

Analyzing Beginning Learners Usage Patterns on Moodle

Kaori Wada

Abstract

This is a report of beginner-level English university students in a Japanese private university. The previous report (Wada, 2006) showed how learners use an online platform inside and outside of the class, how the online course led learner's autonomy both inside and outside of the class, and how the materials in the online course supported learners to create output in English on the online tasks. This report describes the learner usage patterns, and the relationship with their course grade, such as low, medium or high, and also attitude and motivation toward learning language through the semester. How students use the online course materials, such as free listening websites, online dictionary and grammar exercise features, for example, matching, gap-fill and word order exercises, on the online course during the semester is explored. What time during the day do learners often access to the course more? What is the most effective way to manage the instruction how more interactive way throughout the online course? Additionally, this study attempts to show what learners really feel and did on the online course from their interview reaction at the end of the semester supports future instruction.

Key terms: learner autonomy, Moodle, usage patterns

1. Introduction

The Moodle online course has many useful features such as online forum, chat room, uploading, sharing materials, giving assignments and feedback, grading, creating and sharing a glossary and monitoring of all enrolled students. All of these features are packed on the website (see Wada, 2006). The previous report introduced each feature, and how beginning learners use them. This paper deals with the relationship between the learners' usage pattern of the online course and their attitude and motivation toward learning language. This Moodle online website was used with beginner level English university students, spring semester 2006, at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, a private university. It was used in two Introduction to English classes. The participants were international EFL students from Korea, China, and Mongolia with a TOEFL score range of about 350 to 400 or above. The first year students were required to take this course so there were a wide range of English levels in the same course.

2. Frequency of learners' access

The course design covers basic skills such as basic verbal communication skills, basic writing and reading skills, basic listening comprehension skills and cultural and content-based communicative activities in a content-based second language context. The course of the Introduction to English for the beginning English learners has a textbook which includes supplemental worksheets for grammar exercises, and review quizzes. The textbook contained the basic grammar forms in every chapter. In the regular class instruction, the instructor use the content of the topic from the textbook, and then the learners were interacting about the

content of the topic while reviewing the target grammar form in every class time. The instructor asked all learners to share their ideas or opinions after the face-to-face interaction both inside and outside of the classroom in the forum section before the next lesson. Usually there was no extra time for students to post their opinions, and discuss their experiences inside of class time; therefore, most of the students had to type their message outside of the class. Especially for the forums, when students post their message, the user must edit the original message within 30 minutes; after 30 minutes, they can't edit the message. Therefore, if they are not ready to post a discussion topic, they should not start typing. They need to work on the paper with pen first or, for example, start typing with the Microsoft Word document first, and then after they have a clear idea, they can type their message in the forum section. Also, they can just start again from the beginning, adding the new topic.

The forum view (*Figure 1*, below) shows their post or reply time. The administrator of the online course can easily find out when or who posted or replied to the message instantly in the forum. This feature is similar to the system for the WebCT "discussion", but it's much more attractive for learners to use rather than the one for WebCT since it displays their picture ID and different fonts, colors and sizes. Learners often change the word color and size, and also use a pictorial symbol. The instructor recognizes that it is not always necessary to modify the message; however, learners enjoyed using this function. It simply helps them produce output in the target language with pleasure.

When students have to post their opinion after the lesson, most of them were posting until the next class. Students knew if they didn't post their message, it would be easy for everyone to recognize on the forum screen. Therefore, students were required to post their opinions before the next class. The users basically had about two forum themes per week. Therefore, they had time to prepare their opinion. The textbook also had some examples for students to adapt useful phrases. The instructor asked learners to reply to at least five messages to their classmates as homework. At that time, they had to read each others' messages, and then reply to their comments. All of these duties led the learner to access the online course outside of the class. Also, it gave them the opportunity to create output in the target language rather than learning language only with the textbook inside of the class.

The several features of this online course, such as, *forum*, *chat room*, and *glossary*, required all users to read the other classmates opinions or stories, and reply to the person directly. The instructor is the administrator of the course; therefore, it is possible to see how often each user visited which sites and how long they spent to complete tasks throughout the semester. This online course supports the instructor to see the individual learner's learning tendencies.

3. Equality of learners' computer learning environment

These days, most of the learners are able to access the online course from anywhere 24 hours a day as long as they have Internet access connection. In one of the courses, almost all learners lived in the dormitory of the university, so even though they didn't have their own computer, they were able to use a computer with an Internet connection in the dorm after school. However, learners who lived off campus often found it difficult to access the online course after school. Such users needed to find the time to do online assignments before the next lesson between their own registered courses. Those users who had the difficulty needed to work on a paper or their notebook first, and then retype or rewrite again on the online course whenever they had time to use a computer at school. Also, they could submit their work with paper to the instructor when they couldn't work online. As a result, the instructor could see when users did their online tasks, or how often

each user accessed the online course.

4. Learner autonomy

All enrolled users need to enter their ID and Password when they login to the course. The online course was organized by weekly format (see Figure 1). On the top of the website, there is general course information. After their login, they will see both general information and the weekly information (see Wada, 2006). As the course covers one chapter per week, the weekly format was organized by chapters of the textbook. Each of the features is recognizable with their symbol marks for users. Learners can view the all of the forum view, or glossary view by clicking the screen. The learners' access times were counted during the period. Sometimes the simply visited the website for about five minutes, and sometime their continuous work period lasted for about two or three hours. The "Report" tools show the instructor how many times each learner visits the website, and the time, and how often they posted messages or viewed other's messages. When learners have multiple choice grammar review exercises, the program recorded how many times it took to complete the review test, how many times they attempted to take the test, and the score. According to the recorded data, we can see the each learner's patterns of usage including usage during class time.



