



# *The IALLT Journal*

*A publication of the International Association for Language Learning Technology*

## **SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY-GUIDED COLLEGE-LEVEL MANDARIN CHINESE HYBRID COURSE DESIGN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper explains how sociocultural theory (SCT), particularly its three key concepts: mediation, zone of proximal development, and agency, can be used to guide the course design of college-level 1<sup>st</sup>-year Mandarin Chinese hybrid courses. Specific examples are illustrated to demonstrate how three aspects of the hybrid course design: 1) learning materials and tasks, 2) teacher-student and student-student interaction, and 3) assessments, are guided from a SCT perspective. The feedback from students enrolled in a college-level hybrid Mandarin Chinese course sequence is also provided.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hybrid courses, also called blended courses, refer to courses that combine both traditional Face-to-Face (FtF) classroom interaction and online learning elements. Specifically, the online learning elements replace a significant amount of traditional class time, which distinguishes hybrid courses from web-facilitated or

web-enhanced courses (Allen & Seaman, 2008). A hybrid approach has been adopted in postsecondary foreign language curriculum since the 1990s with an expectation that a larger student population could be reached while lowering costs (Rosen, 2009). In a survey of language-program coordinators conducted in 2008, Goertler and Winke discovered that 26% of the surveyed language programs offered hybrid (21%) or online courses (5%) and the majority of these courses were offered in major languages such as German and Spanish. As a politically and economically critical language in the U.S., Mandarin Chinese has been increasingly taught in a hybrid curriculum. Sharing the same fate with various hybrid foreign language curricula (Goertler, 2009), hybridized Mandarin Chinese courses face the challenge of delivering rigorous and sound pedagogy that combines the best practices of traditional FtF instruction and distance education.

This paper aims to explain and exemplify how sociocultural theory (SCT) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) concepts can be used to guide the development of college-level 1<sup>st</sup>-year Mandarin Chinese courses<sup>1</sup>. It consists of three sections. First, a justification for the adoption of a SCT perspective in the course design is provided with detailed explanation of three major SCT concepts that are pertinent to hybrid language course design: mediation, zone of proximal development (ZPD), and agency. Second, examples from the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence are provided to illustrate how the 3 key SCT concepts are used to guide the hybrid Mandarin course design in three specific aspects: 1) online learning materials and tasks, 2) teacher-student and student-student online interaction, and 3) course assessment. The paper will conclude with students' feedback on the hybrid Mandarin learning experience to show the reader students' perception of the quality of SCT-guided hybrid language learning.

### ***Why use SCT to Guide Hybrid Mandarin Chinese Course Design? Issues with Mandarin Chinese Pedagogy***

Thanks to the exponential growth of K-16 learners of Mandarin Chinese across the world, recent years have witnessed a steady growth of practice of web-enhanced, hybrid, and even distance Chinese language instruction (Asia Society, 2010). However, due to the lack of technology-savvy language educators as well as

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<sup>1</sup> In the following text, the course sequence will be referred as CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence as CHN101 and CHN102 are the only courses in the sequence that have been offered at the university.

appropriate teacher training in this area, it is still rare to see a pedagogically rigorous online Chinese curriculum. As a category IV language for native English language speakers (Omaggio, 2001), Mandarin Chinese is perceived as one of the most challenging foreign languages for American learners, particularly due to its tonal and script-based writing systems. A hybrid approach to Mandarin Chinese learning sounds even more daunting due to the fact that face-to-face meeting time with the instructor in hybrid courses is significantly reduced. In addition, Mandarin Chinese is a high-context language, which means its lexicon usually can only be appropriately understood in relevant contexts. Thus, compared to other Roman languages, it naturally demands more effort on the part of well-trained language educators to present Mandarin characters in appropriate social and cultural contexts, usually through authentic materials and interactive activities. However, most Mandarin Chinese language educators in the U.S. are trained with a traditional drill-based, teacher-fronted, and memorization and grammar-focused pedagogical approach (Asian Society, 2010). It is urgent to explore and promote a more effective pedagogical approach to Mandarin language teaching and learning.

