

Introducing Active Learning Strategies into Online Classes for Japanese Engineering Students

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Abstract

This study introduces an effective online course design introducing project-based learning (PBL) as an active learning strategy (ALS) for Japanese engineering students to meet English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum goals: to develop global engineers. Concerning the globalization, development of English communication skills was crucial for EFL teaching in Japan; accordingly, ALS has been introduced to ESP course. ALS is a method of learning and there are various terms: student-centered learning, collaborative learning, and participatory learning that students are actively engaged in building understanding of facts, ideas, and skills through the completion of instructor-directed tasks and activities. Thus, AL has been conducted at technical colleges using an instructional tool which is a task-based business themed material introducing a communicative approach to language learning. Especially, in this course, students imagine that they are new interns at a fictional company where they work together in small teams to perform a series of carefully linked tasks and projects, and also the task of this course includes challenging stages of a product-development cycle, such as debating, poster presentation and making video commercial cycle. Therefore, it could be said that the course is ideal for not only building English communicative fluency and confidence, but also getting expertise such as SWOT analysis.

Keywords

Active Learning Strategies (ALS), Online Classes, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Project-based Learning (PBL), SWOT Analysis.

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Biographies

Rumi Tobita is a professor of Center for Liberal Arts and Sciences of Engineering Department, Ashikaga University. Ms. Tobita holds a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in Language Education, a Master of Education degree in Audio-Visual Education, and certification of Doctoral Candidate in Audio-Visual Education from International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan. Her research topics are Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Educational Technology, Curriculum Development, English Program Development, English for Specific Purposes, Extracurricular activity and International Exchange Program Development, and Brain Science. She has taught several fields of courses such as Educational Technology, Cognitive Science, Social Information, Brain Science besides English courses for engineering students for more than 15 years. She is a committee member of IEOM student chapter in Ashikaga University, The Japan Association for Language Education and Technology (LET) and also local organizing committee of WorldCALL 2008 and FLEAT VII.