要　　約

Blended learning in a university EFL course

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The ultimate aim of the research project reported in this dissertation was to investigate means which may be effective in encouraging university students in Japan to improve their English language skills through sustained study outside of class. The hypothesis was that student use of online learning materials would be frequent and sustained over an academic year in a blended learning (BL) course (see for example, Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003), which integrated online outside-of-class learning study and in-class learning tasks.

The research project explored whether learning tasks, in both online and in-class aspects of a BL course, which aimed to develop students' capabilities for self-regulated learning (SRL) would encourage online outside-of-class study. A role for constructive teacher-student communication in SRL skill development was studied through the use of student self-evaluation tasks mediated by an e-mentoring system and face-to-face communication with a teacher in class.

To create a BL learning environment in which a teacher could facilitate the development of SRL skills online and in class, an innovative flipped learning course was developed and implemented which integrated online and in-class study. Flipped learning, in this project, was defined as a form of BL in which students completed English language-skill development study materials, which included an e-mentoring component, online outside of class and received personalized problem-solving guidance from the teacher in class.

In order to foster students' outside-of-class study, a variety of original English as a foreign language (EFL) e-learning materials were developed and provided to students. The e-learning model used in this study was student outside-of-class study which utilized a learning management system (LMS). The use of the LMS was monitored by class teachers and in this way, it was integrated with in-class learning tasks (E-learning Consortium Japan, 2007). However, it has been found that university students in Japan may not engage in sustained participation in outside-of-class e-learning tasks. It was reported that only 0.8% of all students in a Faculty of Foreign Studies in a university,

Japan, continued their outside-of-class study for one year (Mochizuki & Katagiri, 2003). According to a survey carried out with 48,233 Japanese university students, approximately one out of four university students believe that everything necessary to learn should be taught in class and that they should not have to learn independently outside of class (Center for Research on University Management and Policy, The University of Tokyo, 2007).

However, students' expectations are not in line with government-approved guidelines for study. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology in Japan (n. d.) recommends, according to the Standards for Establishment of Universities (1956), which is currently used as a guideline, that university students study about 8 hours a day including in-class and outside-of-class activities. A survey conducted by Center for Research on University Management and Policy, The University of Tokyo (2007) found that on average only 4.6 hours per day were spent on study: 2.9 hours of in-class activities and 1.7 hours of outside-of-class activities.

Therefore, in order to explore a solution to this problem, the impact of a BL course on learners' online outside-of-class study was investigated. Even in a BL environment, Ishikawa, Kondo, & Smith (2009) found that some students did not access e-learning materials provided in EFL classes outside of class. This heavy reliance of students on in-class study may be explained by findings that teacher intervention plays a dominant role in the learning of Japanese university students (Kondo, 2009; Takeuchi, 2008). Thus, there is an urgent need to explore ways in which students can be encouraged to spend more time outside of class in independent study. Student engagement in outside-of-class e-learning activities within a BL environment is one solution to this problem which should be investigated.

However, a review of previous research on BL revealed sobering findings and concerns about the effectiveness BL courses have had in engaging students in outside of class online study over long periods of time. In order to overcome the reported weaknesses of BL practices, a BL environment in which a combination of in-class activities and outside-of-class activities was integrated in a single learning environment by a web-based courseware, ATR CALL BRIX (http://www.atr-lt.jp/products/brix/index.html) was developed for this study. The courseware featured a LMS. The LMS contained a variety of learning materials to prepare students for the TOEIC Listening and Reading Test. A learning module was created for the LMS which was intended to

foster student SRL practices. The learning module was integrated into the courseware according to the principles of the phases of the continuous academic learning cycle described in the work of Schunk & Zimmerman (1998) which was further developed by Cleary & Zimmerman (2004) in order not only to help improve students' TOEIC scores, but also to nurture student SRL. SRL is defined as a set of proactive study processes which students use to manage their own learning by making decisions about their own learning goals, by selecting and deploying learning strategies and by self-monitoring their own effectiveness as learners (Zimmerman, 2008).

There is consensus in the SRL literature that SRL depends on students being independently willing to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills; but more importantly, also on students being able to sustain their motivation over long periods of time with self-satisfaction being the main reward (Blumenfeld & Marx, 1997; McCombs & Marzano, 1990; Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2004). The nature of this challenge makes the appropriate design of SRL tasks a vital matter for educators. SRL is "the process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviors, and affects, which are systematically oriented toward attainment of their goals" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, p. 309).

Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner (2000) stated that self-regulation involves a number of integrated micro-processes for learning, such as metacognitive self-awareness-raising for goal-setting, strategic planning, as well as the use of effective strategies to organize, code, and store information through the monitoring of learning. Furthermore, they claim that volitional control is necessary to manage time effectively, to generate and sustain sufficient levels of motivation, and to carry out evaluation and self-reflection. They found that intrinsic interest in the learning topic coupled with high self-efficacy, the belief that one has the ability to succeed, is the basis of positive student expectations of effective learning which can lead to the development of an ability to sustain goal-orientation over long periods of time. In addition, Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner (2000) believe that experiences of pride and satisfaction with one's own efforts are key elements in the creation of a congenial learning environment.

SRL may be "teachable" (McMahon & Oliver, 2001, p. 1304) because it is not tied to intangible, and perhaps unalterable, concepts such as intelligence, and not passively acquired from the environment. Schunk (1989) advises that the development of self-regulation is not an automatic process for all learners. Thus, efforts to apply

instructional strategies to facilitate the development and growth of both in-class and outside-of-class study skills into an integrated set of SRL skills may be best supported by collaborative efforts which involve reflective thinking on the part of both teachers and learners (Symons, Snyder, Cariglia-Bull, & Pressley, 1989; Shin 1998).

In order to establish these collaborative efforts and reflective thinking practices for both teachers and learners, an original student self-evaluation system was developed for this project which combined e-mentoring in the LMS of the web-based courseware outside of class, and weekly in-class self-evaluations as part of the course routine. E-mentoring may establish a mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a student when the mentor advises and encourages the learners by modeling effective learning behavior in ways that are often boundary-less for the teacher and the learner, egalitarian, and qualitatively different from traditional face-to-face mentoring (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). These e-mentoring characteristics can be used to support SRL, develop a strong student sense of self-efficacy, and help build relationships among students as well as between students and teachers that contribute to effective learning (Norton, 2005; Chang, 2004; McKenzie & Ozkan, 2006).

However, other research has found that although the use of digital communication channels to supplement face-to-face communication is cost- and time-efficient, exclusive reliance on e-mentoring may not result in student satisfaction (Salmon, 2004; Thompson, Jeffries, & Topping, 2010). This problem may be overcome by enhanced teacher mediation (Chang, 2005). In this research project, teacher-student communication was made a key component of the online and in-class student self-evaluation system.

Investigations of projects which encourage independent English language study for academic purposes may make a contribution to the development of English for academic purposes courses. A BL approach may provide students with the support of EFL teachers that they need to engage in the study of content courses in their academic disciplines in English.

Further directions of research should investigate the potential of BL to encourage learner-to-learner collaboration that leads to the development of SRL. Research should also be conducted to investigate the type of support needed by BL instructors, who have never conducted e-mentoring and are only accustomed to advising students in

conventional classroom situations, to learn to adapt their teaching skills. Effective e-mentoring may be able to enhance student-student, teacher-class, teacher-individual student communication. Thus, research should attempt to identify which particular types of e-mentoring may be most effective in encouraging SRL.