

Production and Implementation of Online Contents for a Blended College English Course*

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[Abstract]

This paper examines the process (and its operations) implementing 'blended learning' into a required liberal English course at a Korean university. It was a complete 16-week-offline English course composed of 27 sections, which was held twice a week for 75 minutes per session. The course Committee decided to offer one of two sessions on-line and maintain the other off-line. For that, lecturers dramatized the stories in textbook and changed them into a series of plays. A total of about 55 performers took part in the production of the set of 14 video contents. For video compilation, a software technician examined the entire video recording by using a program called eStream Presto from Xinics, Inc. The .wmv video files in either 300k or 1MB, supporting eStream Presto, were uploaded on the University's LMS (Learning Management System). The staff had roles of uploading the online material, responding to inquiries from instructors, contacting the technician, and monitoring students' chats and gossips on the student website. The instructor's roles in managing the online lecture were quite different from managing the classroom

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lecture, as also reported in Murday, Ushida, and Chenoweth (2008). Students found their roles in online lectures to be rather simple and trouble-free.

Key Words: blended learning, online lecture, offline lecture, foreign language learning, computer-assisted language learning

I. Introduction

This paper documents the implementation of a unique type of blended learning that was constructed for a first-year liberal requisite English course called English Reading and Writing (hence, ERW) at a 4-year university in Korea. Blended learning has been widely adopted as a combination of face-to-face classroom learning and technology-assisted learning (Hauck & Stickler 2006; Stubbs et al. 2006; Davis & Fill 2007; Hubbard 2008, Goertler & Winke 2008; Bush 2009; among many others). Face-to-face classroom learning refers to the traditional method of in-class teaching where one teacher typically delivers the lecture in person to students in the classroom, and the negotiation of meaning between teacher and student can take place spontaneously; it can be also called offline learning. Technology-assisted learning usually involves out-of-class teaching where computer or some sort of technology mediate the pre-recorded lecture ordinarily to a large number of students, and the negotiation of meaning generally lacks or is executed by other means like e-mail, web posting, etc.; it can be also called online learning.

Until *ERW* at this university adopted blended learning, it had been a complete 16-week-offline English course, composed of 27 sections with approximately 40 students in each section which held twice a week and for 75 minutes per session.

The course had been offered every semester except for the summer and winter vacation semesters. An intermediate to advanced Korean-bilingual instructor was in charge of one to three of those sections; hence about 12 to 15 instructors altogether administered the entire course. The medium of instruction was largely in Korean. During that period, the University was suffering from a shortage of classroom space for establishing new courses, and moreover, the Committee for Liberal English looked for a more efficient way to maintain the homogeneity of lecture among the 27 sections for *ERW*. The Committee was somewhat discontented with different teaching methodologies among different instructors for the same subject although the instructors used the same textbook and syllabus, collaborated with one another to produce the examinations, and generally received satisfactory remarks according to the student evaluation. Another crucial drawback was the medium of instruction being varied: The language in the classroom was by and large Korean, while few instructors who were fluent in English used English and some instructors mixed the two languages, English and Korean. Furthermore, freshman students had to enhance self-direct learning of English outside the classroom because their previous education in high school was literally spoon-fed by the teacher; that is, their network quotient required improvement.

A general consensus among the university administrators revolved around adopting online courses into university education for more efficient teaching and more effective learning, the detailed plan of which aimed to replace some of the existing courses to online-exclusive ones. Once the administrators exposed high praise for the popularity of commercial online English programs presently being sold on the street or used in private English institutes, and hinted at substituting some liberal English courses with them, the Committee of Liberal English raised a resolute opposition to the idea of such a complete switch to commercial online English programs for

existing offline courses. The rationale was that such materials were produced for general English practices and not necessarily for university English curriculum, and instructors in the commercial programs were not professors with academic degrees in English-related fields, but they were merely popular English instructors appearing on TV or other media, although their English was generally fluent.

As an alternative, the Committee proposed blended learning for language courses as adopted in the Language Online project at Carnegie Mellon University for Elementary French I (Chenoweth et al. 2006), the Communicative English Program using ICT at Universidad de Concepción (Baños 2006), the elementary Spanish course at University of Virginia (Scida & Saury 2006), the beginning Spanish course at University of California – Davis (Blake et al. 2008), and the intensive Spanish course at University of Tennessee (Young 2009). The University approved the alternative for blended learning and granted a fund to produce online lecture materials, which had to be completed before March for the spring semester of the following year. Hence, this blended learning pointed toward easing off the classroom shortage, homogenizing the lecture in the sections for *ERW*, and facilitating students for independent language learning outside the classroom.

