

# AAUSC 2012 Volume – Issues in Language Program Direction

## Hybrid Language Teaching and Learning: Exploring Theoretical, Pedagogical and Curricular Issues

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Fernando Rubio (Editor)

Joshua J. Thoms (Editor)

Stacey Katz Bourns (Series Editor)



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Fernando Rubio,  
Joshua J. Thoms and  
Stacey Katz Bourns

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## Chapter 5

# Hybrid Learning Spaces: Re-envisioning Language Learning

Lara Ducate, Lara Lomicka, and Gillian Lord

The advent of hybrid learning is causing what some have termed a “paradigm shift in higher education” (Buzzetto-More & Sweat-Guy, 2006, p. 153; see also Allen & Seaman, 2003; Lorenzetti, 2005; Young, 2002). Various studies have asserted that enhancing course content through technology can support in-depth delivery and analysis of knowledge (Young, 2002) and increase student satisfaction (Dziuban & Moskal, 2001; Rivera, McAlister, & Rice, 2002; Wu & Hiltz, 2004). As institutions of higher education are encouraged to do more with fewer resources, educators and administrators are increasingly contemplating “hybrid” or “blended” learning, whether to redesign whole programs or simply offer more sections. This proliferation of online learning models necessitates a reexamination of various facets of teaching and learning, from delivery mode and contact hours to homework and activities for face-to-face (F2F) time. Language classes are no exception.

The publication of this volume is a testament to the fact that our profession is rethinking our vision of language classrooms, teachers, and students. Because of ongoing challenges, such as budget shortfalls, reduced staff, and increasing course enrollments, educators and administrators are seeking ways to alter traditional class formats and delivery systems for course content. This chapter addresses some of the primary theoretical issues at stake in this re-envisioning of our discipline while also providing case study examples of ways in which Web 2.0 technologies can be exploited to make the most of our new educational landscape.

In this first section, we define the term *hybrid* learning—specifically in the case of language classes—and we examine how different educators have implemented these new delivery methods. We also examine how Web 2.0 tools are relevant to the discussion of our changing classroom landscapes and the redefinition of the role of teachers, learners, and learning spaces. Furthermore, second language acquisition (SLA) theories are discussed with respect to their implementation in hybrid learning because a solid theoretical foundation is crucial as educators embark on the process of adopting and adapting technologies for their classes. The following section of the chapter then takes a critical look at tools that have been used in F2F contexts and adapted in blended or hybrid courses at undergraduate as well as graduate levels. These examples are provided to showcase the ways in which technological tools can enable the enrichment and extension of the classroom setting in both traditional and alternative settings.

## Hybrid Learning

*Hybrid or blended learning*<sup>1</sup> can be defined in many ways (see, for example, Goertler, 2011; Graham, 2005; Nicolson, Murphy, & Southgate, 2011; or Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). For the purposes of this chapter, we operationalize this mode of delivery as Heinze and Procter (2004) have: “Blended learning is learning that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning, and is based on transparent communication amongst all parties involved with a course” (pp. 8–9). With respect to language classes, this definition generally implies a learning space where instruction takes place in a traditional classroom setting and is enhanced or supplemented—sometimes even replaced—by computer-based or online activities. Such activities can, but do not necessarily, replace classroom seat time, but the implementation of a hybrid approach implies that students interact with the instructor and other students both in person and virtually.

However, given the variation in how we define blended learning, one of the greatest challenges educators and program directors face when contemplating a move to hybrid platforms is knowing how, precisely, to structure these courses. A common approach is to reduce the number of weekly contact hours, usually from 4 or 5 down to 2 or 3, and make up those credits via online activities (e.g., Scida & Saury, 2006). Other institutions opt for different patterns, such as one lecture-type meeting and one small group tutoring session with the remainder of the contact occurring virtually (e.g., <http://romlcourses.unc.edu/Spanish/spanybrid/>). At the same time, many instructors have managed to increase contact hours and content beyond the confines of the classroom by adding hybrid elements to their courses without officially changing the number of credits. The combinations and permutations are limitless and depend generally on external factors related to administrative issues, classroom space, personnel, and technological support (Goertler, 2011). Regardless of the variation in contact hours or delivery formats, though, hybrid programs rely on solid pedagogy and innovative technologies to make learning as effective as possible. The wealth of technology tools available to instructors has made these many formats possible and even successful.

## Technological Tools for the Hybrid Class

Recent innovations in emerging technologies have brought change and excitement to the language classroom. For language learning, technology serves as a set of tools that allows teachers and students to communicate with other speakers of the language virtually (Belz, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001; Lomicka, 2009; Sadler, 2009), build classroom

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this chapter, we use the terms *hybrid* and *blended* learning interchangeably. Other terms such as *integrative learning* or *multimethod learning* have also been proposed; however, for the sake of simplicity, we prefer to use the most common terminology.

community (Comas-Quinn, Mardomingo, & Valentine, 2009; Lomicka & Lord, 2012; Rovai & Jordan, 2004), engage students in their learning (Comas-Quinn et al., 2009), and collaborate with others (Rovai & Jordan, 2004). As such, language learning extends beyond the classroom and continues to grow virtually by means of new and innovative technologies. In the earlier implementation of hybrid learning, technology was often thought of as a way to deliver instruction—only one aspect of online learning as we know it today. It is equally important to fully integrate technology into the course and to allow the course content to drive the technology, affording students opportunities to learn, interact, and communicate both in and out of the classroom. Although a growing number of tools are poised to revolutionize the way we teach, our focus in this chapter is on blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter (see Appendix 5-1 for URLs and related tools). We chose these tools because of their popularity and availability, as well as their potential to connect learners and foster collaborative learning.

