# Using Online Flipped Learning for Teaching English Language Speaking Skills at a Japanese University

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In this article, we describe and analyze the planning and implementation of flipped learning classes for teaching the productive skill of speaking at a Japanese national university. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology for delivering classes and content has become vital, with courses being implemented through technologies such as learning management systems and videoconferencing software. The authors of this article have described their experiences of using a Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard Learn R9.1 (Bb9), in the first year of the pandemic, and their different approaches to conducting productive skills classes (Davies et al., 2021). The research described here builds on that work, using the concepts developed in 2020, and with the authors agreeing on a broadly similar approach of providing courses through an LMS combined with mandatory Zoom sessions for students.

The three authors are teacher-researchers, and the article focuses on the provision of the same course and course material to different groups of students. The authors describe their collective planning and agreement before the start of the courses, then briefly describe their approaches to teaching the material. The effectiveness of the flipped learning approach is examined in two parts. In the first part, quantitative feedback data gathered by the authors from two questionnaires is carefully tabulated and analyzed along with qualitative data from some of the open-question items. In the second part of the analysis, the authors provide their own reflections on the online flipped approach. The final sections of this article examine the possibilities for flipped learning, particularly in relation to teachers returning to classroom-based courses. Consideration is given to learning management systems as complementary software, and videoconferencing as substitute software for the taught components of a flipped learning course.

## BACKGROUND

### The Flipped Learning Approach

The instruction model of flipped learning became prominent with the work of Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (2012), who developed the idea of "flipping" the traditional lecture and homework elements of a class. It has been described as "a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter" (Network, 2014, p.1).

Flipped Learning with Face-to-Face Teaching and an LMS

Flipped learning entails out-of-class learning with the use of ICT and the internet, often involving a learning management system (software designed for delivering educational courses). Learners are asked to access online materials for instruction before a taught session, using their own personal devices such as PCs, smartphones, or tablets. These online materials, including video clips, texts, images, interactive quizzes, and essay questions, allow learners to work on them repeatedly, regardless of time and place, until they can understand them (Enokida et al., 2018). For instance, students may first watch a video on a topic by themselves, then deepen their understanding by discussing what they have seen during a taught session.

If we consider Bloom's (2001) revised taxonomy of cognitive skills that classifies them into a hierarchical structure, with lower and higher levels of thinking embedded in a dynamic approach to learning objectives, we can see that flipped learning potentially organizes the learning process in a similar way (Anderson et al., 2001). Based on Bloom's model, the self-study component involves lower-level tasks such as remembering (activating background knowledge), acquiring new knowledge, and checking (self-assessing) understanding. In the taught component, involving social interaction among peers under the teacher's guidance, higher-level tasks consist of application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. In flipped learning, examples of the lower-level tasks can be watching videos and reading texts, followed by matching and gap-fill tasks, while higher level tasks can be follow-up discussions or presentations. For lower-level tasks, in the self-study session, students can monitor their own progress more easily through online tasks that check their comprehension of the content.

Flipped learning has the advantage of allowing more flexibility for both students and teachers (Milman, 2012). For example, students can have access to materials even when they cannot come to class, and so they can catch up with the content. It is also convenient because they can decide when and where to study the online materials. Furthermore, it gives the teacher more time to cover the topic in depth, and it makes the class personalized because students can learn at their own pace, which is particularly good for groups with varied levels. Flipped learning can boost student motivation and promote learner autonomy. Also, students can improve their computer skills and learn how to use an LMS.

On the negative side, flipped learning can be challenging for both teachers and students. Teachers need to convert classroom materials to online content and tasks, which may be time consuming and increase workload. Another downside is that it disadvantages poorer students and those without access to technology. Also, there may be technical challenges, such as problems with connectivity and finding a suitable place for study. Those students who are less organized may find it challenging to keep up with the self-study tasks for the lesson. They may have trouble self-regulating their learning and feel overwhelmed by the number of tasks to be completed on time. To overcome these challenges, it is important to explain to students the benefits of flipped learning, what they are expected to do, and the goal of the course.

Flipped Learning with Videoconferencing and an LMS

In the case of foreign language teaching, it can be particularly challenging to use the flipped approach that combines use of an LMS with videoconferencing. This is because it is skills-focused, as opposed to fields with content-loaded instruction, such as science or engineering.

