# Intensifying Practice and Noticing through Videoing Conversations for Self-Evaluation

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This paper describes an innovative configuration of video cameras and VHS recorders which allows teachers to videotape students' short conversations and give them their video cassette copies immediately to take home and view. A preliminary analysis of questionnaire data suggests that students benefit from the procedure through repeated negotiated practice, multiple opportunities for "noticing" learnable material (linguistic items, communication strategies, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) in their own and their classmates' output, and control over the construction of extended discourse. We suggest that the procedure helps teachers create an acquisition-rich environment for their students to focus on the forms they need to improve their fluency and accuracy while enhancing their metacognitive awareness and autonomy. This procedure also offers a potentially rich source of data for teachers and researchers wishing to study SLA synchronically and diachronically.

本論文は教師がビデオカメラとビデオデッキを使って学生の短い会話をビデオに撮り、 学生はそのビデオテーブを持ち帰り分析するというこれまでに無い使い方を論じる。集 まったデータを分析すると、学生はこのやり方を次の三つの分野で高く評価していること が分かる。1. 学生間でのナゴシエイションの練習の繰り返しをする。2. 自分、また同級生 のビデオを見て、習得事項(言語事項、コミュニケーションの仕方、信条、姿勢等)に 「注目する」機会が増す。3. 会話をどういうふうにするか。錐者は、この方法は教師が学 生にとって取得の面で豊かな状況を作るのを助け、学生が自分のレベルで改善する必要の ある事項に焦点を当て、メタ認知認識と自立を高めると結論する。これはまた学習という ものを時を限り、また越えて研究しようとする教師、研究者に豊かなデータとなるもので ある。

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This article introduces a procedure that seeks to stimulate EFL/ESL students' desire to practice the target language and also to increase the number of opportunities they have for "noticing" their own and others' negotiated output. These increases are achieved when students regularly videotape and analyze their own conversations, a procedure called "videoing conversations for self-evaluation" (VCSE). Here *self-evaluation* refers not to the giving of grades but rather to the conscious act of examining one's performance as compared to previous performances, the performances of one's conversation partners, and language goals which are both predetermined and nascent. *Noticing* is defined by Ellis (1997, p. 55) as the process of consciously attending to linguistic features in the input. We use it here to refer not only to linguistic features, but also to noticing paralinguistic, discourse, and communication features and strategies, as well as beliefs and attitudes.

First we review the background of video use and highlight some second language acquisition (SLA) and communicative language teaching (CLT) supporting frameworks. Then we describe the VCSE procedure as we have used it . We provide preliminary questionnaire data supporting its effectiveness and describe the ways in which the procedure intensifies practice and noticing among students.

### Background

The medium of video has gained wide popularity among CLT enthusiasts for its ability to model language in context and to serve as a focal point for many different communicative activities (Cooper, Lavery & Rinvolucri, 1991; Lonergan, 1984; Stempleski & Arcario, 1991; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990). However, the use of video cameras for taping students is not often mentioned in the literature, and when it is, it most often refers to video projects (Miller, 1996; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990) or short activities to which video might add another dimension (Cooper, Lavery & Rinvolucri, 1991). Directly videoing student conversation is seldom suggested (Lonergan, 1984, 1991), and then usually as a process in which only a few students are videoed and the conversation analyzed by the class.

However, much SLA research highlights the importance of negotiation of meaning (see Pica, 1996 for a review of the research) for the construction of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). Complementary research highlights the need for "pushed" output (Swain, 1995), the idea that the displayed competence of students needs to be stretched repeatedly so that students "increase in control over forms that have already been internalized" (Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993, p. 210). The degree of control that learners exercise over the discourse is also important (Ellis, 1994, p. 594). Cathcart (1986) found that student-controlled discourse was characterized by a wide variety of communicative acts and syntactic structures, whereas teacher-controlled situations produced single-word utterances, short phrases, and formulaic chunks. Schneider (1993) also found that students who merely taped audio conversations with each other in the target language four times a week for 20 minutes "had a significant improvement in fluency (p < 0.001) over the year that was more than double that of the control group of those using a pair work text in the regular class" (p. 55). Simply saying "practice makes perfect" is too simple an explanation; the success of these students may owe much to the fact that they were in control of the content and in extended discourse.

