

Students' responses to a flipped classroom model in a first-year university English class

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反転授業に対する大学1年の学生の反応

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Abstract

A flipped classroom is one innovative way to break out from the traditional learning environment. It has been gaining the attention of educators who are struggling to keep their classrooms active and engaging. Although its theory makes sense to spend time on engaging activities during the class instead of passive lecturing, many teachers fear the lack of the students' preparation, resulting in being forced to have both lecture and activities in class within the limited time. In addition, although teachers believe that students would enjoy active participation in the class, there is a possibility that the students might prefer the traditional lecture style classroom after all. In this study, the responses to a flipped classroom model was surveyed with a questionnaire, and the model of the flipped classroom was analyzed from the students' points of view. As a consequence, although many students preferred the flipped classroom model, they encountered difficulties with the pre-writing quiz that they were supposed to take as the preparation for the class. Therefore, the responses suggest that careful preparation for the pre-class assignment is an essential part of a successful flipped classroom implementation.

Keywords: flipped classroom, Moodle quiz, student survey, writing

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Introduction

A flipped classroom is a pedagogical approach which moves the instruction normally given in the class in the lecture-style to individual learning at home, and during the class time teachers apply the learnt materials normally done as an assignment at home (Bergmann & Sams 2012). With this approach, the students become more responsible for their learning and participate in class discussion (Halili & Zainuddin 2015). Recently, the flipped classroom model has been gaining attention from various educational fields. Uzunboylu and Karagozlu (2015) reported cases of implementation in the actual classroom. English as a second language or a foreign language are not exceptions to its use (Li 2018).

First-year students in Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine are required to take English classes. One of the required classes is Grammar and Composition, English I in spring term and English II in fall term. In this paper, the students in English II: Grammar and Composition class are using the same series textbook as spring term to study and practice various academic writing styles. Throughout the year, students gradually learn how to write from a basic short paragraph to more sophisticated multiple paragraphs. Normally, they have lectures about the organization of writing including some grammatical points; they also practice teacher-instructed sentence exercises during class. Then after class, they write a paragraph following the instruction of the writing requirement. Given a few days to complete, they submit their writing assignment before the next class through Moodle.

Although the students use different textbooks from the spring to fall term, the series is the same, and the instructional design is the same. Therefore, by fall term, the students are very familiar with the class routine. They have developed their expectation of their class and assignments. During the term, the students were given regular lecture style classes and

writing assignments for eight weeks as described above.

Methods

Google Forms was used to make survey questions which were given to 110 first-year students in mid-January 2019 to evaluate the flipped classroom model. Eighty-seven students completed the survey. Prior to the survey, they had eight once-a-week, conventional in-class lectures and at-home writing assignments. Then, a flipped classroom, at-home pre-writing quiz and in-class writing class model was conducted four times, also once a week. In order to ease the stress of answering the survey questions, the questions were kept few at 5 questions, written in both Japanese and English.

The students were asked when they took the pre-writing quiz and what they thought about the quiz, and whether they preferred writing at home or in class. They were also given space to give comments freely.

Result and Discussion

The first question asked the time when the students took the pre-writing quiz. The teacher encouraged them to take the quiz one day prior to the class so that it would help them write the composition in class. In order to reward those who took the quiz before the class, the quiz could be taken as many times as they wanted, in case they made mistakes. However, if a student took the quiz on the day of class or later, then he or she could take it only once. Only 14 students (16.1%) took it on class day (Fig. 1), which prevented the opportunity to retry the quiz if they had wrong answers. Forty-one students (47.1%) answered that they took it the day before. Overall, 83.9% of the students took the quiz prior to the class, therefore, most students received the flipped classroom model (Fig. 1).

The students were asked what they thought about the quizzes and if they were helpful for their writing composition. They were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = very easy to 5 = very difficult. Over 70% of students answered

The students responses to a flipped classroom

that they were difficult (4) or very difficult (5), although they had been practicing similar exercises to compose sentences prior to these classes (Fig. 2). The pre-writing quizzes were intended to help students prepare their composition; however, the students did not find them particularly helpful towards their writing (Fig 3). Only 25 (28.7%) found them either helpful or very helpful; thirty-four (39%) thought the quizzes were not helpful.