Figure 1. The view of the Moodle online course web page

5. Access rates during the semester

According to the usage patterns, most of the users were accessing whenever they had to do some assignments after each lesson. However, during the mid-term break and short breaks, only certain students, who often accessed the online course, were constantly visiting to do some grammatical exercises during the period. According to the data, even after the semester ended, several users were still accessing the course. Sometimes, the users just visited the main site to check the updated information, and occasionally, they spent two or three hours to edit the glossary words and messages in the forum. All of the above shows how much the learners in this course customized their access to the course in their daily schedule.

To look at how learners access the free online websites, such as *dictionary*, *google image*, *greeting card*, *free listening exercise website*, *phonics for kids*, *TOEIC daily exercise website*, and *Hot Potato* grammar exercises such as dictation, matching, and word orders exercises, online courses were set up with several

resources on the main page. Users were able to use them at anytime. *Google image* is a search engine with a key word; it immediately gives images of the words. Therefore, the learner often typed English words of the topic, and then attached the images with their discussion messages. Google image was useful when learners posted the message on the forum section; sometimes it was helpful to have the image with their message. As I mentioned above, the users were beginning English learners and international students. We often exchanged information about their own culture, such as food, clothes, and things in their country or from their cultural background. Without images, it is difficult to understand what the student wants to say or share with others. The access rates of the Google images are probably not accurate because of the way they are accessed. The website is popular website, so, learners can directly go to the website without logging in to the online course, and therefore, the number might be not accurate.

As the online dictionary is basically an English-to-English dictionary, most of the beginning learners were not comfortable using this type in class and instead used their own mobile dictionary with their first language or in Japanese. The students were Japanese-based students when they entered the university; therefore their Japanese levels were good enough to communicate in Japanese outside of the class. That's why most of the learners have Korean-English, Japanese-English, and Chinese-English mobile dictionaries. They tried to use the online dictionary for their glossary assignment work. It required defining the word meaning in English with their own words. If they copied the dictionary or other their resources, it was easy for the instructor to recognize. When learners used the online dictionary, not only for the glossary, but also whenever they want to check out the word meaning, they just clicked the dictionary, and then searched the word meaning with the online dictionary website. Unfortunately, we could not record what words they used the dictionary for on this online course. However, we were able to just record how many times and when they used the online dictionary website.

Online listening 1 and 2 had many different kinds of situational listening materials for the various users. The user could also select different levels of listening. Therefore, every semester, the instructor introduced students to the different kinds of contents and English levels the website provides them in the beginning of the semester. That also led to learner autonomy outside of the class, and also learners had more of a chance to hear the native English speaking real English. They needed to have opportunities to listen to a native speaker's communication including music and cultural issues, so it is mainly set up as a self-study resource.

The phonics section provides phonetics exercises to the ESL learners. The webpage was basically created for native English speakers' children who are developing their mother tongue while watching and playing with the alphabet. Without exception, the users in my course enjoyed playing with this website without any fear. It provided sounds of the alphabet which included the difficult sounds for non-native English learners such as R and L, "th" sounds etc. The users were able to repeat the exercises at their own pace. Furthermore, learners could see the cultural differences between the regions of English speaking countries and their own country by using these authentic online materials. Therefore, it was set up as another one of the self-study online resources on this course.

The TOEIC exercises website was a Japanese website with navigation in Japanese. When the students accessed the site, they had daily exercises such as multiple choice questions of grammar, vocabulary, and phrases. Unfortunately, according to the usage pattern, not many students were accessing the website during the semester. During the interview, the instructor asked learners about that; however, it was not clear why they didn't use the site as the same as other websites. It might be that it was all Japanese instruction, or they didn't like the daily exercise for the TOEIC, or they were not interested in the TOEIC practice during the

semester. As a result, the resources of the TOEIC exercise might be not necessary to have for the beginning learners in this course. Table 1 shows all learners' access frequency. The highlighted number was the highest access for each online website.

Online Resource lists		Google image	Online dictionary	Online Listening 1	Online Listening 2	Phonics exercise	Practice TOEIC Test	Practice TOEIC 1	Practice TOEIC 2
S1	F	0	4	5	8	7	1	0	0
S2	M	6	2	10	2	5	1	0	0
S3	M	0	17	2	1	3	4	2	0
S4	M	4	2	2	1	1	2	0	0
S5	F	2	1	3	0	2	2	1	1
S6	M	2	30	4	4	3	3	1	0
S7	F	21	3	3	2	4	20	2	2
S8	M	0	2	2	1	5	3	1	0
S9	F	14	1	3	1	3	5	0	1
S10	M	1	5	2	2	1	2	3	1

Table 1. *Accesses of online resources*

The next section explains in more detail how learners actually use the features of the online course, such as forums, chats, and glossary tasks.

6. Forums

Learners were required to add their own discussion topic and message in regard to the class activities. After they posted their message, all learners were required to read other classmates' message, and then they had to reply directly to the writer. The users needed to write about their own experience or opinion on the each forum theme. They also were allowed to attach supportive image files with their messages and website information on their message. Therefore, the supportive information with their original message helped readers to understand what they wanted to say. To analyze how much the users accessed one of the websites, which was the Google image website as I mentioned earlier, learners searched the images with an English key word, and tried to find an appropriate image. The users often shared their customs, foods, and cultural background; therefore, so it was difficult to explain all in English. The instructor requested that learners attach the image with their message, but made sure that they did not update only images as their discussion message. Learners also accessed Google images directly without logging in to the course, but it didn't matter how much they used the website. What mattered was how effectively they used the images with their message.