More recently, some researchers, not content to wait for open-ended negotiated interaction to present certain structures, have advocated formfocused communicative interaction (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1997; Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1990; Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993; Williams, 1995; 1997). Recognizing also that students need multiple meaningful encounters with information to acquire language more deeply (i.e., many examples of target forms in communicative negotiation) other researchers are looking into ways to do input flooding (Trahey & White, 1993) and output flooding (Goto & Murphey, 1997), where output flooding refers to the "pushed" repeated production of targeted forms in communicative interaction, as when students have to repeatedly tell different partners a story using some new vocabulary or grammar structure.

Schmidt & Frota's seminal article on noticing in 1986 and the more recent research in developing learners' metacognition, their ability to think about how they learn (Flavell, 1979), call for more involvement of the conscious mind in support of second language acquisition (Schmidt, 1990). When noticing and metacognition are encouraged within a framework of repeated meaningful negotiation among peers, there is even greater potential for learners "pushing" one another's development as they interact within and expand one another's zones of proximal development, or ZPD (Murphey, 1996c; Vygotsky, 1962). In Vygotskian sociocultural analysis, the ZPD is that potential domain of graspable learning that lies dormant for learners who are alone and without interaction. However, when learners are in interactive social situations where they can negotiate meaning with peers, the ZPD becomes actualized as the playing field for successful learning. This concept is in stark contrast to traditional descriptions of learning, a teacher-led process which is usually not "owned" by the learners. Learners within the same zones, more

than merely modeling linguistic items for one another, also become holistic "near peer role models" (Murphey, 1996b) as they display, try on, and borrow one another's attitudes, beliefs, and learning strategies.

Additional SLA support for the VCSE procedure comes from the five communicative language teaching macrostrategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1993). These five strategies for teachers are proposed to help the CLT teacher create a genuinely communicative class:

- 1. Create learning opportunities in class
- 2. Utilize learning opportunities created by learners
- 3. Facilitate negotiated interaction among participants
- 4. Activate intuitive heuristics of the learner
- 5. Contextualize linguistic input

In the following section we will show how the VCSE procedure creates numerous learning opportunities in class, how students can use these to create more, how the teacher facilitates the interaction, how the learners' own data can activate their metacognition, and how their input and output are contextualized into short conversations repeated meaningfully with different partners (see also Kenny, 1997). It will also be clear that the VCSE procedure provides a macrostructure that encourages meaningful negotiated repetition of targeted language forms (targeted by teachers or learners) in and out of the classroom. The procedure also "pushes" output (Swain, 1995), encourages a focus on form, and supports the noticing of linguistic items and performance features that are within the ZPD of the students.

## Procedure

In light of the above SLA and CLT processes and frameworks, we wanted to devise a way for Japanese university EFL class members to regularly negotiate interaction in extended discourse which they controlled. We also wanted them to have their own VHS cassette so they could evaluate their performance and learn from it. These are the essentials within which teachers can explore numerous other options. The following details of our situation are meant to serve as an example for a procedure open to practically any topic or linguistic focus.

Our weekly VCSE procedure has been refined over a three-year period. It is used with first- and second-year Japanese university English majors, 18 to 21 years old, who meet three times a week for 45 minutes per class. During the first two meetings each week, about half the time

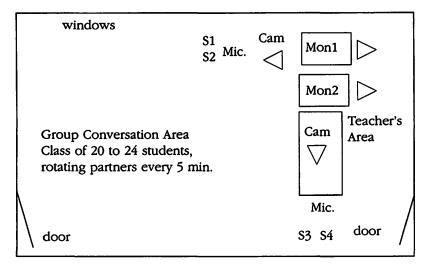


Figure 1: VCSE Equipment Setup in a Classroom

is spent presenting and practicing new target material (e.g., conversation strategies, vocabulary, and certain grammatical structures) within certain topic areas (sports, culture, music, language learning, etc.) to be used during the third meeting, "video day." The rest of the time is spent on other learning activities that may or may not have direct relevance to their video performance.