### ***SCT-guided Second Language Acquisition (SLA)***

There are a few SLA theories that have been influential in second language (L2) teaching and learning in the past decades. Among them, one dominant in computer-assisted language learning is an interactionist view that portrays communication in a tradition of information processing and considers L2 learning as a linear process: information is transferred from A's brain to B's brain (Doughty & Long, 2003a). From this view, language is often considered as a subject that learners need to process cognitively by employing various cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as attention, memory and analysis. Particularly, it is believed that through well-planned novice-expert interaction such as negotiation of meaning and corrective feedback, learners can develop an accurate set of knowledge and skills to communicate in a L2. According to van Lier's (2004) review, typical classroom practices guided by an interactionist view include information gap tasks and various error correction strategies.

Deviating from interactionism, a SCT view (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2004) perceives language not merely as a means of communication, but also as a psychological tool constantly mediating human higher-order cognitive functions such as organizing, planning, conceptualizing, and learning. From this view, language is not considered as a static and standard-based subject, but a dynamic activity that doesn't artificially separate the cultural environment from the users and

language learning from language using. The opposite usually results in “reducing the classroom activities to a series of supposedly culture-free transactions and self-referenced learning events” (Blake, 2007, p.77). Hence, language development is not merely about learning a new set of knowledge or skills that are transmitted from one brain to another brain, but a process that is constantly and dialogically shaped by the newly acquired knowledge and skills. The process originates in human social interaction and is constantly mediated by semiotic symbols (e.g. language in its spoken and written forms). Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) summarize second language development as the process of “how mediational means are appropriated by the individual as a result of dialogic interaction with other individuals” (p.467).

Nowadays, very few L2 language educators would deny the pedagogical benefits of computer-assisted learning activities (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). The advent of computer technologies, particularly social media, not only brings a world of citizens closer to each other, which renders intercultural communication in any language one click away, but also enables a greater variety of resources, mostly free of charge, available to learners of almost any foreign language. As an attempt to combine the best elements of traditional FtF instruction with those of distance education (Rosen, 2009), hybrid courses are facing a golden age in terms of offering language instruction that is more learner-centered and with a focus on developing learners’ practical intercultural communicative competence. However, most of the computer-assisted second language tasks, particularly in the field of computer-mediated communication (CMC) are developed with deep influence from either a behavioristic or interactionist perspective that views technologies as a new social interaction tool that either facilitates or impedes information processing, a.k.a. language learning (e.g. Abrams, 2006; Blake, 2006; Doughty & Long, 2003b; Meskill, 2005; Smith, 2003). Recent years have witnessed a steady number of research projects (e.g. Belz 2002, 2003; Belz & Thorne, 2006; Darhower, 2007; O’Dowd, 2006; Thorne, 2003; Ware & Kramsch, 2005; Wildner-Bassett, 2005) that investigate computer-mediated SLA from a SCT perspective which stresses “the complex nature of humans as sociocultural actors and technological settings as artifacts and as mediators, rather than determiners of action and interaction” (O’Rourke, 2005, pp. 435).

## **KEY SCT CONCEPTS IN HYBRID MANDARIN CLASS COURSE DESIGN**

Aligning with SCT’s increasingly recognized theoretical impact on technology-enhanced L2 pedagogy and answering the call for a more effective Mandarin

Chinese pedagogical approach, the following text will introduce three key SCT concepts and explain in detail why they are especially relevant in hybrid Mandarin language course design.

### ***Mediation***

Mediation is the central concept of SCT, as Vygotsky claims that human mental activities are mediated by culturally constructed tools including physical tools such as a stick, a pen, a computer, and psychological tools such as signs, symbols, cultural concepts. Through participating in various social activities in which our cultural and biological inheritances dialogically interweave, humans develop higher mental functions such as memory, attention, rational thinking, emotion, and learning and development. In other words, mediation is the instrument of cognitive change (Kozulin, 1990). In the case of L2 learning, learners' language development occurs in their participation in various social cultural activities mediated by a myriad of auxiliary means such as visual (text and video) and audio learning materials, their first language (L1), as well as technologies used for learner-learner and learner-teacher interactions (e.g. email, SKYPE, FACEBOOK, etc). In particular, considering the cognitive facilitation provided by learners' L1, SCT researchers (e.g. van Lier, 2004) do not exclude effective use of L1 during the process of L2 learning.