		Access numbers Total (22)	Actual Posts	Actual replies	Post and reply Total
S1	F	47	20	1	21
S2	M	42	22	0	22
S3	M	73	17	8	25
S4	M	97	19	2	21
S5	F	131	21	*10	31
S6	M	54	12	10	22
S7	F	227	20	0	20
S8	M	70	19	0	19
S9	F	165	21	0	21
S10	M	69	17	*11	28
Total		975			230

Table 2. *Accesses result for the forum sections*

Table 2 shows learners' access frequency, actual message postings and reply times during the semester. There were in total twenty-two discussion topics throughout the semester. The access numbers shows learners were not just posting messages, but also reading others' messages on the forum sections. Therefore, the numbers were up to 200. Most of the learners posted their message from 17 to 22 times. According to the number in Table 2, S-2 had only 42 accesses to the forum section. However, he had 22 posted messages and zero replies. S-7 had 227 accesses and 20 posted messages with zero replies. Just looking at the difference between S-2 and S-7, we can see how much S-7 read other messages when S-7 accessed, the forum section compared to S-2. Both of their posted messages were acceptable. S-5 and S-10 had 10 and 11 replies respectively for the others. However, they replied to other classmates with the same messages that were recognized according to the records. In the first forum topic of "getting to know you", for example, S-5 replied to everyone with "I like to read newspaper. How about you?", S-10 also replied to everyone with a similar sentence: "I like to sing. How about you?." They both copied their original reply to the message to every other classmate. That's why I put * in the Table 2. As a result, even though they had a chance to read each others' messages, they didn't reply a lot. S-3 and S-6 were talkative and active in class and replied more in the forum sections. Therefore, it might not be a matter of their gender difference. Learners were rarely afraid of posting their message because of having errors in their writing and not having confidence in their writing. However, in the class, sometimes the instructor pointed out their basic errors on the forum section. The students sometime pointed out their grammatical and typing errors to each other. Having more opportunities to use the language will help them to gain even more confidence. Therefore, the forum assignment was set for almost every chapter of the course.

7. Chats

The course sometime asked learners go to the online chat room in class. Learners started typing and reading the messages to each other the same as for other general chat room. The discussion was held inside of the online class chat room. Everyone could see who wrote which message by their own profiled picture and nicknames. All users enjoyed having a chat in English by reading and typing their messages. Everyone could read all messages after they clicked the chat room; however when all students used one chat room, many

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messages were usually overlapped. Although user A replied to B in sequence, however, the other user, C, replied to D at the same time. On the screen, we can see the message order of B, D, A and C, for example. Even with this condition, they enjoyed continuing the conversation despite the overlap. The instructor called or typed privately to students who were not chatting. These students often replied that they were just reading the messages, and they couldn't type their message quickly. There isn't much time for reading and typing at the same time for lower level students. Here is an example of their chat session below.

Teacher : What do you like to do on this weekend?
S-3 : hi
Teacher : I hope we have a nice sunny day on this weekend.
S-6 : haven't we?
S-1 : I ony know a little English, but I will study hard.
S-6 : don't we?
Teacher : What would you like to do on this weekend?
S-3 : Yes everyday is fanny
S-4 : i like to watch TV
Teacher : "FUNNY"?
S-6 : sunny
Teacher : Who will have a party on the weekend?
S-10 : play football
S-1 : I like to slepp all the day ,bu thing I con not get it
S-6 : there is a lot of sunshine now.
Teacher : Who is going to spend time for sleeping on this weekend?
S-1 : I think I can not.
S-6 : a party?
S-3 : upgrade my blog
S-6 : i want to have a party
Teacher : You are teenagers, so please study hard and play a lot!
S-11 : want to have a party
S-11 : I
S-10 : I am going to Oite City
S-4 : I iovesoccer
Teacher : S-4, what are you going to do on the weekend?
S-2 : ??
S-10 : what is your mean?
S-9 : I am going to
S-4 : I.....I.....I.....dont no
S-9 : go
S-9 : go shopping
S-2 : know??
S-6 : ri ni
S-10 : have not
S-3 : don't be afreid

- S-2 : cao
- S-3 : i'll go shopping too

According to the session record, gender differences are not obvious from this except. Again, it seems that students who have more communicative skills type more messages. It might depend on their personality. Students who often respond to the teacher and their classmates inside of the class has more attempts at interaction than only reading the other classmate's chat session. Also, the students who had a low English level were afraid to interrupt the others' conversation, but did ask others to help on how to express their opinion and comment in English, sometimes in the chat session and sometime orally. Those students were very shy about attempting activities in class as well as online. In contrast, the students who had no fear of applying new things were often active workers. Even though the chat sessions were only in the last 15 minutes of the lesson, we could see the amount of their natural output during their sessions. If the instructor used different types of online features, it would lead learners to create a natural style of interaction. Table 3 shows how many times the each learner attempted the chat sessions. The 1st session was April, 18th and the 2nd was April 21st. Both were held in the last minutes of the class. The themes were different In Appendix A and B; it is possible to see all the session records. S-5, S-7 and S-8 were usually quiet students. Therefore, for them the number of chat attempts was less than S-6 who had the opposite personality.