II. Production of Online Materials

2.1 Background

ERW used Mosaic 1 ‘Reading’ published by McGraw-Hill as the primary textbook which highlighted a total of ten topic-based chapters and two reading-selections per chapter. Instructors singled out 14 readings for which the project director had to

produce online lecture materials with the following notions.

- The medium of instruction must be English. This was done with the purpose of providing students with more genuine input for conversational interactions in the classroom (Gass 1997), because most lectures were carrying out in Korean.
- Native speakers of English who were currently instructors at the University must be primary participants. Not only can they deliver native linguistic and non-linguistic information, but students' familiarization with the native instructors might increase the number of enrollees in other elective English liberal courses that the native instructors taught.
- Korean instructors who were confident in speaking English and enthusiastic about blended learning could voluntarily participate in the video. Korean instructors were in essence encouraged for participation because their presence in the online materials could oblige them for more responsibilities in teaching and better understanding of the contents. Youngs (2007) reports a teacher's confusion occurred in the online class.
- The content of online materials must be somewhat like simple previews for subsequent offline lectures, for which the formidable, literary-styled selected readings were dramatized into interactive, everyday-like settings such as TV reports, discussions, interviews, plays, etc., as suggested in Felix (2005) for process-oriented real-life activities and in Travieso-Parker et al. (2007) for social realities for students' world.
- Platform for delivering the online materials must be easily accessible nearly from any descent computers on and off campus. Plus, software must allow instructors to monitor each student's viewing records for every online material and spontaneously to send individual or group

text messages or emails to students. Time and date for each online material viewing were stipulated.

2.2 Script Designing

The content of online materials pointed toward providing students with the preview and understanding of the designated reading of the week which the project director dramatized. Three concepts were under consideration: insertion of supplemental information for better understanding, plain description into real-life dialogues, and re-articulation of high-level phrases to simple phrases. Below is an example of application of those concepts for an original story *70 Brides for 7 Foreigners* in the textbook to a script version.

[Original text: Beginning of the story]

Russia seems to be turning into a major exporter of brides. Almost 1,500 marriages with foreigners are registered in Moscow every year. Another 10,000 women go to the international marriage agency Alliance each year, according to a poll, and 23 percent of Russian mothers would like their daughters to marry foreign citizens. Russian brides have always been prized by foreigners—ever since the time of Yaroslav the Wise [an eleventh-century grand prince of Kiev], whose daughter became the queen of France. But during Joseph Stalin's time, the attitude toward marriages to foreigners was intolerant.

[Script version]

1. (*SPENCER is browsing through a newspaper and talking to his mother*

who is cooking.)

2. SPENCER: Mom, check this article out! Listen! It says, (*read slowly*) “Russia seems to be turning into a major exporter of brides. Almost 1,500 marriages with foreigners are registered in Moscow every year.” Oh, my God, that is ridiculous and so shocking! Russia is making money by selling its own women. And, “another 10,000 women go to the international marriage agency Alliance, a marriage broker, each year.” Gee, what is wrong with Russian men? It seems, Russian women don’t like to get married to Russian men! (Continue to read) “According to a poll, 23 percent of Russian mothers would like their daughters to marry foreign citizens.” Mom, I don’t think I can understand Russians at all.
3. MOM: Son, think positive! An old bachelor who is so busy at work like you and has already failed a marriage once should actually think to marry a Russian woman, as you see in the newspaper. I know you have had several girlfriends but none of the girls were your types. I know you want a wife who is rather traditional – stay home, raise children, and support her husband.
4. SPENCER: Mom, I am an American and I have a belief that I will find an American wife who can stay home, raise my future children, and support me and you! Isn’t what the relationship between a husband and a wife supposed to be?
5. MOM: Hey, son! Did you forget that I am a half Russian and a half American, so you are a quarter Russian? You’ve got Russian blood in your heart.
6. SPENCER: Yes, but. I don’t know anything about Russia. What does Russia have to do with me and my life? I know nothing about Russian customs, language, food... nothing! I am an American!
7. MOM: OK, but you need to get married and have a wife. You can’t

just live like this in my house. Son, you may not know, but Russian brides have always been prized by foreigners, ever since the time of Yaroslav, the Wise [an eleventh-century grand prince of Kiev], whose daughter became the queen of France. But during Joseph Stalin's time, the attitude toward marriages to foreigners was intolerant. People didn't like marrying to foreigners.