Mediation is a very useful concept in hybrid language courses as learning is constantly mediated by the various technologies adopted in online settings. With regard to the mediational influence of technologies on L2 teaching and learning, Thorne (2008) summarizes that network-based communication has initiated a L2 pedagogical shift from a brain-based cognitive approach to a "contextual, collaborative, and social-interactive" (p.419) approach. The features of various technologies enable more authentic and engaging interactions in L2 between learners and their interlocutors including native speakers and non-native speakers of the target language. More importantly, the technological tools used to facilitate learners' online learning in a hybrid environment will shape how they learn and how they eventually develop. This is especially important for Mandarin Chinese teaching as many Mandarin Chinese teachers are still more comfortable with a traditional teacher-fronted and drill-based language teaching approach. The adoption of different interactive technologies will enable a student-centered and social-interactive learning context where learners can learn and simultaneously use the language for meaningful communication.

### ***Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)***

ZPD is another major SCT concept that is instrumental to hybrid language course design. From a SCT view, learning originates in social interaction and optimally takes place in the ZPD which is defined as the area between learners' current proficiency level and their potential level, usually assisted by a more advanced-level person such as an experienced teacher or native speaker in the case of L2 acquisition. The assistance provided in the ZPD should be contingent, dynamic, and dialogic depending on the learner's language learning needs. Particularly, the learner is considered as an active rather than passive assistance-receiver who actively participates in a cooperative problem-solving situation and eventually gains the competence to independently solve the problem. Although it may sound ideal to implement the ZPD concept in a real class, especially one that is large, ZPD has a significant pedagogical impact as it unfolds the quantity and quality of assistance a teacher can provide to a learner depending on the learner's individual needs. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) compile a regulatory scale that identifies and categorizes what specific assistance a L2 teacher or tutor should provide to a learner at various levels of language proficiency. In addition to traditional expert-novice interaction, SCT researchers (e.g. Donato, 1994, 2004) also argue that appropriately organized learner-to-learner interaction can also provide dialogic assistance within the ZPD. Particularly, collaborative rather than dominant or competitive peer interaction can effectively trigger the ZPD. This concept is instrumental when designing online group/pair interactive tasks in hybrid courses.

SCT doesn't separate teaching from assessment, which is rooted in its proposition that development is a novice's growth from a current level to a potential level when solving a problem and it occurs when the novice can solve the problem independently without external help. Thus, from a SCT perspective, the more interesting aspect of learning is not the learner's actual level of competence (what the learner can do currently), but his/her potential level (what s/he can do in the future). Effective intervention within the learner's ZPD is consequential to the development, which is called dynamic assessment (DA). Minick (1987) defines DA as "a means of gaining insight into the kinds of psychological processes that the child might be capable of in the next or proximal phase of development and a means of identifying the kinds of instruction, or assistance that will be required if the child is to realize the potential" (p. 127). Drawing on this view, DA researchers (e.g. Poehner, 2005) in SLA argue that the assessment of L2 development should focus on what a L2 learner can do potentially with the mediation from a teacher rather than what they do at the current level. DA is a useful concept when designing assessment activities in a hybrid Mandarin Chinese class because it assesses what

students can potentially do with the help from the teacher, which may greatly reduce beginning-level students' stress over learning a challenging language with limited FtF contact time with the instructor and more accurately measures their potential language competence.

### ***Agency***

As mentioned earlier, neo-Vygotskian researchers (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) further emphasize that language learners are not passive learners, but active agents engaged in making various decisions during the learning process such as choosing to learn certain things, to collaborate with certain people, and to purposefully participate in certain activities according to their own historical, social, and cultural experiences. Learners' agency is shaped by and in turn shapes their relationship with the surroundings. In the case of hybrid language learning, this concept is particularly relevant as students' prior experience with and view about language learning in general and hybrid language learning in particular will influence their engagement with various individual and group-based learning tasks, consequently their learning results. Thus, to understand each learner's prior experience with hybrid language learning (e.g. how familiar they are with various technologies needed for online learning, whether they enjoy computer-mediated communication, what resources they have for language learning) and their social cultural background (e.g. heritage speakers v.s. non-heritage speakers) is instrumental to stimulate and gauge students' operation of agency, particularly in self-paced online learning in a hybrid course through designing a learner-friendly online learning environment and learner-engaging online learning tasks. As illustrated in detail in the next section, in addition to its official online class site, the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence also has a Facebook page as an online learning community that capitalizes on the fact that all students in the class are frequent Facebook users.