		Chat 1(4/18) (20 minutes)	Chat 2 (4/21) (15 minutes)
Teacher		29	34
S1	F	10	14
S2	M	15	18
S3	M	13	(absence)
S4	M	6	(absence)
S5	F	3	2
S6	M	22	29
S7	F	2	3
S8	M	0	3
S9	F	11	13
S10	M	22	7
S11	M	3	3

Table 3. Chat message numbers records

It was the first time for all users to do the chat session in class. The two chat sessions were held at the beginning of the semester (see Appendix A and B). One session was held in the second week, and the other was the 3rd week. Students had typing errors and different types of errors in the chat session. The chat sessions were typically at the end of the class time. Learners could interact through the device of chat tool even though they were all in the same classroom. Most of them enjoyed communicating with each other by typing and reading. This chat could have been held outside of the class time. We didn't have a chance to do that during the semester, however. In future instruction, the chat session might be set outside of class.

According the records of the session, the beginning English learners were having natural communication by using English in their real interaction through the chat. The chat sessions led learners to use more language

rather than just sitting in the classroom. The students had face-to-face interaction in class, and also experienced different types of communication in the target language. This led them to use the language more than without using the online communication features.

The instructor didn't point out their grammatical errors during the sessions. The beginning learners needed a chance to use language rather than focusing on the accuracy of the language use such as grammar and spelling. Having spelling errors and grammatical errors led to more natural communication in the forum of confirming the message through negotiation of meaning. The students were checking the meaning of their message by themselves. After the session, the instructor pointed out the common grammatical errors in class, and also mentioned the basic English rule of using capital letters and lower-case letters. The users were Asian international students, such as Chinese, Korean and Mongolian. Therefore, the English education of certain regions was similar in the sense that learners typically learned language for university entrance examinations, so they were used to rote learning. It shows that adapting the chat feature leads to natural communication in English among the beginning English learners even though it was held in the classroom.

8. Glossary

In the glossary section, learners were required to define the word meaning. The instructor gave them two or three words from the textbook, and then learners tried to describe the word meaning with their own sentences. Table 4 shows how many times each learner accessed the glossary. When learner worked to edit a glossary word, they were allowed to use a dictionary. The instructor told them they were allowed to use the key words in the dictionary, but not to copy the whole sentence and definition from the dictionary.

Glossary works											
Chapters		1	2	3&4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
S1	F	0	1	30	14	6	8	17	5	8	89
S2	M	0	0	40	7	3	11	0	17	1	79
S3	M	0	4	23	13	5	13	13	17	0	88
S4	M	0	1	0	8	4	14	5	19	11	62
S5	F	1	7	11	14	11	29	28	25	11	137
S6	M	1	6	7	29	0	0	1	1	3	48
S7	F	7	23	29	8	7	16	5	23	22	140
S8	M	8	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	3	15
S9	F	3	11	14	6	11	12	11	12	8	88
S10	M	0	0	1	4	3	3	1	23	11	46

Table 5. *Glossary work result*

According to Table 5, S-5 and S-7 worked hard on the glossary section. As mentioned earlier in the chat section, their characters were rather passive; however, the two female students preferred to do this kind of individual tasks instead of interacting with others. S-8 only accessed the glossary 15 times because he gave up on making statements of the word meaning. In the interview, several students mentioned that the glossary assignment was not necessary and useful because it was difficult to do. Comments suggested that some learners were lazy to admit challenging themselves enough to create their own sentences in English. It is not an easy task to define the word meaning in English. However, this process supports students in developing output. When they access the dictionary, moreover they have a chance to read authentic English. The

instructor told them in class it might be a lengthy task to find out the word meaning when using an English-English dictionary, such as an online dictionary, but that they should challenge themselves to use the English material when they learn. Learners, who understood the importance of this concept of why they were defining the word meaning with their own words or sentences, might have been motivated to do tasks online.

9. Hot Potato Grammar Exercises

The instructor set up the grammar exercises on the online course because of a necessity to have the exercises after the review tests for the course. The enrolled students were graded on several skills including their review test score for their final grade. However, the review test supported the grammatical points of each chapter, but for lower level students it was not enough to have exercises after the review test. Just in case learners might need to take the test again in the future, the quiz order was randomly shown to the test-takers every time, so, they were able to focus on the exercises. The feature scored their test whenever they completed the exercise, and then the instructor could see the access record. Figure 2 shows the view of the grammar exercise for users and the score monitor for instructor. The participants can see the questions on their computer screen either one-by-one or all questions together. Only the instructor could see all participants' attempted result and time on the screen.

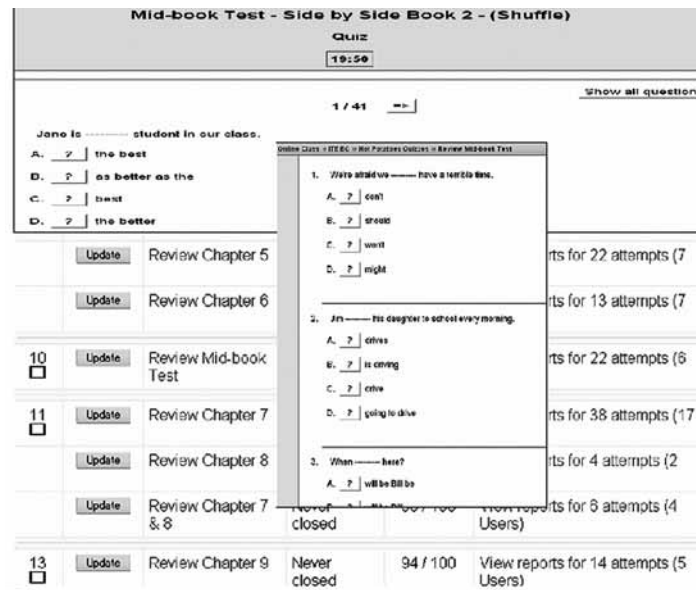


Figure 2. The view of a Grammar Review Quiz and the score view for instructor

Table 6 shows how each learner accessed the review test exercise during the semester. The top of the table was the chapter number. The record runs from the placement test to review test 13, including the mid-book test of the textbook. Each chapter test has 25 questions, and the placement and mid-book test has 50 questions. They were all multiple choice grammar exercises. The number in brackets shows their completed test numbers in Table 6. When they could not complete the exercise, students usually started in class after the instructor mentioned that the exercise was ready. Basically, the instructor asked learners to do the exercise whenever they had time, so, some learners had many attempts and couldn't complete the review test.