Two important considerations of hybrid learning are collaboration and community (see, for example, Rovai & Jordan, 2004). When learning expands beyond the classroom, technological tools can help students to apply lessons learned in class or to extend discussion beyond the walls of the classroom. Two tools we are focusing on in this chapter, blogs and wikis, lend themselves well to collaborative work and are user friendly. Blogs are often thought of as spaces for individual writing and reflection (Granberg, 2010; Miceli, Murray, & Kennedy, 2010), but followers can interact with the blogger through comments. Through this interaction, students can engage in knowledge sharing, reflection, and even debate. Blogs can also serve as an engaging way to build community (Comas-Quinn et al., 2009) because followers can now receive notifications when updates are made. It is also possible to create group blogs in which usernames and passwords are shared among members. Group or shared blogs are more collaborative, affording all followers a chance to participate and interact individually within a group.

Even more than blogs, wikis serve as a way to collaborate and share information with other learners; they also engage students in their learning. Members can edit text, and when revisions are made, the history page reveals the specific changes made. Collaboration is naturally built into wikis; they serve as unique tools that offer learners a powerful way to share and jointly construct knowledge.

As we have indicated already, another key aspect of successful hybrid learning is establishing a community of learners and creating a virtual presence. For learners, it is crucial to be active participants in learning both in and out of the classroom. In more traditional classroom contexts, students are physically visible, and even if their participation is low, they are still seen in the community. In online formats, the learner needs to establish a presence to be “seen” and must make concerted efforts to interact and communicate with others. Learners must participate and interact to help build and maintain an online community. Tools such as Facebook and Twitter may be well suited for establishing strong virtual presence and community and for building a social network among participants.

Inherently social, Facebook has as its goal to “create a richer, faster way for people to share information about what [is] happening around them” (Zuckerberg, 2009, p. 2). As one of the largest social networks, Facebook offers students more

opportunities to develop personal relationships than F2F settings (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). It can also nurture student–teacher relationships if used effectively and appropriately (Mazer et al., 2007). Facebook is a useful tool for establishing connections, exchanging updates and information through the common wall, discussing or debating in the discussion forum, sharing information and pictures, and engaging in instant chat (including video chat), to name a few.

Similar to Facebook, the microblogging tool Twitter is aimed at connecting with others quickly; receiving instant updates from friends, businesses, and celebrities; and finding out what’s going on in the world. Through Twitter, users can send, read, and repost messages of up to 140 characters, which are displayed on the author’s profile page and delivered to the author’s followers. Tweets are often short, unconnected, informal, and surface-level thoughts about what people are doing or what is going on at a particular moment in time. Twitter provides students with a quick and easy way to practice language out of the classroom, and its potential is great for connection, communication, and language exchange. Twitter can help teachers connect with students as well as help students connect with each other, thus building community and establishing a social presence (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009; Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009; Messner, 2009; National Education Association, 2009; Parry, 2008; Walker, 2009). Both Twitter and Facebook hold great potential in education to help students and teachers to transform and bring new dimensions to learning. Having briefly introduced the tools that make up the focus of the chapter, the next section considers the implications that administrators, teachers, and students face as they work together to move toward more successful learning in hybrid contexts.

## Implications

Although few would deny that human interaction remains essential in learning and using language, advances in technologies, such as those already described, have enabled us to reach a point in which students can accomplish a great deal by working independently, thus reserving class time for F2F communication and interactive learning. Administrators are also aware that today’s learners, because of the increasing amounts of nontraditional students, often need more flexible learning opportunities. To address these needs, instructors must re-evaluate how they stimulate interaction and what tools they use to do so. In hybrid contexts, teachers must provide clear structure to online activities (e.g., outline the clarity of tasks and provide specific roles for students and teacher) but also need to allow learners to freely use technology to interact and respond with each other. Learning in virtual spaces takes place differently than classroom instruction, where learning tends to be more linear (Carroll, 2007). Online instruction provides learners with more dynamic and active ways of interacting, collaborating, and learning. Instructors must therefore find ways to interact and communicate with students that can supplement (or compensate for a lack of) F2F contact time. Furthermore, students need to feel both supported and connected in online contexts. McBride and Fägersten (2008) posit that students must maintain “a sense of connection with a

learning community” (p. 43), which is achieved through allowing students to take on a greater responsibility for their own learning.

In addition to changes that teachers must face with instruction in hybrid contexts, students’ roles shift as well. For example, Reynard (2007) mentions that hybrid contexts provide an opportunity for students to become more autonomous and more engaged in their learning. She also posits that through hybrid courses, students learn to drive the learning process in a more direct way, thus pointing toward a shift where students and instructors are equally active. If these changes are successfully implemented, hybrid learning can take on new dimensions and offer a different experience than in the physical classroom. Although traditional and virtual environments both offer valuable experiences and interaction for students, they are not mutually exclusive and can work well together. In fact, Grgurovic (2007) reviewed 25 comparative studies on blended or hybrid instruction and concluded that blended learning is just as effective as or even more effective than traditional classroom spaces.

However, even though hybrid learning is becoming more accepted as an instructional approach, it is important to consider its challenges. Stracke’s (2007) research examines learners who leave hybrid language courses because of a lack of administrative support, lack of a paper medium, or rejection of the computer by the learner as a tool for language learning. Goertler and Winke (2008) point out that it is increasingly difficult to accommodate more students in language classes because of a lack of physical space and that administrators see technology as a possible solution to this challenge in that it can allow more students access to courses, although it cannot instantly solve these issues.