## **HOW SCT CONCEPTS ARE USED TO GUIDE THE HYBRID MANDARIN CHINESE COURSE DESIGN**

Drawing on the SCT view of language and three key SCT concepts, this paper will demonstrate how these concepts are used to guide the development of a learner-centered, contextual, and collaborative environment, particularly its online learning section, in the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence which is offered in a university in the Midwest U.S. to learners whose work schedule doesn't allow them to attend regular weekday classes. As the university adopts a quarter system, each quarter

lasts 10 weeks. Thus, each class contains 10 weekly modules in each of which the class conducts online self-learning and holds a 2-hour FtF meeting every Friday for weekly review, oral practice, and a test. Every Monday of a given week, the instructor posts the following guidelines on its official course site, Desire-to-learn, an online learning platform:

- Week X learning objectives: what language skills and knowledge the students are expected to develop at the end of the module;
- Week X Online Learning To-do List: what online learning tasks and homework the students are expected to finish before the FtF meeting;
- Additional Learning Materials: supplementary resources that are needed for the weekly self-learning, e.g. a special set of eflashcards focusing on the vocabulary to be learned in the week;
- Friday FtF meeting agenda: what the class plans to do during the Friday FtF meeting.

The three key SCT concepts are used to gauge the following aspects of the hybrid course design mainly in the online learning section: 1) course materials and learning tasks; 2) online teacher-student and student-student interaction; and 3) course assessment. The following text will explain in detail how each of the three aspects is guided by various SCT concepts. Table 1 provides a summary of how each SCT concept is connected with various pedagogical implications in the course design.

**Table 1: SCT Concepts & Hybrid Course Design**

SCT Concepts	Hybrid Course Design Implications
<b>Mediation:</b> learning is mediated by physical (e.g. technology) and psychological (e.g. concepts, signs and languages) tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-enhanced content delivery: e.g. course-related video clips, animated character writing website</li> <li>• Technologies used in peer interaction: bimodal chat in the Second Life (SL) virtual world, Facebook community</li> <li>• Online materials to show language variety in authentic contexts</li> </ul>
<b>Zone of Proximal Development(ZPD):</b> constructive scaffolding between learners' actual level of proficiency and potential level of proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative peer interaction</li> <li>• Technology-enhanced teacher-student interaction: Facebook community</li> <li>• Dynamic assessment &amp; e-portfolio</li> </ul>
<b>Agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook community, SL class meetings</li> <li>• Heritage-heritage vs. heritage-non-</li> </ul>



	heritage grouping • online participation monitoring
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### ***Learning Materials and Tasks***

From a SCT perspective, second language development is a process of internationalization of intercultural communicative competences which is mediated by the physical and psychological tools in the learning context. These tools also mediate and in turn are mediated by learners' agency during the learning process. As most of the learning in the hybrid sequence occurs in a technology-enhanced environment, the mediation is reflected on two aspects: 1) what materials to present and 2) what learning tasks learners need to conduct.

In this CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence, taking advantage of various technologies, the instructor chooses authentic language learning materials that are accessible on the Internet, yet still suitable for students who just start learning Mandarin Chinese. Although Mandarin Chinese is the standard language used in all Chinese-speaking communities, there exist a wide range of dialectal and regional varieties phonologically, morphologically and semantically, sometimes syntactically (e.g. Mainland Mandarin vs. Taiwan Mandarin). Although it may not be necessary to overwhelm beginning learners with all the varieties, it is helpful to expose them to some salient varieties by including authentic materials such as online newspapers, radio, TV shows, and movies accessible on the Internet to develop the understanding that Mandarin Chinese is an open, evolving and diverse system. For example, short YouTube videos featuring Beijingers and southerners ("Sexy Beijing" video series) can be shown to demonstrate how Beijingers pronounce certain characters with a heavy "er" sound which is absent in southern dialects. In addition to authentic language materials, effective language learning software such as *Rosetta Stone* or *Tell me more* are recommended to students as these are excellent self-learning tools for beginning learners to practice pronunciation with the voice recognition tool and to expand vocabulary. In addition, one of the most daunting tasks for beginning-level Mandarin Chinese learners is to memorize Chinese characters. Many websites provide excellent Mandarin character learning tools such as <http://nciku.com> which allows users to use the cursor to draw characters based on which the system automatically demonstrates each character's standard writing sequence, stroke-by-stroke. These materials can be accessed free of charge on the Internet. As they are sometimes even more effective, time-efficient, and agency-inducing than a teacher's demonstration, they are thus ideal auxiliary tools for hybrid Mandarin language learners.