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		P	R4	R5	R6	Mid	R-7 & 8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	Total	Complete
S1	F	4(1)								1			5	1
S2	M	1				1		1	1	1			5	0
S3	M	2(1)	2(1)							1			5	2
S4	M	2	1			3	1						7	0
S5	F		6(4)	6(2)	3(2)	6(1)	1	1(1)	2(2)				21	12
S6	M		1(1)	3(2)	1(1)		3(3)	4(1)	2(1)	1(1)	2(1)	3(1)	20	12
S7	F		12(2)	8(1)	1	4(1)	3	6(1)	6(3)	3			43	8
S8	M		1(1)	2	2	2				1			8	1
S9	F			1	2(1)		3			1		1	8	1
S10	M	5(1)		1(1)	1(1)		2						9	3
													131	40

Table 6. Multiple Grammar Review Tests attempted number records

According to Table 6, learners who have more continuous access to the online course have noticed the grammar exercises, so they have more attempts than others (see S-5, S-6, and S-7). It seems that learners have relaxed to take the review exercises after the real review test using paper and pen. Of course, it is not related to their grading after the test, but the mid-book test and final tests were testing the same grammatical points again. Accordingly, the instructor asked them to review by themselves before those tests.

In the online course, the instructor used Hot Potatoes software to create exercises with five functions, such as Match, Cloze, Quiz, Cross, and Mix. It was very helpful because the instructor could use the words, sentences, and reading texts that were taught in class. Gap-fill exercises were similar to cloze-type exercises. The learner needed to use their own Audio CD which was with their textbook. Sometimes, in the beginning of the class, learners could do the exercises reviewing the last lesson with the Audio. It was good for them to type the key words in these exercises, sometimes the content words and verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, depending on the grammar focus. This is all for self-study outside of the classroom. Figure 2 shows the view of each grammar exercises view for the gap-fill exercise, matching, and word order exercises.

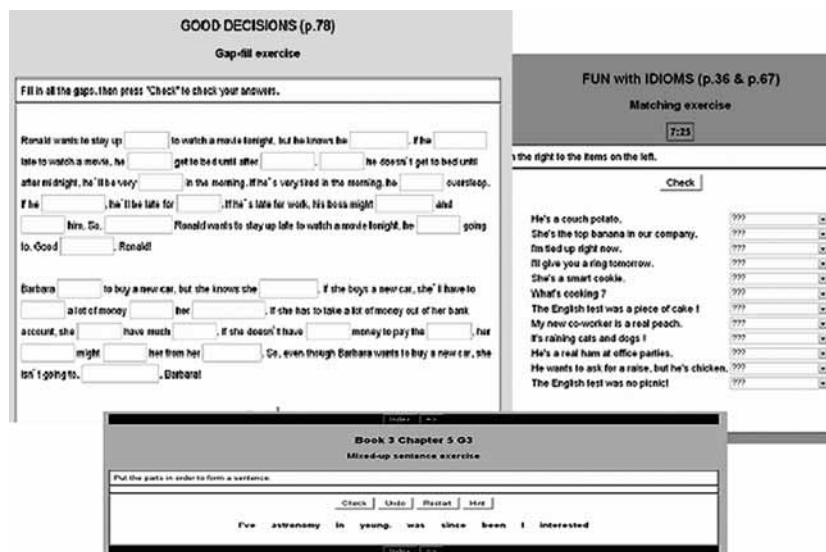


Figure 3. The view of the exercises with the Hot Potato software

The matching exercises were the same as the textbook and workbook exercises. On the paper, learners just checked their answer as when students and instructor checked the answers in class. The instructor wanted to give learners more online exercises rather than just checking the answer on the paper. One of the matching exercises was from the textbook that had an idiom section; therefore, learners matched the idiom phrases and definitions together on the online course. Table 7 shows how many times learners attempted the exercises during the semester. The total numbers mean the numbers of different matching or gap-fill exercises.

		Match Exercises	Gap-Fill Exercises
		Total (7)	Total (21)
S1	F	9	29
S2	M	3	16
S3	M	5	3
S4	M	11	19
S5	F	22	51
S6	M	11	24
S7	F	13	24
S8	M	7	11
S9	F	7	14
S10	M	9	16
		97	207

Table 7. Grammar exercises access number record

10. When do learners access to the online course

The online course users who live in the university dormitory were mostly accessing at night. They were taking other courses during the day; thus, few students were accessing the online course right before or after their registered course. When the course was in the morning, a few students tried to complete their online tasks in their free time on campus because the users were able to use the computer with the Internet connection in the computer room. In fact, according to the data, most of the student accessed at night between 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Table 7 shows the data when users accessed the online course. It was counted just as access time. As a result, sometimes one of the accesses had two or three hours continuous use, and some students just visited the main page of the online course. This meant that the student didn't do anything; they might just have logged in to see the updated news on the top page.

