

IANLP International Association for NLP

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Cyber Café, July 17, 2026

Intro Topic

by
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Some Impressions from
the Meeting



Challenges and Experiences of Running NLP Training in Hybrid Form

(Online and On-Site Simultaneously)

Hybrid training promises the best of both worlds—combining the richness of in-person learning with the accessibility of online participation. At the same time, it presents unique challenges for trainers, assistants, and participants.

In this Cyber Café, experienced trainers **Richard Bolstad** and **Julia Kurusheva** from New Zealand have shared their extensive experience in delivering hybrid NLP trainings across different countries and cultures. They offered valuable insights into practical challenges such as technology setup, group dynamics, participant engagement, adapting experiential exercises, and maintaining training quality for both online and in-room participants.



Running Hybrid NLP Training

Why?

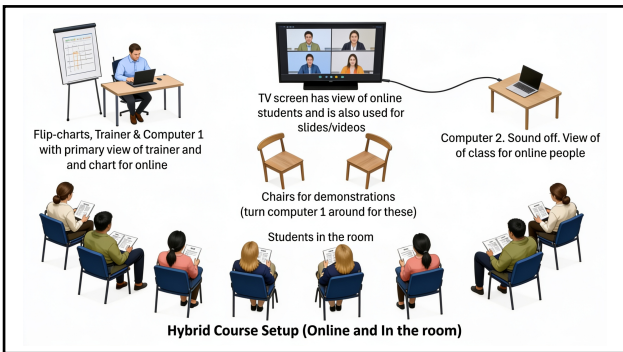
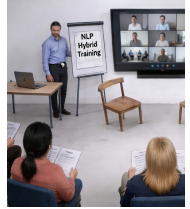
- Demand from two sets of students with separate needs.

How?

- Needs a large TV screen so people in room can see online people.
- Needs two computers both connected to Zoom.
- Second computer must have its sound turned off to avoid feedback.

Dealing with Unique Challenges

- Trainer repeats what is said for audio clarity.
- Physical experiences leave online people out so give them a focus.
- Online people work mainly with online people so two groups.
- Also requires two sets of assistants.
- Preframe different certificates. Group photos require planning.
- Hourly 10 min. breaks for online mean careful planning in the room.
- Needing to be seen online plus in the room limits trainer movement.