Marshall (2017) developed a model for a "synchronous online flipped learning approach" (SOFLA) to

show how flipped learning principles can be applied to online instruction for language teaching. The name of the model is somewhat misleading due to its focus on synchronous instead of asynchronous aspects of flipped learning; nevertheless, it is a useful example for the foreign language learning context. The model explains flipped learning in which learning outside of class develops within an asynchronous space such as on a learning management system, and classroom work is conducted during synchronous sessions such as videoconferencing, in which the teacher and students are present and interacting, thus sustaining the dynamic nature of learning. The model is oriented towards creating teaching presence within both types of learning. Self-study, by definition, does not involve direct teaching. However, Marshall and Kastka (2020) argue that in the self-study stage of the flipped approach, the teacher's presence is revealed through choosing relevant content for students, offering various sources of information, organizing materials online, and guiding students' learning. During synchronous sessions, teaching presence means observing and maximizing interactions between students, offering support, and providing feedback. According to Marshall and Kastka, the model puts an emphasis on the structured, multimodal, and interactive nature of flipped activities.

The SOFLA model consists of eight steps, which define how learning develops in asynchronous and synchronous ways (Marshall & Kastka, 2020): pre-work; sign-in activity; whole group application; breakouts; share-out; preview and discovery; assignment instructions; reflection. The first stage is asynchronous "pre-work", in which students complete a variety of activities before participating in synchronous class sessions. For the asynchronous tasks, students can use meaningful language input through the internet. The teacher's role is to guide students to language that provides comprehensible input and provides students with internet sources that match their proficiency level. The synchronous sessions can take place in the form of videoconferencing that makes screen sharing and use of breakout rooms possible. In the "breakout" step, the aim is to engage all students in a collaborative activity in breakout rooms where students can work together as a team. Following the small-group work, the model includes a "share-out" step in the main classroom where students present what they worked on and learned about in their groups. The final steps are asynchronous again and include assignments (setting new work) as well as reflection (students' short statements on what resonated with them). This model offers students various chances to engage in communication with their peers, both in the videoconferencing session and through online discussion forums, for example.

**Teaching *English Communication* Speaking Classes**

At Hiroshima University, liberal arts English communication courses are mandatory for all first-year students, who are required to study four English-language components organized around the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Davies et al., 2021). While the system for providing these components has become increasingly complex (Morita, 2020), from a teaching perspective, each instructor will be given the responsibility of teaching one of the skills for 16 lessons. In the case of the authors and classes described in this study, the skill is speaking, and instructors have the autonomy to choose the materials they wish to teach and the way in which they evaluate the students.

In 2020, with major disruption to existing course delivery due to COVID-19, the authors had different approaches to their speaking courses. The main difference was that some courses were primarily on-demand with the students essentially studying through the university LMS only, while others involved flipped

learning in which students worked partly on the LMS and had mandatory Zoom sessions that acted as a substitute for the traditional classroom teaching in use before the pandemic.

By 2021, all the authors were in a much stronger position regarding their competence in ICT, and their collective view was that although the LMS was very important, it was not sufficient for speaking courses, where the main aim is to develop the speaking skills of first-year students. Using Widdowson's (1978) famous distinction between "usage" and "use", the authors considered "talking", which Widdowson defines as "the realization of language as use in spoken interaction" (p. 59), to be the main problem for on-demand courses. Regarding reciprocal talking, this involves the use of types of tasks such as discussions that cannot be achieved through self-study on an LMS. In contrast, in a computer age non-reciprocal talking through posting of video or audio for an audience can be achieved online.

As the authors were seeking a balance between usage and use, there was agreement that a flipped learning approach with mandatory Zoom classes was the best strategy for teaching. This also reflected an emerging consensus within the Institute of Foreign Language Research and Education that contact between students and teachers through videoconferencing software was important.

## METHOD

The aim of this article is to document the use of flipped learning for teaching classes focused on the development of speaking skills in relation to planning, implementation, and evaluation. In other words, our research objectives are to describe: (a) how the course was planned collectively by the three authors, (b) how the flipped course was implemented, and (c) how the students and teachers responded to the flipped course.