		Total logs	Midnight - 6:00	6:00 - noon	Class (A.M.)	noon - 18:00	Class (P.M.)	18:00 - midnight
S1	F	1335	13	3	21	10	9	22
S2	M	1058	16	8	22	10	13	16
S3	M	1242	12	7	15	30	10	22
S4	M	1281	7	0	19	5	11	6
S5	F	1518	18	4	23	15	10	36
S6	M	1227	5	1	22	8	14	18
S7	F	2110	10	4	19	17	12	39
S8	M	782	4	1	17	6	10	6
S9	F	1594	13	4	22	17	13	33
S10	M	1143	11	0	23	6	17	17
Total		13290	109	32		124		215

Table 8. Users access time range

11. From the interview and the result of the questionnaire

One student commented that the glossary assignment was useless. However, after the conversation, the instructor recognized that it was difficult to create a definition of the words with their own words. According to their result of the glossary work, even though the instructor told them to not to copy directly from the English dictionary, some students copied exactly the same definition as in the dictionary. It seems that sometimes they were not sure which word to use for their definition statements. In every chapter of the textbook students had several words to use in their own definition on the online course. It is not always easy to create the definition, however. When they do this task, they are trying to access authentic English on either their mobile dictionary or online dictionary on the Internet. At that time, they have to read and comprehend the word definition, and try to rewrite the definition with their own words. This learning procedure is what the instructor intended students to do inside and outside of the class to develop their language skills.

Also, according to the questionnaire result, students responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with using the online course during the semester. In the interview, they had no problem using the online course, but the task was not always easy, they said. However, they actually accessed more than what the instructors expected. According to the learner expectations, most wanted to gain more English vocabulary. The class didn't have the vocabulary quizzes during the semester but instead had the grammar review test and glossary tasks. The instructor was looking for the most effective way for learners gain certain vocabulary knowledge throughout the course.

12. Supporting studies and future prospects

One study in Hass (2006), particular, pointed out that how E-learning and the classroom instruction support autonomous learner. His students' evaluation data suggested that quality education needs to have "blended learning" that mixes, offline/online learning systems. In the present report, the data is not enough to see the individual user tendencies. It is important to point out, however, the important relationship between students language competence and their motivation toward learning language both inside and outside of the classroom. Without the instructor's directions, learners are able to access the online materials whenever they have time. Other language instructors using Moodle have their student access with their mobile phone (Thornton & Houser, 2005). These days, most learners have their own mobile phone with them, so although the users cannot do all the features of the Moodle with their mobile phone, but six mobile phone modules are available, such as forum, quiz, check feedback, and quick mail effective two feature is. In the future, it might be an experiment for the instructor and learners to examine how.

13. Technical problems of managing user data during the semester

One problem related to use of data gathered during the course is that some of the data was lost to technical problems: Somehow the user had to enroll in the course again and again when they could not login automatically. After they typed the enrollment key, they could log in, and at that time, their previous data was brought back on the online course. Therefore, this report just focused on one of the courses which had no technical problems. The number of user was limited (10). However, according to their usage patterns, we could learn what the most effective way is to guide the students self-learning outside of the class. Except for having the technical problem, users had no difficulty in accessing this online course.

14. Limitations of the learning environment

In this report, all users were international students who lived in the dormitory and had an Internet connection. Accordingly, users who had many accesses during the night until early in the morning had no problems with the learning environment. During the previous semester, users who did not have an Internet connection in their apartment outside of campus had limited access time to work, such as posting their own discussion topic, and replying to their class mates, although they did generally have full access to Moodle at home. Even though the data shows most of the users had the same learning environment, we could see the different patterns among the users. According to this statement, the limitation of the learning environment is not a serious issue for the users.

15. Conclusion

This online platform, Moodle, is useful and easy to set up, and for the instructor to adapt to their own class. The course has beginning English learners at various levels. Previous studies pointed out the possibilities of the effective CALL instruction and ways to lead learners' self-study through CALL (Culhane, 2004). Online courses support learners who want to learn by themselves to develop their own language skills and have access to free online materials such as listening websites. Also, learners who were shy to speak in class were able to communicate. Learners who need to time to think about their opinion can work outside of the class, and then share with their classmates. This report had limited data to examine the enrolled learner's tendencies. Future studies should cover more statistical data to see the details of the relationship, some of which will be generated through action research with beginning learners of English.

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Appendix A

The Online Resources

- Moodle Free support: <http://moodle.org/>
Online dictionary: <http://dictionary.com>
Google image: <http://www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi>
Sending greeting card: <http://www.greetingcards.com>
Phoenix exercise: <http://www.starfall.com>
Elllo, English Listening Activity: <http://www.elllo.org/>
Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab: <http://www.esl-lab.com/>

Appendix B

Session 1 (about 20 minutes)

Time: Tuesday, 18 April 2006, 11:50 AM -- Tuesday, 18 April 2006, 12:10 PM

11:39 Teacher : What would you like to do on this weekend?
11:39 S-3 : hi
11:39 Teacher : I hope we have a nice sunny day.
11:40 S-6 : haven't we?
11:40 S-10 : I only know a little English, but I will study hard.
11:40 S-6 : don't we
11:40 Teacher : What would you like to do on this weekend?
11:40 S-3 : Yes everyday is funny
11:41 S-4 : i like to watch TV
11:41 Teacher : FUNNY
11:41 S-6 : sunny
11:41 Teacher : Who will have a party?
11:41 S-10 : play football
11:41 S-1 : I like to sleep all the day ,but thing I can not get it
11:41 S-6 : there is a lot of sunshine now
11:41 Teacher : Who is going to sleep in in this weekend?
11:42 S-1 : I think I can not
11:42 S-6 : a party ?
11:42 S-3 : upgrade my blog
11:42 S-6 : i want to have a party
11:42 Teacher : You are teenagers, so play a lot instead of sleeping all day!
11:42 S-11 : want to have a party
11:42 Teacher : and, also study hard
11:42 S-11 : I
11:42 S-10 : I am going to Oite City
11:42 S-4 : I lovesoccer
11:43 Teacher : with your girlfriend?
11:43 S-6 : ?
11:43 S-2 : how are you
11:43 S-6 : do you have you GF?
11:43 S-4 : I
11:43 S-10 : I am fine
11:43 S-6 : your GF?
11:44 S-9 : hello
11:44 S-1 : this weekend I 'll take a party ,to my friend
11:44 S-10 : ?
11:44 Teacher : S-4, what are you going to do in the weekend?
11:44 S-2 : ??
11:44 S-10 : what is your mean?

