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Enhancing Japanese university students' English-language presentation skills with mobile-video recordings

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In universities throughout Japan, English language learners are required to stand in front of their peers and make a presentation with the aid of software such as Microsoft PowerPoint. This type of public speaking activity can often be an anxiety-inducing, glorified reading or memorization exercise of text-heavy slides that fails to meet the intended objective of developing the learners' presentation skills. This paper reports on the perceptions of Japanese university students toward an action research project that utilized poster presentations in conjunction with mobile-video reflective feedback. An activity systems analysis helped uncover the systemic contradictions and tensions that existed in the participants' English as a foreign language (EFL) oral presentation lessons. One hundred and twenty-nine undergraduate economics students from nine classes completed a paper-based survey. In addition, seven students from the same second-year international economics course participated in a focus group interview. The results indicated that most participants viewed mobile-video enhanced self- and peer-reflective feedback as beneficial tools that could help improve the quality of their EFL presentation performances. However, many students expressed concern about public speaking anxiety, the protection of personal privacy, as well as the cultural contrast between Western and Japanese presentation styles.

Keywords: mobile-video, self-reflection, peer feedback, oral presentations, Japanese students

Regular Paper

Introduction

The ability to deliver informative and interesting presentations with the aid of visuals is considered to be a critical skill for English-language learners (ELL) who are preparing to participate in an increasingly globalized work environment (Danielewicz-Betz & Kawaguchi, 2014; De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2014). In the higher education (HE) context, many English-language instructors require their students to deliver a class-fronted presentation utilizing software such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, or Prezi. More often than not, university learners find this activity creates a tremendous amount of anxiety and discomfort. In addition, students often memorize scripts or read text-heavy slides, which not only defeats the purpose of enhancing their public speaking abilities, but is also a boring experience for the audience. Reynolds (2011) reminded us that even though technology has evolved over the years, "death by PowerPoint" is still a problematic issue because presentation styles have not changed that drastically (p. 7).

In order to address this unfortunate reality, the researchers examined how poster presentation practice sessions, which were recorded on students' personal mobile devices and uploaded to the university learning management system (LMS), could be used to provide self- and peer reflective feedback. Nowadays, most cellphones and tablets are equipped with a video capability that enables users to record and watch their own video files. In this study, the researchers define the term "mobile-video" as a media file created on a mobile phone or tablet. It does not include video clips recorded on a hand-held camera or laptop PC.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study was to examine how mobile-video could be used to enhance ELL's presentation skills through self- and peer reflective activities. In particular, the researchers explored how the practice of observing these videos fostered awareness of elements such as eye contact, posture, gestures, and voice control. The researchers also investigated students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with the use of mobile-video for learning, as well as the contradictions and tensions that exist in Japanese HE English-language presentation classrooms.

Research questions

De Grez, Valcke, and Roozen (2009) noted that even though the ability to speak in front of others is deemed to be an important part of the curricula in many educational settings, it is an area that is under-researched. There is also a noticeable void in the academic literature in regard to the use of mobile-video recordings during EFL learners' oral presentations. This action research project addressed this critical gap in the research literature by adding some practical insights to the pool of knowledge. It emerged from the immediate needs of the researchers' own professional practice. The research team's social constructivist stance and critical theoretical perspective factored into the design of the study as well as the analysis of the data. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do students perceive as potential advantages and disadvantages of the use of mobile-video in an EFL presentation lesson?
2. What are the students' perceptions of the self- and peer-viewing activities on the LMS?

3. What contradictions and tensions, if any, arise when using mobile-videos in an EFL presentation class?

Literature review

Mobile-assisted language learning

In our current globalized era, the development of new types of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has had a profound impact on the field of English language education (Ince, 2014; Liyanage, Walker, & Singh, 2014). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) Web 2.0 tools make it possible for EFL instructors to use blogs, wikis, podcasts, vodcasts, social networking sites, virtual worlds, automatic speech recognition and pronunciation programs, as well as online games in their classrooms (Golonka et al., 2014; Chun, 2011).

Accessing technological enhanced instructional material is now easier than ever for English language learners who have a mobile device. A typical smartphone has a large storage capacity and virtually anyone can capture a high quality audio-visual recording (Jordan, 2012). Burston (2014) pointed out that smartphones are powerful devices that have the "functionality" of computers and audio-visual recorders (p. 344). Faster Internet speeds and Web 2.0 sites such as YouTube, and Facebook have provided useful platforms for people to broadcast and share their mobile-video files (Sun & Yang, 2013).