In order to obtain student data for the third research objective, two questionnaires were created, one being given as a mid-semester survey in the eighth week of teaching (Appendix 1), and the other being given at the end of the sixteen weeks (Appendix 2). The mid-semester survey was built on one given in 2020, including questions about Bb9 that could provide a comparison across the two years, as well as questions about Zoom sessions, video links, and evaluation. The final survey in Term 2 was shorter due to responses received about the Bb9 tasks that were very similar to those received in 2020. For the 2021 16$^{th}$-week questionnaire, detailed questions about the Bb9 tasks were omitted, and thus it contained a total of only eight questions. The detailed survey conducted in the eighth week of classes, in comparison, comprised 14 questions in total. The questionnaires contained both 4-point Likert-scale and open-ended questions; this allowed us to complement quantitative responses with qualitative data to get a fuller picture of how students perceived the course. A 4-point Likert-scale was used to avoid neutral responses.

## HOW WAS THE COURSE PLANNED COLLECTIVELY BY THE THREE AUTHORS?

The speaking courses for 2021 were built on the work done in 2020 (Davies et al., 2021) in which materials from a textbook, *English for World Travel*, had been posted on Bb9 and were used to create tasks for students. These involved four-answer multiple-choice tasks, matching tasks (often used for matching vocabulary terms to definitions) and gap-filling tasks. Audio was made available on Bb9 so that students could use both their textbooks and listening files to complete tasks.

A new addition to the material in 2021 was the use of video. During 2020, as the authors became more familiar with Bb9, it became clear that traditional textbook materials could be supported by relevant video

clips. This had initially been successfully trialed with a flipped-learning medical English course in the summer of 2021. The content of *English for World Travel* was organized around the travel of two fictional students, which made it well-suited to illustration by video clips. For example, a unit set in Delhi and Agra could be supported by short video clips of about three minutes. References to Mughal architecture could be illustrated with video footage, and this was also an aid for helping students to visualize locations and make them more realistic. Similarly, Bauhaus architecture and design in Berlin could be made conceptually much clearer with footage. For each unit folder on Bb9, several links were added, so that students could access short videos.

The authors met on Zoom to discuss strategy for implementing the course. There was general agreement that, with a large amount of content for the students to study online, the length of the videoconferencing sessions should be adjusted to take this into account, and that the length should be between 45 minutes and one hour. In this way, the students' flipped self-study session was essentially preparation for a 60-minute class. A more minor issue concerned the timing of opening folders of material for students. This would be done each week so that students would focus on the content of the unit for the videoconferencing session.

## HOW WAS THE FLIPPED COURSE IMPLEMENTED BY EACH AUTHOR?

### Teacher A

Teacher A taught six groups. Four groups were taught across 16 weeks. Two groups were taught over eight weeks, and these involved back-to-back classes.

Bb9 unit folders were opened one week before a class so that students could do the self-study part of the course at a time of their choosing. The first 45 minutes of class time were set up for self-study or free talking on Zoom; the taught Zoom sessions were held in the last 45 minutes of the class.

The taught Zoom session was almost always structured around three tasks: a set of warm-up questions related to four photographs at the beginning of the unit, an example dialogue relating to a travel situation, and finally a discussion task involving six questions. For the warm-up and discussion stages, the teacher would drill the questions and give example answers to the students as a group. Students would then be placed in breakout rooms so that they could talk in pairs about the questions. The dialogue would first be drilled, then the students were placed in breakout rooms to read it twice in pairs, so that each student had a chance to read both roles and practice pronunciation.

Midterm feedback indicated that a small minority of students wanted slightly longer classes, so the optional sections of the Zoom session were re-structured, with the main taught session taking place after 30 minutes and 15 minutes being made available for optional teaching at the end of the class. In two classes, a few students stayed online for the optional session, but almost all students preferred to leave at the end of the mandatory session.

Within the six groups, only one small set of students wanted to talk in the optional Zoom session at the beginning of the class. This comprised about five students with very high English skills who were studying over eight weeks.

**Teacher B**

Teacher B taught speaking skills to ten groups in 2021. All the courses were taught once a week over 16 weeks.

In a similar way to Teacher A, students were asked to work on the Bb9 materials in the first 30 minutes and the remaining 60 minutes were devoted to the live Zoom sessions and discussions; Bb9 self-study tasks and video materials were a way of preparing students for discussions in the class.

