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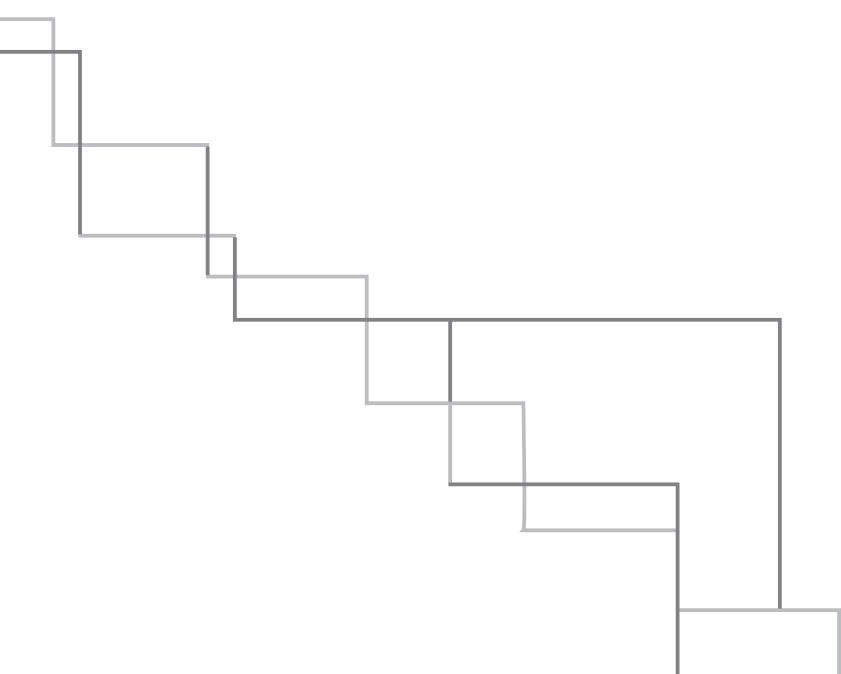
【Practical Reports】

A Proposal for Using Google Classroom to Implement a Content-Based
Integrated English Course

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and Clayton A. CAMPBELL

【実践研究・実践報告】

Google Classroomを使ったContent-Based総合英語授業の提案 キング グレゴリー
キャンベル クレイトン



A Proposal for Using Google Classroom to Implement a Content-Based Integrated English Course

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Abstract

With the surprise onset of the COVID-19 pandemic coinciding with the beginning of the 2020 schoolyear, many, if not most, universities were compelled to hold classes online instead of in person. This necessitated a major re-working of curriculum to support an online learning format. This article presents insights into the challenges and successes encountered in transforming a face-to-face content and language integrated learning (CLIL) English and culture course into a manageable online version. Some of the challenges included managing student engagement, executing testing on a digital platform, dealing with a lack of normally realized student collaboration, and a shortage of teacher-student face-to-face interaction. Although it was a difficult semester for both students and teachers, we recognized some positive outcomes. Students often appeared more comfortable presenting from their own homes. Furthermore, teacher collaboration and task sharing were high, which enabled the vast majority of the curriculum to be successfully delivered. In addition to details related to creating an online course on Google Classroom, there are also insights regarding utilizing parts of the online course in a standard face-to-face classroom situation. Given the current climate of uncertainty related to public health, a forward-looking approach might be advised to include coursework converted to an online format in an attempt to futureproof curriculum against potential eventualities.

Key words

English education, online learning, Google Classroom, content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

1 Introduction

A successful language program is one that is constantly reflecting upon and reevaluating itself. In the spring semester of 2018, the Department of English Language and Culture changed the way Integrated English (IE) A and C were conducted. This continued in the fall semester with IE B and D. These are part of the core English classes that students take in their first two years in the program—IE A and B in the first year and C and D

in the second year.

This class shifted to a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) style focusing on students learning about the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and other English-speaking countries. The details of the class will be discussed later in this paper.

The spring semester of 2020 presented the teachers of IE A and C with a challenge since face-to-face classes were not being conducted. In

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addition, the university's Course Power platform seemed to be a bit archaic, but luckily the option of using Google Classroom emerged, albeit quite late.