Portability, flexibility, affordability and ease of use are the key affordances of mobile devices (Viberg & Grönlund, 2012). A UNESCO (2012) study on worldwide trends in mobile learning (m-learning) predicted that the "ubiquity and portability" of mobile devices have the potential to "influence teaching and learning in a way personal computers never did" (p. 14). Ozadamli and Uzunboylu (2015) argued that m-learning has broken down geographical barriers and facilitated flexible learning in cooperative environments. This benefits ELLs by giving them greater access to educational materials, authentic content, and increased opportunities to interact with other learners and native speakers. In addition, Loewen (2015) argued that technological advancements have paved the way for foreign language students to obtain "individualized instruction" (p. 152).

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has been found to enhance Japanese university students "self-study behavior" and English language abilities (Kondo et al., 2012, p.185). Other studies have reported that mobile devices helped EFL learners facilate communication among instructors and peers as well as improve their speaking and listening abilities (Golonka et al., 2014; Hwang & Chen, 2012).

Mobile video: The benefits

Video feedback is not a new phenomenon; in fact, it has been used since the early 1960s in foreign language acquisition research and the training of new teachers (Tochon, 2008). It is worthwhile to examine some earlier studies that fall outside the mobile-video literature arena because the findings are nevertheless just as relevant in our current technologically charged era. Unlike a written or audio evaluation, unedited video footage is particularly advantageous to ELLs studying presentation skills because it provides them with a more accurate artifact of their public speaking performance (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Jordan (2012) reminded us that our memories are not always reliable and a video file makes it more

difficult to distort reality. In addition to providing a more precise and permanent visual artifact, Dufon (2002) argued that a video recording gives us "denser linguistic information" as it captures the nuances of every spoken word (p. 44). Hensley (2009) believed that the repeated viewings of video files enhanced the objectivity of not only EFL student presenters but also their instructors and peers.

There is evidence that using mobile-video recordings to practice speaking skills can enhance motivation as well as improve word counts and confidence levels in some Japanese HE ELLs (Gromik, 2012). Furthermore, Miles (2014) claimed that Japanese students who watched videos of their public speaking performances could develop a greater sense of autonomy via the self-reflective process. In addition, they can sharpen their sense of responsibility by watching their classmates' presentation videos. In another Asian context, Hung (2009) discovered that video supported reflection fostered Taiwanese ELLs language development and digital literacy skills. On a similar note, Nakamura (2002) argued that peer-assessment could be an effective strategy to motivate EFL students to improve the overall quality of their presentations.

Reitmeier and Vrchota (2009) believed that student self-evaluation facilitates the "transfer of knowledge" from the confines of the classroom to other contexts and thus makes learning a more personal experience (p. 88). Likewise, the process of peer-evaluation can be empowering (Langan et al., 2005) and may foster interpersonal skills and relationships among students (Crooks, 1988).

Mobile video: The challenges

Despite the benefits of mobile-video to enhance peer- and self-reflective activities, there are a number of challenges that educators must address when injecting this technology into their lessons. Firstly, video is an intrusive medium that can cause anxiety during the recording process (Nielson & Harder, 2013) as well as embarrassment afterwards when the visual artifact is examined (Jordan, 2012).

Educators need to be concerned with privacy when employing students' mobile devices in the classroom in order to protect personal data such as photographs, messages and web search history. It is not surprising that Urban, Hoofbagke and Li (2012) discovered that a significant number of participants in their study were reluctant to let other people use their cellphones. The results from this American study may also translate into the context of a Japanese university classroom whereby some learners might be uncomfortable when they are instructed to hand over their smartphone to a classmate during a public speaking exercise. Research conducted by Kondo et al. (2012) and Stockwell (2008; 2010) revealed that Japanese learners were reluctant to utilize their personal mobile devices for scholastic purposes because they were concerned about privacy. On a similar note, Fife and Orjuela (2012) reported that Japanese mobile users were concerned with not only how their personal data is collected, but also who has access to their personal information.

There are also a number of technological challenges that must be addressed when applying mobile learning (m-learning) in a post-secondary context. Finally, it is crucial that instructors avoid becoming trapped in a technologically deterministic mindset. Selwyn (2012) claimed that technologies are constantly undergoing "… a series of complex interactions and negotiations with the social, economic, political and cultural contexts into which they emerge" (p. 84). Even though mobile devices are widely considered to be 'affordable', it would be erroneous for educators to assume that every student will walk into their EFL

classroom equipped with the latest and greatest smartphone or tablet. Some learners might not have the financial resources to own any type of mobile device or they can only afford an antiquated one.