As FtF meeting time is limited, most learning tasks in a hybrid course are conducted online. From a SCT view, learners' L2 development should occur through their engagement in various social interactions in culturally sensitive contexts. Thus, learning tasks in hybrid courses should be centered on learners' participation in various meaningful social interactions that are culturally sensitive. In the CHN101-102 hybrid course, online learning tasks consist of 1) authentic multimedia individual or group projects that require students to use their language skills to individually or collectively solve real-life problems, e.g. to create a video clip with Chinese subtitles of self-introduction for a job interview or to leave a phone message via an online voicemail tool <http://vocaroo.com> ; 2) group voice or text comments: the instructor posts a picture or a short text on <http://voicethread.com>, an online group multimedia discussion forum where users' text or voice comments are grouped around the discussion prompt (see Figure 1). This task allows students to use either written or oral Mandarin Chinese at their proficiency level to participate in meaningful discussions; and 3) synchronous pair or group conversations on relevant topics via text and/or audio chat tools accessible in Skype, Wimba (a popular online classroom platform) or a Second Life (SL) setting (see Figure 2 for a screenshot of the SL course site). It is worth noting that the SL site was created specifically for this class to provide a virtual Chinese context where all the buildings, signs and graphics resemble objects in an authentic Chinese community such as a tea house, a library. Students can use their avatars<sup>2</sup> to walk, run, fly, touch, and talk in text or audio like in the real world. They are asked to conduct virtual group meetings on the site and also encouraged to tour other Chinese communities on SL such as a replica site of a Chinese museum (see Figure 3) in which they can carry out text- or audio-based conversations in a meaningful and tangible although virtual context. This type of interactive learning tasks helps improve students' typing skill and language production fluency as well as develop their sensitivity to specific conversational contexts.

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<sup>2</sup> Avatar is a user's character imitating a real person's body in a 3-D virtual world.

**Figure 1: Voicethread Class Activity:**



**Figure 2: Second Life Group Task: Group Meeting**



**Figure 3: Second Life Group Task 2: Touring a Chinese Museum**



### ***Teacher-Student & Student-Student Interaction***

According to SCT, learning and development, including language development, originates in social interaction. As reviewed in the earlier text, contingent help from an adult or a native speaker in the case of L2 learning and dialogic interaction within each learner's ZPD provides optimal assistance. Although it may be too idealistic to provide individualized assistance within each learner's ZPD in a hybrid language course, the online learning environment in the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence enables the instructor to observe each student's online behaviors such as what exercise has been completed and how well it is conducted by checking each student's online records and thus provides contingent help. Although online learning reduces teacher-student FtF interaction time, the advent of social media in fact expands the range of communication means between the teacher and language learners. Thanks to the popularity of Facebook among college students, the CHN101-102 hybrid course has a class Facebook page as shown in Figure 4 where the instructor keeps in touch with all class members 24/7 by sharing Chinese language learning links and materials, reminding students of homework, and answering students' questions. Students are encouraged to share relevant materials on the page as well and Mandarin Chinese use is encouraged although not required. This class page is a closed group where only invited members can join. Thus, all content is course-related.

Figure 4: Class Facebook Page



Many SCT researchers (e.g. Donato, 1994) also advocate that peer interaction, whether online or FtF, is an indispensable part of a L2 class because of the mediation and ZPD enacted through peer conversations. However, to ensure the learning-conduciveness of peer interaction, the instructor needs to gauge the collaborative stance to be taken in student-student interaction. In the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence, each student is paired with a class buddy for group work and after-class communication. The instructor pairs students with similar technological skills and ensures that each student shares a collaborative stance (e.g. willingness to reciprocally collaborate with a classmate rather than dominate the collaboration) toward group work. Students' personal preference regarding their group member such as gender and language proficiency (e.g. some heritage speakers have higher language proficiency than non-heritage speakers) is also considered during the pairing process to ensure each student feels comfortable to work with their group member. Students are encouraged to communicate in English or Chinese on the class Facebook with each other by posting useful language learning resources or giving feedback on each group's multimedia projects to foster a collaborative online learning community.