At first glance, the script version is longer in length than the original text. Part from the original text is underlined; otherwise is supplemental information setting up the context. Dialogue 1 institutes the schema as a real-life dialogue between Spencer at a table while reading a newspaper and his mother who is cooking in the kitchen, and the further conversation narrows down to Spencer's mother nagging at him about his unmarried life. Alteration of complex phrases or high-level vocabulary took place in a couple of parts. In Dialogue 2, the phrase *a marriage broker reiterates the marriage agency Alliance* to corroborate its meaning. In Dialogue 7, the sentence *People didn't like marrying to foreigners* paraphrases the word intolerant and recapitulates the preceding sentence. The straight reading of the original text would take about 10 minutes; while the runtime for the script version about 20 minutes on average. All scripts can be downloaded from the school website, but students were encouraged to watch the video content first without seeing the scripts.

2.3 Planning

Once the script has been designed, a liaison clerk contacted and selected performers among available native and Korean instructors, in accordance with characters in the story. Also selected were two hosts who introduce the story preview for the video content. The script for *70 Brides for 7 Foreigners*, for example,

necessitated three performers: Spencer, Spencer's mom, and Spencer's female friend. A male native instructor played the role for Spencer; a middle-aged female Korean instructor, Spencer's mom; and a young female Korean instructor, Spencer's friend. For hosts, two Korean instructors participated. The next step was to set the date and the time for cast rehearsal during which the production staff and performers discussed the setting, flow lines, dresses, make-ups, scenes, etc. – just like as in the real acting. Afterwards, the prompt for the performers was made by blowing up the script on a wide screen.

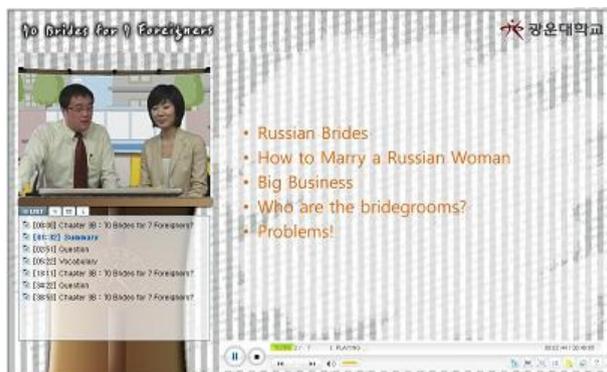
A total of about 55 performers took part in the production of the set of 14 video contents; among those, the number of native instructors was 35 and the number of Korean instructors was 20. They used only English in the video contents. A total of 28 hosts joined, all of whom were Korean instructors, and the medium of instruction for hosts was English and Korean mixed. The runtime for hosts took approximately 15 minutes.

2.4 Recording

2.4.1 Preview by Korean hosts

Preview was done with the purpose of increasing students' awareness of the story that they were about to watch. This part introduces the story summary, content questions, and key vocabulary of the video content. In Figure 1, one host, a near-native English speaker, summarizes the story as explaining in English each bullet about the scene topics, and the other host reiterates in brief his sayings into Korean.

Figure 1: Summary of the Story



The Figure 2 poses several content questions that students can print out and answer as watching the video content. They were required to submit the answers as a weekly assignment. Obviously, they came up with the answers from reading the textbook, not watching the video; however, the purpose of the online material can still be accomplished because they presumably end up ‘knowing’ the content for the subsequent offline lecture. The content questions and key vocabulary are printable from the screen.

Figure 2: Content Questions



After presenting the content questions, what follows is a set of key vocabulary as in Figure 3 singled out in the textbook. The same two hosts explain in English and in Korea the definitions which students are also required to write in Korean, and submit as a weekly assignment along with the content questions. Content questions and key vocabulary are substantially covered in quizzes and examinations.

