

A Study of Learner-Centered Participatory Activities and Learner Satisfaction Using a 4-Cut Cartoon Creation in College Liberal Arts English Classes

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Abstract

This study proposes learner participatory activities for learner-centered college liberal arts classes. In addition, it analyzes learners' perceptions of and satisfaction with learner-centered classes and identifies the issues that must be considered when planning learner-centered activities for college liberal arts classes. The study used a learner-centered participatory activity in which participants created a 4-cut cartoon addressing a specific theme. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to identify learners' attitudes about and satisfaction with the learner-centered classes. It showed that most learners (87.5%) were highly satisfied with the 4-cut cartoon creation activities in the learner-centered participatory class. Learners identified the burden-free nature of the class activities, the fact that they improved their understanding of class content, and that they were fun (not boring) as the main reasons they found the class activities satisfying. In liberal arts English classes, more diverse participatory class activities should be developed to arouse interest and motivation of learners and encourage learners' participation.

Keywords: *Learner-centered class, Participatory activity, 4-cut cartoon creation, Liberal arts English classes*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the revised curriculum was introduced in 2015 and the learner-centered approach was recommended as the means of implementing it in the field of education, the learner-centered curriculum has been firmly established. The shift in the educational paradigm from instructor-centered to learner-centered classes has increased demand for activity-centered, task-centered, and creativity-centered classes. Along with the search for new teaching directions, an emphasis on the importance of learners' diverse needs, interests, and individual differences has emerged in the educational field. This has occasioned a shift in the field of education from teacher-centered classes in which instructors deliver learning information to learner-centered directions in which learners actively engage in their own learning as the subject of education and learning.

From the constructivist point of view, learners are not passive beings who acquire information delivered by instructors; instead, they are subjects who actively analyze, acquire knowledge and information, and construct their own knowledge. Therefore, meaningful instruction in the classroom does not depend on how efficiently the instructor conveys information but on how each learner independently constructs and reconstructs meaning by participating in activities. As part of this learner-centered approach to education, educators are actively using flipped learning, PBL, and task-based activities.

Learner interest and active participation in learning activities are crucial factors in learner-centered classes.

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No matter how great a teacher is at planning class activities, if learners' participation is sluggish, learner-centered activities will not proceed smoothly. This highlights the need to develop creative class activities that encourage learners' participation.

This study proposes a 4-cut cartoon creation activity as a means of encouraging learner participation and helping them understand class content. Topics that the learners might be interested in are selected and a specific class procedure is presented including a 4-cut cartoon creation activity based on the selected topic. This study analyzes learners' satisfaction and perceptions of learner-centered participatory classes using a questionnaire regarding 4-cut cartoon creation activities. It also identifies the issues that instructors need to consider when planning learner-centered activities in liberal arts English classes at universities.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The core aim of the 2015 revised curriculum is to foster independent and creative students. To this end, it emphasizes understanding the key concepts and principles of each subject and presents teaching and learning methods designed to transform classroom instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered. Before the implementation of the revised curriculum, learners demonstrated high academic achievement (the ability to answer difficult test questions) but decreased interest in learning. Addressing this lack of interest requires the adoption of student participation-centered classes and activities that increase learning engagement. Many studies have shown that a learner-centered learning environments more effectively bolster learners' interest and English skills than teacher-centered classes [1-2].

In learner-centered education, learners take responsibility for their own learning, participate in learning activities, and lead the learning process. Crucially, this approach returns the initiative of learning to the learner and is oriented toward individualized classes [3]. Representative forms of learner-centered education include discussion, discovery learning, individualized classes, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and flipped learning. Several recent studies have focused specifically on flipped learning. These include a study on flipped learning and the use of various media [4], a study on English learning methods by combining flipped learning with learning tools such as mobile apps [5], and a study of the role of instructors and learners in flipped learning [6].

A study investigating the impact of learner-centered classes on high and low-ranking students [7] found that learner-centered classes positively affected students' academic achievement, showing that learner-centered classes motivate students to make good presentations, inspire them to devote considerable effort to learning, and increase their confidence. This study argued that a variety of learner-centered instructional models designed to help students improve their grades and develop self-directed learning skills should be developed.

