Exploring the Impact of Technology Decisions in English Language Speaking Courses

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, for most English language courses, classroom teaching was replaced by online instruction at Hiroshima University. Teachers developed skills and used a range of technologies to deliver their classes, particularly in relation to the university's learning management system (LMS) and through videoconferencing technology. In 2023, classroom teaching was again permitted, with teachers having the option of giving fully online courses, fully classroom-based courses, or a mix of online and classroom-based instruction.

This article documents the authors' decisions on how to teach speaking skills classes and the impact of these decisions on students. A particular focus is on classes taught via videoconferencing in contrast to classes taught in person. In addition, the authors reflect on the technological skills they developed and how the online materials they organized on the university's LMS were utilized in delivering their courses.

Through self-reflective reports, we document our decisions and experiences. We then analyze the results of a student survey to evaluate students' responses to the use of videoconferencing classes and the LMS, drawing on both quantitative descriptive statistics for Likert-scale questions and qualitative data in students' written answers. In the final part of the article, we discuss our views on the use of technology in the light of our own experiences and the feedback of the students.

BACKGROUND

The courses covered in this research were English language speaking skills courses for first-year students at the university, and the four authors used the same textbook, *English for World Travel* (Uenishi et al., 2016). They had collectively developed a similar approach to teaching online during the COVID-19 years (Davies et al., 2021). The provision of courses online involved considerable use of technology, with students and teachers connecting via the internet as well as utilizing a variety of software. The approach involved the use of an LMS (initially Bb9, now Moodle), and videoconferencing software (either Zoom or Teams). For each textbook unit, several listening tasks and vocabulary tasks were created alongside links to YouTube clips that provided audio-visual information about the setting of a unit. Students were usually given about 30 minutes of class time for self-study before joining the taught component on Zoom/Teams. The challenge in 2023 was how the technological innovations employed in the previous years could be used in a situation where both in-person and online options were available.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Warschauer and Meskill (2000) argue that technology can enhance language learning, but its effective use depends on teacher decisions. If teachers harness technology effectively in online and face-to-face environments, they can provide interactive and engaging language learning experiences. Key decisions in the research reported here concerned whether to teach classes online via videoconferencing software or whether to teach in person, as well as consideration of what technology to use for the courses.

Teachers' decisions regarding the use of multimedia resources, online materials, and synchronous interactions can significantly impact language proficiency development. Further, students' motivation and persistence can also be influenced by the mode of instruction. Online language learners may face challenges related to self-regulation and motivation, while students in the real classroom may benefit from the physical presence of peers and the teacher. Dörnyei (2014) suggests that teachers must make decisions that foster motivation and persistence, regardless of the instructional mode. In terms of learning outcomes, research by Lee and Chan (2007) indicates that students in online language courses can achieve similar language proficiency levels to their face-to-face counterparts when teachers carefully select and design online activities.

The choice between online and in-person instruction has profound implications for student engagement and interaction patterns. Teachers' decisions on interaction structures and the use of discussion forums, blogs, or virtual classrooms can shape student engagement. Also, teachers' decisions about synchronous or asynchronous instruction can impact the immediacy of interactions. A study by Swan and Shih (2005) found that synchronous online interactions, such as live videoconferencing, can foster more immediate student–teacher and peer-to-peer communication. In contrast, asynchronous online instruction may provide greater flexibility but can require proactive decision-making to sustain engagement. As technology continues to shape the educational landscape, teachers must make informed decisions to create effective and engaging language learning experiences for students.

Categorizations of Instruction

Online instruction is a teaching style in which educational materials and interactions are on digital platforms. It involves various digital technologies such as use of an LMS (Davies et al., 2021) and live videoconferencing (Thatphaiboon & Sappapan, 2022). Online instruction can refer to fully online courses where all assignments and interactions are conducted on the internet, or it can supplement traditional classroom settings.

Flipped learning is a type of learning in which students are first introduced to new topics outside the class and explore the topic in more depth in class (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). This type of learning creates more opportunities for integrated learning inside and outside the classroom. Previous research conducted on online instruction using flipped learning in the EFL classroom in Japan yielded positive results in terms of students' engagement and educational effectiveness (Tanabe et al., 2022).

Blended learning is the fusion of online and in-person instruction. In a blended learning environment, students engage in a mix of classroom-based face-to-face instruction and online learning activities. Blended instruction places emphasis on the benefit of both the traditional teaching style and online resources. This type of instruction is often associated with the flipped learning model (Lagunes-Reyes et al., 2022). Previous research on blended learning in the English language learning environment focused both on the benefits

(Kobayashi & Little, 2011; Yang, 2012; Yang, 2014) and on the problems and challenges (Nissen & Tea, 2012; Yang, 2014).

Hybrid learning is a combination of online and in-person teaching modes. The teacher is in the classroom and some students are physically present in the class while at the same time other students participate remotely. This is a type of instruction that works for both groups of participants at the same time (Nishikawa-Van Eester, 2022).

