

What Worked with a Large Moodle Application

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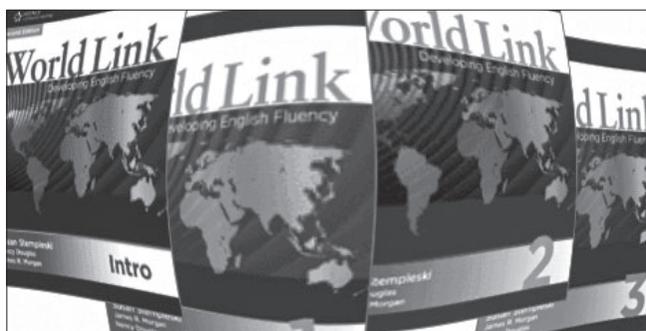
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[Abstract]

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 A Review – Partial example

While You Watch



Watch the video. Write the correct words to complete the dialogue.

SUN-HEE: Where is it?
 TARA: It's on _____ . Let's ask him. Excuse us, we're looking for _____ called Giovanni's. Do you know where it is?
 MAN: Giovanni's. I know the name. What _____ is it on?
 SUN-HEE: It's on _____ West Houston Street.
 MAN: Oh, yeah, yeah, Giovanni's. It's on West Houston _____ and _____ Street, right?
 TARA: That's right! That was in the movie! So, can you give us _____ down this street, and you turn _____ at the green on the corner.
 MAN: Yeah, sure. It's pretty close. You walk _____
 SUN-HEE: OK.
 MAN: There you walk one more block, and there's a big _____ called Lip Case. It's on the _____ of West Houston and MacDougal.



Watch the video again. Match the beginning of each sentence to its ending.

Sun-hee and Tara _____ ?
 Claudia wants Sun-hee and Tara _____ ?
 The restaurant is on West Houston Street _____ ?
 Claudia tells Tara and Sun-hee _____ ?
 Sun-hee and Tara ask a man _____ ?
 Finally, they find the restaurant across _____ ?

After You Watch

Study the dialogues from the video in the box below.

Useful Expressions

Do you know where it is?
 Excuse us.
 I know the name.
 It's on West Houston.
 What street is it on?



Lesson A Review – Partial example



Read the map. Choose the correct preposition.

The movie theater is _____ the corner of Bloor Street West and Albany Avenue.

Select one:

- a. in
- b. from
- c. on
- d. across

Lesson B Review – material from the World Link Workbook and examples from the World Link Examview Collection.

Partial example

Reading and Writing

Read the newspaper articles and select the correct headline for each article. Two headlines are extra.

The Dangerous Dinner	They Couldn't Communicate	Beautiful Girls
Silent Beauties	Robbery at the Store	A Very Busy Thief

News Daily, Jun 24



_____ ?

A bank robbery in Virginia, USA, was stopped when the robber and the bank teller couldn't reach an agreement. The robber pushed a holiday note under the window, but the teller looked at it, said, "I can't read this," and gave it back. The robber reached the note through a second time. The teller crumpled the note up and threw it at the robber. He picked it up and walked out of the bank.



_____ ?

A professional ice hockey player will miss the rest of this season's games because he injured himself. National Hockey League goalie Jean-Louis Blanchard went on the injured list after he fell and seriously hurt his back. He was walking out of a restaurant in Ottawa, Canada, when he slipped on some ice.



_____ ?

The first international camel beauty contest was held last week in Alxa, in western China. More than 100 dressed-up camels entered the contest. The judges examined them for shiny hair, tall humps, and beautiful costumes. Unlike human beauty contests, though, there were no interviews with the contestants.

Partial example

Complete the sentence with the correct form of the verb in the parentheses. Use the present perfect or simple past tense.

They (deliver) _____ the paper at 6:30 this morning.

Select the word or phrase closest in meaning.

newspapers, magazines, radio, TV

Select one:

- a. entertainment news
- b. cable news
- c. media
- d. word of mouth

Select the word or phrase closest in meaning.

word of mouth

Select one:

- a. hear it on the radio
- b. see something online
- c. read it in the newspaper
- d. a person tells you

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.

Question	World Link 1	World Link 2	World Link 3
Helpful	53 (35.57%)	47 (23.50%)	25 (19.23%)
Somewhat	56 (37.58%)	91 (45.50%)	52 (40.00%)
Not really	24 (16.11%)	37 (18.50%)	31 (23.85%)
Not at all	14 (9.40%)	22 (11.00%)	20 (15.38%)
Participants	149	200	130
Like	109 (73.15%)	138 (69.00%)	77 (59.23%)
Dislike	48 (25.51%)	59 (29.50%)	51 (39.23%)

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.

World Link Book 1	<i>I think that it was easy to use. It was fun. I think moodle was a good thing for review and preparation of lessons.</i>
World Link Book 2	<i>It was easy to study very much. Thank you all! It was a good lesson.</i>
World Link Book 3	<i>I think that I made good habits to study English. I want to continue next year.</i>

