planed. The details of how to develop such kind of curriculum

based on the blended learning theory are showing in Section 3. The learning effects of students are also very important issues that we need to take into our consideration when we planed the project. Therefore, we designed an assessment method for the blended learning project in Section 4. Section 5 makes a simple conclusion and some expectations.

2. Project Goals and Learning Activities

The goals of this ongoing project are trying to apply blended learning theory to design some kinds of learning activities in order to teach foreign brides Chinese characters and let them understand the cultural differences between our country and their native countries by the traditional classroom lectures. On the other hand, these students (foreign brides) can learn computer skills, including the basic operation of computer, Internet surfing and Image Processing Software with eLearning lectures in either their home or the activity center of the community.
Besides learning language/culture and computer, the learning activities also have to improve the relations between foreign brides and other family members (such as husband and children), moreover, other community members. The whole goal of this blended learning curriculum could be shown as Figure 1.

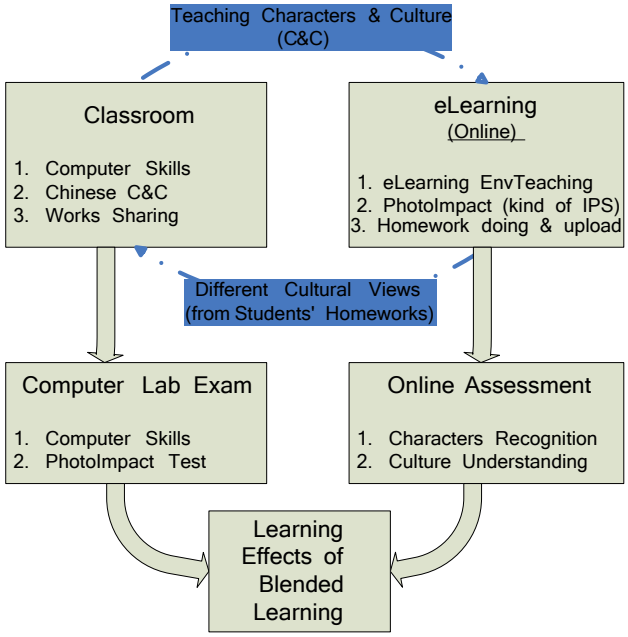


Figure 1. Goals of the Project

As Figure 1 illustrated above, the blended learning activities can be divided into two parts, classroom learning and online eLearning. According to the blended learning theory these two parts are relevant.
Actually students will learn how to use computer and surf Internet in the traditional classroom first. Then students will be taught Chinese characters and culture (C & C) in classroom, too.[5] After back to home (or activity center of community), students can learn how to use Image Processing Software such like PhotoImpact in the eLearning environment.[6][7] Students will be ask to do some homework and upload to the teacher via the online eLearning environment.[8] The homework of students eventually will reflect the different cultures in their native countries and could be sharing and discussing in the traditional classroom as Figure 1 shown above.
There are two assessments designed for this kind of blended learning activities, which are Computer Laboratory Exam and Online Assessment. The goals of these two assessments are quite special. We are trying to measure the learning effect of students about computer skills in the Computer Laboratory and characters recognition/culture understanding via eLearning environment.[9] The details of the assessment method will be described in Section 4.

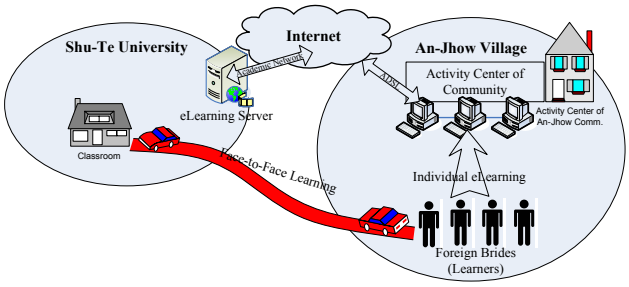


Figure 2. Learning Activities

Figure 2 represents the scene of the blended learning activities. The participants of the ongoing blended learning project are those foreign brides whom live in An-Jhow Village near Shu-Te University. These foreign brides came from many different countries, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Philippine. They come to Shu-Te University for attending the traditional classroom lectures, and take eLearning lectures when either back to home or go to the activity center of An-Jhow Community.
We also setup several personal computers in the activity center of An-Jhow community for those students whom do not have computer at home. Each computer is connected to the Internet well via ADSL. The eLearning Server provides interactive multimedia instructions for teaching PhotoImpact is built inside campus.[10][11]

3. Blended Learning and Curriculum Design

Since the participants of this blended learning project are including foreign brides and maybe its family members, the basic operation of computer is necessary for them to take the eLearning lectures. The curriculum designed by us involves two kinds of lectures include traditional classroom lectures (C) and eLearning lectures (E). There are two features in the curriculum:

1. Two different lectures: traditional classroom lectures (C) focus on teaching the characters and culture; eLearning lectures focus on teaching

Image Processing Software such like Ulead PhotoImpact.