This paper will describe the contents of the two classes and explain how these classes were conducted in the spring semester of 2020.

2 Class contents

This section of the paper will lay out the contents of both IE A and C and provide the framework used for the three topics covered for each class.

In each of these classes, students are presented with three topics containing two readings on each topic for a total of six readings. **Table 1** shows the topics and readings covered in each class.

These classes meet twice a week for a total of 30 times during the semester. One cycle using one topic is comprised of eight classes. **Table 2** shows what one cycle looks like and is described in the third part of this paper.

The remaining six classes are used in the following ways. The first class of the semester is an introduction to the course and a review of the material from the previous course. Of course, for IE A, the first class focuses heavily on explanations about the course and what is expected of the students. This includes an explanation of our extensive reading program, how to register for the websites we are using, and an overview of the class as a whole.

Two of these classes are used for the poster test. Students who are not being tested are expected to be studying for the final exam, which happens on the final day of class. This leaves us with two classes remaining. One of these classes is an explanation of the poster test and the other is a review for the final exam.

3 Conducting class

In face-to-face classes, students spend time collaborating in class. This is primarily related to vocabulary study and comparing answers to comprehension questions. At the beginning of the semester, we were uncertain of the reliability of students' internet connections, so we opted for an approach that mainly used an on-demand type system, although we did have deadlines set for the assignments. Because of this, students were unable

Table 1 Topics and readings for each class

Integrated English A		Integrated English C	
Food	Thanksgiving	Flags & Symbols	The Union Jack
	Sunday Roast		America in Symbols
Music	American Music: Roots and Types	Leaders	Winston Churchill
	The Beatles		John F. Kennedy
Film	Charlie Chaplin	Peoples	The People of the United States
	Bollywood		Peoples of Britain

Table 2 One cycle of classes

Class	Class Contents
1	introduction to reading 1 vocabulary for reading 1
2	vocabulary test for reading 1 read passage 1 comprehension questions
3	content test for reading 1 introduction to reading 2 vocabulary for reading 2
4	vocabulary test for reading 2 read passage 2 comprehension questions
5	choose topics for presentation begin research
6	content test for reading 2 complete research start making posters
7	poster check presentation practice vocabulary for the next reading passage
8	presentations vocabulary for the next reading passage

to collaborate in class. Whether they did this on their own, or not, is unclear.

Most of the classes were asynchronous, so a plan for each class was written. Students were to read that plan in the form of a PDF for each class, which

contained the directions for the class. Deadlines were also set for assignments. For assignments, students had more than 24 hours to complete each task. In the case of tests, there was a set starting and ending time.

This section will give a detailed explanation of how the material was presented to the students.

3.1 Extensive reading

Bamford and Ray (1997) describe extensive reading as “reading large amounts with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. Readers are more concerned with the meaning of the text than the meaning of individual words or sentences” (para. 3). In the past, students would borrow books from the school library or from the graded reader library in our Multi-Media Room (MMR) and then take tests on MReader, a website housing tests that check to see if students have actually read the book. If students are reading at or below their level, they should be able to answer the questions easily. But with students being off campus, we needed to find a solution to keep students engaged in reading since they could not borrow books from the university.

It should be noted that this extensive reading program is a major part of our curriculum and not only a part of IE, but also a component of our English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Communicative Grammar (CG) classes. For IE, first-year students have a goal of reading and passing the tests for 50,000 words. In the past, some students would wait until the deadline approached and read what they were assigned just prior to the deadline.

In an effort to keep students reading constantly, a midterm goal was put in place to encourage students to read throughout the semester. Unfortunately, there were still students who would not do this and only read two times during the semester—before the midterm and end of semester goals. To support this, EAP implemented weekly goals for students. In the fall semester, first-year students have a midterm goal of 37,500 words, and an end of semester goal of 75,000 words. Second-year students have a midterm goal of 50,000 words, and a semester goal of 100,000 words in both the spring and fall semesters. If students fail to reach

the midterm goal, their final grade in IE and CG is lowered by 10 percent. If they do not meet the end of semester goal, their grade in IE, CG, and EAP is lowered by 25 percent. That is to say, if a student finished the semester with a grade of 75% but did not meet the semester goal for reading, their grade would be lowered to 50%, and they would consequently fail the class.