Regardless of the technology implemented, it is important to create a learning experience that is “as ‘seamless’ as possible for students, providing intentionality for each environment and the technology used” (Reynard, 2007, p. 1). In sum, hybrid learning should enable instructors to become “more connected and aware of each student, and students can become more aware of their own learning and take more responsibility for it” (Reynard, 2007, p. 3). In this chapter, we provide examples, based on SLA theory, of sound and effective use of technology in hybrid language learning.

## **Second Language Acquisition Theory and Hybrid Learning**

Although there will always be new and interesting technologies for the second language (L2) classroom, deciding which tools to use for which purposes must be informed by SLA research (Chapelle, 2009). With this in mind, this section explores relevant theories and pedagogical principles in order to provide a framework for the use of the tools discussed in this chapter. As current research in SLA, L2 pedagogy, and technology demonstrates, teaching with technology has shifted from using computers for structural drills to a sociocultural or constructivist orientation, in which the computer serves more as a medium to facilitate communication rather than as a tutor (Kern, 2006). The following section discusses many

of these elements in their theoretical context and as they relate to blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter.

### **Sociocultural Theory**

One of the key principles of sociocultural theory asserts that learning takes place through interaction or mediation (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) as “external socio-cultural activities are transformed into internal mental functioning” (Basharina, 2007, p. 84). Tools, including both physical tools, such as cultural products, and psychological tools, such as language, help to direct behavior and lead to higher mental processing (Basharina, 2007; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). In regard to language learning, for example, tools can include textbooks; authentic materials; classroom tasks; and interactions with teachers, other learners, or native speakers (Basharina, 2007). During a problem-solving task, learners use tools or scaffold with a peer or a more experienced learner or instructor to pass through the zone of proximal development and progress from being able to complete a task with help to being able to complete the task alone (Donato, 1994; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Collaborative learning then, depending on how it is structured, can help students to produce better final products. During collaboration, students are encouraged to reflect more deeply on their own ideas and course material (Arnold & Ducate, 2006; Lord, 2008; Lord & Lomicka, 2008), can telecollaborate with native speakers to improve linguistic or intercultural competence (Belz, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Furstenberg et al., 2001; Lomicka, 2009; Sadler, 2007), and connect with others through blogging or social networking (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Ducate & Lomicka, 2005, 2008; Lomicka & Lord, forthcoming, 2012; McBride, 2009). In addition, by working on wikis collaboratively, students are able to achieve more than they would be able to alone in terms of content, accuracy, organization, and research (Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2009, 2012; Arnold, Ducate, Lomicka, & Lord, 2009; Ducate, Lomicka, & Moreno, 2011; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Kessler, 2009; Lee, 2010; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008). To take full advantage of these learner-to-learner interactions, instructors can design activities that engage students in problem-solving tasks in order to encourage them to maintain focused interactions with clear goals (Gánem Gutiérrez, 2003; Spodark, 2005, 2008).

In addition to mediation through tools and interaction, another important consideration of learning, especially relating to learners' goals, is activity theory. Activity theory was initially introduced by Vygotsky and Leont'ev and then expanded by Engeström and can help researchers to more deeply understand learner motivations because of its micro- and macro-analysis of student interactions and orientations toward tasks (Engeström, 1999). This theory investigates the different ways that learners progress through an activity by focusing on their goals, including physical needs, career aspirations, or personal goals, and how these aims help to mediate their actions (Blin & Appel, 2011; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Three factors mediate actions according to activity theory: the available tools, the community, and the guidelines of the task and how the labor is divided (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). When considering these factors, one can examine not just the outcome of the task but also how learners mediate their interactions and work on



the task with others (Allen, 2010). Motivation, therefore, comes not only from an individual but also from the learning context and evolves with and is mediated by the co-participants through actions completed during the activity. Actions are thus motivated by one's goals and desire for specific outcomes. One can think of activities as more long-term endeavors and actions are focused on subgoals for that activity. For example, the activity might be to learn German for purposes of work, travel, or personal enrichment, but the actions associated with that activity could be completing blog postings, collaborating on a wiki, speaking with native speakers or classmates, or listening to authentic texts online (Blin & Appel, 2011).

Using activity theory as their theoretical framework, Blin and Appel (2011) were able to investigate what artifacts students used, how and why they used them, and where artifacts were used to encompass their potential development. The researchers examined how a computer-supported collaborative writing task exemplifies Lantolf and Appel's (1994) assertion of three factors that mediate activity and the influence of these mediating factors as the students worked toward completing their activity. In this case, the writing task was mediated by (1) tools such as the L2 and the computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies; (2) guidelines, both for the task and for other wiki and forum postings; and (3) the other participants in the task and their degree of collaboration (community). Blin and Appel (2011) found that the instructors' guidelines and the messages on the forum "mediated the collective activity and sometimes triggered focus shifts by prompting students to question their emergent practice. Teacher interventions also helped redirect students' attention to the object and desired outcomes" (p. 493). Villamil and De Guerrero's study (1996) on peer revision in Spanish students' writing, for example, found that students mediated their actions with external resources, their first language (L1), scaffolding, interlanguage knowledge, and vocalizing private speech.

In a study in which student motivation during study abroad was investigated, students reported linguistic and career-oriented motives for learning French and that studying abroad was critical in achieving these goals (Allen, 2010). Students seemed to be more motivated if they were more personally interested in learning French rather than for merely practical goals such as a better career. Activity theory demonstrated in this study that "it is impossible to view motivation as a stable, internal characteristic of individuals or to see students as possessing either 'low' or 'high' motivation" (p. 45) because some students were more socially motivated and generally interested in learning something new but others were more focused on a tangible goal such as fulfilling a French minor, which did not lead to as many gains in language proficiency as those with more intrinsic goals. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) studies have found similar results concerning students' use of a large variety of tools to mediate their learning (Basharina, 2007; Haneda, 1997; Lei, 2008), which allows researchers to gain more insight into students motivations and successes for using various tools when carrying out CALL tasks.