Figure 3: Key Vocabulary

The screenshot shows a video player interface. On the left, a video frame displays two hosts, a man and a woman, in a classroom setting. The video title is "70 Brides for 7 Foreigners". Below the video frame, there is a list of video titles and their durations. On the right side of the player, a "Vocabulary" list is displayed, containing three columns of words and their meanings. The video player controls are visible at the bottom.

Vocabulary		
turn into	criticism, criteria	valid/invalid
poll	milieu	property rights
intolerant	well-to-do	to erect barriers
the trickle of	groom	marital
coherent	apply	grant (v)
slender	attitude toward	fictitious
humble	requisite	try
to place an ad	be fined	dependable
flourish	stiff requirements	turn out
to put in the files	be imposed by	deception

2.4.2 Video content

Although the preview section appears before the video content in the final output, the order in shooting was the opposite because the hosts had to watch the content shooting before they could more precisely summarize the story. Figure 4 displays the acting scene for the script sample mentioned earlier about the dialogue between Spencer and Spencer's mother for *70 Brides for 7 Foreigners*, which the rather dull, essay-typed report turned into a real-life situation.

Figure 4: Acting Scene



2.4.3 Video compilation

For video compilation, a school-employed software technician meticulously examined the entire video recording by using a program called eStream Presto from Xinics, Inc. Presto is an image and voice production tool widely utilized in many e-learning institutions, and is equipped with five tools: composer, producer, encoder, studio, editor, and viewer. Among those, editor was used to cut out errors and redundant or unnecessary sections, and to re-encode the revised recording for synchronization. Animations substituted thorny parts to act and hence ameliorated the story development, and also replaced specific scenes to induce enjoyment for students. Adobe® Photoshop® and Adobe® Illustrator® were used for graphics to create animation characters, and Adobe® Flash® Player for motion. Facial expressions and mouth movements matched characters' mood and language. Composer then assembled lecture contents, video scenes, and animations. Adobe® Premiere® completed the video compilation.

2.5 Uploading

The .wmv video files in either 300k or 1MB, supporting eStream Presto, were uploaded on the University's LMS (Learning Management System). LMS kept track of online attendance by pre-setting the minimum viewing time. For example, if the minimum time is set for 30 minutes, the student must watch the video for at least 30 minutes to mark 100% attendance. If the student has watched it for only 10 minutes, the attendance would show 33%. There is no limit for the number of viewings, but the viewing must be completed by the designated date and time. Otherwise, after the closing time, the viewing is still possible, but attendance does not count and marks as tardiness. To deter a student from turning on the video but not watching it, a button asking 'Continue' pops up every 5 minutes and must be clicked to resume the video. This is a function inherent in eStream Presto. When viewing the video on another time, the video starts from where it stopped last time. The condition for viewing through LMS is Pentium 4 or a computer that equips the version of Window Media Player 10.

We planned to alter the video files so that students could have ubiquitous access to the files via mobile phones or portable multimedia players (PMPs). The idea was, however, turned down because of the likelihoods of unauthorized distribution of the video files through peer-to-peer (P2P) websites and of commercial purposes by some unknown people. Also, any trivial image or sound used in the video could be subject to the infringement of some sort of copyright. Use of the Digital Rights Management (DRM) was brought up, but the consensus delimited the delivery of online materials to be only via computers.

III. Implementation of Online Materials

To implement the online material into to the working curriculum, a collaborative effort had to be kept in harmony among the staff, instructors, and students for all the 27 sections for *ERW* to be processed at the same pace. Moreover, all instructors and affiliated staff had to have a faith in blended learning in language education in order for its use to be successfully adopted by students (Coryell & Chlup 2007; Sung 2016).

3.1 Staff' s Role

The staff had roles of uploading the online material, responding to inquiries from instructors, contacting the technician, and monitoring students' chats and gossips on the student website. The reason that the staff uploaded the weekly online material in a lump was because we wanted to ensure all the uploading to be carried out at the same time. However, the viewing dates were set differently. In other words, an online material was usually uploaded around 10 days prior to the intended offline lecture date for each section, but the program was set up in the way that the online material automatically started to be available for viewing just after an offline lecture and ended just before the next offline lecture; the designated period for viewing the online material was, therefore, one week. Hence, the homogeneity for providing the online lecture could be more or less sustained for all sections throughout the entire 16-week semester.