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

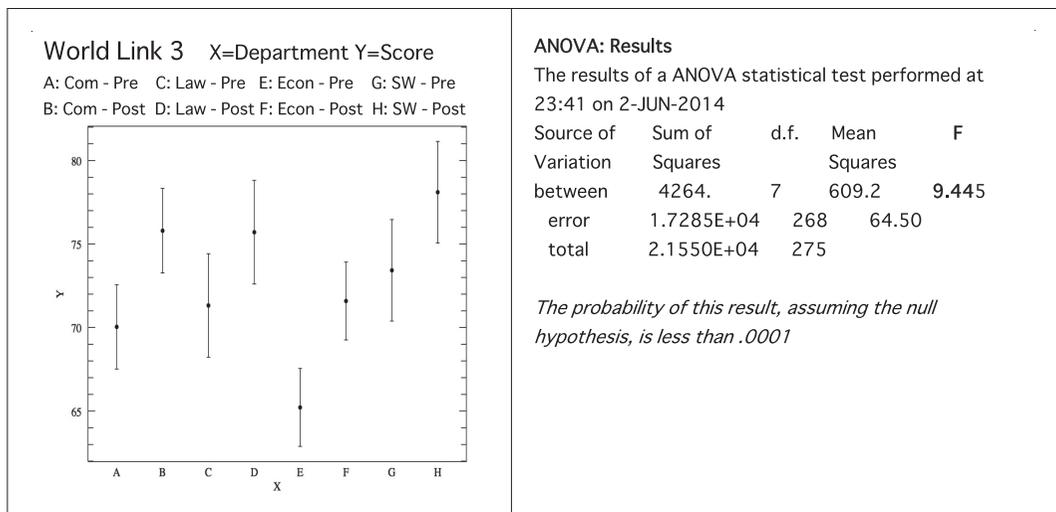
World Link Book 1	<i>I want to eliminate the deadlines if possible. Felt burden is large as compared with other languages, I mean moodle and homework paper.</i>
World Link Book 2	<i>There was a point where the answer is moodle or clearly wrong. I want you to reduce the amount more.</i>
World Link Book 3	<i>There is too much difference in the degree of difficulty of Lessons A and B. There are times when you do not know what to write to answer a question that's all English. It appears wrong after writing the correct answer.</i>

Pre and Post Testing

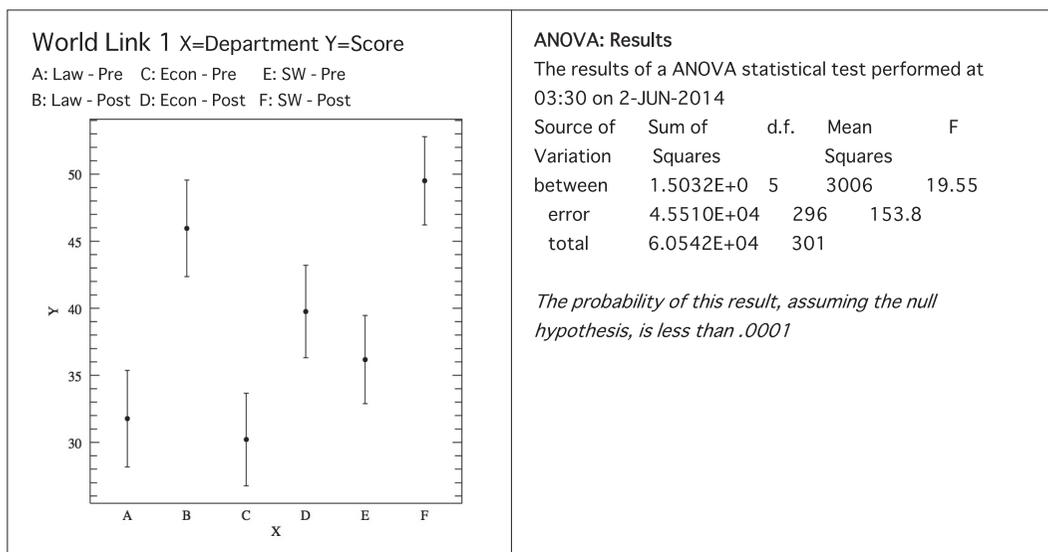
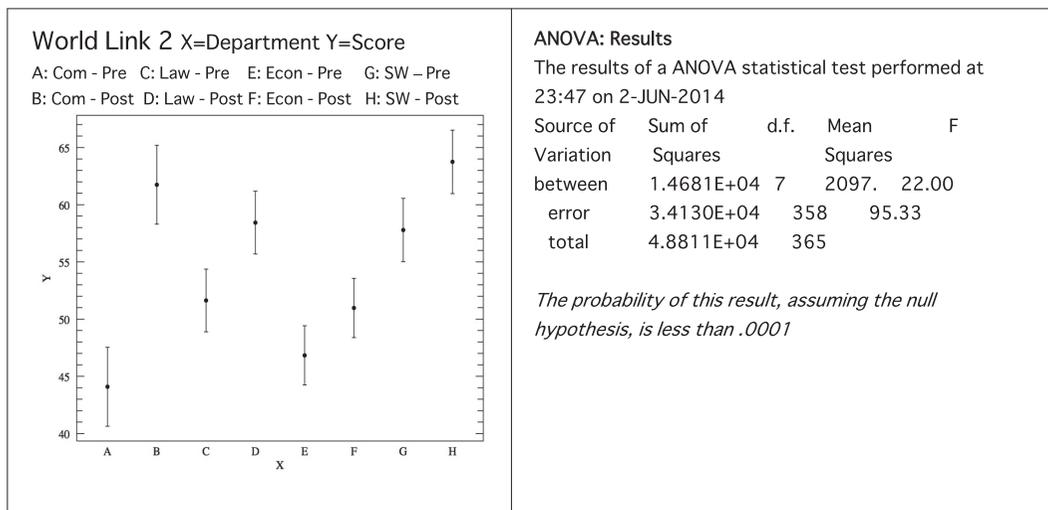
Results indicate increased performance on the second sitting of the placement test. The Pre and Post tests were identical and were provided by the publisher, Cengage Learning. Tests originated on the Examview CD-rom, transferred to moodle, and administered online. The Pre test was administered in April, 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.



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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.

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