Another study that conducted learner-centered English-speaking classes for college students was structured around learners' communication and interaction [8]. Investigating how student-directed learning affects English presentation skills through English discussion activities on various topics, it showed that learner-centered classes effectively improved English-speaking abilities and positive impacted affective areas such as confidence, participation, accuracy, and confidence in speaking English.

Research regarding learner-centered practices in class [9] and the practical direction of learner-centered classes in various academic fields is spreading in various ways. For example, a study examining learner-centered education practices by focusing on college students' peer coaching experiences [10] found that the coaching experience helped reconstruct knowledge and expand thinking.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Period and Subject

This study was conducted over 10 weeks, from early March to mid-June 2023, in a liberal arts class that met twice a week (for 150 minutes) at OO University located in Seoul. This course was a liberal arts course targeting engineering students, and the majority were first-year students.

The class included a total of 47 learners. Classified based on major, the College of Architecture took up the largest portion at 31.9% (15 students), followed by the College of Science and Technology at 27.7% (13

students), the College of Automotive Convergence at 23.4% (11 students), and others (Future Mobility, Software Convergence, College of Creative Engineering) at 17% (8 students). The vast majority of participants were first-year students at (95.8%, 45 students), followed by those in their 3rd and 4th years (4.2%, 2 students).

Although this study was an exclusive course for first-year students, it included two students who did not take it in their first years. Table 1 summarizes the subjects' information.

Table 1. Subject information

Major	N (%)	Year	
College of Architecture	15 (31.9%)	1	45 (95.8)
College of Science and Technology	13 (27.7%)		
Automotive Convergence College	11 (23.4%)	3	1 (2.1%)
Department of Future Mobility	6 (12.8%)		
Software Convergence College	1 (2.1%)	4	1 (2.1%)
Creative Engineering College	1 (2.1%)		
Total	47	Total	47

3.2 Procedure

This study selected the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe), the Harry Potter series, Disney animations, and Batman as the topics that learners are interested in, and actively utilized movie clips or YouTube videos related to these topics to help learners understand them.

The class was conducted in four stages: the understanding the topic stage, the class activity stage, the sharing stage, and the finishing stage. In the understanding the topic stage, learners watched video clips related to the topic together. After watching the video, they tried to organize the video content individually.

In the second stage, class activities in which learners directly participated were conducted. Learners exchanged their opinions in groups on a given topic. Next, learners participated in a learner-centered class activity that involved the creation of 4-cut cartoons. Learners created a 4-cut cartoon in which certain characters had imaginary conversations about specific content or topics. The 4-cut cartoon activities were designed not only to help learners understand subjects, but also to encourage them to share their own opinions and thoughts. Table 2 summarizes the themes used in the 4-cut cartoons.

Table 2. Main topics

Category	Topic	Discussion
MCU	1. Disagreement between Captain America and Iron Man	Arguments for and against the "Sokovia Accords"
	2. Controversy between Captain America and Thanos	Each person's opinion on Thanos' redemption activity (half of the population must be eliminated to balance the entire universe)
Harry Potter VS. Voldemort	3. Conversation in Harry Potter and Voldemort	Harry Potter's strengths vs. Voldemort's strengths, or what prevented Voldemort from winning the last battle
	4. Conversation between fans of Harry and Voldemort	Debate: Who is more dominant in raw magic skill?
Disney Animations	5. Conversation between Moana and Miguel	Moana's Polynesian culture (clothes, tattoos, traditional dances), Coco's Mexican culture (Day of the Dead, traditional food, paper crafts)
	6. Conversation between Judy and Nick from Zootopia	Judy's conviction ("prejudice must be broken") VS. Nick's position ("it is comfortable living with prejudice")
Batman	7. Conversation between Batman	Batman and Joker's "two sides of the same coin"

VS. Joker	and Joker 8. Conversation between Batman and Superman	relationship (similarity) Batman and Superman's very different beliefs for Justice
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In the third stage of the class procedure, learners uploaded their completed 4-cut cartoon to the Padlet (Padlet.com) to share it with all their peers. Learners voluntarily explained the dialogues of the characters in the cartoons they created, and presented their thoughts or opinions on specific topics. The instructor turned on the Padlet on the blackboard screen, listened to learners' presentations, and provided individual feedback.

