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 専攻分野の名称 : 博士 (教育学)
 学位記番号 : 博乙第 102 号
 学位授与年月日 : 令和 2 年 9 月 2 2 日
 学位授与の要件 : 学位規則第 4 条第 2 項該当 論文博士
 学位論文名 : Effects of Introducing Team-Based Learning for Developing
 Conceptual Understanding and Learning Motivation:An Action
 Research Study in University-Level English Language Education
 Courses
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学 位 論 文 要 旨

Chapter 1. Introduction: Background and Procedure of TBL

Accelerating rates of computerization and internationalization have put greater emphasis on the acquisition of new competencies, such as skills and attitudes, rather than mere knowledge. As it is difficult to develop such competencies through a teaching method where “teachers just deliver knowledge to students,” calls for introducing *active learning* have grown (Iwasaki, 2016, p. 39). Therefore, as a form of active learning, I incorporated *Team-Based Learning* (TBL) in undergraduate English language education courses.

TBL was developed in the late 1970s by Larry K. Michaelsen (Michaelsen et al., 2007) and has been incorporated mainly in medical education. In TBL, learners are divided into small groups and learn in three steps: first, they study the materials individually; then, they take the individual readiness assessment test (iRAT), followed by the team readiness assessment test (tRAT) in which they discuss things as a group, to determine answers to the same problems tackled in the iRAT; finally, they work on *applied exercises*.

For this dissertation, I examined TBL’s effects on conceptual understanding and learning motivation, analyzing their development process in the framework of action research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review: TBL’s Effects

I reviewed previous studies examining TBL’s effects in various fields, such as the medical (Cheng et al., 2014; Inoue et al., 2019; Mennenga, 2013), business (Tokoro, 2016), and general ESL (Hosseini, 2014; Kodama et al., 2015). I summarized the effects thus: (a) TBL increases learners’ motivation to participate in their group and class; (b) it is not necessarily a linear process: uneasiness due to unfamiliar group members often translates into low motivation initially, which becomes high eventually; and (c) it can positively affect the cognitive aspects of academic abilities, such as conceptual understanding. However, little research and practice have been reported in the humanities, including English language education.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology: Action Research

I proposed a more scientific methodology for action research. Instead of one-group posttest-only and one-group pretest-posttest designs, which most previous action research studies have adopted, I suggested a posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups. Furthermore, to solve the problem of comparing nonequivalent groups, I suggested an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model in which learners' general academic abilities could be controlled.

Chapter 4. TBL's Effects on Conceptual Understanding and Learning Motivation: Study 1

This study examined the effects of the introduction of TBL on the development of conceptual understanding and learning motivation. A major subject of English language teaching, Second Language Acquisition Research, was taught in two different ways. In the 2015 academic year, the course was taught based on the lecture and activity method to 28 students, whereas in the 2016 academic year, the subject was taught based on TBL to 15 students. The effects of the introduction of TBL on students' conceptual understanding and learning motivation were examined in comparison with those who underwent the lecture and activity method. The study's results indicated that TBL had greater effects on improving conceptual understanding than the lecture and activity method. The findings also implied that TBL has some effect on encouraging students' learning motivation.

Chapter 5. Process of Conceptual Understanding and Learning Motivation Development: Study 2

The purpose of this study was to re-examine the effects of introducing TBL for developing conceptual understanding (Study 2a), and reveal the process of how conceptual understanding and learning motivation are developed (Study 2b). A major subject named Second Language Acquisition Research was taught in two different ways, through a lecture and activity method and through TBL. The results of Study 2a showed that TBL had greater effects on improving conceptual understanding than the lecture and activity method.

In Study 2b, six students taught by TBL cooperated in a semi-structured interview. Data from the interviews were analyzed based on the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA; Kinoshita, 2003). It was found that for group work, in order to foster conceptual understanding and learning motivation, "communication in small groups" and "learning from others' different opinions" interacted with each other. The smooth functioning of group work was influenced by affective factors such as the "desire to improve communication skills for the future," "preparation for discussion," and "care for group members." Group work was especially fostered when the group had a "leader who activates discussion and gives a sense of security," whereas the presence of an "uncooperative other" was inhibitive. The presence of an "uncooperative other" triggered "demands for improvement."

Chapter 6. Solution for a "Free Rider": Study 3

This chapter presents my attempt to further improve learners' conceptual understanding and motivation in Second Language Acquisition Research classes. Although the introduction of TBL was found to be effective, the presence of an "uncooperative other," or a "free rider" in group work remained an issue. To resolve this issue, each member in the group was assigned roles, such as a moderator, first presenter, or second presenter. A quantitative analysis revealed that learners become more motivated and understood

concepts better when a certain role was assigned in group work. Another qualitative analysis suggested that if a learner accepted their given role, they acted with a higher awareness as a contributor to group work, thus inhibiting the emergence of an “uncooperative other.” A new version of the paradigm model was proposed to explain the process of how learners’ conceptual understanding and motivation are fostered.

Chapter 7. TBL’s Effects on Different Types of Learning: Study 4

This study aimed to examine the effects of introducing TBL for acquiring knowledge and understanding concepts in English Linguistics (Phonology and Morphology) classes. The subject was taught in two different ways, through a lecture method in 2016 and through TBL in 2017. The effects of the introduction of TBL on learners’ knowledge acquisition and conceptual understanding were examined in comparison with those of students who underwent the lecture method. The results showed that TBL had a greater influence on knowledge acquisition and comprehension than the lecture method. The combination of these findings and the amount of time that the students spent on this subject implied that although TBL did not necessarily influence the quantity of learning it did improve the efficiency of learning.

Chapter 8. Reexamination of Effects of Assigning Roles During Group Work: Study 5

This study reexamined the effects of role assignment during group work in TBL for acquiring knowledge and understanding concepts in English Linguistics (Phonology and Morphology) classes. Each member was assigned a role, such as a moderator, first presenter, or second presenter. At the end of the course, the test scores were compared with those from a lecture method taught in 2016 and TBL without role assignment taught in 2017. The results showed that TBL had a greater influence on knowledge acquisition, comprehension, and conceptual understanding than the lecture method, and learners understood concepts even better when a role was assigned. Additionally, a quantitative text analysis suggested that with role assignment, learners became more purposeful about collaboration with others and recognized the importance of preparation.

Chapter 9. Conclusion: Summary and Future Prospects

The studies in this dissertation show that TBL has a greater influence on conceptual understanding and learning motivation development than the lecture method, and that TBL functions even better when each learner is assigned a role. The studies suggest a paradigm model that describes how learners’ conceptual understanding and motivation develop. As a framework of action research, besides proposing a more valid methodology, I hope that further action research studies are conducted to improve the quality of English language education courses.