

Moodle: Students' perspectives on forums, glossaries and quizzes

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A socio-cultural approach has been taken in investigating student perspectives of CALL instruction for EFL, specifically the use of three Moodle applications: forums, glossaries, and quizzes. This action research study employed open-ended survey questions and focus groups to examine student perceptions of the Moodle applications with regard to the provision of affordances (van Lier, 2004), noticing (Schmidt, 1995) and comprehensible output (Swain, 1985, 1995). Results indicate that students were largely appreciative of the forum exercises for the learning affordances and for the enabling of meaningful interaction. Quizzes were also popular for the affordances provided. Glossary activities were found to be lacking due to inadequate cognitive processing of vocabulary, insufficient repetition, other preferred methods of study, and ambiguous feeling with regard to the use of hyperlinks. Student participants also made a number of suggestions as to how the Moodle applications can be used more effectively.

Introduction

Web-based technologies such as Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) are now regularly used in second language (L2) classrooms (Winke & Goertler, 2008). Empirical studies have thus far presented a cautiously optimistic if limited view of the effectiveness of such technologies on language learning (Felix, 2008). Though qualitative studies have shown many teachers believe these technologies to be effective (see Schuck & Kearney, 2008), it is important to assess the students' perceptions on their own use of technology. Student beliefs are critical in

that if students feel the technology to be helpful to their learning, then they will have greater motivation to use the technology (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

Literature review

Potential benefits of CALL instruction

Previous research has highlighted a number of benefits to **CALL** instruction. Certainly of great importance is the possibility of enhanced motivation. Warschauer (1996) cited previous studies in finding four motivational aspects of using computers in the classroom: 1. novel approach; 2. individualization; 3. learner control; and 4. “frequent non-judgmental feedback” (p. 2). In Warschauer’s own 1996 study, the author found three main reasons for **CALL** instruction to be motivating for language learners. First, **CALL** enables meaningful interaction with native and non-native speakers worldwide, in a manner often felt to be less threatening than the traditional classroom. Second, there is empowerment in that students have more control over use of the L2. Students can communicate “... with whom they want, when they want, and about whatever topic they want ...” (pp. 9–10). Finally, students believed **CALL** enabled them to learn more quickly, effectively, and independently. “[Students] feel they have more control of their learning and more opportunities to practice English” (p. 9).

Another important benefit of **CALL** instruction is the potential to individualize student instruction. In their study of an L2 Spanish course with an online homework component, Sagarra and Zapata (2008) found that the students particularly “enjoyed having multiple attempts, receiving individualized feedback, being able to work at their own pace, and consolidating class content” (p. 219). The majority of Sagarra and Zapata’s participants also agreed that the online homework assisted in their learning of Spanish and made the course more interesting.

Increased student autonomy is a third potential benefit of **CALL** instruction. In a study of British 11- and 12-year-olds studying French and German, Hanrahan (2005) attributed students’ embrace of online homework to language learning made enjoyable for students, the promotion of learner autonomy, and “a higher level of pupil engagement and a sense of ownership and emancipation” (p. 52). Hanrahan also found that the online homework assignments allowed for reduced teacher-centeredness and the co-construction of knowledge in comparing one’s own output with others, and modifying subsequent output accordingly.

Further advantages of **CALL** cited by researchers include course organizational benefits (de Almeida Soares, 2008; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008), assistance in better L2 interaction (de Almeida Soares, 2008; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Warschauer, 1996), and increased possibilities for repetition and noticing (Chapelle, 2007; Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008). The potential benefits of **CALL** instruction are summarized in Table 1.

Much of the existing research on student perspectives of **CALL** instruction has either analyzed data from a Likert scale instrument (Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Warschauer, 1996), from a single open-ended question (Hanrahan, 2005), or from blog postings (de Almeida Soares, 2008). None of the literature reviewed here has taken a systematic approach to analyzing open-ended data from the perspective of students.

Table 1: Potential benefits of CALL instruction

Organizational benefits
1. can (at least partially) free teachers from large amounts of mundane marking (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
2. can provide enhanced course organization for students and teachers (de Almeida Soares, 2008)
Motivational benefits
3. can provide increased motivation due to meaningful communication, learner empowerment, and effective learning (Warschauer, 1996)
Benefits in student autonomy
4. gives students the flexibility to work independently (Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, Warschauer, 1996)
5. provides students with the freedom to work at their own pace (Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
6. can ideally give students greater control over their own learning (Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
7. reduces teacher-centeredness (Hanrahan, 2005)
Benefits in repetition and noticing
8. can allow for "instant access to error feedback, which can promote language acquisition" (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, p. 209).
9. can allow for multiple attempts (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
10. encourages negotiation of meaning (Hanrahan, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
11. can make language salient on the screen (Chapelle, 2007)
Interactional benefits
12. can "equalize" class participation for students who may be shy in a face-to-face setting (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
13. can increase self-confidence for those afraid of making mistakes (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008)
14. can increase the range and quantity of L2 interaction for learners (de Almeida Soares, 2008; Warschauer, 1996)

Research question

The present study endeavored to analyze student perceptions of **CALL** activities in their own words, and do so in a systematic manner so as to ensure validity. The specific research question was: To what extent do students report Moodle forums, glossaries, and quizzes to be useful with regard to affordances, noticing, and comprehensible output as defined below?