During the Zoom session, the teacher used a short quiz at the beginning of the class to test students' understanding, evoke their interest, and break the ice. The teacher found at first that, due to unfamiliarity with the flipped approach, the students tended to be silent in the classroom during discussions. In order to avoid this, the short quiz was used to facilitate students' active participation in the discussions. The quiz was related to the topic of the discussions and the materials on Bb9.

Next, students practiced a dialogue about a travel situation: First, they shadowed the listening audio to practice pronunciation; afterwards, they were put into breakout rooms in pairs to read the dialogue again. The next task involved the practice of a key expression in pairs and the last task included six questions for students to discuss in groups about the topic. For the final evaluation task in the 16th week, the instructor opted for oral presentations. The presentations, using PowerPoint slides, were about a travel story from a textbook unit of the students' choice. They needed to include their personal opinion or critical reflection on the story. The presentations were followed by a short Q&A session. According to the feedback, the majority of students enjoyed giving presentations and wanted to practice that skill more in the future.

**Teacher C**

Teacher C taught speaking skills to four groups during the semester, involving teaching once a week for a total period of 16 weeks. As with Teacher A's classes, Bb9 unit folders were available to the students one week in advance. During the first 40 minutes of each class, the students were expected to work on the Bb9 materials and prepare for the second half of the lesson, which was a live Zoom session.

A typical class would begin with a warm-up activity, often in the form of a quiz to introduce the students to the topic of the unit. This would be followed by practice of a short dialogue in pairs, which would familiarize the students with the unit's key expression. Following an explanation and the presentation of examples, the students were put into pairs in breakout rooms and given a task which provided them with practice in using the expression in a variety of contexts.

The final task was an activity adapted from the discussion questions in the textbook, with students again put in pairs or small groups in breakout rooms to ask and answer the questions; each student in the group was given a different set of questions from the others.

In addition, there were occasional blog tasks on Bb9 in which students were required to post a blog entry on a particular topic (often, but not always, related to the topic under discussion in that week's unit of the textbook). Although these activities did not require students to use their speaking skills, feedback showed that they were welcomed as an opportunity to get to know the other students in the class better, to understand a wide variety of opinions, and to express their own carefully considered opinions on a certain issue without the pressure of producing a quick verbal response.

## HOW DID THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS RESPOND TO THE FLIPPED LEARNING COURSE?

All three teachers collected quantitative data in order to strengthen the validity of the findings. To explain the results in depth, qualitative data from teacher B's survey were used to complement the quantitative data. In the case of teacher A, student feedback was received from 64 students in Term 1 and 66 students in Term 2 and these were for the 16-week courses. Teacher B received 193 completed questionnaires from 203 students in the first term and 181 completed questionnaires out of 203 in the second term, whereas teacher C collected data from 42 students in Term 1 with 49 students responding in Term 2. The coverage of responses was very high for teacher B with 95 % coverage. The response rate for teacher A was 70 %, and the response rate for teacher C was 50 %.

### Student Feedback on Bb9 Content and Tasks

The majority of students responded positively to the Bb9 materials. As Table 1 indicates, almost all self-study task types were favored by students. This may be because the level of the tasks was appropriate for students *("I like the tasks' level. It is not too easy and not too difficult."*). Another possible reason might be that they were provided with immediate feedback on whether their answers were correct, and so they could monitor their own learning process. However, the gap-fill task was rated slightly lower by the participants. This result may be partly because students experienced some difficulties with typing and spelling as well as listening. Overall, high ratings for Bb9 task types were confirmed in the second term, as illustrated in Table 2.

Also, Table 1 and 2 show that in both terms, many students found the Bb9 materials useful for Zoom. This indicates that the materials worked well for the flipped approach, providing support for tasks that required social interaction. This is confirmed by qualitative data as well: *"I liked Youtube video that you provided on the Bb9. Because I understood more easily about the countries. Through this class, I was able to learn about the cultures of other countries, famous tourist spots, and traditional dishes. The YouTube videos supported my learning so I could see them before class and share them with my classmates."*