Mixed learning is a more general term that involves various teaching approaches, including blended learning. It is about the integration of various ways in which technology and traditional classroom instruction can be combined to meet certain educational goals. In the case of this article, "mixed instruction" will be used as a broad term in which teachers combine online instruction and traditional classroom instruction throughout their English language speaking course.

In the study reported here, teachers did not use hybrid learning. While this can be used for lectures, it was considered too challenging for classes that were taught using a communicative approach, one that requires grouping students for interactive tasks. Within the definitions cited above, some teachers used flipped learning by allocating about 30 minutes of class time to student self-study before conducting a videoconferencing session, while others used blended learning, with students involved in self-study for about 30 minutes in a classroom in the presence of a teacher, before engaging in an interactive session. The key difference was whether the same structuring of study took place in a classroom or online.

In the research presented here, we make the following definitions: A *fully online* course is one in which all learning and teaching takes place outside the physical classroom. An *in-person* course is one in which, for each 90-minute class, all learning and teaching takes place in the physical classroom. A *mix* or *mixed* course is one in which some classes are taught in the physical classroom and some classes are taught through videoconferencing.

METHODS

Participants

The four teachers involved in the study are full-time members of the university's Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education, which primarily provides language courses to undergraduates. They provided written reports documenting how they taught their courses and their reflections on them. The student participants of the study were in the first year of their studies and all of them took one of the authors' English-speaking-skills courses.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How did teachers organize and view their courses?

RQ2. How is the speaking course and its teaching mode (fully online, in-person, and mixed) shaping students' opinions of course delivery?

Data Collection

In relation to RQ1, the four teachers wrote reports of their courses (see Appendix 3). For RQ2, students answered surveys at the beginning (see Appendix 1) and end of their 16-week courses (see Appendix 2). In total, 623 Japanese university students completed the questionnaires at the beginning of their course. At the end of the semester, 542 students responded to the survey.

Data were collected from students using online questionnaires. The initial survey investigated students' preliminary views about the speaking course and their previous experiences with online learning and technology. It was administered after the first week of the course and had 11 questions compared to the second survey's 19 questions. Both questionnaires consisted of 5-point Likert scale items and open-ended items. The second questionnaire explored students' views about the speaking course and its instructional mode. It also examined students' preferences regarding the instructional mode of future courses. It was administered in the 16th week of the course. The 5-point Likert scale included a neutral option for the participants in order not to force them into giving a positive or negative response if they were not certain. By using two surveys, the researchers were able to observe changes in students' opinions. Qualitative items were used in the questionnaires to explore the reasoning behind students' quantitative responses. Teachers' reflections on the courses were added to provide various further insights.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics were used for the quantitative questionnaire items to understand the central tendencies and uncover patterns within the data. With the 5-point Likert scale, the following points were allocated: ++ (4 points), + (3 points), neutral (0 points), - (2 points), -- (1 point).

Content analysis was used for the open-ended items to examine the meaning and patterns in more depth. Frequently occurring ideas were grouped into themes and explored in the findings and discussion of the data.

FINDINGS

RQ1: How did teachers organize and view their courses?

Initial Strategy and Final Result

The four teachers fell into two groups: Teachers A and D planned for fully online courses, while Teachers B and C opted for a mix of in-person and online classes. Teachers A, B, and C did not deviate from their initial strategy, but Teacher D decided to teach some in-person classes after getting feedback from his students, resulting in a mixed course. However, it is important to note that there are some differences between the teachers who used a mix. Teacher B planned mainly in-person classes, with 10 classes in person and five online, Teacher C opted for a 50/50 split and alternated throughout the term between an online class and an in-person class, and Teacher D taught five classes in person and 10 classes online.

Online Classes

All four teachers structured their online classes in a similar way: Students were expected to engage in self-study for 30 minutes of class time, and then join a Zoom session for about one hour. This approach

followed that which had been used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In-Person Classes

Teachers B and D taught their in-person classes in a similar way to their online classes, allocating about one-third of the class to self-study and two-thirds to an interactive session. In contrast, Teacher C used the entire 90 minutes as an interactive session and used only the textbook and classroom handouts.

Content

All the teachers primarily used the content from the class textbook, but Teacher A experimented with a small research and presentation task for students. Teacher C supplemented the textbook material with handouts when teaching in person for 90 minutes.

RQ2: How is the speaking course and its teaching mode (fully online, in-person, and mixed) shaping students' opinions of course delivery?

Videoconferencing

Findings revealed that students were much more skeptical about videoconferencing at the beginning of the course than at its completion: Table 1 shows that there was an overall rise in scores for all the teachers at the end of the semester.