Methodology

Theoretical framework and operationalization of terms

Huh and Hu (2005) explain in their chapter, "Criteria for effective **CALL** research," that effective studies must have consistent **SLA** theoretical support. The framework of this study is from an ecological viewpoint of language learning (van Lier, 2004). The researcher has

investigated students' perceptions of three **CALL** activities with regard to their potential for affordances, noticing, and comprehensible output.

Affordances were operationalized as potential opportunities for L2 interaction and learning for a particular student in a particular context and at a particular point in time. Whether the environment provides affordances depends on the situation, the learner's level and frame of mind, and other factors. An affordance for one learner is not necessarily an affordance for another. Here is a crucial difference from input.

Noticing was operationalized as stated awareness of lexical or grammatical patterns that have been previously encountered. The construct of noticing in this study was expanded from that of Schmidt and Frota (1986) to include not only differences between interlanguage and target language constructions, but also the recognition of constructions experienced earlier in the learner's study (Schmidt, 1995). Noticing describes a particular kind of facilitative input.

Swain (1985, 1995, 2000) described comprehensible output as integral in that it enables learners to do the experimentation with language necessary for successful uptake. The present study operationalized Swain's (1985, 1995, 2000) comprehensible output as learner language given an audience by the teacher, other learners, or other English users.

Participants

The participants were 23 first year university students in their second semester of study at a university of foreign languages in Japan. The students comprised 19 women and four men. All students consented to their participation on signed forms explaining that such participation was voluntary, could be withdrawn at any time, and that any information published would be strictly anonymous. The potential benefits to participants included specially adapted materials for their courses and experience to (for these particular students) a novel medium of instruction.

One class of 13 students met twice a week and a second class of 10 students met four times a week, all for lessons of 90 minute duration. Half of the weekly lessons were conducted in computer equipped classrooms, and the other half in traditional non-computer classrooms.

CALL activities under examination

The present study sought to understand students' perceptions regarding three **CALL** activities as undertaken in the course: forums, glossaries, and quizzes, all provided by the online course management system known as Moodle.

Moodle forums are similar to other internet forums in that participants are asked to post entries and reply to other participants' postings. Students were prompted to write about topics explored in course readings, class discussions, or other course materials. Students were assigned to write a posting of a given word count (generally between 200 and 400 words) and to give a substantial response to two other students' postings. Such assignments were given approximately twice a month. Screen shots of a forum assignment, posting, and replies can be seen in Appendix A.

Moodle glossaries required students to post one word per week along with definition, part of speech, possible synonyms, and example sentence. The students were encouraged to choose lexical items that were new to the student and that were likely to be useful to

classmates. Items from the glossary were automatically hyperlinked to any other place they appeared on the Moodle site, including forums, main pages and other activities. The glossary activity was a cooperative one in which each individual student chose lexical items for the whole class to study. The students were generally given an online quiz every three weeks on approximately two-thirds of the lexical items that appeared in the glossary for that period. Screen shots of glossary directions and entries are reproduced in Appendix B.

Moodle quizzes were developed to test students on the lexical items in the glossaries above and additionally on course content. The instructor's quizzes comprised multiple choice and cloze items. The assessment was formative in that students could receive partial credit for answering a quiz item correctly on the second try and were further encouraged to take the entire quiz up to three times with the average of the scores counting as the final mark. Appendix C provides screen shots of items from two different quizzes.

In accordance with Chambers and Bax's (2006) notion of **CALL** activities, each of the above was a regular, integrated feature of the course. None of the activities were *fillers*, nor were they *stand-alone* tasks solely responsible for the instruction of particular language or content. To the extent possible, **CALL** and non-**CALL** instruction were given as complementary course components with little distinction made between them.

The **CALL** activities examined below took place both inside *and* outside the classroom. Introduction to a new activity was always during a lesson in a computer-equipped classroom. Students frequently began activities in the classroom and were asked to finish them for homework.