To maintain our extensive reading program, we changed from using the MReader platform to XReading, a platform in which students could access graded readers digitally – both on their smartphones and on their computers. A special grant from Chubu University was used to pay for access to XReading. The same goals used in the past were also used for online learning.

3.2 Vocabulary study

Before students read a passage, they are instructed to study vocabulary. The vocabulary chosen for students to study has been selected by the teachers. Students use a free website called Quizlet to study the vocabulary. This can be accessed using an app on their smartphones or on their computers. Once students join the class, they are able to study all of the vocabulary from the semester. **Figure 1** shows the vocabulary lists for IE C. The students are not given definitions in Japanese. Students are encouraged to use as much English as possible and not rely on translating everything into Japanese.

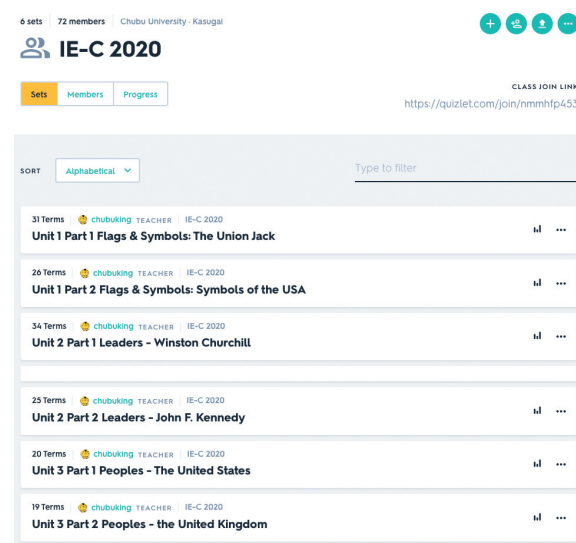


Figure 1 Vocabulary sets on Quizlet

Quizlet has multiple ways for students to study the vocabulary and they do vary slightly between the app for smartphones, and through a web browser on a computer. The “learn” activity has learners match the definition to the correct term. “Flashcards” is simply a flashcard with the word on one side and its definition on the other. “Write” presents the student with the definition and they must type in the correct word. “Gravity” is similar to “write” in that the definition is on a rock falling and the learner must type the correct term before the rock reaches the ground (figure 2). “Match” is a game to see how fast the learner can match the terms with the definition. There is also a “test” function in which students can design their own test and test themselves over the vocabulary.

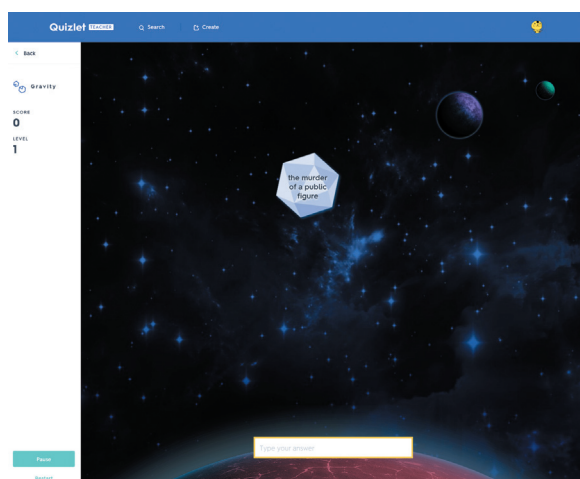


Figure 2 “Gravity” game on Quizlet

Quizlet is not new to IE. We have used it in the past. Generally, students are expected to study the words on their own, but there is a game within Quizlet called “live” in which students are put into groups and must work together using their smartphones to match the terms with their definitions. This was not a feature we were able to use with online learning as students need to be in close proximity to one another.

3.3 Introduction to each reading

The importance of activating students' schemata has been well documented (Coady; 1979, Carrell, 1984). In the case of IE, one lesson is dedicated to getting the students to think about the topic. This is done with a video that they can watch online.

Oftentimes, the videos are found on YouTube, and sometimes they are produced by the teachers.