TABLE 1. Pre- and Post-Course Comparison of Student Ratings for Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is …	**Teacher A (pre)**	**Teacher A (post)**	**Teacher B (pre)**	**Teacher B (post)**	**Teacher C (pre)**	**Teacher C (post)**	**Teacher D (pre)**	**Teacher D (post)**
Number of students	221	201	94	105	88	39	220	197
4 (++) 3 (+) (N) 2 (-) 1 (--)	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**
…effective	2.82	3.11	2.42	3.00	2.25	3.25	2.45	3.29
…enjoyable	2.10	3.13	1.63	2.48	2.14	3.23	2.06	3.07
…convenient	2.95	3.50	3.40	3.42	2.90	3.56	3.08	3.47

The following statements from students emphasize the effective, enjoyable, and convenient aspects of videoconferencing:

> *"Videoconferencing classes enable us to study at our own home, so they are very effective and convenient. Therefore, I hope this style of classes keep."*
> *"I think Zoom classes are very convenient. I think that sharing some screens is very effective in particular."*
> *"To use videoconferencing, we can communicate with those who we don't talk with so much. It's very enjoyable."*

Another student considered online classes and videoconferencing as an essential opportunity to develop new skills that might have practical relevance for their future career:

"We will need some skills to speak in online conference in the future. So videoconferencing is valuable to grow these skills."

In the qualitative data, one student's statement highlighted a very important point about effectiveness and summarizes a major finding of this study: *"I think videoconferencing classes are as effective as in-person classes because whether in-person or videoconferencing classes has nothing to do with efficiency and efficiency has to do with the way you teach and students' attitude toward the classes."* This finding echoes Dörnyei's (2014) view that teachers' decisions about classroom activities are influential in terms of motivating students, but it does not depend on the instructional mode. This quote also explains and confirms the results in Table 4: Students tend to prefer the teaching mode chosen by their teacher. It indicates that teachers have a great influence on students' experiences and their attitude towards the course. The important question is how the teachers teach. Students may not favor a course for reasons such as the teaching methodology used regardless of whether it is online or in-person. Also, regarding effectiveness, many students believe that it is not the delivery mode that determines the effectiveness of the course but the teacher. "*I like the teacher so much"* and *"I like XY's way of teaching"* are quotes from students that underpin this finding. The frequency of these teacher-related statements was high with 53 instances (10%) in the qualitative data.

This finding suggests that teachers can choose any delivery method provided the implementation of their class plan is favored by the students, who are motivated by the way the class is taught, which in turn leads to the development of their language skills. Also, the majority of students remained neutral at the beginning of the course, but in the post-survey the number of neutral responses decreased dramatically, as Table 2 illustrates. This indicates the changes in students' perceptions as they were able to express their opinion more clearly about videoconferencing at the end of the semester.

TABLE 2. Comparison of Neutral Responses Towards Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is …	**Teacher A (pre)**	**Teacher A (post)**	**Teacher B (pre)**	**Teacher B (post)**	**Teacher C (pre)**	**Teacher C (post)**	**Teacher D (pre)**	**Teacher D (post)**
Number of participants	221	201	94	105	88	39	220	197
4 (++) 3 (+) (N) 2 (-) 1 (--)	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**	**Neutral response**
…effective	28.1%	10.9%	21.3%	8.6%	21.6%	5.1%	18.2%	5.6%
…enjoyable	31.7%	10%	41.5%	22.9%	22.7%	5.1%	30.9%	10.2%
…convenient	12.7%	6.5%	6.4%	3.8%	13.6%	2.6%	8.6%	4.6%

Many students did not have much experience with videoconferencing in their high school years and did not know what to expect. However, a change in students' views was not only apparent in the quantitative data but in the answers to the open-ended questions as well. The next quote from a student illustrates the point:

"Firstly, I didn't like Zoom classes, but now, I like this style because there was no problem in this style. At first I thought the face-to-face class would be better because I thought discussion would not be possible, but with the breakout room, discussion was very good. In person, I could only discuss with

similar people due to seating, but online, I could discuss with different people each time. It was also nice to be able to take the course at a place of my choice so that I could have more time to spare."

The Use of an LMS

In all four teachers' cases, the responses about the LMS were more positive at the end of the course. Generally, students considered tasks and materials on the LMS to be more effective and convenient than enjoyable, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Comparison of Student Ratings for the LMS

LMS is…	**Teacher A (pre)**	**Teacher A (post)**	**Teacher B (pre)**	**Teacher B (post)**	**Teacher C (pre)**	**Teacher C (post)**	**Teacher D (pre)**	**Teacher D (post)**
Number of students	221	201	94	105	88	39	220	197
4 (++) 3 (+) (N) 2 (-) 1 (--)	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**
…effective	2.40	3.13	2.83	3.25	2.51	2.89	2.55	3.21
…enjoyable	1.46	2.50	1.37	2.43	1.44	2.02	1.56	2.69
…convenient	2.66	3.16	3.23	3.30	2.71	2.92	2.59	3.18