Although the students in the hybrid course have reduced FtF contact time with the instructor, students' communication with native speakers of Chinese is not sacrificed. Each student in the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence is also paired

with a native Chinese partner who is a student volunteer from the same university to have weekly meetings in which the pair can either practice conversing in Mandarin Chinese or share cultural information. Certainly, due to the time constraint for FtF meetings, the intercultural communication can be conducted online after each pair gets familiarized with each other. As most Chinese native speakers haven't received formal training about being language partners with beginning-level Mandarin Chinese learners, the instructor provides each Chinese volunteer with a simple tutorial on how to converse with and tutor beginning-level Mandarin Chinese learners (see Appendix A for the handout) to ensure the assistance given to each student is within their ZPD.

### *Assessments*

As mentioned earlier, SCT practitioners are concerned with learners' potential level rather than their current level and they don't separate assessments from teaching. Adopting a DA approach, the instructor conducts both a pre-test and a similar post-test for each assessment task including verbal communicative tasks in the CHN101-102 hybrid course sequence. During each weekly module, students are required to follow the weekly instruction and do online self-learning. Every Wednesday, a pre-test is posted online. Then, based on each student's test score, the instructor diagnoses each student's grade, identifies what assistance each needs, then provides direct instruction electronically to the student or gives suggestions for the student to seek additional learning materials or talk to their native Chinese partner. During the class' FtF meeting every Friday, a similar post-test is given and each student's gain between the pre-test and the post-test scores is recorded as their weekly test grade.

In addition to a focus on students' language gains with scaffolding help within their ZPD rather than on one-shot assessment results, this hybrid course also adopts an e-portfolio system that allows all students to upload their digital course projects or any document that can demonstrate their language proficiency at different phases of the process of Mandarin Chinese learning. The instructor also has access to each student's e-portfolio and can suggest the student add or drop certain progress evidence. By using the e-portfolio, both the instructor and students can track their progress throughout the course and have a clearer view of what each student can and cannot yet do with Mandarin Chinese. On the other hand, with explicit knowledge of each student's progress, strengths and weakness in Mandarin Chinese learning, the instructor can offer appropriate help to boost the progress rate.

In all, this section explains and illustrates how a SCT perspective, particularly the three key concepts (mediation, ZPD, and agency), guides the design of three aspects of the hybrid Mandarin Chinese course sequence. The next section presents the quality of the SCT-guided course design from the perspective of students enrolled in the hybrid course sequence.

### ***Students' Feedback on the Hybrid Course***

Students in the CHN101 hybrid course were asked to give feedback on their learning experience in the hybrid course by ranking each question in a five-level Likert-Scale online questionnaire (1=disagree and 5=strongly agree). 11 out of 13 students finished the questionnaire. The answers to the five relevant questions as shown in Table 2 indicate that students dominantly agreed that the course materials, learning tasks, teacher-student and student-student online interaction, and the DA approach were helpful for their Mandarin Chinese learning.

*Table 2: Students' Feedback on the Hybrid Course Design*

<b>Feedback Content</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1. Do you think the multimedia materials in this course are helpful and appropriate for your Mandarin Chinese learning?	4.53/5.0
2. Do you think the online learning tasks in this course are helpful and effective?	4.85/5.0
3. Do you think your online interaction with your instructor is sufficient and helpful for your learning?	4.60/5.0
4. Do you think your online interaction with your group member and native Chinese partner is helpful and sufficient?	4.23/5.0
5. Do you think the interactive assessment model (pretest-instruction-post-test) is a helpful and effective way to assess your language development?	4.66/5.0

## **CONCLUSION**

Recent years have witnessed increasing offerings of hybrid foreign language courses, stimulated by the advent of technologies and increasing demand of non-traditional students who cannot attend regular language classes. Although numerous

studies have been conducted to analyze how foreign language learning can effectively take place in an online environment, very few analyze and conduct hybrid foreign language course design from a SCT perspective, a non-traditional view of language and language learning. There are even fewer theoretically-guided studies to investigate how Mandarin Chinese, an increasingly popular foreign language offered in the U.S. K-16 school system, can be taught and learned in a hybrid setting.