On video day, each student brings a VHS video cassette wound to the end of the last conversation (to prevent old conversations from being erased). Students place their cassettes on the front desk at the beginning of class and the teacher chooses cassettes at random to make partners for the recordings. While four students are recording, two in front of one camera and two other in front of another (see Figure 1), the rest of the students remain in the group practice area, practicing for their turn at the video or simply honing their skills after being videoed. Because everyone is talking at the same time, no one is "on stage," being watched by the others. After four or five minutes, the four students finish their video conversation, get their videotapes from the teacher, and return to the conversation area to find new partners. Then four new students are called up to be videoed. In this way, each student is videoed for five minutes. Each week a new conversation is added to the previous conversations on their videotape. At the end of a twelve-week semester, every student has a videotape with about ten or eleven conversations.

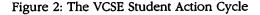
Our video equipment consists of two cameras (Hi8 Handycams) attached to two VHS recorders, each system on a trolley so that it can be moved to the appropriate classrooms on video day (see Figure 1). Since the equipment allows four students to be videotaped in a five-minute period, videotaping 22 students requires only about 35 minutes, with changeover time included and a warm-up conversation at the beginning of class. (Note: A 23-minute semi-professionally produced video for teacher training purposes made after the first year of this project is available from the authors.)

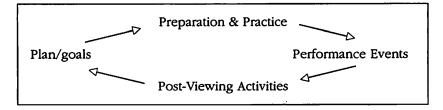
The students receive their videotapes immediately, when they are especially curious and motivated to see it. They can go home or to the school's media center to watch it the same day. In order to focus the students on noticing even more, we have experimented with several activities to perform while viewing and analyzing their conversations:

- *Evaluation form*: Students respond to a set of questions concerning their conversations: What did you notice that you said/did well? What mistakes did you make and how would you correct them? What did your partner say that you might like to use? How about your partner's mistakes? What are your goals for next week's videotaping?
- *Transcriptions*: Students transcribe their conversations correcting as many mistakes as they can find and also answer questions similar to those above.
- Watching a partner's video: After a few weeks have passed and several conversations are recorded on their tape, the students take their partner's tape and watch all the conversations, including the last one they just did with each other. They are asked to notice conversational elements which they want to borrow (e.g., strategies and language items) and are asked to write short letters encouraging and giving advice to their partners.

A synopsis of the whole procedure is shown in Figure 2, starting with students' preparation for the recording, videoing it, viewing it, and then, on the basis of the viewing, planning goals for the next performance, practicing for it, and performing the cycle again.

The teachers keep the master tapes from the cameras and have several options. They can view them and comment to students individually, watch the taped conversation together with the student, have a counseling session, and/or stockpile the copies for eventual research. While extremely valuable for both teacher and learner, viewing and comment-





ing on each student's conversation can be an overwhelming task if done each week. One author asks his students to do transcripts and to selfcorrect the errors in the left-hand columns. Then he checks those corrections which theoretically represents the material that students are dealing with within their ZPDs and are therefore ready to address. The other author watches all conversations and writes comments on selfevaluation forms, approving (or correcting) the student self-corrections and pointing out useful language items.

An overview of the three periods of the process (before, during, and after videotaping), the student behaviors, and the corresponding theories are given in Figure 3 below.

### Results

Student feedback was solicited through questionnaires and reports written after students reviewed the videos they had done for a semester (ten or eleven 5-minute conversations each semester; see Appendix 1 for the instructions). Feedback was also received weekly through selfevaluation forms, transcriptions and journals.

The authors have previously reported (Murphey & Kenny, 1995; 1996) that many students say they are uncomfortable during the first few weeks. They especially notice their silences, awkward movements, and the lack of questions. However, they soon find the videoing to be highly useful and even fun. In the students' end-of-semester reports, in which they do word counts comparing their first and last conversations as well as reviewing all their conversations, they confirm their developing ability to fill silences, continue conversations, and notice pronunciation and grammatical problems, and they are pleased with the obvious improvement. For example, in the spring semester of 1995, out of 40 first-year students reporting on the procedure, 22 said they had noticed the advantages of "shadowing" (i.e., regularly repeating parts of a partner's utterance; see