They rated its convenience the highest: *"It is convenient for me that I am able to check my assignments anywhere."* Another student favored the message board on the LMS: *"It's easy to get information."* The second-highest rating was related to the effectiveness of the LMS. Many students emphasized it in relation to the flipped approach: It keeps their learning organized, they come to the class well-prepared, and they are able to participate in discussions more effectively. As one student stated: *"It is very effective to be ready for the lesson."* Students appreciated the materials on the LMS which they had to review before class. It supported their understanding of the lesson: *"Moodle is very great systems. We can learn about the classes by ourselves before. By doing the Moodle tasks, we can enjoy and understand the classes more!"* The LMS was also considered as an essential platform to foster learner autonomy: *"I think it's good for us to use the LMS because it will give me more chances to learn English."*

Views on Videoconferencing, In-Person, and Mixed Classes

Table 4 (also see Appendix 4) reveals that many students preferred the teaching mode that was used in their course.

TABLE 4. Comparison of Student Ratings for Speaking Class Methods

How should speaking classes be taught?	**Teacher A (pre)**	**Teacher A (post)**	**Teacher B (pre)**	**Teacher B (post)**	**Teacher C (pre)**	**Teacher C (post)**	**Teacher D (pre)**	**Teacher D (post)**
Number of students	221	201	94	105	88	39	220	197
4 (++) 3 (+) (N) 2 (-) 1 (--)	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**	**Rating**
Videoconferencing	1.49	2.57	1.59	1.42	1.52	1.30	1.68	2.41
In the classroom	1.56	1.40	1.77	2.07	2.03	1.25	1.58	1.46
Mixed	2.39	2.32	2.60	2.99	2.21	3.25	2.23	2.54

Low ratings in the first questionnaire suggest that at first, students were skeptical about videoconferencing, but their views had changed by the second survey when they had become more positive about the online session:

> *"When comparing videoconferencing and face-to-face teaching, I think the disadvantage of videoconferencing is that discussions cannot be held directly, but I have found that this is not a problem if breakout rooms are utilized. I think there are many advantages to videoconferencing, such as not having to choose the location, being able to discuss with many people without worrying about where to sit, and being able to speak up without being shy."*

Teacher A conducted the course entirely online, and at the end of the semester videoconferencing was the most preferred teaching mode for her students. In the case of Teacher B, a mixed approach was used. Consequently, the ratings are high for mixed instruction, Similarly, in Teacher C's case, a mixed teaching mode was preferred, which is in line with the instructor's decision. With Teacher D, the mixed instructional mode was the most favorable, but videoconferencing also received similar ratings, which reflects his mainly online approach. This finding indicates that the majority of students felt that the decision of the teacher was most appropriate for the course. If the students enjoy the activities during class, they tend to lean towards the preference of the teacher. The results suggest that various ways of teaching can be favored by students if the teaching style is motivating and engaging for them. This finding was also confirmed in the qualitative responses of the students:

> *"No problem whether classroom or not."*
> *"I think either is fine."*
> *"I think in-person classes are as good as videoconferencing classes."*
> *"The current system is the best."*
> *"We will need some skils to speak in online conference in the future. So videoconferencing is valuable to grow these skills."*

DISCUSSION

The Influence of the Teacher

A key point emerging from the research is that students tend to support their teacher's decisions, as indicated by Table 4. Teacher A taught an online course and the students rated videoconferencing-only most highly, while the three teachers who taught a mix of classes got the highest ratings for that approach. Also, Teachers A and D, who emphasized videoconferencing, had much higher ratings for videoconferencing-only in contrast to Teacher B, who focused more on in-person classes, and Teacher C who had a 50/50 balance. In this study, all four teachers were experienced in both online teaching and in-person teaching. Students tended to rate the option that their teacher chose.

Student Diversity of Opinion

In all classes, although there was a group preference for a particular mode of teaching, there were

clearly a range of opinions on online and in-person classes. Some students preferred online classes, whereas others preferred classroom-based teaching. Teacher D's experiences indicate that in general, his students wanted to try in-person classes, but in the end, seemed to prefer online classes. Teacher B conducted informal in-class polls to evaluate student opinion and felt that responses were strongly influenced by the day and other classes prior to and following his class. For example, in situations where students had an online class before or after their class, more students had a preference for online classes than in other groups.

Time Pressure on Teachers and Students

One important factor in the decision-making of the teachers for their courses is time pressure. This was noted by Teacher B, who felt he could work on research as well as teach on days when he used videoconferencing. With in-person classes, large chunks of time and energy were taken up with commuting and other tasks. Also, online classes were very useful for teachers and students in the case of make-up classes, taught when teachers had been absent due to conferences or sickness; teachers and students did not have to commute to the university on weekends, the time when such classes are usually re-scheduled.