Data collection

There were two components to the data collection. The first component required all 23 students to complete an online survey comprising the seven open-ended items included in Table 2 below. An open-ended format was specifically desired in order to seek out a more robust picture of participant attitudes and to allow for the emergence of unpredicted responses (Dörnyei, 2007). Each set of two questions contained a picture in order for students to review the activity about which they were responding. Appendix D presents a screen shot of questions 3 and 4 from the online survey.

Table 2: Online survey items

1. Have the Moodle vocabulary exercises been helpful for your learning of English? Please explain why or why not.
2. Can your teacher improve the Moodle vocabulary exercises so that they better match your needs? If yes, please explain how.
3. Have the Moodle quizzes been helpful for your learning of English? Please explain why or why not.
4. Can your teacher improve the Moodle quizzes so that they better match your needs? If yes, please explain how.
5. Have the Moodle forum exercises been helpful for your learning of English? Please explain why or why not.
6. Can your teacher improve the Moodle forum exercises so that they better match your needs? If yes, please explain how.
7. What additional opinions do you have with regard to Moodle and your learning of English?

The second component of data collection sought to clarify the participants' responses to the online survey and to elicit additional information. To do so, focus groups from one of the classes (N=13) were organized loosely around the questions below:

1. How have you used Moodle?
2. How can we better use Moodle?

The student participants were given about 15 minutes to discuss their use of Moodle. The instructor circulated among the four groups and asked guiding questions. The conversations were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Results

Analysis of the open-ended survey items was conducted using Nvivo software for consistent categorization of responses (Dörnyei, 2007). Student input was coded during an iterative process (Mackey & Gass, 2005) with eight categories eventually emerging. Student responses were coded for one or more of the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) <i>Affordances</i> | e) <i>Helpful (-) concerns</i> |
| b) <i>Comprehensible output</i> | f) <i>Hearing others' opinions</i> |
| c) <i>Noticing</i> | g) <i>Confusion</i> |
| d) <i>Helpful (+)</i> | h) <i>Suggestions</i> |

Affordances, comprehensible output, and noticing

Categorization of all the survey data from both classes indicated that students generally appreciated all three Moodle activities for the learning affordances provided. Unfortunately, students reported opportunities for comprehensible output only from the forum activities. Noticing was only mentioned twice, both times for the glossary activity. Figure 1 below illustrates the occurrences of statements with regard to the specific inquiry into affordances, comprehensible output and noticing.

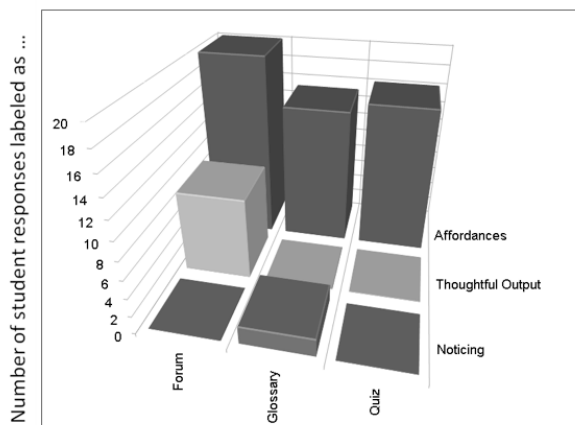


Figure 1. Reports of affordances, comprehensible output and noticing

Forums were reported by students to be the largest source of affordances (20 references). A typical answer to survey question five was: *Yes! I like discussion and writing very much. Also, my classmates are quite chatty on moodle even though they are quiet in the classroom :) Quizzes were similarly reported to provide opportunities for interaction and learning. One student answered survey question 3 by saying:*

Yes, [the quizzes have been helpful to my learning]. One of the reason is that the moodle vocabulary list were made by ourselves, not by [the teacher]. Of course, it will be helpful if [the teacher] made them, however, we could think deeply which one was more important vocabulary to us by making the moodle vocabulary list.

With 15 references, glossaries also appeared to provide affordances for learning. *By taking quizzes, I could remember many vocabulary that I studied before. So, I think they were helpful for me.*

Comprehensible output was reported by students to have only occurred in the forum activities (9 references). One student explained: *It's good exercise, I think. It is not only good writing practice but also we can know about others opinion. We can share our ideas.*

The instructor was disappointed that students had not made any mention of comprehensible output occurring in the glossaries. It was hoped that through the required example sentences, students might have expressed some of their own creativity. It appears, however, that many students simply copied example sentences from other sources rather than constructing their own.

