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Language performance videoing for home viewing

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Abstract

This paper describes a study by an Indonesian primary school English teacher who made a variety of video recordings of her students’ performing in English during class activities. She then made the videos available for students and parents to watch at home, offering more exposure to English and creating a memorable secondary learning experiences. Parents at home took part as co-learners encouraging students’ intensive learning and participation. Students seeing their classmates (friends) performing well on the video were also potentially doing near peer role modeling in which students model their peers, become more motivated, and learn more. The teacher was able to
evaluate the procedures through students' progress reports and questionnaires, as well as qualitative feedback from both students and parents. The results indicate that such procedures not only reinforce classroom learning, but expand it and give it more value when it is seen by significant others. The research was conducted partially in consultation with a Japanese university professor who had done similar studies with his university students.

Introduction

Video has become a very popular instructional medium that is widely used in various teaching contexts owing to its numerous benefits for educational purposes (Sherman, 2003). Its ability to present visual clues and sound suits perfectly for auditory and visual learners and it serves as a very effective instrument to convey meaning that helps build comprehension. In addition, learning by watching videos seems to create a greater amount of interest for young learners as compared to learning by reading printed materials.

For these reasons many researchers and educators have experimented and explored how video can be used effectively within many different educational contexts. In language teaching, it appears that one of the fun ways to engage students more in their learning experience is by making a video recording of themselves speaking and performing in their target language (Murphey, 2001; Murphey & Sakaguchi, 2010). Students watching themselves performing on video can enhance their intrinsic motivation as well as stimulate their confidence. Performing together with their friends could also encourage near peer role modeling (Murphey & Arao 2001, Singh 2010), i.e. getting inspired by peers.

This paper describes a 'Student Language Performance Video' (SLPV) project conducted in a children's class level 4 (intermediate level) at LIA Semarang Candi Indonesia, as an attempt to intensify the students' foreign language development. This paper will also evaluate the videoing's effectiveness in improving students' L2 proficiency.

Setting up the student language performance video (SLPV) project

This project was designed by the two authors: one teaching at LIA Semarang Candi Indonesia (Nina Septina) and one teaching at Kanda University in Japan (Tim Murphey). We met each other at an International conference in Bandung in 2010. At the outset of the program, she saw the need for students to have more exposure every day instructions as she often found it necessary to translate the instructions in Indonesian to get students to understand.

This problem of limited exposure to English in children's language learning is common in EFL situations. There were 16 students altogether in Nina's class aged 8-10 coming from different elementary schools. The fact that English in Indonesian elementary schools is not a compulsory subject has made school administrators decide and formulate their own English curriculum that differs from school to school. Some schools start giving English lessons from grade one while others begin from grade four. Furthermore, the time available for English language teaching at these schools is generally very limited. Given this situation, many parents send their children to special English schools, like LIA, where they could have more exposure to the language. At LIA, students come twice a week for 90 minute classes.

During these 3 hours a week, Nina tried to create a new learning environment that was fun and at the same time maximized learning through offering different kinds of learning opportunities. Inspired by a video project done by Tim in Nagoya (Murphey 2010) where he made a video recording of children interacting with him and got parents to come with video cameras to
Parents in this program were invited to take part as co-learners to participate with their children when watching the recordings at home. They could give their children encouragement to participate more and perform better while at the same time follow their children’s progress.

A. Polling questionnaire.

Based on feedback from parents, it was first decided to make the video copies using a flash disk. Flash disk was seen to be the most ideal and practical portable storage device to copy and transfer the video files from the teacher’s laptop for its affordability, yet it also was familiar to most of the students’ parents. Students were then asked to bring a flash disk when the video recordings were ready. Later, it was decided to try putting them up on a private YouTube channel for viewing (still in progress).

B. Recording process.

The teacher used a not so sophisticated camcorder available at the workplace and operated by herself and a couple of times with the help of a staff member. Prior to the first videoing, the teacher explained to students why and how the project would be done.