Not Just In-Person Classes

One interesting finding is that, in general, students do not want in-person classes only. This might be explained by the length of the courses, which consist of sixteen 90-minute classes. Students may like to have a break from classrooms, especially in their first year at university when they take a lot of courses. In addition, some of the qualitative feedback indicates that students recognize the value of being able to communicate through videoconferencing software, a useful skill that they can develop. Another advantage to having online classes is that students who are mildly ill or cannot get to university for some reason can still join a class. In addition, it is much easier to vary the groups so that students can talk to different people during videoconferencing.

Organizing Online Classes

All four teachers taught classes via Zoom and in similar ways, with 30 minutes of self-study and about 60 minutes of interaction. Teacher A taught the course fully online and felt that there were technological advantages. She used a visual presentation system which was effective on Zoom. Also, with the option of writing on the Zoom screen, students' understanding was supported more efficiently compared to an in-person class. All students could share content in breakout rooms and work together, which helped support social interaction. Technology was particularly important in a research task that students undertook in breakout rooms. They could browse websites together while sharing screens and write notes on the same screen. This made group work more efficient and supported the group dynamics.

Student feedback from RQ2 indicates that after experiencing videoconferencing sessions from their teachers, who had two years of experience of managing such classes during the COVID-19 pandemic period, students felt they were effective, enjoyable, and convenient. Also, as some students have noted, being able to work together online is an important skill to develop.

A clear advantage felt by all teachers was that students could be grouped and re-grouped very easily in contrast to in-person classes, in which they would speak to the same people throughout the class, usually the

people sitting next to them. It was also a convenient way of teaching because teachers were using their own workspaces.

Disadvantages to online teaching involve issues with technology, particularly with lost connections and computer problems. Also, the speed of the class can be slightly slower as it takes time for students to move in and out of breakout rooms, and it is harder to monitor students than in an in-person class.

Organizing In-Person Classes

Two different approaches were taken in relation to in-person classes: Teachers B and D used essentially the same style as their online classes, giving students about 30 minutes for self-study on Moodle, and then doing an interactive session. Although Teacher B at first found it slightly awkward to be in a classroom in which he was not actively interacting with the students, he soon adapted to it, and he felt it added to the atmosphere of study. Although students could talk quietly to each other during the 30 minutes, most worked silently, and Teacher B felt this meant they were ready to talk during the interactive session. Teacher C used the whole 90 minutes as an interactive session. For him, the advantage of teaching in the classroom was that students were able to meet their friends in an enjoyable atmosphere, more easily ask their teacher questions, and receive considerably more feedback. He was also able to introduce supplementary material and tasks not directly related to the topic of the unit, and the students appreciated the variety that this provided.

The Learning Management System

From the teachers' perspective, the university's LMS has been very useful for communicating with students and setting up accessible materials for them. For a speaking class, it also had the advantage of allowing teachers to create self-study tasks relating to input and vocabulary. The LMS tasks created for the course were also beneficial because they were automatically marked and allowed teachers to check whether students were keeping up with their studies for these tasks. Such tasks could also be studied at each student's own speed rather than the standard lockstep approach that needs to be taken in a taught session. Feedback from students indicates that they found the LMS to be effective and convenient but not necessarily enjoyable. While input and vocabulary tasks are a necessary part of the class, students are likely to prefer interacting with their teacher in the taught part of the class. Teacher C's students were less enthusiastic about the LMS, and he wondered whether he had put enough emphasis on Moodle. One explanation for the slightly lower rating could be that his course had a slightly heavier workload for in-person classes, in which he taught the full 90 minutes and students did the Moodle tasks for homework. For the other three teachers, Moodle tasks were integrated into class time. Immediately after doing these tasks, they then did an interactive session that linked to the LMS work. In contrast, doing the tasks for homework in Teacher C's class may have been seen as more of a chore and less enjoyable by the students.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on the provision of university courses in Japan. In the case of the authors of this article, it led to a high level of cooperation and planning, resulting in a carefully designed flipped learning approach involving an LMS and videoconferencing. With the option of returning to the classroom, the authors retained a great deal of the approach that had worked during a period of crisis.

Our study involved four teachers and 32 English-speaking courses at a national university in Japan. Perhaps the key observation that emerges is that if students feel an experienced teacher has done a good job, then they tend to favor the way that the teacher taught the course. The group of teachers involved in the study had been driven to greatly enhance their technology skills during the COVID-19 pandemic and, with the option of a return to classrooms, they continued to use the technology in similar ways. In general, students, following their teachers' decisions, like the idea of a mix of in-person and online classes or a fully online course. As the post-course results (Table 4) indicate, they do not seem to want a fully in-person course.

An interesting aspect of the research has been the student observation that it is important to develop videoconferencing skills. Our future research will be oriented towards how tasks can be developed that encourage students to work collectively through videoconferencing, not only to develop their English language skills, but to operate effectively when they are interacting through video screens.