Regarding the YouTube videos, responses were only obtained in Term 1, and the feedback was also positive, although lower than the rating on the Bb9 tasks. This might be due to the high number of video links – students were unlikely to view them all, and some students felt overwhelmed, which was confirmed in the qualitative responses. It might be useful to make a clear distinction on Bb9 between the more important videos and more difficult or less relevant videos on offer. It would also be beneficial to keep the length of the videos short. Some students mentioned that the videos were difficult to understand and that subtitles might be useful: *"If the movies which you give us have Japanese text, we can understand deeper."* Although YouTube does have a closed captions function, students may not have been aware of this. However, a positive aspect of the videos, namely learner autonomy, was expressed by another student who found the videos difficult, but video images supported his/her understanding of the language: *"Sometimes I can't understand what videos say, but picture is very good. So I can search them later and I can learn about what is in the world."*

While students mentioned some problems about YouTube videos, qualitative results yielded a lot of positive views about the YouTube videos and the flipped approach. Learning can be supported and enhanced by the use of videos, as the student comments suggest. The following excerpt from a student shows that videos can motivate them to travel: *"I want to go to around the world thanks to the YouTube videos."* Not only did the videos have an effect on students' motivation, but they also evoked new ideas and deepened students' understanding of the topic. The video materials engaged students in observation and then participation in an active learning experience on Zoom. Therefore, the videos enabled students to develop several cognitive skills. After watching the videos on the LMS, they were engaged actively in learning during the Zoom session. They could recall or reflect on the information seen in the video materials and communicate with their classmates about it. The videos complemented the lesson's content well because *"the videos on Bb9 were helpful to know more about different countries and cultures.*" Another student felt that it was easier to understand the dialogue in the textbook after watching the videos.

The audio-visual experience provided by the videos meant dual coding opportunities for students, and they could test their comprehension in various contexts. Audio complemented with visuals supported students' comprehension.

According to students' feedback, the videos supported their intercultural learning because studying with videos was a great way to experience various cultures from the comfort of their home. It stimulated their imagination, and they could visualize the place they were learning about: *"Thanks to the video, it was easy to imagine the country, culture and listen to the sound of bagpipes. They make me want to go there."*

Video materials provided students with the chance to engage with the target language in a more natural context. In the videos, language is presented in an authentic way compared to the pedagogically structured language in a textbook. Through the videos, students could experience how first-language (L1) speakers of English and second-language (L2) speakers of English use the language at various levels. Students also gained access to knowledge about various cultures through the lens of L1 and L2 English speakers which otherwise might be difficult for them to experience in their daily lives in Japan. The videos helped students to make a connection between what they studied in the class and how it is applied in real-life communication in authentic situations: *"I can learn real English as it is actually."* Videos were a great way to link textbook content to visual support: *"In my case, I prefer watching videos to reading textbooks and when I watched videos, I felt like travelling the world."*

**TABLE 1. Average Feedback Scores for the Flipped Speaking Course, Term 1**

| | **Teacher A** | **Teacher B** | **Teacher C** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 64/91 | 193/203 | 42/84 |
| **4 (++) 3(+) 2(-) 1(--)** | **Rating** | **Rating** | **Rating** |
| Textbook rating | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.6 |
| Multiple choice tasks | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.6 |
| Gap-filling tasks | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.5 |
| Matching tasks | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Usefulness of Bb9 materials for Zoom | 3.6 | 3.5 | x |
| YouTube video rating | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.2 |

**TABLE 2. Average Feedback Scores for the Flipped Speaking Course, Term 2**

| | Teacher A | Teacher B | Teacher C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 66/91 | 181/203 | 49/84 |
| **4 (++) 3(+) 2(-) 1(--)** | **Rating** | **Rating** | **Rating** |
| BB9 task rating | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.7 |
| Usefulness of Bb9 materials for Zoom | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.7 |
| Speaking strand overall rating | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.8 |

**Student Feedback on Zoom**

Although the videos on the LMS supported students' understanding, viewing videos was a receptive activity; therefore, the follow-up tasks on Zoom were highly relevant to engage the learners and involve them actively in the learning process. Feedback from the flipped course indicated that the Zoom sessions were perceived positively in both terms by students even though they were mandatory. It is also interesting to note that there was an increase from the first to the second term for teacher C, as indicated in Table 3. Comments from some students indicated that they could enjoy the course more as they became more adept at videoconferencing and had fewer technical problems.