11:44 S-2 : who is S-10??
11:44 S-9 : I am going to
11:44 S-4 : I.....I.....I.....dont no
11:44 S-10 : me
11:44 S-9 : go
11:44 S-6 : do you have a girlfriend?
11:44 S-9 : go shopping
11:44 S-2 : know??
11:45 S-6 : ri ni
11:45 S-10 : have not
11:45 S-3 : don't be afreid
11:45 S-2 : cao
11:45 S-3 : i'll go shopping too
11:45 Teacher : Let's change the topic from now.
11:45 S-6 : ok
11:45 S-10 : I have gf before 6 years
11:45 Teacher : Please share your birthday episode.
11:45 S-2 : yes
11:45 S-1 : me too
11:46 S-6 : mine?
11:46 Teacher : If you had a nice or bad birthday party with your friend before, please let us know it.
11:46 S-9 : what are you doing now
11:46 S-3 : my birthday is 3.20
11:46 S-6 : only mine?
11:46 S-10 : 0102
11:46 S-2 : my birthday~~
11:46 S-4 : S-2, hlep me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
11:46 S-2 : 0922
11:46 S-9 : S-5, what are you doing now
11:46 S-10 : 0102
11:46 S-5 : what are you going to do now?
11:46 Teacher : Who has the birthday in this month, April?
11:47 S-10 : eat
11:47 S-11 : 0809
11:47 S-6 : i'm 0811
11:47 S-2 : we are talking ~
11:47 S-1 : I had a verry good birthday party .last year
11:47 S-9 : i am not going now,every day
11:47 S-2 : me too
11:47 S-6 : this month
11:47 S-6 : !!!
11:48 Teacher : Please tell us about your birthday, again.

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11:48 Teacher : What kinds of presents did you get on your birthday?
11:48 S-4 : terday, I
11:48 S-5 : S-9 and I talking
11:48 Teacher : Did you eat a birthday cake, special food and drink on your birthday?
11:49 S-2 : yes
11:49 S-10 : today?
11:49 S-6 : me too
11:49 S-2 : eat birthday cake
11:49 S-1 : I get a lot of kinds of presrnt
11:49 Teacher : Is the typical birthday cerebration in China different from Japanese one?
11:49 S-3 : drink brithday wine
11:49 S-6 : i want to have the meat in beppu
11:50 Teacher : How do you count your age?
11:50 S-2 : my birthday sime to my friden
11:50 S-9 : my birthday is 5 month
11:50 Teacher : every New Year's day
11:50 S-5 : my birthday is 4month
11:50 S-10 : 27
11:50 S-6 : yes
11:50 S-3 : WOW
11:51 S-10 : yes
11:51 S-1 : I think chinese birthday party is same to jappan,in the young peopol
11:51 S-7 : my birthday 3.30
11:52 S-3 : I'm 20.
11:52 Teacher : What you can do now, for example, you can take a driver license...
11:52 S-1 : my birthday is 12 24
11:52 S-3 : Xmas EVE
11:52 S-10 : 2 January
11:53 S-10 : 0102
11:53 Teacher : S-1,do you have your birthday party with the X'mas event or separated from the X'mas party?
11:53 S-1 : what
11:53 S-3 : I have once
11:53 S-10 : no
11:53 S-10 : have not
11:53 Teacher : I asked S-1.
11:53 S-10 : oh
11:54 S-3 : i'm sorry
11:54 S-10 : thanks
11:54 S-1 : different time
11:56 Teacher : Now, let's move on to forum section to post your own birthday story.
11:56 S-3 : 88
11:57 S-2 : see you

11:57 S-9 : see you tomorrw
11:57 S-2 : tomorrow see you ~

Appendix C

Session 2 (Total 15 minutes)

Time: Friday, 21 April 2006, 11:55 AM >> Friday, 21 April 2006, 12:10 PM11:55

Teacher : Hi, all
11:55 S-6 : hi
11:55 S-6 : Hi.all
11:55 Teacher : Tell about foods you like and you dislike.
11:55 S-2 : I like to eat meat very much!!
11:56 S-6 : i like banana very much
11:56 S-2 : hello ~ everyone
11:56 Teacher : what kinds of meat do you like to eat
11:56 Teacher : Pork ? Chiken ? Beaf ?
11:56 S-2 : all~
11:56 S-10 : pig
11:56 S-6 : pork
11:56 S-2 : and dog
11:56 S-9 : i like to meat
11:56 S-6 : pork and beaf
11:56 S-9 : pig meat
11:57 Teacher : What kinds of the way of cooking do you prefer?
11:57 S-9 : pig and beaf
11:57 S-2 : and hituji
11:57 Teacher : For example, baking, boiling, etc
11:57 S-10 : Snake
11:57 S-6 : i have been to zhe yakinikumise for 3 times
11:57 Teacher : lumb
11:57 Teacher : How often do you eat snake?
11:57 S-5 : chicken meat
11:57 S-9 : fresh beaf
11:58 Teacher : Again, tell about foods you like and you dislike.
11:58 S-6 : i don't like syouga
11:58 S-5 : i like to eat fruit
11:58 S-7 : I like a beefsteak very much.
11:58 Teacher : Syouga is ginger in English.
11:59 S-6 : thank you
11:59 S-11 : i like cake
11:59 S-2 : wellcom
11:59 S-9 : i like to meat and fruits very muh
11:59 S-1 : I like yogurt