With no intention to give an in-depth empirical analysis of Mandarin Chinese learning in a hybrid setting, this paper argues why key SCT concepts can provide useful guidance for beginning-level hybrid Mandarin Chinese course design, particularly its online learning section. After a detailed theoretical account of three relevant SCT concepts, examples are given to illustrate how the SCT concepts shape three aspects of the hybrid course design: learning courses and tasks, online teach-student and student-student interaction, and course assessment. Students' feedback on the three aspects of the course design is also provided to show the course quality from learners' perspective.

Research on and practice of hybrid Mandarin Chinese curricula are still in their infancy although an increasing number of educators and researchers have become interested in such a course format. A SCT perspective in teaching Chinese as a foreign language is an even more exotic concept. It is hoped that this paper can offer an innovative view of developing a Mandarin Chinese hybrid curriculum and provide preliminary and helpful insights to administrators, educators and researchers in the field of Mandarin Chinese hybrid pedagogy. Due to the scope of this paper, many other pedagogical issues such as how SCT concepts can be used to guide seamless integration of online and FtF peer interaction in a hybrid course have not been touched. As a newly emergent area, SCT-guided hybrid foreign language pedagogy merits more discussion and systematic investigation. Both qualitative and quantitative studies need to be conducted to empirically investigate how to optimally augment foreign language learning in a hybrid course model.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author of this paper would like to thank the editor and the reviewers of the journal for their helpful and insightful feedback. Any errors remain solely the author's.



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## APPENDIX: NATIVE CHINESE LANGUAGE PARTNER TUTORIAL HANDOUT

### 2011-2012中文语伴辅导须知

#### 一：中文语伴工作的基本原则：

1. **了解**你的学生的中文水平：在听说时发音，词汇，或句法各方面的强势和弱势。在发现他/她在弱势方面有所进步时，及时表扬进步（任何时候都用中文表扬）；
2. 多用简单的中文或其它方式与他/她进行平等的**交流**。不要把你的学生当成在教室里的学生。如果他们不直接问，不用纠正他们的表达方式。你可以用正确的方式自然地重复一遍；
3. 不断**鼓励**你的学生用简单的语言或其它方式（肢体语言或者少量的英文）积极主动**参与**各种实际语言应用活动，比如鼓励他/她自己去跟售货员用中文交流，不要主动帮他/她跟其他中国人交流；
4. 使用**渐进式辅导技巧**。根据学生的水平及语言使用的环境，提供适量的帮助。比如，在学生完全不知道怎么表达自己时，提供一些词汇提示，或者给一个类似的范例，然后让学生自己表达他/她想表达的意思。如果学生能够表达自己但出现句法错误，不用纠正他/她。

二：渐进式辅导技巧：你的学生的中文口语水平应该会大致在以下两个阶段。请根据学生的水平来提供口语交流的帮助。注意：你的学生的口语在这两个月内可能会有明显的进步。如果你观察他/她的水平进入到下一阶段，请逐渐改动你的交流方式以适应他/她的高一级水平的对话方式。

	美国学生的语言能力	
阶段一	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 只能说词汇，不能说句子</li> <li>• 不敢大声或主动说中文</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 多问学生一些能用“对/不对，是/不是”</li> <li>• 如果发音不影响交流，不用强调发音</li> <li>• 多用肢体语言或少量的英文来让学生</li> <li>• 用学生学过的简单的句子和词汇来示</li> </ul>
阶段二	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 敢用中文句子交流，但是很慢，常停下来想该怎么表达</li> <li>• 常常用错的词汇或句子结构</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 放慢你的语速来适应学生的语速及中</li> <li>• 如果四声影响交流，用较慢的语速，</li> <li>• 交流时选一些学生熟悉的话题。如果</li> <li>• 尽量不要纠正错的句子。如果你实在</li> <li>• 如果你的语伴非常希望你能及时纠正</li> </ul>

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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