**TABLE 3. Average Feedback Scores for the Zoom Session of the Flipped Speaking Course**

| | Teacher A | | Teacher B | | Teacher C | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4 (++) 3(+) 2(-) 1(--)** | **Rating** | ***n*** | **Rating** | ***n*** | **Rating** | ***n*** |
| Zoom session rating in Term 1 | 3.7 | 64 | 3.5 | 193 | 3.5 | 42 |
| Zoom session rating in Term 2 | 3.6 | 66 | 3.5 | 181 | 3.8 | 49 |

The qualitative comments about Zoom sessions touched upon several positive points such as building a sense of community through making friends, learning from peers, sharing ideas, peer motivation, and boosting self-confidence to speak English. Also, with the breakout room function it was easier to manage and arrange the groups, compared to a traditional classroom setting: *"Automatic group formation made it easier to work in small groups."* This way it was easier to make sure that the groups consisted of different students each time: *"I can speak with many classmates. If it's in classroom, I couldn't speak with such people."* The biggest advantage of the flipped approach was increased speaking opportunities for students, allowing the instructor to cover the topic during the videoconferencing session. The fact that flipped learning enables more time for discussions in class was appreciated by the students: "*A lot of opportunities to speak is good point."* The breakout room function made it possible for students to work in small groups of two, three, and four. This enhanced their understanding of the topic through learning from their peers: *"I could talk with most of the students who take this course, so I could spread my perspective by sharing our thoughts."* Students also liked the screenshare function, and the use of slides enabled teacher B to complement speech with text and visuals to support students' understanding. One student felt that *"the good point is that we can see some slides as well."*

The challenges concerned mainly technical issues such as connectivity, microphone issues, and finding a good environment for study. In relation to the latter, a number of students connected to the internet from classrooms designated for the purpose. However, especially where numbers of students were practicing their

English in different groups with different teachers, these rooms could be noisy.

**Authors' Opinions of the Flipped Learning Course**

As noted, the overall approach of the three authors in 2021 was effectively the same in relation to using a learning management system and Zoom videoconferencing software to deliver the course. The authors themselves had discussed the strategy before the class started and then made changes. For 2021, one author reduced the time on Zoom from 90 minutes to between 45 and 60 minutes, while the other two authors made the Zoom sessions mandatory, running their videoconferencing lessons over a similar length of time.

The authors felt that the Bb9 work ran smoothly, particularly in contrast to 2020. The course had been placed on Bb9 rapidly in 2020 when they had relatively little experience of the system, and it contained small errors. At that time, many diligent students emailed to point out the mistakes, so that it was necessary to reply to the emails and correct the problems on each course that had been set up. By 2021, with more experience, there were very few errors, and supporting hints had also been added to help students with some of the tasks. Consequently, emails expressing concern about mistakes in the materials were rare in 2021. Also, the tasks had been set up to allow students to repeat them. Students could make two attempts at a multiple-choice question, and had unlimited attempts at a matching task, which often required matching phrases and terms to definitions or spaces in a piece of discourse. As noted in the student feedback, learners could find out whether their answers were right or wrong and try again, helping them to self-monitor their progress.

One author felt that there was a trade-off between self-study on Bb9 and undertaking a similar task in class. This related to the way students answered questions. On Bb9, a variety of tasks relating to comprehension involved multiple-choice questions. On the other hand, in a classroom, students were expected to write answers, and this offered opportunities to illustrate cohesion between a question and a full-sentence answer during the checking of answers. The teacher felt it was more natural for students to search for answers to questions without being given a set of four possible answers. However, the benefit of Bb9 was that students could move at their own pace and check their own answers.

Another author felt that, with more experience on Bb9, communicating by announcement through the software became much more prevalent. This connects with Marshall's (2017) concept of teacher presence in the self-study parts of flipped learning. In contrast with past classroom-based teaching, where almost all communication took place in classroom time, with a learning management system, announcements can be sent at any time. Although the university's system (Momiji) can be used for messaging, the teacher found that the learning management system was much easier to use. Given that it was being accessed regularly every week to check and organize learning materials, sending announcements became a regular part of the class. As these went out in English, they provided students with authentic communication in English.