From their comments, many students encounter some trouble with the quizzes (Fig. 4). One of the reasons was due to computer grading. In Moodle, the answers for the quiz

can be set to be automatically graded; however, there may be multiple correct answers for a single question. Moodle allows multiple answers settings, but only grades if the answers are exactly the same as the set ones. Therefore, some answers would be graded as wrong answers when they are actually correct. The teacher explained the problems and possibilities of these occurrences and assured students that the quizzes would be graded correctly when the teacher manually graded them at a later time. Despite the assurances, there was little alleviation of the students' frustrations.

When did you take the quiz for the class? 授業前にやるクイズをいつしましたか？

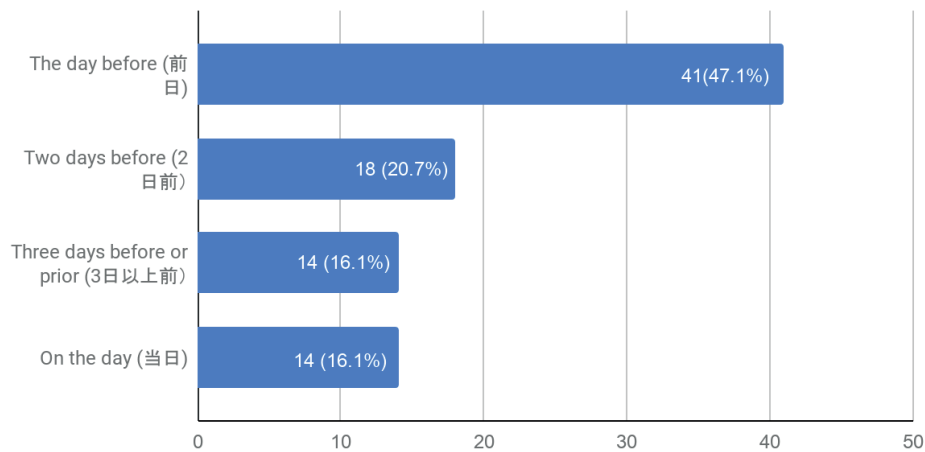


Fig. 1 Timing of the quiz

How did you find the quiz? クイズについてどう思いましたか？

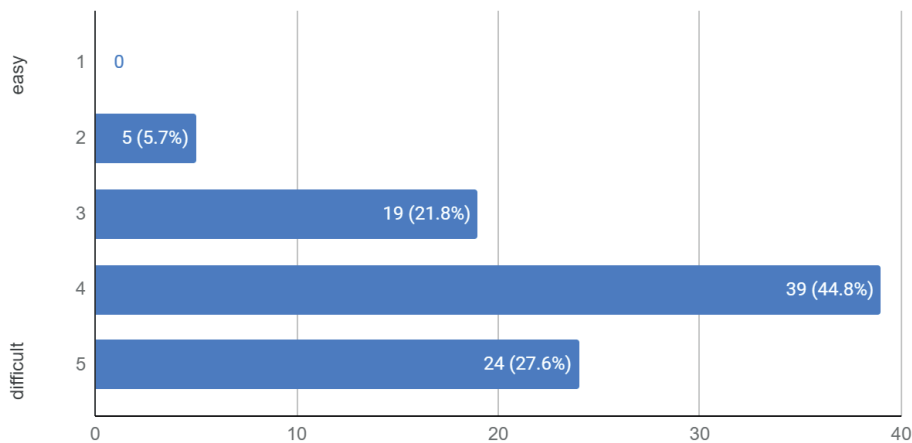


Fig. 2 Difficulty

Was the quiz helpful for you to write the composition later?
 課題作文を書くのにクイズをやるのは役立ちましたか？