The most disappointing result for the instructor was that there were only two instances of noticing reported. Both occurred in the glossary activity. Said one student: *I sometimes see vocabularies which we learned in this [glossary] in other classes' reading.* Another student reported the glossary activity to be helpful but not sufficient: *We can find the [glossary] vocabulary in some reading but it is not enough to remember that we just [look] up the vocabulary and have test.*

The teacher had believed that through the hyperlinks automatically created with glossary entries, students would regularly notice glossary words occurring in the forum posts students were required both to write and to read. The problems, however, were multiple. One participant complained that fellow students were using vocabulary words from other classes making the vocabulary easier to learn on the one hand, but diluting the meaning of the activity on the other: *I suppose it's not good because we already know the words.* A second concern was that the number and type of glossary terms entered and the length, number, and type of forum assignments given may not have provided for an optimum appearance of useful hyperlinks. Finally, from the focus group phase of the study, a pair of students reported that hyperlinks can actually be harmful to retention.

Yeah, in [teacher]'s class he used Pop-Jisyo online and it's like moodle, moodle's vocabulary – it pops up while we're reading it, we just put the cursor on it and we can know the meaning so it's, maybe after that we will forget it easily.

Because we don't have to think about it. I used it for [other teacher's] translate. [laughter]

General responses

The additional categories of *helpful* (positive or negative), *confusion*, *hearing others' opinions*, and *suggestions* emerged from the data with the relative frequency depicted in Figure 2. Suggestions are omitted from the chart because they are not directly applicable to this section, but will be discussed later. Generally, the participants reported the three Moodle activities to be helpful for English learning, with only a small number of references indicating *concerns* or *confusion*.

Both instances of confusion were reported by students who found discrepancies in their understanding of vocabulary items from the glossary activities and their experience using those items in the cloze or multiple choice vocabulary quizzes. This confusion is not necessarily negative. It can be perceived as noticing (Schmidt, 1995; Schmidt and Frota, 1986) and may even provide for an affordance (van Lier, 2004) if the student has the wherewithal to take advantage of the opportunity. The comments, however, were coded for neither as the remarks indicated, more than anything else, general confusion over lexical meaning.

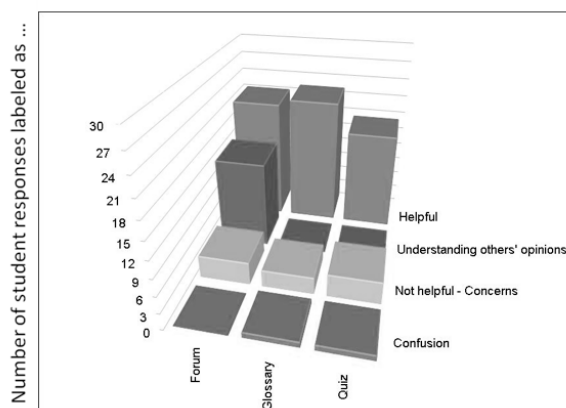


Figure 2. General responses

As far as being *not helpful* is concerned, one student demonstrated frustration with forums because *...I'm not good at debating online...* and because the Moodle forum activity did not have the spell check or editing capacity of Microsoft Word. Another student explained:

I don't hate this exercise. This is very useful to improve my knowledge and to share my or classmates' ideas. But, I've been using same exercise in Writing class. So I sometimes get boring.

Concerns with the glossary exercises included inadequate exposure to the lexical items, infrequent use of computers in general and the Moodle program specifically. One student said the following:

[The glossary activity] is not helpful because of style. Before the test, I always study hard, but I forget very easily. What's the important is to study everyday and to use the words in the class or in the daily conversation. In addition, I don't access to moodle

everyday because it's too busy for me to access the moodle everyday. That's why I feel this is not helpful.

With regard to the quiz activities, one student expressed concerns with the value of quizzes in general.

... I think I don't need to review the contents of the unit pack. I studied a lot in the class, and if I feel that I want to study the contents again, I can look back with my unit pack.

Other students complained that the quizzes were alternatively too easy or too difficult. One student questioned the value of online quizzes:

I think [quizzes are] helpful but I don't think it's good to do test on website. Writing on paper is the most effective way to remember new words.

Despite the misgivings noted above, the students generally reported the activities to be beneficial. Much of what the students found to be helpful was also cross-coded with either affordances or comprehensible output.

Discussion of the three Moodle activities

Forums

The students clearly indicated appreciation of the three Moodle activities for affordances. Forums were additionally appreciated for the opportunities to produce comprehensible output. Students regularly reported that, in a class of shy students, the Moodle forum was an excellent way to facilitate meaningful exchanges. Some students appreciated the convenience of Moodle in its accessibility both at school and at home. Other students reported that the forum activities enabled them time to think and develop their ideas fully before expressing them. Explained one:

The reason why I prefer Moodle because discussion in the classroom ... we can see one idea very deeply, but in classroom we have to say just yes or no and one reason. But we don't have time. It's very shorter, so maybe the argument is very ... shallow.

