

An Evaluation of “Face-to-Face” Group Activity on Blended-Learning in University Cooperation

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Abstract: At Oita University, lectures were organized for both Oita University students and students from other universities (also called on-demand students) as a part of an investigation into the notion of university cooperation. We hypothesized that the student-focused “face-to-face” lessons would fulfill the blended-learning lessons’ objective of achieving student interaction. In the final lesson, a review of the lessons was completed using a learning portfolio. In this thesis, I will not only report the results and examine the learning effects but will also discuss the review of the learning portfolio.

Keywords: blended-learning, on-demand, group work, university cooperation

Introduction

Many universities in Japan often fill classes by sharing classes with each other. However, universities usually just offer their main classes to other institutions by using on-demand video contents, video-conference or other e-learning systems. These modes of delivery are easy for the university’s staff to share their classes, but some students are not interested in on-demand only classes. They cannot continue their course as they lose motivation. We know the importance of online mentors to support students’ learning. So we used mentors in other classes. But mentors alone were not adequate in sustaining students’ motivation.

One way to solve these problems is to use the blended-learning class [1]. Blended-learning incorporates the advantages of the “face-to-face” class with the advantages of e-learning. At Oita University, we examined a class entitled ‘Introduction to Oita’ and allowed other universities to participate in it as an on-demand class. “Face-to-face” lessons were held in the middle of the term. The aim of these classes was to inspire learning through group interaction. The organization of this class was difficult because each theme was different, so the students were not easy to combine some knowledge that they learned by the face-to-face classes. In order to solve this problem, we utilized the learning portfolio. We organized the minute paper as a learning portfolio and supported their combination of the knowledge that they learned at the end of the term.

This research focused on “face-to-face” group work in a blended-learning environment and discussed the effectiveness of the reflection using the learning portfolio.

1. The Objective of the Research

In this research, we examined a teaching module entitled ‘Introduction to Oita’ which was developed at Oita University as a common subject throughout all faculties. The students learn not only about the industry in Oita but also learn about Oita’s culture and history across different themes. Approximately, 90 Oita University students took this particular class while 28 other students registered from other universities and took the lessons online. All students handed in their minute paper where they wrote about their thoughts, ideas or opinion they got from the classes [2].

The on-demand students took advantage of a ‘Moodle’, which is an on-line Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS had four main functions; (1) Watching on-demand videos. (2) Submission of minute paper. (3) Questions (4) Interaction through a class BBS. By using ‘Moodle’, the students could ask questions, watch the videos and submit reports.



Figure.1. Screenshot after log in



Figure.2. Watching the video of class

The 10th and 11th classes were “face-to-face” lessons. Both on-demand students and Oita University students were connected to the learning facility. Then, groups were constructed and students worked cooperatively. In this research, we focus on group work and investigate the learning effect by the group work.

2. Research design

2.1 “Face-to-face” class and group work

For the “face-to-face” classes, we divided 69 students into 12 groups consisting of 6 members. In order to facilitate the discussion between Oita University and students from other universities, we gave them some themes. Initially, every group discussed and determined their projects. Subsequently, the students were reorganized into a new group by the jigsaw method [4]. In this group, the students exchanged their original group’s opinions. After the students considered the knowledge that was gained from the opinion exchange in the jigsaw group, they summarized and presented the project in a poster. Additionally, a survey about the group work was completed during the last class.

2.2 Reflection using the learning portfolio

In the final class, we returned the students’ minute papers to the students as a learning portfolio in order to facilitate their combination of the knowledge and review of all classes. For the purpose of these activities, we checked all the minute paper and had all students discuss what they learned through this course. Through an online assignment, they had to answer the question ‘what did you learn in this class?’ The students recognized and picked out the key-words from minute papers and exchanged their opinions with other members.

3. Results of the Questionnaire

There were 69 students who attended the “face-to-face” classes in the middle of the term. In the group work, each group tended to gradually discuss and then present the poster at the end. We analyzed the results of the questionnaire in Table 1. The followings are the four questions that were asked in the questionnaire; (1) Did you enjoy the group work? (2) Were there any new findings in the interaction activity? (3) Do you have the motivation to complete the subsequent lessons? (4) Should we try this type of lesson next year? Each question was evaluated out of 5.

Table1. Questionnaire results

	Students on-demand	Oita-university students
Questions	Average (standard deviation)	Average (standard deviation)
(1)	4.26 (1.01)	4.22 (0.86)
(2)	4.37 (0.98)	4.12 (0.91)
(3)	4.32 (0.98)	4.02 (1.01)
(4)	4.53 (0.82)	4.22 (0.88)

According to the t-test that was done using the figures in Table 1, there was no significant difference between on-demand student and Oita University students. However, according to the result of questionnaires, we obtained positive opinions such as ‘I would like to participate in the lesson again’ or ‘I should have more time to participate in the lesson’. It means that on-demand students took part in the face-to-face lessons willingly. Additionally, many similar opinions such as ‘I acquired much knowledge about Oita’ and ‘I acquired the expression skill’ were written on the reflection forms. We can suggest that the students could combine their knowledge about Oita that they learned through the course.

As a result of course evaluation, we could pass 67 students who participated in face-to-face group work activities. It means 97.1% passed, we could say this ratio is very high.

Conclusions and Future Work

We came to the conclusion that all of the students were inspired to learn through both the “face-to-face” learning and the blended-learning. On-demand students were able to display a positive attitude towards every class and could thoroughly consider every lesson despite learning across different themes. This could be attributed to the effectiveness of the learning portfolio. Our future work will look into the effect of blended learning on student grades.

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