What Worked with a Large Moodle Application

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Abstract
The English Language section of the Hokusei Gakuen University Foreign Languages Division made a commitment to provide salient online learning materials to complement the first-year English core curriculum. These materials matched the textbooks used and were written into the syllabus thus giving the learners 30% authorship over their final grade. Moodle was the Learning Management System (LMS) used.

Research Design
Three different levels of the popular textbook series, “World Link” published by Cengage, were applied to a population of nearly six hundred students.

All materials made available online were transferred from print and other media into moodle with the full knowledge and permission of the publisher. The syllabus was complex in that students had to do online Preparation Exercises prior to classroom instruction and then Review Units upon chapter completion within a liberal, but set time frame. While this

Key words: Moodle, E-learning, ESL/EFL
is not a flipped classroom per se, it does, however, reward the student who takes the initiative to prepare for lessons and reinforce learned material.

Syllabus Plan for English 1 & 2
Unit 1 (授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Unit 2 (準備学習 Preparation・授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Mid-term 1 (中間テスト1 Mid-term 1)
Unit 3 (準備学習 Preparation・授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Unit 4 (準備学習 Preparation・授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Mid-term 2 (中間テスト2 Mid-term 2)
Unit 5 (準備学習 Preparation・授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Unit 6 (準備学習 Preparation・授業 In-class・復習 Review)
Mid-term 3 (中間テスト3 Mid-term 3)
Final Exam (統一試験 United Final Exam)

Purpose
The purpose is to have the students "touch English" outside of class at least twice a week. Language acquisition happens with the frequent and periodic recirculation of already familiar information (Krashen: 1985). Showing up for class, cold, each time will not work to this end. All learners have had at least six years of English language study prior and therefore are not considered first time learners.

The Plan
The units are divided into two parts, lessons A and B. Lesson A is typically covered by a native speaker of English, since Lesson A tends to emphasis speaking and listening skills, while Lesson B is covered by a Japanese national with such material emphasizing reading and writing. Of course, there is overlap, but this reflects the current plan. Students have Preparation Quizzes for Lessons A and B as well as Review Quizzes for Lessons A and B. The following screenshots give an idea of the type of work students are expected to do.

Lesson A Preparation, material from the accompanying World Link Workbook is incorporated. This includes the sections called Vocabulary Workout, Conversation Workout (useful phrases and collocations), and Language Workout (grammar). Additionally, at the request of the publisher, Cengage, material from the World Link Video Course Book was made available.
Lesson B Preparation, original material together with the Lesson B material from the accompanying World Link Workbook is incorporated. This includes the sections called Vocabulary and Language Workout, Language Link (grammar page from the textbook), Language Workout (grammar). Additionally, original material was used: Word Scramble, Listening, and Reading exercises.

Lesson A Review - material from the World Link Video Course Book and examples from the World Link Examviewview Collection.
Lesson B Review – material from the World Link Workbook and examples from the World Link Examview Collection.

First Semester feedback

Students were provided a substantial amount of out of class work to do on moodle according to a time schedule. The amount of time it took the students to accomplish the tasks was self reported as excessive. Many openly complained that the amount was too much or that it was time consuming. This was based upon verbal feedback from students to teachers in class. It was decided to reduce the amount starting from the Second Semester and then to survey the students at the end of the semester.
Research Results Second Semester

Students were surveyed after the Second Semester with the majority liking the reduced moodle plan. The salient question here asked if moodle was helpful in giving students a better command of English.

Moodle was helpful in giving me a better command of English. Two thirds – 67.12% – found it to be helpful.

Research Results

Many formed new habits of studying English both in and out of class.

Negative, yet constructive comments, proved helpful for further curricular revision and tailoring to local needs.
Pre and Post Testing

Results indicate increased performance on the second sitting of the placement test. The Pre and Post tests were identical and were provided by the publisher, Cengage Learning. Tests originated on the Examview CD-rom, transferred to moodle, and administered online. The Pre test was administered in April, 2013 during new student orientation while the Post test was given during the Fall Semester final exam week. A Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to interpret the data.

Discussion: moodle, did it matter?

To determine if moodle mattered one can look to test null hypothesis that no significant differences occurred between Pre- and Post-testing with respect to the 2013 Placement Test used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Link 3</th>
<th>X=Department Y=Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Com - Pre</td>
<td>C: Law - Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Com - Post</td>
<td>D: Law - Post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA: Results
The results of a ANOVA statistical test performed at 23:41 on 2-JUN-2014
Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | d.f. | Mean | F |
---|---|---|---|---|
between | 4264 | 7 | 609.2 | 9.445 |
error | 1.7285E+04 | 268 | 64.50 |
total | 2.1550E+04 | 275 |

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is less than .0001.
In all cases the null hypothesis was dismissed. Significant differences in the form of gains occurred in all three groups.

Is the gain due to moodle? Not exclusively, nor can it be dismissed. What can be said that the moodle adjunct was successful in getting students to come into contact with English outside of class when they otherwise would have not done anything.

The more frequent recirculation of already familiar linguistic information is what leads to permanent and lasting acquisition in the Target Language. Moodle did matter.
Concluding Thoughts

Peter Skehan once asked the question, “who learns how much of which language under what conditions?” (Skehan: 1989) The human mind is a problem solving organ that can and does restructure itself over time. Stephen Krashen would agree that effective and lasting language acquisition happens through the frequent recirculation of already familiar information (Ibid). The students are better off than before. They could recirculate already familiar information more frequently, thus aiding to a more permanent acquisition of English.

Sources

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