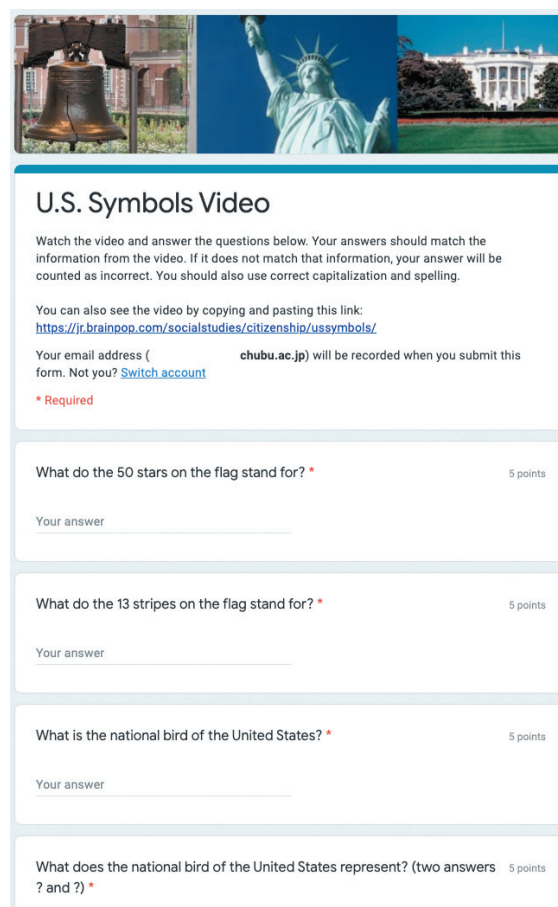


Figure 3 Questions over an introduction video

3.4 Reading passages

Most of the reading passages came from the textbook used in the class with the exception of the passage about Thanksgiving for IE A. This was written by the teachers and uploaded to Google Classroom in the form of a PDF. Before students read a passage, they may have some pre-reading questions they need to complete. After they have read, there are comprehension questions to be completed. Again, these were done through Google Forms within Google Classroom.

3.5 Testing

Students were tested over both the vocabulary (before reading) and the reading passages (after reading). These tests were timed, but monitored by the teachers. If a student had some sort of technical problem, or simply forgot, we would reopen the test for that student and let them complete the test.

One important discovery made before we

administered the first test was that Google Classroom does not release an assignment on its platform at the exact time for which it is set, so for timed tests it is important to manually “assign” or release the tests at the correct time.

To close access to a test on time, we used an add-on called formLimiter. This add-on will change the setting on the Google Form from “accepting responses” to “not accepting responses” at the time for which it is set. This was usually set for one minute past the time students were told the test was over. For example, if students were told the test ended at 12:00, we would set formLimiter to close the test at 12:01. FormLimiter generally took about 30 - 40 seconds from the time we set it to close the test, so the test mentioned above would actually close at 12:01:35.

The final exam was also timed and covered all of the vocabulary and content from the semester. For the first vocabulary test, we had students type in the answers, and points were deducted for word form and spelling mistakes. It seemed that students had a difficult time with this. From the second vocabulary test, we changed it to multiple-choice. Also, all of the words from the vocabulary set being tested were included in a drop-down menu where students could select the correct answer. On the final exam, the vocabulary questions had four possible choices from which students had to choose. All of the content questions were multiple choice.

3.6 Presentations

Presentations are a major part of this class. Students give a presentation on the topic for each unit. They are required to research their topic and input their research notes into a Google Form that will be checked by their teachers. They use these notes to help them decide what pictures to include on their poster. Posters were made on Google Slides and submitted as homework. Students were also required to upload notes on what they would say about each picture on their poster.

For the first presentation, we simply had the students record a video of themselves giving their presentation and then upload it to an assignment on Google Classroom. A rubric made within Google Classroom was used to grade the presentations. We wanted to have students view each other's videos,

but were a bit worried about giving students access to the files. We discovered a way to create groups using Google Meet and set up a link for each group. Groups were limited to three or four students each. After students gave their presentations in groups, they had an assignment to make a video for uploading and grading.