The students were generally very appreciative of the forum activities but had a few suggestions to make the exercise more valuable. Several students indicated that they would like online forum discussions to be continued *offline* in the regular classroom:

Some people write such replies "I want to talk about it with you more." But I have [n] ever seen such discussion scene. So I think making a discussion time [during the regular class] is very good.

This thinking is very much in line with Chamber and Bax's (2006) assertion that **CALL** activities should mesh seamlessly with non-**CALL** instruction. The use of written expression as a warm up activity or preparation for general discussion is also appealing.

Another participant suggestion was that the teacher could give students more time to develop and write their ideas in an L2. The student said, *I sometime feel that due date is quite soon, so it should have more time to do it.* A final suggestion for the teacher was that [the teacher] should *evaluate with this forum because you can see enthusiasm very easily.*

Given the strength of positive feeling regarding the forums, the instructor recommends **103**

the regular use of forums with the following provisos: 1. Students should be given adequate time to effectively contemplate the issues and complete the assignments; and 2. the forum activities should be integrated into regular classroom discussion activities.

Glossary

The Moodle glossary activity was not popular among the students for several reasons. Though many students indicated that the glossary was generally useful for language learning in that it provided affordances, the students indicated other preferred methods of studying. One of the focus groups had the following exchange about using the glossary activity in conjunction with the vocabulary quizzes:

... recently I began to study vocabulary on my own, by myself. So I think, of course, vocabulary quiz on Moodle is useful, but I like studying vocabulary by myself better.

Why?

Why? Because, actually, my first language is Japanese, so I like to study vocabulary with Japanese so ... it's efficiently.

Ah yes. Moodle vocabulary quiz ... meaning in English so sometimes I misunderstood the meaning of vocabulary.

Ah, yes. So I want to study vocabulary from Japanese to English. Nihongo mite, eigo mite na. [look at the Japanese, look at the English].

As discussed earlier, students did not generally appear to be impressed with the hyperlink function of the glossaries. One student did indicate appreciation of the hyperlinks, but that was only in the focus group stage after the researcher had specifically solicited comment on hyperlinks. It was reported earlier that some students believe the hyperlinks can be detrimental to vocabulary acquisition as the meanings are soon found out and soon forgotten. Their views appear to confirm the findings of De Ridder (2002) that the use of hyperlinks does not increase the amount of vocabulary learned incidentally.

Indeed, looking up the meaning of a word is only the first step of successful vocabulary acquisition. There must additionally be a deep level of processing and considerable repetition, about which these students are clearly aware (Peters, Hulstijn, Sercu, & Lutjeharms, 2009). The following online survey responses are suggestions from students with regard to the glossary activity:

I think the Moodle exercises is helpful, but I wanna do a exercise we come to be able to remember for a long time.

... I often forget what I put on Moodle. Maybe it's my fault but I want some activity to memorize them.

... if the exercise is changed so that we come to remember words for a long time, it will be better.

Please have some **MEMORIZE** work for us!!!!!!!!! I have sooooooo bad memory so they easily go out from my brain soon [emphasis entirely from the participant]

recording of the vocabulary in Moodle glossaries, and taking online quizzes. The students have explicitly asked for *activities*, *exercises* and *memorization work* in order to facilitate deeper level processing of the vocabulary and for long term retention.

There was an additional concern with regard to the selection of vocabulary for the glossary activity. Though the teacher had initially relished the idea of student autonomy in choosing vocabulary for study, the students did not always choose the most advantageous lexical items. Training had been given in identifying low and high frequency vocabulary, and how best to choose lexical items for study (see Nation, 1990, p. 142). It appears, however, that either this learner training was insufficient, that students were not advanced enough to make their own vocabulary study choices, that students were pressed for time and did not carefully consider their word selections, or, most probably, a combination of all of the above.

The final concerns with the Moodle glossary activity related to the online format. Several students indicated that they did not access Moodle regularly and that glossary items were thus relatively ineffectual. Other students felt rather strongly that there are benefits to writing new vocabulary by hand, a sort of muscle memory. The instructor also found that the Moodle interface made reviewing and editing glossary entries an extremely time-consuming and laborious endeavor.

Quizzes

Though there was earlier discussion of participant concern with quizzes, the overwhelming response to the Moodle quizzes was positive. In the online survey, students indicated the quizzes to be helpful, generally for the affordances provided as described below.

[I]t was helpful because we know how to use these words by reading your example.