The materials for the video recording were selected mainly based on the lessons outlined in their course books. The students’ language performances in the videos used the vocabulary, expressions and grammar taught. Our routine during their 90 minutes became first discussing the material from the course book, then videoing an activity in which they performed with the new material that they had learned. Additional materials and activities were used to expand their learning opportunities, such as singing, reading, playing games, conversing in short dialogs, storytelling, discussions, etc.

In most classes, to prepare the children before videoing, the teacher put them in groups and assigned the material for them.
to practice with their peers. However, not all recordings went smoothly, and some activities ended up taking half the class time. Sometimes the children also asked their teacher to cut and repeat the recording when they were making mistakes. To cope with this situation, the teacher occasionally assigned the practice time for the students as homework, so they would be ready when they had to perform and do the recording in class. In this respect, the student language performance video (SLPV) created important motivation for lengthening students' practice time that included the practice before the recording process in class or at home, during the recording process, and after the recording process when they watched the videos at home with their parents.

In some videos, the teacher also participated to give instructions or demonstrate and it became an opportunity for her to learn and improve her teaching. By watching and repeating these videos, she was able to identify which activities went well and which didn't go as expected, and by reflecting on this she could apply different strategies to execute the subsequent activities better. She could also improve her own English language performance including the clarity of her speech. She also noted the times when she missed giving compliments or appreciation to her students when they could answer questions correctly, and when she forgot to use the homework assigned. Hence, the capture of class moments allowed the teacher to reflect, learn and try to improve her teaching performance.

As part of the research, she also uploaded some of the videos on YouTube to share them with her research partner in Japan to consult and seek suggestions for the betterment of the videos. Excerpts of their email correspondence are as below:

I uploaded another video called ‘Line Drill’ and on the video I wrote the objective of the game as well as the procedure. It’s an activity to drill the grammar of present verbs and past verbs. In Indonesia we name the English verbs as Verb1, Verb2 and Verb3. For example Verb1 is ‘go’, and the Verb2 is ‘went’ and the Verb3 is ‘gone’. And in the video we drilled the verb1 and the verb2.

I need your opinion or comments, please take a look at the video. (Nina)

You are getting good at explaining with the text beforehand. What I would suggest further is to video just one child asking another as an example at the beginning. Then video all the children doing it and changing places. It looks like a great activity and well done. But the viewer of the video needs to hear a clear example at the beginning (in addition to the great written description). Then they can watch the whole class. It is difficult to hear what is happening with the whole class. But if we have a clear example of just one student at the beginning we know what they are doing. (Tim)

C. The Video distribution to students

This SLPV was done in the first semester of level 4 over a period of 2 terms (each three months). The following are the details of the video distribution for the two terms to students.

The first term:

February 10: blindfold game, describing and comparing people’s appearance, singing ABCs, singing Incy Wincy Spider

February 17: class discussion on vocabulary exercise, speed dictation

February 22: line drill - drilling present and past tense verbs

March 8: discussion on past tense exercise, game "the wind is blowing" to pre-teach vocabulary of a story they’re reading, post story telling activity
The second term:

April 5: acting out a dialog about illnesses, line drill - quantifiers some and any

May 10: reading a story - Roberto’s dinner

May 31: small presentation - talking about dinosaurs

June 7: small presentation - talking about endangered animals

Results and discussion

To gather feedback from parents and evaluate how the project was perceived, a total of 13 parents were invited to fill out questionnaires in Indonesian.

A. Questionnaire II

Questionnaire II was distributed in the middle of the first term or two weeks after the distribution of the videos and parents were asked to return it by the end of the term. The questions were as follows (translated into English) with results:

1. Have the videos been watched?
   Yes - all
   No - 0

2. If the videos have been watched, how frequent these videos are played?
   Once a week - 4
   Twice a week - 4
   Three times a week - 4
   More. Please specify: .1 = every day

3. What is your impression about the videos?
   The most common response to #3 was that they were happy and proud to see their kids on the video doing activities in English. Furthermore, they also stated that the videos helped their children memorize the lessons learned in class. And few added that they would prefer to hear more songs and other speaking activities in the video.