Period	Activity	Theoretical correlates
<ol> <li>Pre-Videoing</li> <li>Monday Tuesday</li> <li>Wednesday Thursday</li> <li>(*class days)</li> </ol>	present input select input target items practice output recycle	comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) learner training (Wenden & Gruben, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) performance events (Murphey, 1996) facilitative anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960) Notice (Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Ellis, 1995) Awareness (Flavell, 1979) Goals (Nunan, 1997)
2. Video Day	talk to lots of partners	multiple performance events pushed output (Swain, 1995)
•Friday	videotaped with random partner notice and note items from partners to learn	recycling
3. Post-Videoing	multiple viewing & pausing	intensifying: Notice
Saturday	transcriptions of	Awareness
Sunday	conversations	Goals
	focused observations	action research loop
	& feedback with forms	bottom up/top down
	or logs or take partner's video home	making input comprehensible "Grabbing the i+1" (Krashen) "within the ZPD"
	write self-progress report	(Vygotsky, 1962)
	review partner's progress	reflection (CLL) (Curran, 1997)
	set goals for next time	learner autonomy
	compile a "noticing list"	(Holec, 1981)

## Figure 3: The Three Periods of the VCSE Process

Murphey, 1995), 20 reported they looked more relaxed in later videos, and 15 said they were now really enjoying speaking English. They mentioned there were no longer any silences (13 students), that the word count increased (12 students), their sentences were longer (10 students), and they had longer turns (5 students) (Murphey & Kenny, 1995). They also noticed that they had begun to use gestures and could express their feelings and manage a conversation more easily. An increased ability to help their partners was mentioned as well.

Students appreciate that other students are engaged in similar conversations while they are being taped. Initially one of their great fears was that everyone would be watching while they talked. The relative privacy of the event goes a long way toward relaxing them, yet students still seem to retain the appropriate amount of facilitative anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960) to get them to prepare for the videoing event.

Students also commented that they were not only learning language items from one another, but in more holistic ways they were also learning and appreciating their partners' attitudes toward English, effort in studying, speaking in a "loud clear voice," using an assertive style of talking and questioning, and making appreciative responses. In sum, they were getting the "big picture" of communication, and the videoing allowed them to look at it repeatedly and model it.

That students can see their progress over time is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of videoing. They find examples of their improvement, and that appears to motivate them to want to improve more. Not only does weekly analysis of their videoed conversations encourage metacognitive awareness, but writing semester reports also intensifies this awareness by allowing them to view their progress over time, something that is impossible to do without a record of their language performance.

The feedback instructions initially asked the students to count words and turns, as we thought that increased counts would indicate more fluency gains. However, we suggest that such increases were only indications of gains in fluency for lower-level students. The length of the turn is a more accurate indication for intermediate and advanced speakers, as one student noticed: "In the first conversation, I said only one sentence each time. But in the last one, I talked a lot and my partner also talked a lot. I think that's why the number of turns decreased." Thus, while word-counts did increase for 36 first-year students from 34 words per minuteper partner to 45 words per minute per partner in four-minute conversations with each partner (1995 data, student transcribed and counted),we have since found that the number of words and turns may level off in the low 40s as students tend to take longer turns and ask for details which elicit more elaborate replies from their partners, necessitating greater time for formulating responses. For example, a preliminary examination of our most recent data (January, 1997) shows that 36 second-year students used an average of 42 words per minute.

The most obvious change over time was in the students' attitudes toward speaking English, as evidenced in the following quotes:

"Now, I have no hesitation to speak English in front of other people. This is the greatest thing for me through the videoing!!"

"In V-2 [the last video] we were talking like foreigners! I think the videoing helped us a lot. The best way to learn English is by using it."

We also suggest that the noticing process motivated learners to set clear, attainable, short-term goals. These explicit goals "set mostly by the learner" have become part of the classroom routine and appear to enhance student motivation (Nunan, 1997). As one student wrote in July 1997:

Watching my videos, I noticed several differences between them. First in V1 [the first video conversation], I didn't prepare anything to talk, so I haven't had any target words. And I didn't know much of shadowing, so my replies are often "yeah" and "oh  $\ldots$  !". When I saw this, I felt ashamed. Shadowing is much better in V2 [the last videoed conversation in the semester].  $\ldots$  Second, in V1, I was very nervous. So I couldn't talk very much. but in V2, I was very relaxed. I laughed with my partner and had a good time. Relaxing is very important. I think I learned many things from videoing.  $\ldots$  I am a little bit proud!