The use of mandatory Zoom sessions made all the authors feel connected to their students. For one author, an advantage of using videoconferencing was that presentation software could be used easily. The teacher would prepare a carefully organized set of slides incorporating instructions, tasks, and illustrations in the form of photographs and diagrams to aid the students. The use of small groups using Zoom's breakout rooms, which allowed interaction between students, had several benefits over classroom-based groups. Reflecting some of the student feedback, a major advantage of these rooms was that students could be re-

organized quickly depending on whether a task required pairs, groups of three, or groups of four; in addition, participants could be easily re-grouped, so that students could interact with most of their classmates over the duration of the course.

The main problems of flipped learning were associated with technical issues. While Bb9 was very reliable, there were rare occasions when the system became overloaded. In relation to Zoom, a number of problems occurred. The worst of these was if a teacher's computer lost connectivity, effectively ending the class early. A more minor problem was when a teacher accidentally ended the session, requiring students to re-join. The more common problem was students having difficulty connecting to the Zoom session, and teachers had to be sensitive to this issue. Another issue was background noise, noted in the student feedback. It was often necessary for teachers to mute students when presenting to them or giving instructions.

## IMPLICATIONS

The current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many teachers and students to use and experiment with various technologies for online learning. This development is likely to be utilized in a number of ways in the future: as a resource in times of emergency or disruption, for courses involving students in different locations, for joint online projects at the university, and for new hybrid models.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, videoconferencing software has been used as an alternative to temporarily replace the traditional classroom environment. The flipped courses discussed in this study indicate that online courses can be delivered successfully through carefully planned organization of materials on a learning management system and good teacher management of students with videoconferencing software. For courses that are primarily taught in classrooms, an LMS and videoconferencing may offer a powerful resource in the case of disruptions caused by natural disasters, for example, or in relation to more individual problems such as absence due to poor health.

Although it is expected that in the future, classroom-based learning will continue to be the dominant form of instruction, some courses could be offered online through videoconferencing and learning management systems, especially in cases where international students are involved. During the pandemic, students who, because of travel restrictions, have been unable to leave their home countries, have had the chance to participate in classes online. In this way, videoconferencing technology and learning management systems now offer a much greater opportunity for international student exchange.

Online flipped learning can be useful for future instruction in additional ways. For instance, by working collaboratively, educators and even faculties could design courses together to share the burden of work and support each other. Joint materials could be accessed and used for flipped instruction. By sharing these materials, their creators would have the opportunity to broaden their teaching methods and share ideas. It would also decrease their workload in relation to creating online content.

With the return to classrooms, an important question is how technology will be combined with classroom-based language instruction in the future effectively. The most likely result is a hybrid model, in which some of the innovations that emerged in the time of the pandemic are integrated with onsite courses to support students' learning.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have described the planning and implementation of flipped learning for teaching English speaking skills to first-year students at a national university in Japan. We have combined this with student feedback on the course and our own reflections as teacher-researchers. The driver of change has been the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing teachers to adapt rapidly to a situation in which they have been distanced from their traditional classroom teaching. The results of this small-scale study show that it is possible to deliver courses effectively online. It is also worth noting that large amounts of time had to be invested in transferring classroom materials to a learning management system, but given the long period of online-only teaching, this was very valuable. An additional benefit was that the authors were able to use the experience of developing flipped learning online for the speaking skills course to design and develop an online course for writing that used a similar approach.

The expectation of the authors is that teachers will return to their classrooms in the near future. An important question is how the technologies, that have been so vital to teaching in the past two years, will be utilized in the future. As we have noted, learning management systems are a complementary software to classroom teaching. While they have been in existence for a number of years, recent events have made many teachers much more aware of their potential. By placing materials and tasks online, students can become much more autonomous, and in the event of disruptions, can to some extent stay on schedule. When Bb9 is combined with videoconferencing software, a substitute for the classroom, teachers can switch to teaching online in the event of disruptions.

Finally, consideration should be given to how technologies may be utilized in the classroom. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the main hardware used has been the desktop or laptop computer. With the return to classrooms, there is the important issue of what equipment students will bring to classrooms. The flipped learning described in this article involves periods of time being given over to students' self-study and combined with more focused periods of teaching. How this can be achieved effectively using a traditional classroom setting will be a focus of future research.