In terms of research, using the micro- and macro-analysis described by activity theory enables the researcher to analyze many different types of data such as chat transcripts, forum postings, and wiki pages to see how students communicate and

use language and how they negotiate and renegotiate their actions. Activity theory therefore allows the instructor a view into students' interpretation of the guidelines and how they negotiate them within their learning community and can help instructors of hybrid courses to more fully understand their students' motivations toward tasks in order to organize instruction in a way that is most beneficial to everyone.

### **Communities of Practice**

The importance of collaboration and interaction through community-building has been discussed earlier and relates directly to the formation of communities of practice (CoPs). CoPs were originally defined as all kinds of groups with shared interests or occupations, and, according to Wenger (1998), must include a community or "mutual engagement" (characterized by regular interactions and discussions with a common goal that bind the community together), a domain or "joint enterprise" (a shared topic of interest), and a practice or "shared repertoire" (the resources they produce while achieving their common goals) (pp. 72–73). In education, CoPs refer to groups of people who are all involved in learning or researching a similar topic and thereby help each other to learn more or complete the task more successfully through regular interactions (Wenger, 1998). CoP interactions are characterized by problem solving, requests for information, seeking experience, reusing assets, coordination and synergy, discussing developments, documentation projects, visits, and mapping knowledge and identifying gaps (Wenger, 1998). Richards (2010) found that some of the benefits of belonging to a CoP, especially for in-service teachers, include collaborating with other learners, teachers, and administrators; sharing ideas, lesson plans, and knowledge; forming reading groups, action research teams, and peer observation groups; and helping members feel part of a larger group to keep them from feeling isolated. Although these benefits were suggested for in-service teachers, many can also apply to students in an L2 hybrid class, where it is especially important that students feel part of a larger group with a common purpose or joint enterprise.

Research on CoPs also allows for a deeper analysis of learning behaviors, including both how and why they occur (He, 2009; Kiely, 2009; Wiltse, 2006). In the case of Kiely's study (2009), for example, although both L2 learners examined in the case study were successful, analyzing the data using the CoP framework demonstrated how one Chinese learner of English did not as easily take advantage of the interpersonal aspects of language learning and did not pay close attention to context and therefore felt that language learning was more of a solitary endeavor. Her strategy was to focus more on the fixed rules she had learned to help her progress in her language learning. Although she was just as successful and motivated as the other learner in the study, she ultimately had a harder time developing language awareness, the goal of the study, and did not take advantage of being a member of a CoP and stayed on the periphery of the group. Her classmate, on the other hand, was more aware of her language development in general and of the importance of interpersonal communication. She therefore also felt more integrated into the CoP and took advantage of the opportunities for language learning within the group.

In a study of the discourse of junior high students in a language arts class, Wiltse (2006) used CoPs to illustrate the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the learners in a CoP of learners. Wiltse points out, however, as Wenger (1998) also admitted, that the CoP framework was not designed for school contexts because “legitimate peripheral participation makes a fundamental distinction between learning and intentional instruction” (p. 217). Because students are required to be in their classes, they are not, at the beginning at least, voluntarily in their classroom CoP, and the framework is therefore not necessarily adequate to explain all aspects of a classroom setting. In agreement with Haneda (1997), Wiltse (2006) suggests that when the CoP framework is applied to classroom contexts, especially when there is explicit teaching involved, the concept of scaffolding should be included in the CoP framework to provide a larger role for that of the teacher and more proficient peers, as demonstrated in the next study.

In an analysis of in-service teachers’ interactions with teacher trainers, He (2009) found that learning did not happen automatically but rather only when what was termed as a broker helped the participants to negotiate their roles within the CoP to reach the principals of a CoP: “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 72–73). Because each participant stemmed from different professional contexts and histories, the broker helped to mediate between the teacher trainers and the in-service teachers so that each had enough knowledge about the school or the subject knowledge to be able to cooperatively complete their task within the CoP.

Although CoPs may not originate spontaneously in hybrid learning contexts (Haneda, 1997), providing students with a common goal and a problem-solving task may help them to begin one on their own. A collaborative wiki project, for example, can provide a common goal, and the accompanying discussion board can supply a forum for learners to engage in the various characteristic behaviors of a CoP listed above. Given a specific task, members of a Facebook group can also form a CoP based around their common goal of improving their L2 skills and cultural knowledge. Foreign language (FL) methods graduate students, for example, exhibited characteristics of a CoP on a discussion board when conversing about FL pedagogy and teaching methods with experts in the field (Arnold, Ducate, & Lomicka, 2007).

### **Interactionist Theory**

Each of the four tools we discuss also has a great potential for providing input from native speakers, other L2 learners, and instructors, as well as forcing L2 learners to produce output. Input is vital to language learning because it provides learners with a model for their output and encourages interaction (Gass & Mackey, 2006; Krashen, 1985; VanPatten, 2003). Through increased interaction, students produce output, which allows them to test hypotheses about their interlanguage (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Therefore, students must be given the opportunity to engage in negotiation of meaning, whereby they engage in comprehension checks, recasts, and paraphrasing to understand and be understood (Gass & Mackey, 2006; Long, 1996). Through the feedback students receive during this negotiation of meaning, they can make adjustments to their language and fill in any necessary

gaps. Although Long's interaction hypothesis (1996), defined above, focused on speaking, interaction through writing in such applications as synchronous and asynchronous CMC have also been suggested to encourage more negotiation of meaning and even lead to gains in language proficiency (Baburhan, 2010; Beauvois, 1998; Bower & Kawaguchi, 2011; Payne & Whitney, 2002; Pelletieri, 2000; Sauro, 2009; among others). As Chun (2008) points out, though, there is also recent evidence that computer-mediated interactions between non-native speakers or between native and non-native speakers do not always lead to language gains in terms of "noticing linguistic errors, lexical or syntactic complexity, length of discourse produced, or equality of participation" (p. 24), reported by many of the above studies. Nonetheless, most of the research does point to a positive transfer from written CMC to oral proficiency. These conflicting results point to the need for continued research on these issues, including the role of the teacher within these learner-guided interactions because, as Chapelle (2009) points out, the teacher is necessary for planning and guiding successful tasks in CMC.

