THE USEFULNESS OF DIGITAL TOOLS FOR WEB BASED BYOD FLIPPED INSTRUCTION: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF A POLLING TOOL; A CANVAS TOOL AND AN ANNOTATION TOOL

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Abstract

In a second-year undergraduate course in second language learning at a large public Australian university, students develop a sense of understanding of second language learning processes. Despite its popularity, some discerning problems have been identified, including students' lack of engagement with readings and low levels of active participation with in-class activities. To tackle these problems, the flipped classroom model was deployed which engages students in pre-class online learning in preparation for in-class active learning. This was commonly conducted through a series of very short lecture videos prior to class in conjunction with collaborative activities in-class and complimented by assessment or reflection after class. However, how students perceive technology during different times (prior, in-class and post class) and their perceptions of three technological tools within flipped instruction was a central tenant to this study. Due to rapid changes in technology, it is important to set curriculum and pedagogical objectives before chasing technological advancements in education. For this reason, this paper sets out to examine particular technological tools, by first placing the pedagogical intent first, that is flipped instruction as its motive, and then the technology. While there are continuing and countless academic debates in the field of flipped instruction, there is often less critical debate about technology due to it being seen as a progressive 'improvement'. For this reason, the paper focuses on the pedagogical motives and then how these digital tools supported these motives. Moreover, technologies used in a flipped classroom are often quite varied and while research into flipped classrooms and students' perceptions are dense and diverse, this research aims to examine how digital tools can support the development of in-class active learning that aims to promote higher order thinking skills more specifically. Three different web-based technological tools were evaluated: a collaborative canvas tool, a live polling and an annotation tool in an effort to investigate student perceptions of digital tools in a flipped classroom. Using quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus groups) methods the findings shed light that not all digital tools are considered equal and that the usefulness of a tool pervaded how easy it was to use. The paper concludes by offering implication for flipped practice both inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: Flipped learning, pedagogical innovations, padlet, polling software, annotation tools, active learning.