The sharing stage allowed learners to broaden their understanding of specific topics by presenting and sharing the content of their 4-cut cartoons. In addition, while drawing their 4-cut cartoons, the instructor encouraged learners to focus on using certain vocabulary or key phrases to express specific opinions. Figure 1 is an example of a 4-frame cartoon showing a conversation between Batman and Joker uploaded to the Padlet.



Figure 1. 4-cut cartoon activity

In the finishing stage, the instructor reviewed the important learning content with the learners and organized the entire class.

3.3 Data Collection

This study emphasized the necessity of learner-centered classes in liberal arts English education and suggested the creation of 4-cut cartoons as a learner-participation activity. A questionnaire was conducted in the ninth week of class to determine learners' attitudes and perceptions about the class. The questionnaire utilized the Google Spreadsheet format. It included the two questions listed below. Question 1 asked learners to rate their satisfaction with the class activities on a 5-point Likert scale, and Question 2 asked them to explain their responses to Question 1.

1. How satisfied are you with the 4-cut cartoon-based learner participatory class activities?
 - ① Very satisfied ② Satisfied ③ Neutral ④ Dissatisfied ⑤ Very dissatisfied
2. Please explain the reason for answer 1 above.

4. Results and Discussion

In this study, a 4-cut cartoon creation activity was conducted to arouse learners' interest and enhance their understanding of class content. A questionnaire was conducted to understand learners' perceptions and attitudes regarding the learner-centered class activities. Figure 2 shows the participatory activities satisfaction

results.

A total of 57.5% of learners (23 students) reported that they were “very satisfied,” 30% (12 students) reported that they were “satisfied,” 10% (4 students) reported that they were “neutral,” and 2.5% (1 student) reported that they were “dissatisfied.” None of the students indicated that they were “very dissatisfied.” Overall, learners’ satisfaction with the 4-cut cartoon participatory class activities was found to be high (87.5%).

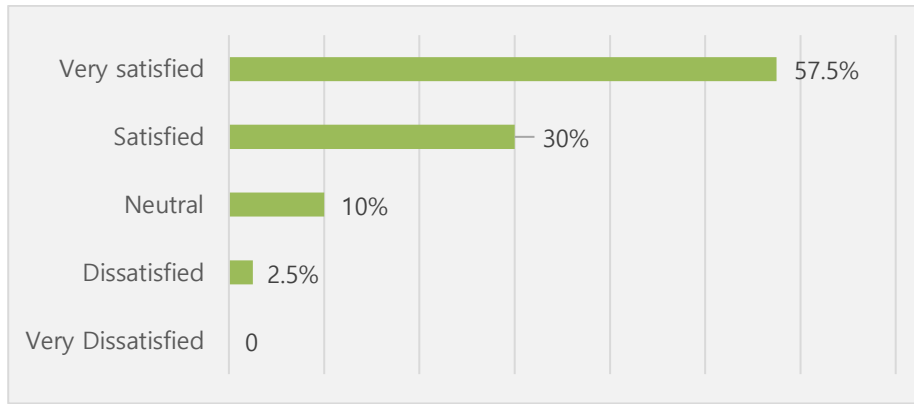


Figure 2. Results of satisfaction with class activities

To analyze learners’ specific perceptions of learner-centered classes, Question 2 asked them to describe the reason for their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with class activities. Since the survey was anonymous, the instructor asked learners to explain in detail why they answered Question 1 the way they did.

Since the learners expressed diverse opinions in response to Question 2, the instructor downloaded their answers from the Google survey form into Excel, classified them based on the semantic words centered on keywords, and grouped common opinions into categories. The reasons learners highly satisfied with learner-centered participatory classes included that the class activities were burden-free, increased their understanding class content, and were fun (not boring). Table 3 provides an overview of learners’ specific opinions.