Although blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter are not necessarily synchronous, they do provide learners with large amounts of input from their classmates, instructors, and native speaker interlocutors. In addition, they engage students in meaningful interactions, which can lead to the negotiation of meaning and thereby language learning. It has also been found, for example, that blogging leads to improved writing proficiency (Arslan & Sahin-Kizil, 2010). There are also certain pedagogical principles, including autonomy, motivation, and learning styles, that should be considered when integrating technology into a hybrid course; these are discussed in the following subsections.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy is defined as the process by which learners assume control and guidance of their own education and thereby make decisions involved in the learning process according to what they believe is most necessary for their learning (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1987, 1995; Little, 2000). In the context of wikis, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and hybrid learning, it is possible to examine autonomy from a variety of perspectives, including where students are located when they engage in their L2 learning, what individual characteristics they bring to the learning, how they interact with other learners and tools, and how they manage to assert their own voice in the learning. The nature of Web 2.0 technologies promotes autonomy, which is also necessary in a hybrid-learning context. Such autonomy, though, may lead to isolation, and studies have shown that students must be prepared, trained, and provided with the appropriate tools to gradually take autonomy over their own learning in effective ways (Fischer, 2007; Murray, 1999, 2005; Ruschoff, 1998; Thang & Bidmeshki, 2010) and it can also be influenced by the supportiveness of their classmates or group members (Chang, 2007).

Few studies have specifically focused on autonomy and the tools we focus on here, although the concept has come up indirectly in several wiki projects. In a study by Kessler (2009), students were given complete autonomy over a wiki they wrote to define culture. However, the students seemed to pay more attention to content than form when left to their own devices. It has also been

found that students are able to work collaboratively on a wiki and successfully revise both form and content autonomously (Arnold et al., 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Lee, 2010). The researchers of each of these wiki studies recommend that for students to successfully collaborate and revise their wikis, they need instructor guidance and training to set expectations, confirming previous research on autonomy in general.

### **Motivation**

Motivation in L2 learning is often closely linked to learner autonomy in L2 research, and it has been suggested that one affects the other. According to Gardner (1991), there are two types of motivation: instrumental, which entails learning a language in order to achieve an external goal such as fulfilling a language requirement or getting a better job, and integrative, or learning a language because of a genuine love of the target language and culture. In Gardner's socioeducational model (2000), he suggests that motivation is supported by integrativeness and the learner's attitude toward the learning environment. Dörnyei (1994, 2001) agrees that the classroom experience can have an influence on students' motivation, including the teaching methods, the connection between the teacher and students, and the learning atmosphere and dynamics among students. Other factors that have been found to influence motivation are the level of difficulty of a task, meaningful learning objectives, feedback from the instructor, and minimal hindrances to learning (Good & Brophy, 1987).

As shown in this chapter, blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter can tap into students' motivations by providing meaningful contexts for interaction, varied teaching methods, increased communication, and community building between teachers and students and among classmates. Although studies have not specifically examined motivation related to these specific tools, incidental evidence indicates that they increase motivation for the reasons mentioned above. Lee (2010), for example, found that students enjoyed the collaborative nature of a wiki to practice their writing, which led to increased motivation for writing. Kessler (2009) also found that his students appreciated the chance to work autonomously on a wiki.

### **Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences**

Learning styles and multiple intelligences can factor into motivation and success toward learning a language. Learning styles include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic in terms of different types of sensory learning styles, or analytic versus global, intuitive versus random, sensory versus sequential, orientation to closure, or competition versus cooperation (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). According to James and Gardner (1995), there are nine types of intelligences: intrapersonal, interpersonal, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, naturalist, and existential. The versatility of blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter allows learners to tap into many of these learning styles and intelligences with the guidance of an instructor. Each is visual and can include auditory material, and by engaging in projects using a variety of tools, students are engaging their kinesthetic, or active, sense. Audioblogging,

vlogging (video blogging), and moblogging (uploading from a mobile device) allow for blogging through multimedia and can relate to various learning styles of both the producer and the audience.

As Spodark (2008) points out, students of the millennial generation need these varied activities even more than their predecessors, and instructors should take advantage of the telecollaborative tasks available using new technologies, such as collaborative work, peer review, and multimedia presentations. Van Deusen-Scholl (2008) also found that engaging beginning and advanced German learners in CMC allowed them to tap into their own learning styles to make learning more individualized and helped them use their strengths to their advantages while addressing their weaknesses. Hybrid learning also provides more opportunities for students to make use of their multiple intelligences and individualize instruction as long as teachers assess what students need to best fit their learning styles and intelligences and plan the use of technology accordingly (Chakraborty, 2010; Chisolm & Beckett, 2003).