4. Please give your criticisms and suggestions to improve the video recordings.
   For #4, some of the criticisms concerned the sound quality that needed to be clearer. This sound problem was caused by other children’s voices chatting with their peers while waiting for their turn outside the class, and the sound of creaking chairs in class when students were sitting on them during the recording process. Parents also suggested that this SLPV project should be continued in the next term, as they believed this was a good way for their children to learn. This questionnaire helped the teacher reflect and plan the second term video recordings.

B. Questionnaire III

In the middle of the second term, the teacher wrote a letter to parents thanking them for their participation and their thoughts about the SLPV project. With the letter, she attached Questionnaire III, which was to be submitted again by the end of term 2. Questionnaire III was the same as Questionnaire II with one additional question at the end:

5. How do you see your child's language development since this project was conducted?
   Showed no progress at all
   Showed a little progress
   Showed pretty significant progress
   Showed very significant progress

Of the 10 questionnaires received, all parents stated they had watched the videos. Two respondents reported they watched the videos twice a week, four
stated they watched the videos everyday, and the other 4 circled the last option “other” and described they watched the videos once in a while when their children were studying English and when they had some leisure time at home.

Most parents said they liked the video recordings and to keep up the good work. Additionally, one parent in particular said that this SLPV project was interesting and inspiring. Even though most of the videos recorded in the term two were all about oral practice like reading a story aloud, conversing with friends, and doing small presentations, parents still said they wanted to see more of their children’s speaking activities in the video and suggested making them longer. This short duration of the videos was due to the time constraint in each class, in which students had to discuss the activities from their course book, then prepare the materials for the recording and practice them before recording. Nevertheless, this result shows parents’ enthusiasm in watching their children's language performance. They seemed to realize the importance of this language performance videoing to their children's language growth.

70% of the parents stated their children showed pretty significant progress and the balance 30% reported their children had made very significant progress during the videoing program.

C. Students’ progress report results

To evaluate and examine the effectiveness of this project in improving students language development quantitatively, the teacher looked at the students’ progress reports of their first semester in level 4 when the SLPV project was being carried out and she compared the scores with those in the students' progress reports in the semester 2 of level 3 before this project was conducted. Students’ daily scores, midterm and final exams as well as exit interviews were all compared and found to be more positive for nearly all the students in all categories.

From the descriptions above, it appears that students in level 4 with the SLPV project generally had better language performance compared to how they performed in the previous level before the project was conducted.

D. Parents Interview

At the end of semester, the children’s parents came to school to take their child's report and return the questionnaire distributed earlier. In this moment, some parents also talked about how excited they were when watching their kids performing on the video. They added that not only did their children feel happy and motivated seeing their friends performing on the video but also parents got excited when they saw other children showing their foreign language ability and their confidence in front of the camera. As a result, this led them to encourage their child to be able to perform better confirming the near peer role modeling taking place.

Conclusion

Having seen the results of the questionnaires in which parents were quite positive toward the project and supported by the students' progress report data that showed students' escalating results with this program, it seems plausible that this project has shown itself to be effective in enhancing students’ foreign language development.

This procedure allows classroom activities to enter the home environment and reinforce language learning by offering more exposure to English as well as potentially creating a memorable learning experience for the students in the home as well as the classroom. The process is equally as important as the goal, in which the time spent to do the language performances before, during, and after the video recording significantly increased
these children’s foreign language growth. Unfortunately we cannot measure the exact impact of seeing (visualizing) themselves using English on their futures images of themselves as English speakers, but other research points to the importance of this aspect of the project, i.e. performance over practice (Gladwell, 2008). Furthermore, the video artifacts that show a milestone in the students’ language-learning histories may also prove to be personally rewarding for the students themselves.

References


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**In the muddle of the data**

**Turning testing into healthy helping and the creation of social capital**

*Tim Murphey*

Conventional tests are fine as far as they go, but I have always wanted more for the tests I made for my students. A few years ago I dared ask students to make test questions (Murphey, 1994) and then later to actually evaluate their classmates oral skills in response to set questions (Murphey 2001). The last few years I have