Table 3. Reasons for satisfaction with class activities

Reasons	Opinions
burden-free class activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * It is not an activity that is forced to make an announcement or burdensome. * It was not such a difficult activity, and it seems that the participation of the students was high. * It's not too difficult as I only need to draw 4 cuts and I don't have to draw well. * I was embarrassed at first when I was told to draw a cartoon, but after doing it several times, I liked that it was simple.
Understanding class content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I am satisfied because it is an activity that I can do easily. * When I draw a 4-cuts cartoon, it seems that the contents of the class are easy to understand and I learn a lot from the class. * I watched a lot of video materials and drew simple cartoons, so it was easy to understand the contents of the class. * In this activity, it is not important to draw cartoons, but to fill in English lines, so making my own lines helped me to study English. * Watching various videos and drawing cartoons are good activities that help understanding. * I like activities such as like watching videos, creating cartoons that help me understand the content.
Fun (not boring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Even beginners can easily understand the core contents of the topic and it is not boring. * The subject matter is interesting and drawing cartoons is also interesting. * Creating cartoon is just very funny. I liked it.

Other	* It would be nice if a professor could give me more time to draw short cartoon.
comments	* It's an English class, so why do I have to draw cartoons?

The biggest reason learners were highly satisfied with the learner-centered participatory activity was that they could do it simply and without burden. Since this activity did not require professional drawing skills and simply involves engaging in English conversations regarding what they had learned, learners felt that it helped them study English. Many learners pointed out that the class activities were not difficult or that they were good because they were simple. Therefore, when teachers plan class activities in English classes, they should organize activities that learners can access easily and fulfill without difficulty.

The second reason learners reported satisfaction with class activities was that the activities helped them understand the class content. Learners felt that the process of completing a 4-cut cartoon based on related content after watching the video material and understanding the content helped them understand the class content more easily.

Also, the learners recognized that it was more important to complete an English conversation between two characters than draw effective cartoons. During this class activity, the instructor sought to reduce the drawing burden on students and clearly remind them of the class goal by emphasizing that the cartoon activity was designed to improve English proficiency.

It is important for instructors to highlight for learners what they should focus on in the process of class activities before starting them. The learners felt that completing the 4-cut cartoon in English helped increase their understanding of the learning content and was useful for learning English. When instructors plan similar creative activities in liberal arts classes, they should make sure the specific activities relate to the class goals and help learners understand the learning content.

The third reason learners reported satisfaction with class activities was that they were fun. Many indicated that they found the topics interesting and that drawing cartoons was also very fun. Presumably, they felt that the class was not boring overall because the activity of creating cartoons was not difficult and fun. Instead of a one-sided explanation by the instructor, learner-centered activities based on what learners have learned can bring life to learning and add to the fun. Therefore, organizing participatory class activities for learners in liberal arts English classes should be considered important.

5. CONCLUSION

In liberal arts English classes at universities, learner-centered participatory activities can play an important role in arousing learners' interest and motivating them to learn. In this study, a 4-cut cartoon creation activity was conducted to help learners understand the learning content.

This activity involved the completion of an English conversation between two specific characters based on a specific theme into a 4-cut cartoon. Participating in this activity can help learners understand a specific topic more easily and express their own opinions or thoughts about that topic. A questionnaire was administered to gauge learners' satisfaction and collect their opinions about the learner-centered class using a 4-cut cartoon.

The results showed that learners were highly satisfied with the learner-centered class activities in which they participated by making 4-cut cartoons themselves (87.5%). The reasons for their high level of satisfaction with the participatory class activities included that the class activities were burden-free, increased their understanding of class content, and were fun (not boring).

Instructors implementing learner participatory activities in liberal arts English classes should consider the following points.

First, fulfilling the class activities should not be burdensome for learners. Considering the level of class activity, the instructor should aim to develop creative activities in which completing tasks is not difficult and that learners find easily accessible.

Second, learner-centered participatory activities must be clearly connected to class goals. Before proceeding with class activities, instructors need to explicitly explain to learners the reasons for the activities and the learning effects participating in the activity will generate. Instructors need to remind students of the need for participatory class activities by explicitly conveying the connection between class participation activities and

class goals.

Third, instructors need to organize classes in a variety of ways so that learners find classes fun. The fun that learners have can motivate them and increase their satisfaction with classes. Instructors should strive to develop various class activities in which learners can participate with interest. In addition, learner-centered instructional models should be continuously developed.

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