I think that [the vocabulary quizzes are] very useful for me. Because there are various kinds of questions or divide some parts. It make me master how to use the certain vocab.

These quizzes are helpful. I can get to know how I use new vocabs in some sentences. And, this quiz is like a reading stuff so sometimes I enjoy the story while solving questions.

I can review what we learned by answer the quizzes.

Using context, I could grab the meaning more deeply ...

The majority of feedback on the quizzes was for the vocabulary quizzes as opposed to the content quizzes. Though there was no mention of noticing sufficiently explicit to code it as such, some of the statements above do indicate that students are beginning to appreciate the complexity of lexical knowledge and use. The researcher was disappointed that students made no reference to being able to attempt the quizzes multiple times, thus learning from the quiz instrument itself (Sagarra & Zapatta, 2008). Nor did the students refer to the availability of instant feedback (Sagarra & Zapatta, 2008; Warschauer, 1996), perhaps because they had no offline quizzes or tests in the class with which to compare. Both of these advantages of online quizzes are appreciated by the instructor and are believed to be appreciated by the students despite the absence of commentary. Further research might be helpful in ascertaining whether these advantages of online quizzes are in fact appreciated by students.

Limitations

The students' statements were evaluated and coded by the researcher. Through systematic and repeated coding with Nvivo software, the researcher attempted to be both objective and consistent. Nevertheless, coding remains a partially subjective endeavor and there is the possibility that others will have interpreted the statements differently. Additional limitations naturally include researcher and participant expectancy. Given the time and energy invested by the teacher and participants in the Moodle activities, the threat of cognitive dissonance may exist such that participants and teacher are reluctant to register an overly negative reaction. That said, the participants were quite forthright in their disinterest in some Moodle activities which can be reassurance of honesty if not appreciation. Statements such as *I don't hate this activity...* underscore this point.

A further concern is that this study employed only self-report measures as a method of data collection. It would be very interesting to see a triangulated approach including methods such as observation, online ethnography, and stimulated recall. While self-report data does not invalidate any of the conclusions made here, a more robust study would certainly give greater weight and clarity to any findings.

Two additional limitations include a small sample size and limited generalizability. Naturally, it would be ideal to conduct a large scale study of these Moodle functions in which all instructors use the same activities in a similar manner.

Conclusion

This study has determined that the participating students appreciated Moodle forums, glossaries, and quizzes for the affordances provided. Forums were additionally appreciated for their enabling of comprehensible output and interaction, especially in classes with reserved students. Glossaries were problematic in terms of access for students who were disinclined to use computers, students' choice of lexical items, students' preferred study methods, and limited recycling and processing of vocabulary. Students had positive reactions to the quizzes in terms of challenging their understanding of terms and concepts, though students did not explicitly make mention of the advantages of online quizzes in providing both instantaneous feedback and multiple attempts.

From the perspective of the instructor/researcher, this action research project has had a lasting impact on the preparation of course materials. I no longer use Moodle glossaries, nor do I ask general **EFL** students to choose their own vocabulary words. With students of English for Specific Purposes (**ESP**), self-selected vocabulary in the particular discipline may be helpful. For general **EFL** students though, particularly of beginner to intermediate level, vocabulary selected according to frequency of use may be a better method of choosing words to study. As for the Moodle glossary, it is both too cumbersome for students and teachers to manipulate, and not particularly effective at recycling vocabulary. In lieu of the Moodle glossary, there are an ever increasing number of dedicated vocabulary websites (e.g. flashcardexchange.com, praxised.com, quizlet.com) that are much more practical for accessing and recycling vocabulary. Whether using the Moodle glossary or another vocabulary learning method, activities should be carefully considered to ensure the appropriateness of vocabulary being studied, the depth of processing and frequency of repetition, and students' preferred study methods.

outside of class, enabling interactions to take place at greater length and in greater detail, preparing students to speak in advance of class meetings, and to compensate for the inherent shyness of some students. I have, however, altered the way in which I use the forums. Depending on the type and length of assignment, I sometimes recommend students begin a forum entry in MS Word for the benefits of spell check, grammar check, and back-up saving, and subsequently copy and paste their work into Moodle. It is also important for forums to be integrated with offline classroom activities so that there is a clear connection between the ideas explored and written online and those considered and discussed offline. To do so, teachers are advised to consider forum activities well in advance of their implementation, and not as a filler activity or quickly manufactured homework assignment.

Quizzes continue to feature prominently in my courses for consolidating class content, for the washback effects, and as a formative assessment. In constructing quizzes, I have two suggestions: 1. Teachers are advised to create items that can be employed over multiple semesters, enabling the development of more creative items that can be tweaked over time. This is particularly rewarding for those quizzes that have taken hours to create. 2. Teachers may also wish to consider extolling for students the benefits of attempting quiz activities more than one time. In doing so, perhaps the students will better benefit from the formative assessment provided and from the test-retest effect.

