Reflective video 1: Motivations

Kat Robb explains what motivated her to adopt this approach.

This article, the first in a series, focuses on the use of video for developing the specific oral skills needed for giving presentations. Presentations and oral summaries are something many of my students need to do for their work, their studies or to pass an exam. Giving a presentation is difficult enough in itself, but adding to this the need to deliver the presentation successfully in a second language can make it a very challenging experience.

The rationale for choosing to record student presentations comes from the concept of 'video correction'. The students watch their recordings and analyse their performance to identify features they would like to improve. Through a process of discovery, they learn how to identify the features of a good presentation, and develop their own skill-set to deliver effective presentations with confidence.

This strategy is based on a process-led approach, enabling the students to build up their skills until they are happy with the final outcome. This helps them become mindful of the way that, by combining the creation of video on their mobile devices and self-reflection, they will be able to carry out reflective practice regarding their performance when giving presentations. By using mobile technologies for learning, I aim to support the 'anytime anyplace' learning ethic that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) proposes.

Recording

The increasing presence in society of portable electronic devices equipped with video has created a culture of moviemaking. Years ago, making a film or video required specialised skills and equipment. Nowadays, however, mobile technologies have made it possible for anybody to do it. In fact, videos can now be created and shared using electronic devices as quickly and easily as sending a text message. *Vimeo* and *YouTube* first introduced the idea of creating video content to share online in 2004 and 2005 respectively, and self-created videos have flooded social networking sites and the internet ever since. The advances in smartphone technology and the proliferation of other portable devices like the iPod Touch and tablets have resulted in the integration of video into daily life, and in societies where smartphone use is high, recording special moments on video has eclipsed the 'snapshot' culture of previous decades. This demonstrates the transition from the moving image being exclusive to television and film production, to

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becoming a ubiquitous and standard form of communication. This shift is also reflected in teaching practices globally, as educators and students alike feel more comfortable using and responding to video for feedback or skills development purposes. In a world permeated with digital imagery, video has undoubtedly become an integral part of our daily lives.

Reflecting

By recording themselves using their smartphones, students can create observation material which enables them to reflect on their own performance. The recordings can also be used to pinpoint any changes or improvements that could be made. In addition, they serve as a barometer against which future performances can be measured, and as a video log or portfolio of development and ideas. The learning objective is that the students engage in reflective practice and identify action points to carry forward. By viewing their videos, the students are able to carry out reflection on their actions in retrospect, and also engage in reflection for action in the future. They are, therefore, becoming reflective practitioners and creating specific learning goals personalised to their own individual needs.

Rationale

The rationale for using the students' personal mobile devices for the recording process is to demonstrate the mobility of language learning itself and to make the students aware of just one of the range of possibilities available to them for scaffolding their learning. It also avoids any privacy or copyright problems, because the students will own the footage and, therefore, control who is allowed to view it. The intention is that the students will also be motivated to engage with English *outside* the classroom, thereby providing strategies for self-study and fostering learner autonomy. I believe students should be given opportunities to extend their learning and to maximise their exposure to language. By bringing the outside world *inside* the classroom, the learning experience becomes more realistic and is widened because there are no restrictions. I think it is important to heighten the students' awareness regarding the learning opportunities mobile devices offer, and to transcend the boundary of using them exclusively for entertainment and communication purposes outside the classroom. Furthermore, I have found using smartphones in the classroom is a great tool to boost student motivation.

Reticence

I admit that introducing the concept of recording their performance when speaking in English does not initially make most students feel very comfortable. However, it was equally true that before the emergence of the 'selfie' culture, most people felt self-conscious about having their photo taken. At the outset, the students inevitably feel a certain amount of reluctance and trepidation about watching themselves on video. However, by prompting them to persevere, we can help them to reap the benefits of self-reflection.

I think it is important to ask our students for feedback on the pedagogical decisions we take as educators, and I would never insist that my students partake in an activity they felt really uncomfortable with. I check with them beforehand, therefore, whether or not they are willing to experiment. If there are any objections, the activity is not carried out in class, and I suggest that the students try it at home first, to see if they feel comfortable with the experience. If there is a positive response from the outset, I still verify with the students after the initial recording that they are happy to continue with the process.

Realisation

The idea for reflective video came from 'sports correction' videos that were made of me when I started snowboarding many years ago. I realised that it was impossible to understand the advice I was given about how to improve my technique unless I could actually see myself in action. We all check the mirror to see what we look like before leaving the house in the morning, and we make any adjustments to our appearance that we deem necessary. In the same way, when I could see myself snowboarding, I was able to detect what I could change in order to improve my performance.

Results

Knowing that reflective video works in a sports context, I decided to adapt the technique slightly and apply it to a language-learning context. I have always found the results to be extremely positive, so I continue to experiment and develop different ways of utilising self-created video for this purpose. In the beginning, it was an experiment to meet the needs of the students in my specific context, but the continued positive outcomes and enthusiastic learner feedback compel me to continue in different contexts, and to share my ideas and experiences at conferences and on my blog: *englishandtech.com*.

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In the next article in this series, I will explain the procedure I use to implement reflective video in the classroom. I will outline the guided questions that the students can ask themselves during playback to support the reflection process. I will also share some of the feedback I received from different contexts when I asked my students to complete an anonymous questionnaire about using reflective video to improve oral presentation skills. ETp

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