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## APPENDIX 1. Questions on the Term 1 Questionnaire (8th Week)

**Bb9**

1. How clear were my announcements/messages to you during the course?
   4: very clear (++) 3: clear (+) 2: not so clear (-) 1: not clear (--)
2. What was your overall opinion of the 12 unit folders based on English for World Travel?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
3. What was your overall opinion of the multiple-choice tasks?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
4. What was your overall opinion of the “fill-the-gaps” tasks?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
5. What was your overall opinion of the “matching” tasks?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
6. How useful did you find the materials on BB9 for the Zoom sessions?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
7. Do you usually watch YouTube videos in English in your daily life?
   1: Yes 2: No
8. How many YouTube videos did you watch on BB9?
   4: all of them (++) 3: most of them (+) 2: some of them (-) 1: none (--)
9. What was your overall opinion about the YouTube videos on BB9?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
10. How did the YouTube videos help your learning?

**Zoom**

11. What was your overall opinion of the Zoom sessions?
    4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
12. What did you like about the Zoom sessions?
13. What did you dislike about the Zoom sessions?

**Final Comment**

14. Please write some comments, giving your opinion of the speaking strand and how it could be improved.

## APPENDIX 2. Questions on the Term 2 Questionnaire (16th Week)

**Bb9**

1. How clear were my announcements/messages to you during the course?
   4: very clear (++) 3: clear (+) 2: not so clear (-) 1: not clear (--)
2. What was your overall opinion of the Bb9 folders in term 2?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
3. How useful did you find the materials on BB9 for the Zoom sessions in term 2?
   4: very useful (++) 3: useful (+) 2: not so useful (-) 1: not useful (--)
4. How many YouTube videos did you watch on BB9?
   4: all of them (++) 3: most of them (+) 2: some of them (-) 1: none (--)
5. How did the YouTube videos help your learning?

**Zoom**

6. What was your overall opinion of the Zoom sessions?
   4: very good (++) 3: good (+) 2: not so good (-) 1: not good (--)
7. What were the good points and bad points of the Zoom sessions?

**Final Comment**

8. Please write some comments, giving your opinion of the speaking strand and how it could be improved.

## ABSTRACT

# Using Online Flipped Learning for Teaching English Language Speaking Skills at a Japanese University

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology for delivering classes and content has become increasingly important. This article discusses the planning, implementation, and outcomes of technology-supported flipped learning with a combination of a learning management system (LMS) and videoconferencing for teaching English speaking skills to Japanese students at a national university in Japan. The aim was to examine the effect of the flipped approach on students' learning experiences. In the study, two questionnaires were administered to obtain feedback from students at two points in time: after eight weeks and after 16 weeks. The questionnaire contained both items using a 4-point Likert scale and open-ended items. In addition, the instructors of the course reflected on the outcomes.

Data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods to reveal how the flipped approach with an LMS and videoconferencing supported students' speaking skills in an online learning environment. The findings suggest that learning on an LMS with tasks and videos provides students with a useful source of ideas for discussions; therefore, these materials worked well for the flipped approach, since they supported students' social interaction. Videoconferencing facilitated peer motivation and enabled more opportunities for discussion, which was the main advantage of the flipped approach. The article concludes by exploring the possibilities for flipped learning in future hybrid classes.

要　約

# 日本国立大学における英語のスピーキングスキル教育への反転学習の活用

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新型コロナウイルス感染症の影響により，オンライン授業や教育用コンテンツ利用の重要性が高まっている。本稿では日本の国立大学で日本人学生を対象に英語のスピーキングスキルを指導するために，学習管理システム（LMS）とビデオ会議を組み合わせた情報通信技術型の反転授業の計画，実施，成果について考察し，反転授業導入による学習効果を検証した。本研究では，学期中間と学期末にアンケートを実施した。アンケートには，4段階の回答からなるリッカート型の尺度と自由形式記入欄，及び担当講師の評価を含めた。

調査では，定量データと定性データを組み合わせ，LMS とビデオ会議を用いた反転授業が，オンライン学習環境における学生のスピーキングスキルにどのような影響を与えたかを明らかにした。その結果，タスクやビデオを用いた LMS 学習は，グループディスカッションの活性化に有効であることがわかった。したがって，これらの教材が，学生の社会的交流を支援するものでもあり，反転授業の手法に適していることもわかった。また，反転授業の最大のメリットは，ビデオ会議を利用することで，受講者のモチベーションを高め，ディスカッションの機会が増えたことであった。反転授業は今後のハイブリッド授業に有用である可能性を示唆した。