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Author biodata

Rob Hirschel is currently a lecturer at Sojo University in Kumamoto, Japan. He has been teaching **EFL/ESL** for more than 10 years at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. His research interests include **CALL**, affective factors in the language classroom, error correction, and alternative assessment.

Appendix A

Screen shots of a forum assignment, posting, and replies

Directions + List of Postings

Subscribe to this forum

Next December in Copenhagen there will be a conference about the world's climates. In the last month we have listened to both Jane Goodall and Sylvia Earle discuss the importance of living in harmony with our planet. Please use your own knowledge and anything that you have learned in class to discuss what you feel that we, as individual people, should do to protect the environment for our children and grandchildren. Please use details and examples to support your argument of 300 - 500 words.

This assignment is due on Thursday, November 12th at 3:00pm.

[Add a new discussion topic](#)

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Environment and Economy	[redacted]	0	Thu, 19 Nov 2009, 01:43 AM
BE AWARE to take action	[redacted]	2	Mon, 16 Nov 2009, 10:11 PM
there are lots of solutions!	[redacted]	4	Mon, 16 Nov 2009, 10:56 PM
A reasonable way of looking at environment	[redacted]	4	Mon, 16 Nov 2009, 02:28 PM

One Student's Posting

there are lots of solutions!
by [redacted] Monday, 9 November 2009, 10:23 PM

Today, this world has a lot of problems such as depression and poverty. After listening two lectures in Rob's class, I thought that the environment problem is one of the most serious problems. For example, global warming causes desertification, destruction of ecosystem, extraordinary weather, and so on. It may be too difficult to stop these terrible progresses completely, however, we might be able to make the progression speed slower by taking actions.

I have three ideas to protect the environment not only for ourselves but also for our children and grandchildren.

First, I want to suggest using alternative energy resources. In Japan, thermal power generation is a major way to create electricity. On the other hand, in France, nuclear power is a major energy resource. Nuclear power has such problems as to produce some radiations, however, it creates less CO₂ than that of thermal power generation. Nuclear power has become the third energy resource in Japan now, so Japan should use it more and more. Solar energy or hydrogen energy is also good example of alternative energy resources. Recently, these energy are applied to car. These two energies are environmental ways, so we should widen the opportunity to use them.

Second, it is necessary to promote ecology movements. For example, we can divide the garbage according to the types correctly and it can be used for recycling. Recently, "refuse (to refuse the things which can be garbage)" was added to 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) and is called to "4R". These kinds of action are so easy that we can do through our daily life, so we should do actively.

Third, education also has big power to protect the environment. It is very important to teach children what the reality is like. By knowing today's terrible condition, children can have a keen awareness of the problem and it may lead children to take actions. However, just reading or listening about it is not enough. I think it is very effective for children to know the change of the environment by watching movies or visiting the place which has already something occurred.

In conclusion, there are many kinds of solutions of the environmental problem. We can't ignore the problem of the present world. In addition, I found the interesting new study about Jungle of Amazon. By knowing today's terrible condition, children can have a keen awareness of the problem and it may lead children to take actions. According to the news, it seems to be shortage of salt in Amazon can reduce emission of CO₂. I think it is also important to continue research like this in order to protect the environment for the future.

Reply

Two Replies

Re: there are lots of solutions!
by [redacted] Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:29 PM

Hi, [redacted]

Your idea is very interesting! One problem also cause other problems at the same time. It is vicious circle, isn't it?

Your idea which the most interesting is education, I thought. The next generation: children have to shoulder the present problems. So, it is important for children to know about such things.

Thank you for sharing your opinion!

[redacted]

Show parent | Reply

Re: there are lots of solutions!
by teacher Sunday, 15 November 2009, 12:27 PM

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for sharing a very well thought-out paper. I fully agree with all of your points. I had never heard of the 4th R, *refuse*. I think that's fantastic! If we are truly serious about making a difference, then I think we have to become a little more militant. I think we also need to demand that our governments take action. Big businesses need to be reigned in. Thank you for sharing and I'll see you tomorrow.

Best wishes,
teacher

Show parent | Reply

Appendix B

Screen shots of glossary directions and four entries

Abbreviated Glossary Directions

To start with:

1. Please click **Add a new entry**. Write your vocabulary word in the box marked **Concept**.
2. In the box marked **Definition**, please write:
 - A. Part of Speech,
 - B. meaning of the word as you have encountered it, one or two additional meanings,
 - C. your example sentence checked by a teacher or native speaker, and
 - D. the original sentence, if available. Please leave a space between A, B, C, and D.
3. In the box marked **Keyword(s)**, please write any synonyms you can find for your word. Please separate your synonyms with commas.
4. Please click **Save changes** to save your work.