### Discussion

While the VCSE procedure can potentially change the learning environment, there are certain obstacles to its implementation. The first is the cost of the equipment. Although prices of video cameras and VHS recorders are decreasing, the initial expense, not to mention the upkeep and repairs, may be beyond many school budgets. Storage and placement of the machines may also be a problem because of space and security restrictions. Then there is the question of the "teacher as technician," a role which some teachers may feel uncomfortable with due to their unfamiliarity with the technology or with the change in teaching style that it necessitates. Finally, the students themselves often find the recording procedure uncomfortable at first. They may be shy about "being on TV" and feel uncomfortable speaking to other nonnative English speakers in the target language. They may also be unused to collaborating with another person because of cultural expectations regarding the format of the traditional EFL classroom. Thus, it is natural for students to be a little reluctant at first, but that their objections are overcome within a few weeks only adds more support for the VCSE procedure. Students overwhelmingly wish to continue with the procedure after the first year.

While some preliminary data seems to support the effectiveness of the procedure (Murphey, Matsunaga, & Sasaki, in progress), more research is required. The preliminary data from the student weekly and term-end reports, follow-up questionnaires, and regular teacher observations supports the VCSE procedure as an effective CLT activity. Undeniably, language practice is increased by regular performance events (Murphey, 1996a) which provoke appropriate amounts of facilitative anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960). In addition, noticing is greatly facilitated by recording language which is otherwise "hear" and gone. Ellis (1995,p. 90) proposes that students need to be able to perform a comparative operation, a cognitive comparison, comparing what they have noticed in the input with what they are presently able to produce in their own output. Such noticing and cognitive comparison becomes easier to do when students can replay their conversations and study not only their own output but their partners' as well.

In reference to affect, students can do these cognitive comparisons with little risk of losing face with VCSE since they can watch their conversations privately. Learners can then plan to use noticed language items in future conversations and make future goals. It is suggested that metacognitive awareness (Flavell, 1979) of "How am I doing?" greatly increases the degree of control learners have over their learning. Creating such opportunities for noticing, cognitive comparisons, and the exercising of control seem to be the greatest advantages of VCSE. However, more research is needed to see to what degree the opportunities are taken.

It is further suggested that providing opportunities for noticing can train learners to be their own teachers and can promote learner autonomy (Holec, 1981; Karlsson, Kjisk & Nordlund, 1997; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). The students are actually engaged in action research on their own learning as they plan conversations, practice them, are videoed, and then observe and reflect on their performance and make new plans for better results.

The VCSE procedure is also a way for teachers to get an "inside view" of what students are doing, to determine specifically what different students need, and to monitor improvement (instead of guessing as to the impact of instruction). Teachers are thus able to individualize feedback and conduct their own action research, seeing the result of their instruction from their students' actual performance. Involving the students in action research through regularly soliciting feedback has also been useful in discovering ways to improve the process. For example, when a few students watched their conversations with their friends or family members, this seemed to increase the importance of the videoing for them. Thus, this assignment has become a regular part of the course activities, and students are periodically asked to report on the feedback given to them by friends and family.

Finally, the procedure is an inviting subject for SLA research, generating a large amount of material for analysis. For example, from each semester there is over 6 hours of video material for each class and about 55 minutes (eleven 5-minute conversations) on the students' individual VHS cassettes. There are a host of ways to use the material for student and teacher research addressing various facets of SLA.

## Conclusion

This article has described a procedure for videoing conversations for self-evaluation. We suggest that this activity intensifies preparation and practice for regular performance events and allows students to notice otherwise fleeting language input and output through replaying their own conversations on video. This form-focused input and output flooding that is appropriately negotiated among peers within their ZPDs theoretically allows for noticing to occur and creates authentic comprehensible input while at the same time encouraging "pushed" output .

In terms of the CLT teacher macrostrategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1993), the VCSE procedure clearly enables teachers to "create learning opportunities in class," to "utilize learning opportunities created by learners," to "facilitate negotiated interaction between participants," to "activate intuitive heuristics of the learner," and to "contextualize linguistic input." All of these are believed to contribute to effective language acquisition.

While the technology may seem expensive, the potential benefits are considerable. As VCSE is increasingly used for teaching and research, equipment makers may very well develop cheaper, more user-friendly configurations for educational purposes. However, we feel it already is an extremely useful pedagogical procedure adaptable to a wide variety of situations, as well as a potentially rich field in which to conduct SLA studies.

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