Although there is not enough space to address them in depth, there are also cultural learning advantages to using blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter. Reading native speaker blogs or wikis, for example, can provide a window into the target culture (Ducate & Lomicka, 2005, 2008) because they are easily accessible authentic materials, materials written by a native speaker for a native speaker. Engaging in what Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) term “bridging activities,” advanced students can choose their own news blogs or wikis or personal L2 blogs and analyze various linguistic or cultural aspects. Allowing students to choose their own material helps them to see the relevance of reading these materials outside of the classroom and provides them with more ownership over the task, possibly leading to higher motivation and autonomy (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). Wikis can also be developed to serve as a reference about the target or home culture, language, or history (Arnold et al., 2009) and thereby possibly even advance their intercultural competence (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, 2010). As the chapter continues, examples will be shown that relate back to each of the theories and pedagogical principles discussed above.

## **Putting It into Practice: Case Studies and Examples**

Keeping in mind the previous discussions of hybrid learning, technological innovations, and SLA theories, as well as best pedagogical practices, this section examines how certain tools (those introduced earlier) have been used in blended contexts to enhance and expand the language learning experience. The examples provided come from different language classes, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and encompass a range of delivery formats. In all cases, though, the technology is used to its greatest advantage to offer the most in terms of linguistic and learning outcomes based on the theoretical considerations previously addressed. Although there is not enough space to discuss each tool and example in great detail, the purpose of this review is to begin to provide ideas for implementing these tools into hybrid learning and for further exploration.

## Blogs

Within a hybrid-learning context, blogs can create a supportive environment; encourage reflection and sharing among students; provide greater access to the L2, including authentic materials; and facilitate linking to references and outside sources. The most productive way to use blogs in L2 learning is to take advantage of the opportunities they provide for reflection and community building. For example, students can post responses to readings, cultural questions, or class discussions, or current and future FL teachers can use blogs to reflect on their teaching experiences and get encouragement and advice from classmates. In relation to the SLA theories already mentioned, it will be evident in the descriptions here that using blogs in the classroom can provide students with a CoP in which to scaffold and learn about the target culture and language together; they can provide a variety of input from classmates or native speakers and encourage output from their authors. Because students work on blogs outside of class with differing amounts of guidance from the instructor, they promote autonomy and motivation, and because of their multimodality (images, sound, text), they appeal to different learning styles and intelligences. These advantages will be evident through the examples discussed below.

### *Weekly Blog Postings*

In a blog study conducted by Ducate and Lomicka (2008), intermediate language students completed a weekly blog journal in which they responded to questions provided by the teacher based on in-class readings and discussions with a few open topics. Their classmates were then required to comment on two blog postings per week. At the end of the semester, the instructors found that writing a weekly blog encouraged a sense of community that may not have been possible without the blogs. The students learned many personal details about each other that most likely would not have come up during class discussions, and shier students were much more likely to write about themselves. The students appreciated the forum because it gave them the opportunity to practice their writing and learn more about each other.

### *Blogging as a Tool for Teacher Reflection*

Another blog project takes place in a service-learning course in which intermediate and advanced German students teach German every week during an after-school program at an elementary school (Ducate, 2009). Students use the blogs to reflect on their teaching experiences and provide their classmates with encouragement and suggestions. Because students are writing in German, this is a chance for them to internalize pedagogical terms and issues in the L2. The blogs also add to the feeling of community within the classroom and give them an opportunity to express triumphs and frustrations. Blogs as a forum for reflecting on teaching have also been used for beginning graduate teaching assistants and K to 12 teacher candidates with similar benefits but without the added benefit of L2 practice for students whose native language was English (Arnold & Ducate, 2010). For both blog projects, students were graded on a combination of factors,

including accuracy, content, and relevance to the topic. Although blogs tend to be a more solitary endeavor with the option for others to read posts and comment and thereby lead to more reflective thoughts, wikis are tools that, through their very nature, encourage collaboration.

## Wikis

Outside of education, wikis can be used for project management, event planning, policies and FAQs, collaboration, and brainstorming (WebWorkerDaily, 2007). Many of these uses are also applicable in L2 education, including collaborative writing in which students use a wiki to compose, revise, and edit (Arnold et al., 2009; Kessler, 2009; Larusson & Alterman, 2009; Lee, 2010), to process information (Matthew, Felvegi, & Callaway, 2009), to engage in writing as a process (Gibbons, 2010), and to enhance group interaction (Bradley, Lindstrom, & Rystedt, 2010). In hybrid learning, wikis can promote collaboration, encourage revisions based on community or teacher feedback, provide an audience for final products, supply a log of what everyone contributed to make it easier to monitor contributions, and plan a project using the attached discussion board. In terms of SLA theory, wikis have many of the same advantages as blogs in terms of autonomy, motivation, learning styles, and input and output but provide even greater possibilities for scaffolding and co-constructing meaning to build new understandings because they are collaborative in nature. From a CoP perspective, a class or group wiki project provides learners with a “joint enterprise” (shared topic), “mutual engagement” (common goal that binds the community), and “shared repertoire” (resources) (Wenger, 1998, pp. 72-73), which hopefully allows them to profit from the benefits of a CoP, such as group problem solving and combining assets and experiences. As mentioned earlier, though, when building CoPs in fixed classes where students have not necessarily chosen to be a part of the CoP, one must also acknowledge the important role the instructor plays in encouraging scaffolding throughout the task (Haneda, 1997; Wiltse, 2006).

### *Foreign Language Teaching Wiki*

In one example project, graduate students in four different methods classes collaborated to produce a wiki on an FL teaching topic such as feedback, culture, technology, or target versus native language use (Arnold et al., 2009). Students from the different universities worked together on one topic or page to provide a resource on important topics of FL teaching at the end of the semester. Students also used the discussion board to comment, plan, and provide peer feedback and were easily able to post links and pictures and edit content and format. The instructors found at the end of the project that each of the groups produced well-designed and informative pages, but how they produced them varied greatly depending on the group dynamics.