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APPENDIX 1. Online Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (1st Week)

1. What is your class day and period for the Communication 1A Speaking classes?

   _____

2. During the last three years, how often did you experience videoconferencing classes on Zoom, Teams, etc?
   Often Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with these statements.

   Video-conferencing classes are effective.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are enjoyable.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are convenient.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are more effective than in-person classes.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

4. Please write your opinion on videoconferencing classes in a few sentences:

   _____

5. During the last three years, how often have you used a learning management system (LMS) such as Moodle or Google Classroom?
   Often Sometimes Rarely Never

6. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.
   LMSs are effective.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

LMSs are enjoyable.

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

LMSs are convenient.

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

7. Please share your opinion of learning management systems such as Moodle or Google Classroom in a few sentences.

---

8. At high school, what was your interest level in the following subjects?"

Your favorite subject

4: very interesting (++) 3: interesting (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: not interesting (-) 1: absolutely not interesting (--)

Your least favorite subject

4: very interesting (++) 3: interesting (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: not interesting (-) 1: absolutely not interesting (--)

English

4: very interesting (++) 3: interesting (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: not interesting (-) 1: absolutely not interesting (--)

9. Please list the three (or more) most important websites or educational technology tools that helped you to learn English during the last three years.

---

10. What is your opinion on the way English speaking classes should be taught?

Video-conferencing only

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

In classroom only

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

A mix of video-conferencing and in classroom teaching

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

11. Please explain your answer to Question 10 in a few sentences.

APPENDIX 2. Online Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (16th Week)

1. What is your class day and period for the Communication 1A Speaking classes?

   _____

2. How were your English Speaking classes taught this semester?

   Online In person Both online and in person

3. What was your overall opinion of the Zoom sessions during this semester?
   Very good (++) Good (+) Not so good (-) Not good (--)

4. What was your overall opinion about the classroom sessions?
   Very good (++) Good (+) Not so good (-) Not good (--)
   I did not have classroom sessions (0)

5. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with these statements.

   Video-conferencing classes are effective.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are enjoyable.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are convenient.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

   Video-conferencing classes are more effective than in-person classes.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

6. Please write your opinion on videoconferencing (Zoom) classes in a few sentences.

   _____

7. If you had in-person classes (taught in the classroom), please write your opinion in a few sentences.

   _____

8. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.
   LMSs are effective.
   4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

LMSs are enjoyable.

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

LMSs are convenient.

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

9. Please share your opinion of the LMS we used (Moodle) in a few sentences.

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10. What was your overall opinion of the mid-semester evaluation task in June?
    Very good (++) Good (+) Not so good (-) Not good (--)

11. What was your overall opinion of the final evaluation task in July/August?
    Very good (++) Good (+) Not so good (-) Not good (--)

12. What was your overall opinion of the online "research and present" task about each country?
    Very good (++) Good (+) Not so good (-) Not good (--)
    My class did not do this task. (0)

13. Please list the three (or more) most important websites or educational technology tools that helped you to learn English this semester.

---

14. What is your opinion on the way English speaking classes should be taught?
    Video-conferencing only
    4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

    In classroom only
    4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

    A mix of video-conferencing and in classroom teaching
    4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

15. Please explain your answer to Question 14 in a few sentences.

---

16. In the future, regarding terms 3 and 4 from October, what is your opinion on the way English writing classes should be taught?
    Video-conferencing only
    4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

In classroom only

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

A mix of video-conferencing and in classroom teaching

4: strongly agree (++) 3: agree (+) 0: neutral (0) 2: disagree (-) 1: strongly disagree (--)

APPENDIX 3. Author/Teacher Reports

Author A had ten English language speaking courses during the semester and chose to teach the courses online via Zoom and Moodle, the learning management system of the university. A normal class consisted of two parts: in the first 30 minutes students worked on Moodle tasks and there were also links to relevant videos on YouTube so that students could get a feel for the places in a unit that gave a setting to the material. Self-study was followed by an hour-long live Zoom session to provide speaking practice for the students. This style of teaching had worked well with students during the pandemic, and Author A decided to continue teaching the course online but with some changes in the speaking tasks on Zoom. To promote the idea of "learners as researchers," Author A placed emphasis on a research task during the Zoom session. On Zoom, the live session started with a warm-up Quizlet game to review vocabulary from the previous week's unit, and it was followed by an interactive cultural content quiz, where students' responses were displayed on the screen. The quiz was related to the topic of the discussion and the YouTube content. This was followed by a "research and report" task where students worked in small groups to find out more about the country under discussion while browsing the internet, and they presented their findings in front of the class. This task enabled them to explore the culture of the country which was covered in the unit. Students could discover new information by themselves in English, take notes, and share their findings with others. The task promoted learner autonomy to foster students who are able to work on tasks, delegate roles in a group, and access and identify necessary information for themselves. With the rise of AI technology, Author A felt that looking for key information and using it effectively is an important skill that should be fostered in students.