Hybrid Training New Zealand 2024



Hybrid Training Japan 2025

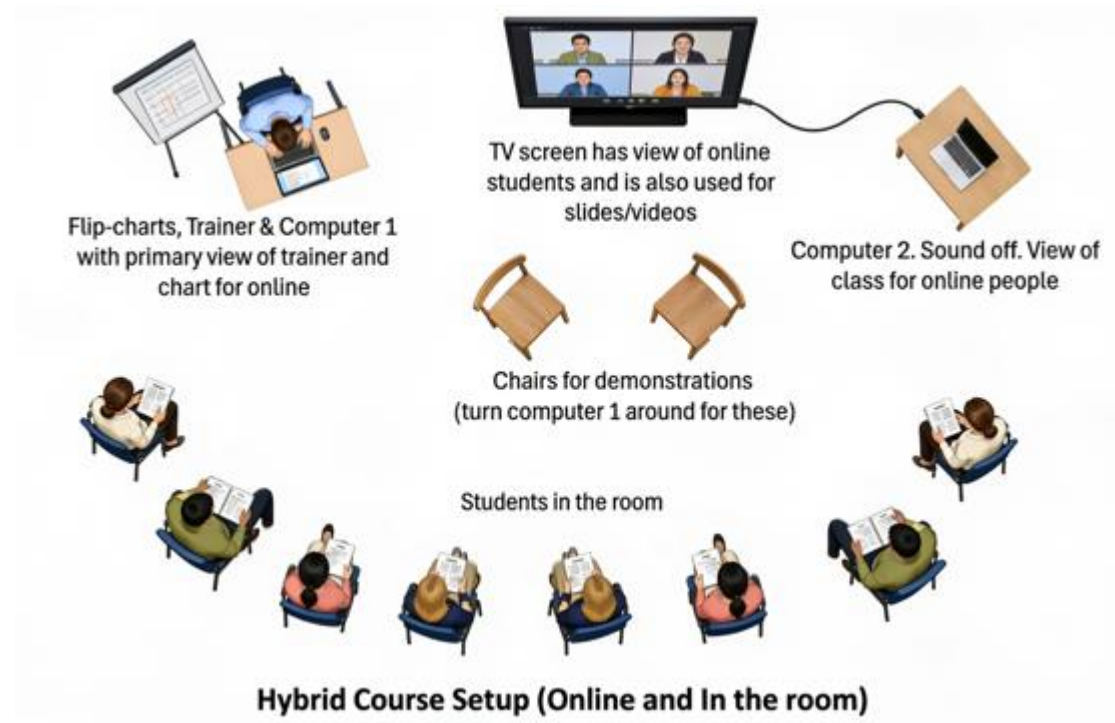


Hybrid Training Poland 2024



Challenges of running Hybrid Training sessions

Richard Bolstad, July 2026



Of course, the motivation is to get the best of both worlds: to make the in-the-room experience available for those who want it (often who insist on it, saying it's the only "real" training) and the online experience available for those who say they cannot travel to the venue (In New Zealand, for example, we have just 5 million people spread across a very long thin set of islands - 2000 kms long - and we are 2000 kms from the nearest country).



It is the online people (and the trainer, of course!) who find the hybrid experience most challenging, and one person chose to leave our training rather than cope with it (a person who of course had other challenges, but might have been supported in a fully online course).

What are these challenges?

- Whenever someone speaks in the room, the trainer needs to repeat what they said to make sure it can be heard online.
- The whole point of having some experiences in the room is that we can do very physical things there, such as a board break experience, and yet those very experiences actually leave the people online feeling more isolated and left out.
- The group really becomes split into two smaller groups (people on line generally are easier working with people online, and people in the room of course want to work with people in the room).
- That split is complex for assisting as well - I need to plan how many assistants we have online, how many in the room.
- During group exercises with participants in the room, online participants can be assigned observation tasks on which they are asked to provide feedback after the group exercise is completed.
- We have learned how to set up the technology (it requires two computers and a large television screen, on which the online people can be seen in the room), but challenges with setting up this system take an enormous effort also, and that adds to delays.
- People get different certificates, which doesn't feel very nice in some cases (online certificates).
- How do you design your certification ceremony?
- Our experience shows that punctuality is apparently handled differently. As soon as participants are back on screen (online), they are present and attentive. The people in the room see "the whole picture" and may feel like they're back in the loop, but they are not visible to the online participants.
- The breaks need to be hourly for the people online, which means ten minute breaks, and that is tough on the people in the room who hardly have time to get to toilets and get a drink. Not to mention of mingling and striking up conversations with one another.
- The trainer still needs to be aware of how they are able to be seen online for every moment, including when doing demonstrations, which severely limits trainer movement. Unless you have a camera that is following the trainer. Sound during demonstrations is different (quieter) compared to when the trainer is teaching directly in front of a screen.



Technical details: One of our computers is set right in front of me as a trainer, one faces the group from the front, so the people online can see the group (though of course on their screen the “group” is now one small speaker view). So as a trainer I have a computer with camera looking at me from right in front of me: that needs some adjusting so that I can be seen clearly in the group in the room as well as online. The TV screen also faces the group. The sound on the second computer/camera (the one filming the group, for online people to see) needs to be turned off so you don’t get feedback from two sources on zoom. People in the room need to remember that when they talk to the people online, they are probably facing the TV screen (where they can see the people) but the people online can only see them from wherever the camera (computer) is that views the room, and can only hear them via the computer/camera/microphone that is facing the trainer (i.e. not very well).

.... In general, it can be done, and it is hard work. All that said, it is still true that we, and our organisers in Poland and Japan, all choose to run hybrid trainings because the demand is so strong from both sets of people. It works for these three groups of organisers, and it satisfies a larger group of students. Since it is recorded on Zoom, to some extent the video is available for review after.

