

## &lt;報告&gt;

## Blended Learning: Teaching English Pronunciation with a Web-based Application

### ブレンディッドラーニング： Web教材を活用した英語発音指導

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「ブレンディッドラーニング」とは、2000年代初期に「e-learning」を補う形で導入された教授法である。従来の「教室での学び」に「オンライン学習」を加えた「ハイブリッド学習法」であり、デジタル時代にふさわしい学習法として、今後の広がりが期待されている。本論文では、大学における「英語発音授業」に、この教授法を取り入れた実践例について報告する。この授業の特色は、授業内での英語発音練習に加えて、教室外でのオンライン学習教材として、英語学習アプリ (*EnglishCentral*) を取り入れたことである。最初に、この授業の理論的背景、参加者、および概要について述べる。次に、学生と教師それぞれの立場から、この授業についての省察を記す。結果として明らかになったのは、*EnglishCentral* を使用した発音練習に熱心に取り組んだ結果、発音が大幅に上達した学生が数名いたことである。しかし、同時に、このアプリから低い評価を受けたことにより、モチベーションが低下した学生もいた。

キーワード：blended learning, Web-based teaching materials, English pronunciation instruction

This paper reported on a college English course which utilized *EnglishCentral*, a web-based English teaching application to teach English pronunciation skills. The approach of the course was *blended learning*, which combined web-based learning and traditional classroom learning.

The students in this course were 26 students (ages from 19 to 22; 2 males and 24 females) without extensive overseas experiences. Some of them had early exposure to English in their childhood by attending private English conversation classes, watching English videos at home, or listening to English songs, but all of them started learning English formerly in their junior high schools (age 12). The participants' majors included voice, piano, music education, flute, and percussion. Many of them, especially voice majors, were interested in improving their English pronunciation because they wanted to sing English songs with good pronunciation.

The teaching material, *EnglishCentral*, is an online application which can be used with both a mobile device and a computer by installing its application from the Internet. It is designed to provide English learners with a wide variety of English practices with short video clips from movies, TV programs, commercials, news, famous speeches, and documentaries. Each video clip includes three types of practices: 1) students watch a video, 2) they practice the vocabulary in the video by filling out gaps, and 3) they read aloud the lines from the video, repeating after the model native speaker. The topics of the videos were varied: business, media, daily life, trips, academics, and kids. Besides, there were videos specially made to teach English pronunciation. Students were able to choose the right level of the materials for their English proficiency from the seven levels (Level 1 = Beginner, Level 2 = High Beginner, Level 3 = Intermediate, Level 4 = High Intermediate, Level 5 = Low Advanced, Level 6 = Advanced, and Level 7 = High Advanced).

A special feature of *EnglishCentral* was that it produced two types of records: student's pronunciation ratings and the percentage of their overall completion of the assignments during the semester. The former indicated that students' ratings for their recorded speeches ranged from A<sup>+</sup> (> 99% of the Japanese speakers of

English) to C (3% - 23% of the Japanese speakers of English). Therefore, students were able to see how much progress they were making as they practiced their pronunciation over the semester.

Although the students' improvements in pronunciation were varied, it was clear that those who practiced frequently and repeatedly improved their pronunciation proficiency. The top two students practiced much harder than the other students; as a result, their final pronunciation ratings got better and in the end they received "A". At the same time, those who did not practice remained at the low level, "C". Therefore, it was obvious that practicing with the model speaker was beneficial for pronunciation improvement.

Students' reflections on the course showed that although *EnglishCentral* was useful and effective as a pronunciation practice material, some felt demotivated when they received low ratings from its rating system repeatedly and this prevented them from trying harder. This automatic feedback system seems to be one of the problems of the application.

In conclusion, this paper described the effects of blended learning with the web-based English learning application. There were many advantages for both students and teachers; however, from motivational perspectives, some considerations should be given in the way its feedback is given.

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