3.7 Poster tests

At the end of each semester, students have a poster test. They bring all three posters that they have made throughout the semester and have a one-on-one interview with a teacher of a different class. The teachers ask the students questions about their posters and the reasons that they chose the pictures. Students must explain everything in English.

For the online class, it was decided that it would be best for the teachers to grade their own students. First, an assignment was made for the students to combine all three Google Slides documents (their posters) into one document. Knowing that combining the three documents would be a challenge for some students, a video was made for the students showing them how to do it.

Over the course of two days, the teachers met one-on-one with the students on Google Meet through links set up for each individual student. The teachers would display the students' posters on the screen and use the cursor to point to the pictures and ask questions. This interview test lasted about five minutes for each student. Again, a rubric made in Google Classroom was used to grade the students. This process worked quite well with most students being ready and online before the teacher entered the Google Meet session.

4 Conclusion

While conducting the IE classes online was a challenge, we generally felt that the semester was a success. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and we did encounter some difficulties.

First, because classes were not face-to-face, we could not see the reactions of students to gauge their understanding. This is important for language teachers when giving instructions in the target language while in class. The instructions for

this class were in written form, so students were able to contact the instructors via email or LINE to clarify meaning. Because they were not in the classroom, students also did not have as much input from listening to the teacher speak in English as they would have in a regular teaching situation.

Second, peer feedback and discussion virtually disappeared. Perhaps a separate Google Form could be used to collect peer feedback from the presentations. Another problem related to presentations was that it was difficult to determine if students were using their notes while presenting. They were given instructions not to use notes, but from listening to the tone of voice and watching the students' eyes, it seemed as if some were using their notes more than they should have.

Third, there was a major problem exposed regarding testing when all of the tests essentially became open-book. We tried to address this by limiting the length of the vocabulary and content tests to 15 minutes each. Future research could compare the scores of the tests from classes in both face-to-face and online learning.

Finally, a particularly troublesome problem we encountered was computer literacy. Students who were not familiar with using computers had problems and this continued throughout the semester. Even with videos showing the students how to combine their three posters into one document, it was a challenge for some. We received submissions from students who had combined all three posters onto one slide, rather than three separate slides within one document. It is possible that the video provided for them was insufficient to

bridge the gap in their technical knowledge, or was not viewed at all.

With a class like IE it is important for students to be able to collaborate and talk with one another. This was not accomplished to the degree that has been the norm. Having live classes, meaning not using an asynchronous format, and utilizing Google Meet more with students in groups would help with collaboration. In the event that classes during the semester are face-to-face, students will still need to practice social distancing. This social distancing does not allow for effective collaboration. In this case, making use of Google Meet would provide more opportunity for effective collaboration.

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Google Classroomを使ったContent-Based総合英語授業の提案

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要 旨

COVID-19パンデミックの突然の始まりは、2020年度の学年初めと一致したため、多くの大学が対面授業からオンライン授業への変更を余儀なくされた。このため、オンライン学習形式をサポートするために、カリキュラムを大幅に作り直す必要があった。この論文では、対面式の言語統合学習英語 (CLIL) クラスを管理可能なオンラインバージョンに変換する際に直面した課題と、成功への洞察をまとめている。課題の一部には、学生関与の管理、デジタルプラットフォームでのテストの実行、通常実現される学生間コラボレーション欠如への対処、教師と学生の直接のやり取りの不足などが含まれる。学生にも教師にも、難しい学期であったが、いくつかの肯定的な良い結果も認めることができた。学生は自分の家からのプレゼンテーションのほうがより快適であるように見受けられることも多く、教師とのコラボレーションとタスクの共有が高く、カリキュラムの大部分が高いレベルで正常に機能した。また、Google Classroomでのオンラインコースの作成に関連する詳細に加えて、標準の対面授業でオンラインコースの一部を利用することに関する考察も含めた。公衆衛生における現在の不確実な状況を考慮し、将来を見据えたアプローチの一つとしては、潜在的な不測の事態に対するカリキュラムの将来性を確保するために、オンライン形式に変換されたコースワークを含めることが望ましいと考えられる。

キーワード

英語教育、オンライン ラーニング、遠隔授業、Google Classroom、言語統合学習英語 (CLIL)