Analyzing Beginning Learners Usage Patterns on Moodle

11:59 S-6 : it tastes terrible
11:59 Teacher : Beef steak sounds very delicious. I'm really hungry now.
11:59 S-9 : me too
11:59 Teacher : S-11, what kinds of cake do you like?
11:59 S-9 : hungry
12:00 S-8 : I like fish
12:00 Teacher : For example, Chocorate cake, cheese cake, cream cake ...
12:00 S-1 : I'HUNGRY too
12:00 S-6 : me too . what about coming back and have our lunch?
12:00 S-11 : yes
12:00 S-6 : now
12:00 S-9 : cream cake
12:00 S-6 : i did'
12:00 S-6 : i did
12:00 S-9 : chororate cake
12:00 S-1 : wat are you going to cook?
12:00 Teacher : Everyone, which foods you don't like to eat or smell ?
12:01 S-6 : i didn't have my breskfast
12:01 S-10 : noodle
12:01 S-6 : stop
12:01 S-2 : I don't like ginger too
12:01 Teacher : Do you like to eat Natto with rice ?
12:01 Teacher : Ginger is good for your body.
12:01 S-1 : I think I dong't have
12:02 Teacher : Great ! S-1!
12:02 S-8 : I don't like mayonnaise.
12:02 Teacher : Do you like to eat vegetables?
12:02 S-1 : I like the all food ,I really want to eat something
12:02 S-6 : stop talking food . i am really hungry now .
12:02 Teacher : For example, carrot, green pepper, tomato, onion, etc...
12:03 S-7 : I don't like cheese
12:03 S-11 : me too
12:03 S-1 : do you like monglian food?
12:03 Teacher : Did you have a bad memory with cheese, S-7?
12:03 S-2 : ???
12:03 S-6 : everyone .do you like yakiniku?
12:04 Teacher : What is the most popular and famous Mongolian food, S-1?
12:04 S-2 : I like it
12:04 S-1 : I like like
12:04 S-6 : let's go to have yakiniku together?
12:04 S-2 : her home tone's food
12:05 S-1 : I think it is meat

12:05 Teacher : "her home tone's food" What does the mean, S-2???

12:05 S-6 : town

12:05 S-8 : where ?

12:05 S-7 : yes.I have.so,I don't like

12:05 S-2 : Mongolian is her home tone~

12:06 Teacher : town

12:06 S-2 : towne

12:06 Teacher : No, town

12:06 S-2 : town

12:06 S-6 : town

12:06 S-1 : the monglian food is verry delicious

12:06 S-2 : so ~

12:06 Teacher : Do you recommend one of them?

12:06 S-6 : yes

12:06 S-6 : will you ?

12:07 S-1 : yes ,you can try to eat

12:07 Teacher : S-6, do you also know some Mongolian food?

12:07 S-6 : no i don't know

12:07 S- 2 : ramu

12:07 S-1 : but i dond have now

12:07 S-10 : I am hungry

12:07 S-6 : i think sina will recomend one to us

12:07 S-2 : so

12:08 S-2 : I think so too

12:08 Teacher : Okay, everyone. Your homework is writing about one of your favorite foods in the forum section.

12:08 S-9 : i koow

12:08 S-1 : if I got some i'll

12:08 S-9 : i know

12:08 Teacher : Please post your idea by next Monday.

12:08 S-2 : tanosimi

12:08 S-1 : yes !

12:08 S-6 : how many words should i write?

12:08 Teacher : Please give your chapter 1 worksheet before you go.

12:09 S-6 : answer me

12:09 Teacher : See you next week, have a nice weekend

12:09 S-6 : please answer me

12:09 S-6 : how many words?

12:09 S-10 : see you next week

12:09 S-9 : have a nice weekend

12:09 S-1 : have good time the weekend

12:09 Teacher : It is on the section. You can check

Analyzing Beginning Learners Usage Patterns on Moodle

12:10 S-6 : ok .thank you . Have a good weekend .
12:10 S-9 : goodbye
12:10 S-6 : may i come back ?
12:10 S-10 : sa yo na la

Appendix D

Student Questionnaire for using the Moodle online site

Class _____ Date _____

Please read the following questions carefully, and then put into the ().

1. Was the website easy to follow during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
2. Was the website easy to use during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
3. Was the website helpful for your English during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
4. Does the website meet to your requirement during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
5. Were the online materials easy to use during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
6. Was the forum easy to do during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
7. Was the homework assignment easy to do during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
8. Was the glossary useful during the semester?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree
9. Did you use this online material enough outside of the class?
() I strongly agree () I agree () I disagree () I strongly disagree

<Comments>

Please give your comments for the following thing you can use either languages in English or Japanese.

Any comments about the course textbook

Any comments about online material

Any comments about home works (worksheets, online homework)

Any comments about whole lessons (lesson time schedule, and activities, etc...)

Appendix E The result of the questionnaire

	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9
1. I strongly agree	12%	12%	25%	12%	12%	0%	12%	0%	0%
2. I agree	50%	88%	63%	38%	38%	75%	38%	50%	63%
3. I disagree	38%	0%	12%	50%	25%	25%	50%	38%	25%
4. I strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	12%	12%

(n=10)