After the research task, students studied and practiced a dialogue and a key expression from the unit. In the last task, students talked about some discussion questions in groups. The final evaluation was conducted online in the form of presentations. Students shared their slides on Zoom and presented a summary and reflection about a unit in the textbook.

Author B decided to experiment with a combination of in-person classes and online classes, but placed more emphasis on in-person classes. As an initial strategy, in the first term, he taught the first four classes in person, the fifth and sixth classes online, and the remaining two classes in person (the eighth class consisted of a written evaluation task, which the students did on paper). In the second term, the first five classes were in person, and three classes were online. Two of the online classes were at the end of term, the seventh class being a review period, which only involved a short time online, and the last class was a set of online oral evaluations.

In terms of structuring classes, Author B used the same approach both in-person and online, which had worked well in the online years of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the in-person classes, after a brief introduction, the teacher gave students approximately thirty minutes to complete Moodle tasks for the relevant unit, and he then taught the students for roughly fifty-five minutes with the aid of PowerPoint slides. Students usually worked on four tasks: describing a picture in a few sentences, practicing a dialogue, practicing a key expression from the unit, and talking about five discussion questions. If there was any time remaining, the teacher filled it either with general knowledge questions in English or a very short problem-solving task. Online units followed a similar structure, with students joining Zoom about thirty minutes after the beginning of the class. There were no fillers because organizing students online was slower, and sometimes there was no time for feedback on the discussion questions.

Author C's approach was, as with Author B, to experiment with a combination of in-person and online (Zoom videoconferencing) classes. However, unlike Author B, in-person and online classes were given equal weight: The first two classes were held in the classroom, and then classes were held alternately online and in the classroom. The final class of the first term was held in person, with the students being given a written evaluation task. The final class of the second term was also held in the classroom, with evaluation being carried out in the form of small-group discussions.

Although initial informal feedback seemed to suggest that the students would prefer to be taught in the classroom, after a few weeks of experimenting with both modes, it became apparent that students could see the benefits of both and were happy to continue with a mixed approach.

Author C's approach to online classes was similar to that of Author B, with the first 30 minutes of the Zoom lesson devoted to task preparation, and the remainder of the time used for a warm-up quiz, practicing the key expression, dialogue practice, and discussion questions. However, in the classroom, Author C used the whole 90 minutes for pair work, group work, and whole-class interactive tasks. It was a more traditional paper-based lesson with the textbook, often with handouts, and students were asked to complete the Moodle tasks for that unit before coming to class.

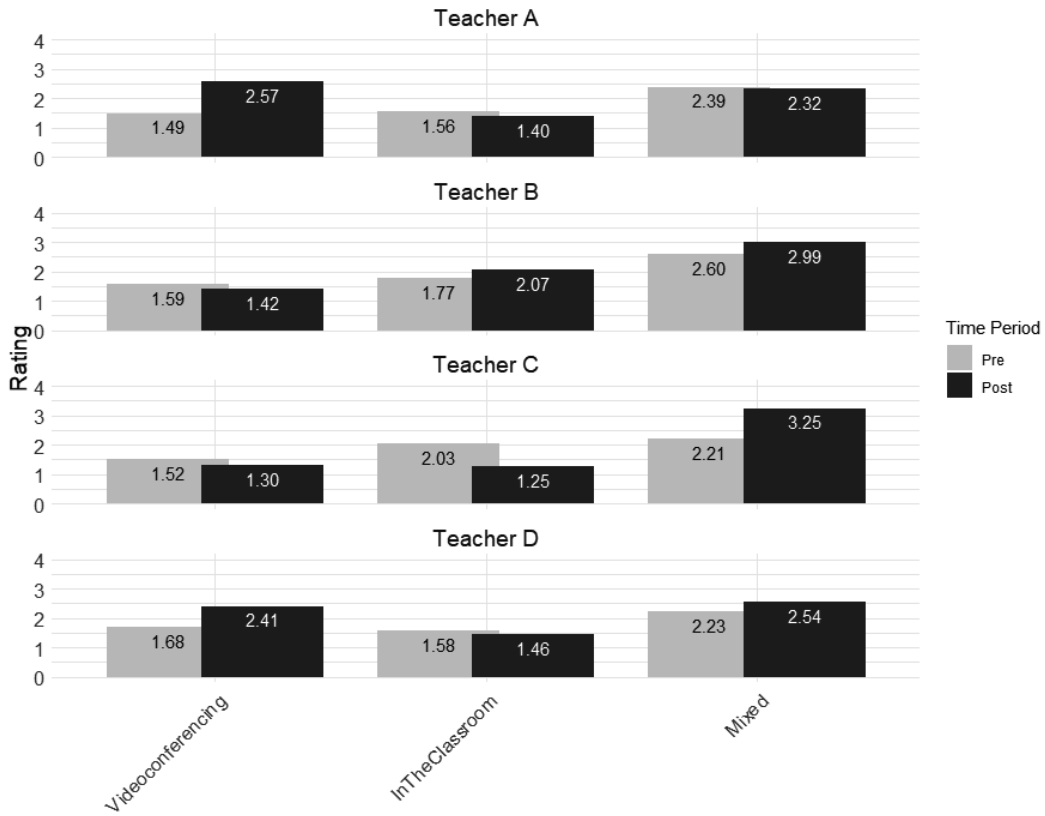
Author D conducted the first class in-person with an initial strategy to transition to an online format for subsequent sessions (from the second to the 16th class). This decision was influenced by a survey from the previous term involving author D's students (n = 164). In this survey, 60% favored continuing online learning for speaking and writing classes from April 2023. Additionally, 29% were open to both online and in-person methods, while 11% favored moving back to the in-person mode.