KALLS > K7Rob > Glossaries > World Englishes Glossary > Add a new entry

1 World Englishes Glossary

General

Concept*

Definition*

HINT: Check teacher examples of *assume* and *loanword*.

2

Please leave spaces between sections.

A. Part of Speech

B. meaning of the word as you encountered it, one or two additional meanings

C. your example sentence checked by a teacher or native speaker

D. the original sentence, if available; please put source in parentheses, e.g. (World Englishes Unit, p. 11)

eliminate:

Several Glossary Entries

A. verb

B. get rid of something

C. I eliminated the sentence because the grammar was wrong

Keyword(s):

enlarge:

A. verb

B. become bigger, develop a bigger point of it

C. This photo will enlarge well.

D. Can you enlarge a picture? (EAST 43rd STREET, p.g.33)

Keyword(s):

entire:

A adjective, noun

B all of something

C The entire population of Japan is well over the hundred million.

Keyword(s):

F

fiscal:

A. adjective

B. relating to money, taxes that are managed by the government

C. The government proposed fiscal policy.

D. . . . emissions of carbon dioxide and other green house gas in fiscal 2008 dropped 6.2% . . . (11. 11 NHK NEWS)

Appendix C

Screen shots of items from two different quizzes

Content Quiz Items

1 What are some reasons that Japan may need more foreign workers?
Marks: 1/1

Choose one answer.

- a. an increase in the population of older people
- b. a decrease in the population of younger people
- c. a need for foreign labour
- d. a and c
- e. all of the above ✓

Correct
Marks for this submission: 1/1.

2 According to what we've studied in class, which of the following are true of culture?
Marks: 0.5/1

Choose one answer.

- a. Culture belongs to a country.
- b. Culture belongs to a group.
- c. Culture belongs to an individual.
- d. a and c
- e. all of the above ✓

Correct
Marks for this submission: 1/1. With previous penalties this gives 0.5/1.

Time Remaining
0:05:06

3 What percentage of the Japanese population are registered foreigners?
Marks: --/1

Choose one answer.

- a. 1.6%
- b. 5%
- c. 10%
- d. 12%
- e. 15.2%

Vocabulary Quiz Items
Cultures of Japan Vocabulary Quiz - Attempt 1

Time Remaining
0:14:29

Page: 1 2 3 4 (Next)

1 **Cultures of Japan**
Marks: 3/5

In class, we have recently examined the cultures and sub-cultures of Japan. We have c and have determined that not all Japanese are humble and (reserved 2) ✓. Despite the impression of Japanese as modest in all of their behaviors, we have seen that many su celebrate their differences from what is considered mainstream Japan. Some people, e feel (flattering 2) X by the narrow roles that society imposes upon them. Changes in appanese cultures are (accelerated 2) ✓ by the influence of western societies, particularly America. More conservative Japanese citizens may be (eliminate 2) X about the changes taking place around them. However, just as with languages, cultures are always evolving.

Partially correct
Marks for this submission: 3/5. This submission attracted a penalty of 0.75.

4 **Synonyms**
Marks: 0/1

Please choose the word or phrase most similar in meaning to mend.

Choose one answer.

- a. discover X
- b. fix
- c. operate
- d. close

Incorrect
Marks for this submission: 0/1. This submission attracted a penalty of 0.5.

Appendix D

Screen shot of the online survey (questions 3 and 4)

2. Moodle Quizzes

Please review this Moodle Quiz image before answering questions 3 and 4 below.

1 of 4
Mark: -/3

Cultures of Japan

In class, we have recently examined the cultures and sub-cultures of Japan. We have discussed stereotypes and have determined that not all Japanese are humble and [input]. Despite the [input] impression of Japanese as modest in all of their behaviors, we have seen that many sub-cultures in fact celebrate their differences from what is considered mainstream Japan. Some people, especially youngsters, feel [input] by the narrow roles that society imposes upon them. Changes in Japanese cultures are [input] by the influence of western societies, particularly America. More conservative Japanese citizens may be [input] about the changes taking place around them. However, just as with languages, cultures are always evolving.

[Submit]

[Save without submitting] [Submit page] [Submit all and finish]

Page: 1 2 3 4 (Next)

3. Have the moodle quizzes been helpful for your learning of English? Please explain why or why not.

4. Can you improve the moodle quizzes so that they better match your needs? If yes, please explain how.

[Prev] [Next]