### *Historical and Cultural Wiki*

In another study that took place in intermediate German classes, students were required to produce a wiki based on historical topics from a novel set before the



fall of the Berlin Wall as a pre-reading task (Arnold et al., 2009). After writing the wiki, the students began reading the book and were able to consult the wiki if they had questions about, for example, the secret police in the former German Democratic Republic or the history of the Berlin Wall. Non-group members commented on the other groups' pages throughout the project, and each group was asked to collaboratively revise content and grammar. Most students appreciated being able to work together on a final product, but data analysis revealed that not all students contributed equally to the project, which was also a complaint made by some students (Arnold et al., 2012). Whereas in a blog it is easy to assess whether a student posted or commented because it is more of an individual project, wikis have the added challenge of ensuring that the work that students do is truly collaborative, where it is necessary for all students to work together to complete the final product, rather than merely cooperative, where students can each individually complete a part of the whole (Arnold et al., 2012). Assessment took place several times throughout the project and considered format, content, accuracy, relevance of pictures, and references and considered both individual contributions and group dynamics. After having discussed both blogs and wikis, which foster reflection and collaboration, among other things, we now look to more community-building tools such as Facebook and Twitter.

## Facebook

Facebook can serve as a course organizer and community-building tool and as a way to further content knowledge; it can also be useful in helping learners to analyze native speaker language. In this section, examples are provided that give readers a sense of how to effectively use Facebook in different contexts for language classes. Time constraints often limit the amount of interaction and socialization during class time; however, social networking tools offer increased opportunities for students to easily connect with their classmates, peers, and instructors in ways that can be more personal and motivating (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012). Because of the high level of social interaction that is inherent in these tools, CoPs (Wenger, 1998) and sociocultural theory both lend themselves well to social networking tools. Sociocultural theory suggests that learning takes place through interaction or mediation (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978), and thus social networking tools allow for both of those to take place. Facebook also brings together communities of people that share, interact, communicate, and dialogue on given topics. Thus, with respect to the creation of CoPs, forming groups to learn about or research a similar topic allows students to work together to complete their task more successfully by working with each other. Because social networking tools are relatively new to the language learning classroom, research has only begun to offer a glimpse into how these tools can be used in language teaching and in SLA.

Blattner and Lomicka (2012) provide a detailed analysis for using the discussion forum in Facebook to build community and exchange perspectives. A second example (Blattner & Fiori, 2011) discusses student use and analysis of Facebook groups and how it leads to the development of sociopragmatic competence and multiliteracy skills.

### *Facebook as a Discussion Forum*

In a study by Blattner and Lomicka (2012), Facebook was used in an intermediate university-level French class to organize common discussions, exchange perspectives, and foster community among students in the United States and in France. Students expressed their opinion (50 words or less) on a given topic approximately twice a month using the Facebook discussion forum feature. For example, during election time, students were asked to respond to questions about their thoughts on the upcoming elections, how they choose candidates to vote for, and the role that politics plays in their daily lives. All students shared their ideas and perspectives, and many contributed follow-up responses. Because students were writing for a native speaker audience and their peers, they were graded on completion and not on grammatical accuracy.

The data reveal positive attitudes toward the use of Facebook but at the same very time limited use of social networking in language learning. The atmosphere of Facebook was considered by students as “casual” and “pressure free,” making it both an attractive and comfortable place to engage in communication and interaction outside of the classroom. Learners saw Facebook as a new platform where they could practice their developing target language skills to use and naturally engage in authentic and meaningful exchanges, which are essential in order to develop communicative competence. Their personal and academic use of Facebook varied greatly, however. In personal contexts, students tended to use a wide variety of functions, but for academic purposes, students were much more limited in their ideas on how Facebook could be used.

### *Facebook Groups to Develop Sociopragmatic and Multiliteracy Skills*

In a different context (Blattner & Fiori, 2011), intermediate-level students studying Spanish in a university setting were required to find and share three different content-related Facebook groups with their classmates and then post links to relevant content areas that they were studying. They then analyzed sites for specific linguistic information (e.g., greetings, abbreviations, leave takings) and shared this with their classmates. The study examined language that was part of different Facebook groups and students were able to identify or recognize certain norms at the site, such as those associated with greeting and leave taking. Although CoP formation was not a goal of this study, it would seem interesting to explore this in more detail.

Blattner and Fiori (2011) concluded that students have the potential to increase their sociopragmatic awareness and multiliteracy skills in an FL through such tasks. The authors also emphasize the importance of becoming familiar with the conventions of discussion forums and of target country cultural aspects and that those are crucial to making engaging and meaningful connections with native speakers. A relatively new tool like Facebook, Twitter also serves as a tool to help to foster community building, interaction, and communication among learners.

## Twitter

As has been shown, microblogging can be an ideal way to supplement class time by enhancing social presence and building a sense of community among users. As a learning tool, one of Twitter's strengths is allowing for quick and easy communication with others. However, given the 140-character limit in posts, Twitter may not allow for as much reflection or detail in responses. Research in CMC has pointed to several interesting trends: F2F interaction can be replicated (Sotillo, 2000), negotiation of meaning can be enhanced (Pellettieri, 2000), and opportunities to increase learner output can be produced (de la Fuente, 2003). Interactionist theory lends itself well to Twitter because students, by engaging in increased amounts of interaction, produce more output. Given that Twitter posts are by nature short, students may be less intimidated to produce output and more motivated to interact frequently. This interaction can lead students to examine their own hypotheses about their interlanguage (Gass & Mackey, 2006).

The two examples discussed in this section illustrate how these tools can be used to engage lower level language students in interaction and communication and to build a network for pre-service FL teachers during their student teaching experiences to connect with other language teachers to create a CoP and support.