The staff was in charge of responding to inquiries from instructors. For any inquiries or technical problems, students contacted their instructors, and the instructors in turn contacted the staff. The agenda on online materials concerned from

printing out the content questions and vocabulary and testing patterns for quizzes and examinations to frozen screens while viewing the online materials. We later produced an online material for frequently-asked questions and examinations that was available at all times. Particular, urgent notices were promptly flagged on the front of each student's website. Lectures also called for the technical support when they had troubleshooting for viewing the online material during the offline lecture. Technicians' assistance was needed for hardware or software-oriented sophisticated problems that the staff could not handle.

The staff also on a regular basis monitored student postings on the online bulletin board about their comments on the *ERW* course, because Korean students tend not to be very vocal to their teachers and to the class and it was likely that they would cast off complaints on the anonymous school website. Since the course was a requisite for all freshmen and the University administrators had been keenly putting their eyes and ears on the outcome, we paid sharp attention to any sorts of critical derogatory remarks or dissatisfactions by students, and otherwise would have proposed immediate clarifications, in case those had happened. Meetings on blended *ERW* were held at least once a week to discuss the recent incidents and troubles.

3.2 Instructor' s Role

The instructor's roles in managing the online lecture were quite different from managing the classroom lecture, as also reported in Murday, Ushida, and Chenoweth (2008). Since the classroom lecture intended to discuss the video content and related materials in the book, it was essential for students to watch the video beforehand, for which the instructor had to persistently talk students in the classroom into watching it, and also by email or SMS (short message service).

In the offline (i.e. classroom) lecture, there were various ways the instructor encouraged students to watch the video and to do the weekly assignment for content questions and vocabulary definitions. Instructors always informed students that the next videos had greater worth watching them than any previous ones, and the content questions and vocabulary were so crucial that they could appear on the future examinations. After a few weeks the course started, some instructors actually displayed to the class and browsed through the online attendance roster screen via the projector and literally compared those who were marked 100% for perfect attendance with those who were not. Although some students might have felt uncomfortable by the instructor's openly revealing the roster screen, more imperative was to alert students that the instructor had been vigilantly monitoring whether students had been watching the videos or not, and the consequence could be automatically calculated by the computer and reflected to the student evaluation criteria.

To further make students watch the video before the offline class, after gathering the written assignment the instructor selected in random some students to recapitulate the video content in sequence for some minutes. Since the purpose was to ensure students to know the class topic of the day in order that the offline class could converse about the video content and related vocabulary and grammar, students could utter in Korean for recapitulation. In essence, most freshmen were not proficient enough to say something in English. When a student could not describe his part in the video even in Korean – meaning that he had not watched it, the instructor rather calmly took over the flow of the recapitulation, and chose the next student to continue the story. The instructor did not point out the student's lack of preparation, but merely encouraged him to watch the video from the next time, because the student himself already felt shame to other classmates. Once the recapitulation was

over with the instructor's supplemental description, the schema for discussion was available to all students and the instructor could then begin the lecture.

After the lecture, the next video became available for students to watch it until the start of the next offline lecture (i.e. for about six days) to be counted as perfect attendance. During the period, the instructor sent out an email about general information as well as a courteous urge to watch the video and to do the weekly assignment. The instructor or the staff delivered a reminding prompt by group SMS for the nearing deadline to watch the video, and hence, online attendance would not be tallied thereafter.

3.3 Student' s Role

Students found their roles in online lectures (i.e. watching the videos and doing weekly assignments) to be rather simple and trouble-free. After an offline lecture, every student's LMS account was notified of the newly-uploaded video for the next session along with relevant learning materials, which they had to fully undertake before the next offline lecture. Students were aware that perfect attendance implied the entire watching of the video and that the resume-button popped out every five minutes, so their presence was literally required at all times until the video finished. Content questions about the online material had to be answered, while watching the video, as shown below for *70 Brides for 7 Foreigners* (from Figure 2).

- Why is Spencer surprised at the newspaper article?
- How does Spencer's mom think of international marriages?
- Why does Spencer meet his friend Jinny?
- Why do some men from other countries want to marry Russian women?

- What problems are there with international marriages?

