Creating a Hybrid Oral Skills Course for IGTAs

TESOL 2010
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hybrid_igta_course.html
Why a hybrid course

- Course is a requirement for IGTAs who score below 60 on the SPEAK

- Perennial problems with timing and attendance
  - TAs are busy – many obligations in departments
  - They don’t see the point in the course
  - 12-step pronunciation program - website

- Couldn’t be any worse! ..
Approach

- Blackboard platform
- Initial in-class meeting
- Online activities and discussions
- Two other face-to-face presentations
- Two self-filmed presentations
- Final presentations in class

Calendar (online on the presentation website) ..
Blackboard components

- Readings
- Exercises
- Limited discussions
- Pros and cons with the platform
Students seemed pleased with the flexibility
Good initial response to in-class and online activities
Some students MIA from the beginning
  As usual with this class
Self-filming options

- Their own computer + webcam
- Their own video camera
- Using the webcam in the Learning Center with a friend
- Setting a time for an assistant to film them in the Learning Center
Positive elements

- Flexibility in time
- Recordings
  - Revised self-recordings
  - No time constraints on recording
  - More focused feedback on recordings
- Anytime, anywhere access to online resources
Perennial issues

- Students not taking the course seriously
- One student with severe problems that needed speech therapy, not an IGTA class
- Not enough time to make a real difference
Hybrid course issues: Self-recordings

- Self-recordings didn’t get peer feedback effectively
  - Videos weren’t viewed by other students
- Webcams didn’t show body language beyond the face
- Hard to juggle visual aids and a webcam
- Some issues with saving and emailing large recordings
Hybrid course issues: Time on task

- Students could work anytime, but didn’t
- Fewer real deadlines provided less incentive to do the work
- Not enough Q & A practice – just in the in-class presentations
Lessons learned

Still a good concept, but…

- Use FlipVideos or other small cameras
- Require weekly videotaping and peer review by a designated partner
- Have sessions that are just Q & A practice in class
- Have more individual meetings with students to work on their specific pronunciation issues
  - Online or offline
Overall

- Much more time needed to make this work right
- Systematic issues with IGTA training remain
  - Sponsoring faculty
  - Self-perception
  - Lack of consequences
- Flexibility is very valuable – worth trying again
See handouts and other information on my website:

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