### *Undergraduate Language Class*

In a study by Lomicka and Lord (2012), microblogging was used in an undergraduate, intermediate-level French class to encourage students to engage in language practice with their peers outside of class. After establishing their accounts and learning the basics of Twitter, students in the class were required to interact with each other and with native speakers of French in an English class (tweeting from France) at least three times a week (all Tweets consisted of short posts of 140 characters or less). Of those three interactions, two posts were in French and one post was in English for the U.S. students and two posts were in English and one in French for the native French speakers. Both languages were used so that reading and writing could be practiced and observed for both native and non-native speakers. In their Tweets, students were able to share information about themselves, their daily lives, and what they were doing at the time. It should be noted that the instructor did not overtly correct grammar or spelling or otherwise grade the tweets, which were evaluated only for effort and completion. In a medium such as this one, it was determined that communication should be the primary focus.

This study offers several insights into the use of microblogging. Students involved in the project created a stronger connection with each other and with their instructor beyond the classroom (which supports prior research by Antenos-Comforti, 2009), but this relationship also enhanced connections among U.S. students, creating an overall stronger and more dynamic community of learners. The students and the instructor built relationships over the course of the term and were thus more comfortable sharing more information with each other and in turn using more target language. Another advantage was the opportunity for interaction with native speakers, thus allowing for more realistic and meaningful exchanges

among the students. In sum, the tweets were able to make the language come alive for the learners involved in the project.

### *Graduate Methodology Seminar*

Microblogging can also be used at other levels of instruction. For example, in one project, more than 80 new language instructors across the United States and Canada used Twitter to connect with each other and share their learning experiences in the language classroom. Many of the participants in this study were involved as part of their teaching methodology course, but a number of instructors became involved on their own and used the opportunity to connect with language instructors that they otherwise would not have known or had access to. Participants tweeted three times weekly—two original posts and one response—and focused on the triumphs and challenges they faced as they developed into language educators. The Twitter community was used as a way to connect to others, learn from their peers, and develop a CoP that existed beyond the confines of their own institutional settings.

Although the use of the target language was not an issue in this case, the use of the microblogging service enabled these new instructors to share, reflect, and engage with a large group of peers that were going through similar experiences. The short and somewhat informal nature of the Twitter interactions may have precluded the more in-depth reflections that a blog project would promote, but the ease of posting to Twitter made the project an attractive one for these new teachers. Participants connected to peers around the world with whom they would have had no way to communicate otherwise. They were able to take more control of their own professional development by engaging in continual reactions, and their motivation to share and reflect helped them in their classrooms as well. The participants created a true CoP in which they were able to reinforce class content and continue their development as language instructors.

## **Conclusion**

In an era in which more work is being carried out beyond class time and outside the four walls of the classroom, instructors must find new and creative ways to connect with students and to encourage ongoing learning in alternative settings. The tools described here all contribute to this goal and, if used appropriately, can extend our classrooms in theoretically and pedagogically sound ways.

As illustrated in this chapter, blogs can help learners to reflect, build a community within and beyond a class, engage in autonomous learning, access multiple learning styles and intelligences, and interact with authentic cultural materials. Wikis, in turn, are also useful for promoting autonomous learning and motivation as well as generating collaboration and scaffolding among learners, encouraging revision, and improving writing proficiency through increased output. Facebook and other social networking sites are ideal tools for creating learning communities and engaging students outside of class time to enhance the learning experience and to help students analyze sociolinguistic features (Blattner & Fiori, 2011).

Finally, Twitter (and microblogging) affords increased opportunities for interaction and thus output and allows students to connect with each other and with native speakers (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Lomicka & Lord, 2012), to build relationships outside of class, and to reinforce content learned in class. Both Facebook and Twitter as relatively new tools to the language classroom merit additional research so that their full potential can be more carefully examined.

There are many advantages to using these tools, particularly in hybrid language learning contexts. Teachers are able to relinquish the “sage on the stage” control that is often prevalent in classrooms. Students learn in a self-directed way and can benefit from increased interaction with classmates and the instructor. Offering both flexibility and convenience, hybrid contexts afford more opportunities to all learners and open doors to learning anytime and anyplace, as well as tailor instruction based on student needs, considering different styles, skills, and abilities. Hybrid learning, one of the fastest growing sets of delivery modes, is indeed promoting a paradigm shift and with it an emphasis on technological tools that foster collaboration and community. This shift, coupled with a multitude of benefits and challenges, is fueling student engagement and effecting a potential transformation of learning.

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## Appendix 5-1. Additional Tools

### *Blogs*

- Blogger* ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com))  
*Edublogs* ([www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org))  
*LiveJournal* ([www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com))  
*Wordpress* ([www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com))

### *Wikis*

- PBwiki* ([www.pbwiki.com](http://www.pbwiki.com))  
*Wikispaces* ([www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com))  
*Wikidot* ([www.wikidot.com](http://www.wikidot.com))  
*Wetpaint Central* ([www.wetpaint.com](http://www.wetpaint.com))

### *Social Networking*

- Facebook* ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))  
*Groups* ([www.grou.ps](http://www.grou.ps))  
*Grouply* ([www.grouply.com](http://www.grouply.com))  
*Linked In* ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))  
*Ning* ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com))  
*Spruz* ([www.spruz.org](http://www.spruz.org))  
*Webs* ([www.webs.com](http://www.webs.com))

### *Microblogging*

- Beeing* (<http://www.beeing.com>)  
*EdModo* ([www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com))  
*Emote.in* (<http://www.emote.in>)  
*identi.ca* (<http://identi.ca>)  
*Jaiku* (<http://www.jaiku.com>)  
*Plurk* (<http://www.plurk.com>)  
*Tumblr* (<http://www.tumblr.com>)
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