After a few online sessions and a subsequent learning attitudes survey, Author D found that a majority of students had a preference for a mixed approach to classes. Consequently, Author D reverted to in-person instruction for four classes (the 10th to 13th). Author D conducted a final one-question "face-to-face or online" survey in the 11th class. The results indicated that 55% preferred the online mode (via Zoom), 33% were amenable to either format, and a minority (12%) leaned towards in-person sessions. Based on this feedback, the final three classes (from 14th to 16th) were conducted online. Within terms 1 and 2, Author D taught 11 online classes and 5 in-person classes.

For each unit, Author D employed a flipped learning model: Students were tasked with answering questions from the textbook via Moodle. Students were asked to complete half of these questions for homework and the remaining half could be done during a 25-minute self-study session at the beginning of

each class. Subsequently, Author D conducted class-wide activities sourced mainly from the textbook for roughly an hour. The activities and steps included: (a) discussing the warm-up questions while referencing visual aids; (b) delving into pre-dialogue information for comprehension and context; (c) focusing on the second dialogue, with collective Q&A sessions, followed by speaking practice in breakout rooms; (d) a concerted practice of the "key expression," which was then employed by students in pairs within breakout rooms; (e) concluding with broader whole-class discussions and further paired breakout room discussions; (f) occasionally, a vocabulary exercise or a team-based game using the Quizlet application was introduced.

APPENDIX 4. Comparison of Student Ratings for Speaking Class Methods



ABSTRACT

Exploring the Impact of Technology Decisions in English Language Speaking Courses

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In the academic year starting in April 2023, language teachers at Hiroshima University had a variety of options available in the way that they delivered courses. An important decision was whether to teach classes through videoconferencing software (Zoom) or to teach in person in a classroom. Another decision to be made was how and when to use the university's learning management system (LMS), Moodle, in relation to the classes.

In this article, we summarize the way that we taught our 16-week English language courses to students in the first half of the 2023 academic year and analyze students' responses to the use of the LMS and videoconferencing. All the authors used the same core materials in the form of a textbook and LMS tasks connected to it. However, the means of delivery ranged from a fully online course using the LMS and Zoom to mixed courses involving some videoconferencing classes and some in-person classes.

In relation to the findings, all the authors continued to use the technology that they used during the COVID-19 pandemic when they had delivered fully online courses. However, the way they used these technologies tended to vary. In addition, the results of the questionnaire survey indicate that as groups, students tend to support the decisions of their teacher. Also, one reason why they like videoconferencing classes is because they realize the importance of developing skills in online communication.

要　旨

英語スピーキングクラスにおけるテクノロジー活用に関する調査

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2023年4月から始まる年度において，広島大学の語学教員は，授業の提供方法について多様な選択肢を用意していた。その中で重要なのは授業の実施方法であり，ビデオ会議ソフト（Zoom）を使用した遠隔授業か，教室での対面授業かというオプションである。また，大学の学習管理システム（LMS）である Moodle を，いつ，どのように活用するかについても判断を下さなければならなかった。

本稿では，2023年度前期16週間の英語コースで学生を教えた方法をまとめ，LMS とビデオ会議の利用に対する学生の反応を分析する。すべての著者は，教科書とそれに関連する LMS 上の課題からなる同一の主教材を使用した。しかし，授業の実施方法は様々で，LMS と Zoom を使用した完全なオンラインコースもあれば，ビデオ会議と対面授業を組み合わせた混合コースも存在した。

調査の結果，全ての著者が COVID-19のパンデミック時の完全オンライン授業で採用していたものと同じシステムを使用していたことがわかったが，その活用方法は千差万別であった。また，学生は教員の決定を支持する傾向があることが見えてきた。学生がビデオ会議システムを利用した授業を好む理由のひとつに，オンライン・コミュニケーションのスキル習得の重要性に対する認識が挙げられる。