2. Two kinds of assessment: assess the foreign brides' proficient degree of IPS in Computer Laboratory (Computer Laboratory Exam); assess the foreign brides' character recognition and culture understanding via eLearning environment. (Online Assessment)

In this Section we focus on how to design such curriculum (the first feature), and Section 4 will describe the idea about the second feature.

Since the curriculum should be blended, we must think about what kinds of blended we want. There two kinds of blended learning, that are blended between courses and between lectures. Because we want to teaching characters/IPS first and then sharing culture with the IPS homework of students, the curriculum design in this project should be based on the blended lectures.

The meaning of blended lectures is simple, which means there should be relations between lectures when design each lectures. In general speaking, eLeaning is always plays as a supporter and review system in the blended learning design, for example students can either review the lectures mentioned in class or take the short quiz about the specific topic. However, in this project we try to make both online eLeaning and classroom learning takes the actor place.

To reach the goal we have to put some basic computer skill training lectures in the first several weeks, such as operation of computer, operation of Internet browser, and operation of IPS. After finishing the computer skill training, rest of classroom lectures will focus on teaching language, characters, and culture. When students learn Chinese character, they need to type it by learning Image Processing Software to do an e-card. A goal set for each phase depends on some factors such as holiday near by, the procedure from easy to complicated and Chinese tradition to international festival. Homework will be assigned to students according to the learning progress of IPS around every couple of classroom classes.

The online eLearning lectures will teach students IPS, such as Ulead PhotoImpact. With interactive multimedia instructional design students should be able to learn some image processing functions, visual effects and etc.. When students doing their homework with IPS, we expect they will put their native cultures and customs in their works.

After uploading and collecting the students' homework, teachers can initiate a cultural sharing (homework-sharing) session in the traditional classroom. Participants (students and perhaps their family members) with different cultures and customs will have opportunity to get know each other deeper through the homework presentation and discussions.

We plan to use around 28 weeks to execute this blended learning project. Two assessments will be taken by students at the last four weeks. We wish we can analyze and get some concrete results in the middle of 2005. The whole planed curriculum schedule is listed in Table 1 below.

Week	Content of Lectures	C/E
1	Basic Computer Skills	C
2	eLearning Environment Teaching	E
3	Basic Operation of PhotoImpact	C
4	PhotoImpact Unit #1	E
5	C & C Unit #1	C
6	PhotoImpact Unit #2	E
7	C & C Unit #2 (Homework A)	C
8	Homework A doing & uploading	E
9	PhotoImpact Unit #3	E
10	Homework A sharing & discussing	C
11	PhotoImpact Unit #4	E
12	C & C Unit #3	C
13	PhotoImpact Unit #5	E
14	C & C Unit #4 (Homework B)	C
15	Homework B doing & uploading	E
16	PhotoImpact Unit #6	E
17	Homework B sharing & discussing	C
18	PhotoImpact Unit #7	E
19	C & C Unit #5	C
20	PhotoImpact Unit #8	E
21	C & C #6 (Homework C)	C
22	Homework C doing & uploading	E
23	PhotoImpact Unit #9	E
24	Homework C sharing & discussing	C
25	Online Assessment (for C & C)	E
26	Computer Lab Exam (for PhotoImpact)	C
27	Closing Remark	C
28	Production Exhibition	C

Table 1. Curriculum Schedule

4. Assessment of Learning Effects

The blended learning activities developed in this project have another feature which is the cross-assessment. As mentioned in the previous Section, the assessment method designed for measuring learning effects in this project is also divided into two parts:

1. Computer Laboratory Exam: to measure the learning effects of eLearning lectures (E) in (C).
2. Online Assessment: to measure the learning effects of classroom lectures (C) via (E).

The procedures of the Computer Laboratory Exam are

1. asking students come to the Computer Laboratory
2. giving them enough resources, such as text and image files
3. asking students doing a small work such like a Christmas Card in a half hour
4. giving students appropriate scores according to their performance and completeness.

It is much simpler when design the Online Assessment. The Online Assessment is taken by students via eLearning

environment. We prepare several interactive questions, for example, we

1. use drag-drop question to test student's character recognition
2. use streaming audio and single-choice image button to test student's listening
3. use streaming video and single-choice image button to test student's culture understanding

After students complete both of the assessment, we can then construct the overall learning effect for each of student by using the data analysis techniques.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we design a blended learning project in order to achieve five major goals:

1. to teach foreign brides Chinese characters
2. to let foreign brides get familiar with local culture and custom
3. to let foreign brides equip the basic computer skills
4. to improve the relation between foreign brides and other family members
5. to share different cultures and customs between participants.

With blended learning theory, the curriculum design in this project is based on the blended lectures. Different to the supporter role that eLearning lectures always play in other blended learning curriculum, we create some independent eLearning lectures. Therefore, we have several expectations on this blended learning project:

1. the learning effect of eLearning lectures is good
2. the homework-sharing bridge between eLearning and classroom learning is enjoyable

If these two expectations are come true after this project finish, then we will have faith that the eLearning lectures could be operated independently for those learners whom did not familiar with the Internet or even the computers.

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