Some questions could be answered without watching the video, but simply by reading the textbook, while some questions arose only out of the video, not from the textbook. Also required was to write the definitions for a set of vocabulary, shown in Figure 3. Students could download the video script to comprehend parts of the video they could not understand. An objection among the Committee members surfaced at the implementation stage against providing students with rather much information about the video content such as the script, but it was declined because the purpose of the online lecture intended to help students have ideas of the online materials dealt in the coming offline lecture. For technical problems or any concerns, students always contacted their instructors who in turn consulted the staff or the course director.

IV. Summary

This paper reports the implementation of blended learning into a required liberal English course called English Reading and Writing (hence ERW) at a university in Korea. Beforehand, a complete 16-week-offline English course composed of 27 sections was held twice a week for 75 minutes per session. However, after having examined blended-learning language courses in Carnegie Mellon University, Universidad de Concepción, University of Virginia, University of California at Davis, and University of Tennessee, the course Committee decided for *ERW* to offer one of two sessions on-line and maintain the other off-line. The purpose of online materials was for students to preview and have a glimpse of the content. For that, lecturers

dramatized the stories in textbook and changed them to a series of plays. A total of about 55 performers took part in the production of the set of 14 video contents; among those, the number of native instructors was 35 and the number of Korean instructors was 20. They used only English in the video contents. A total of 28 hosts joined, all of whom were Korean instructors, and the medium of instruction for hosts was English and Korean mixed. For video compilation, a school-employed software technician meticulously examined the entire video recording by using a program called eStream Presto from Xinics, Inc. The wmv video files in either 300k or 1MB, supporting eStream Presto, were uploaded on the University's LMS (Learning Management System). LMS kept track of online attendance by pre-setting the minimum viewing time. For example, if the minimum time is set for 30 minutes, the student must watch the video for at least 30 minutes to mark 100% attendance. If the student has watched it for only 10 minutes, the attendance would show 33%. The staff had roles of uploading the online material, responding to inquiries from instructors, contacting the technician, and monitoring students' chats and gossips on the student website. The instructor's roles in managing the online lecture were quite different from managing the classroom lecture, as also reported in Murday, Ushida, and Chenoweth (2008). Students found their roles in online lectures (i.e. watching the videos and doing weekly assignments) to be rather simple and trouble-free (Oh & Lee 2016). After an offline lecture, every student's LMS account was notified of the newly-uploaded video for the next session along with relevant learning materials, which they had to fully undertake before the next offline lecture.

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국문초록

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이 논문은 한국 소재 4년제 대학 교양영어 필수 교과목에 블렌디드 학습(blended learning) 도입 과정 및 운영을 추적한다. 이 교과목은 16주 교실수업으로 27개 분반으로 이루졌고 강의는 주 2회 75분으로 구성되었다. 교과과정 운영위원회는 주 2회 학습으로 유지하되 1회는 온라인(online lecture) 다른 1회는 오프라인으로 운영하기로 결정하였다. 이 교과목 담당 교강사들은 교재의 내용을 여러 편으로 이루어진 드라마로 변환하기로 하였다. 총 55명이 참가하여 14세트의 동영상상을 제작하여 온라인에서 매주 보여주기로 했다. 모든 동영상 편집은 1명의 소프트웨어 전문가가 Ximics 회사 제품인 eStream Presto라는 프로그램으로 작업하였다. 동영상 파일은 eStream Prest가 제공하는 .wmv로 변환하며 300k 혹은 1MB 용량으로 저장하여 대학 학습운영시스템(LMS)에 탑재하였다. 기술자는 온라인 동영상을 탑재, 교강사와 운영 관련 질의응답을 담당하였고 또한 교내 홈페이지에서 본 강의 관련 학생들이 주고받는 내용이나 가십을 모니터링 하였다. 교강사가 탑재된 동영상을 관리하며 온라인 수업을 진행하는 것은 교실수업을 운영하는 것과 매우 다르다고 보고됐으며 이 결과는 Murday, Ushida 와 Chenoweth (2008) 그리고 Oh와 Lee (2016)의 보고와도 일치한다. 학생들은 온라인을 통해 강의를 보게 되는 것이 쉬운 편이며 다른 문제는 없다고 보고됐다.

주제어: 블렌디드 학습, 온라인 강의, 오프라인 강의, 외국어학습, 컴퓨터보조 언어교육

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