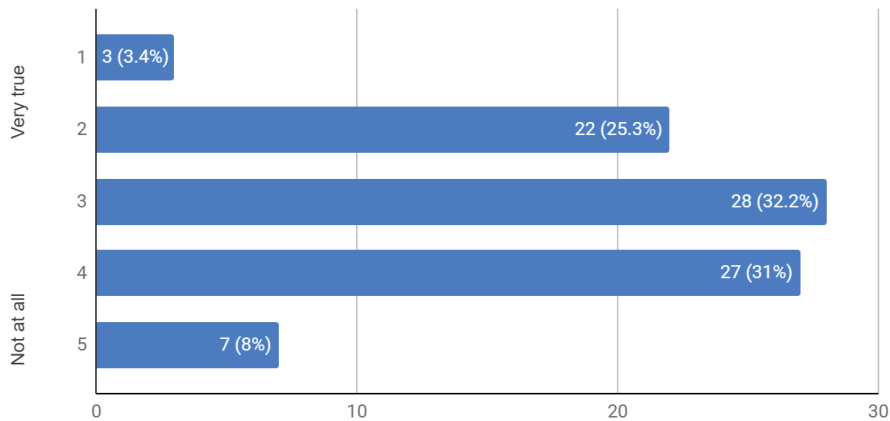


Fig. 3 Helpful

Comment, complaint, or suggestion about the class. 授業についてのコメント、不満、提案。

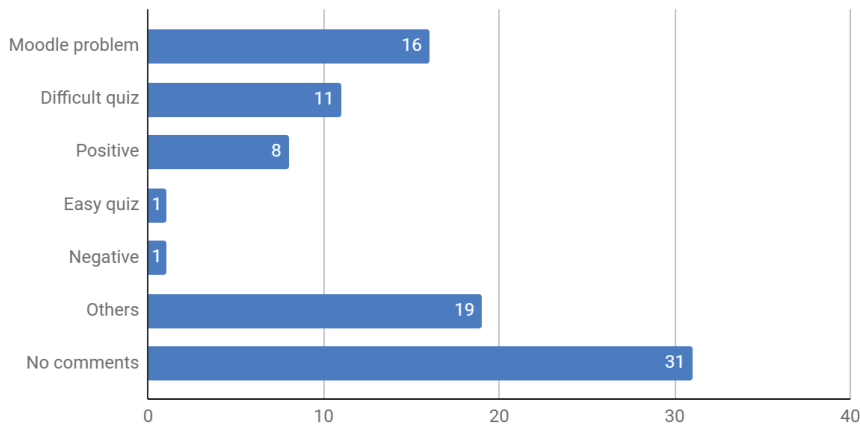


Fig. 4 Comments

Conclusions

Although the students expressed their complaints and annoyances toward the pre-writing quiz, the overall evaluation of the flipped classroom was positive. Of course, this is not to suggest the entire class format should be changed. However, a flipped classroom model can be conducted from time to time depending on the class materials or the time of the term to break up the routine of the class style.

The biggest challenge in the flipped classroom model is the pre-class activities (Baig 2019; Bergmann & Sams 2012).

Looking at the comments in the survey, the pre-writing quiz can be improved in many ways. One of the common barriers in implementing a flipped classroom is the use of computers and internet (Baig 2019; Wang 2017). Lack of free WIFI access sometimes can be blamed for the completion of a pre-class activity (Li 2018). According to Campbell (2019), the students are mostly using mobile devices and not fully aware of their convenient functions for English writing. Therefore, including instruction of effective use of mobile devices in taking the Moodle quiz might be helpful for their pre-class preparation. Having better experiences with the pre-writing

activities would enhance the motivation of the students to engage in preparation for the class, thus, participation in the class. Therefore, further investigation and careful preparation of the pre-writing activity are needed for the implementation of a successful flipped class model.

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摘要

反転授業は、従来通りの教育指導方法を覆す革新的な方法の一つである。授業を躍動的、積極的なものに保つため日々苦勞している教育者たちから注目を集めている。受動的な講義より、活動的なアクティビティを授業中に行うという理にかなった方法だが、多くの教師は、生徒の準備不足から、限られた授業時間の中で講義とアクティビティの両方を余儀なくことを恐れている。また、教師は生徒が積極的に授業に参加することを楽しんでいると信じているが、生徒は従来の講義形式の授業方法を好む可能性もある。本研究では、反転授業モデルへの生徒の反応をアンケート調査で収集し、生徒からの視点で反転授業を分析した。その結果、多くの生徒が反転授業モデルを好んだが、授業準備のためのライティング準備クイズで問題があった。そのため、反転授業モデルを成功させるためには十分な授業準備の課題の作成が重要であることを示唆している。

キーワード：反転授業、ムードルクイズ、学生調査、ライティング