Oral presentations and language learning in Japan

A criticism of the English-language education system in Japan is that preparation for entrance examinations, which focuses on the rote learning of grammar and vocabulary, is given greater emphasis than developing communicative abilities (Kikuchi, 2013). This reality in conjunction with an overreliance on traditional teaching methodologies has undoubtedly played a significant part in the high levels of student demotivation and apathy that are present in many post-secondary EFL classrooms (Maftoon & Ziafar, 2013; Cowie & Sakui, 2011). Sociocultural factors, such as the fear of making mistakes in front of others (Carless, 2012) and the unfamiliarity with Western-style teaching practices (Cutrone, 2009) can also impact English-language proficiency among Japanese learners.

Wroblewski et al. (2014) tell us that the Japanese high school system has underemphasized public speaking so there are not many opportunities for students to learn and practice presentation skills. The researchers discovered that speaking in public is thought to be "one of the most feared context-based apprehensions in Japan, even when done in Japanese" (p. 59). Therefore, 'foreign language anxiety' (FLA) (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) is a serious concern whenever students are required to make an English-language presentation in front of their classmates.

EFL educators can reduce some of the FLA that is associated with class-fronted presentations by weaving carousel poster sessions into their classes. In brief, this presentation format is a type of guided interpersonal communicative activity where there are a number of short, interactive student presentations occurring at the same time. Tanner and Chapman (2012) contended that ELLs found poster sessions to be easier and less stressful than traditional presentation styles. Added to that, poster presentations increases the learners' speaking time as well as generates more meaningful interactions between the presenters and the audience (Prichard & Ferreira, 2014).

Theoretical framework

This research investigation was constructed on the pillars of action research (AR) and activity theory (AT). The dual approach provided the researchers with a versatile theoretical framework to examine the participants' thoughts on using mobile-videos as a reflective tool as well as the systemic contradictions that are present in Japanese university EFL classrooms. Darwin (2011) believed that the "collaborative and democratic" elements of AR can provide AT-based scholarly investigations with "a less hegemonic and more sustainable form of inquiry" and thus allow for a more in-depth analytical device for researchers to utilize (p. 216).

Action research: The benefits and challenges

Over the years, AR has taken root in a variety of academic disciplines and been defined in a number of different ways. For example, Carr and Kemmis (1986) tell us that AR is a type of "… self-reflexive enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to

improve the rationality and justice of their own practices …" (p. 162). Whereas, Stringer (1999) contended that AR is a "collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems" (p. 17). The participatory and collaborative elements that are firmly entrenched in the AR tradition are important in a TESOL environment, especially when one considers the individualistic nature of the teaching profession. The AR approach can foster a sense of community (Richards & Farrell, 2005) and "reinvigorate" EFL educators' teaching practice as well as make them more cognizant of the complexities that are part of their job (Burns, 2010, p. 7).

There are a number of methodological pitfalls that researchers must circumvent when they gather data during an AR investigation. Critics of the AR tradition claim that the deep involvement of a research practitioner creates "personal bias" that can distort the findings of a study (Burns, 2005, p. 250). Another perceived flaw is that AR lacks academic rigor and is not as valuable as other types of research (Sowa, 2009). However, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) feel that this type of criticism is misguided because AR is in fact a "flexible, situationally responsive methodology that offers rigor, authenticity, and voice" (p. 361).

The action research cycle

Burns (2005) believed that the cyclical nature of the AR process is one of its strongest features because it can enhance the findings of a study. AR is often depicted as a cyclical or spiral diagram (see Figure 1) because of the ongoing nature of the process (Hayes, 2011). The four stages of an AR cycle are: (1) Planning – identify a problem and create a plan of action, (2) Action – intervention in the teaching context over a certain amount of time, (3) Observation – the data collection phase, (4) Reflection – reflect on and evaluate the effects of the action (Burns, 2010).

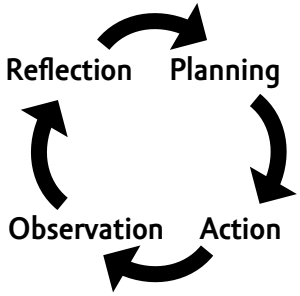

Figure 1. An action research cycle (Adapted from Burns, 2010)

Each of these four AR components played an important role in this study. The researchers identified a specific problem from their professional practice, namely the students were performing poorly during their class-fronted and software-aided presentations. Next, a plan of action was established that injected mobile-videos into presentation lessons in the hope that it would enhance the learners' observational and reflective capabilities. The researchers' critical observations in conjunction with the collection of quantitative and qualitative data comprised the third stage of the AR process. Finally, the reflection element

enabled the research team to evaluate what worked and areas that need to be modified during the next cycle.

Activity theory: Definition and value

Activity theory (AT) is a cross-disciplinary theoretical model that can examine various types of human interactions (Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007) as well as provide a means to scrutinize the change process of individuals within their "cultural and historical contexts" (Mak & Lee, 2014, p. 75). On a similar note, Westberry and Franken (2015) claimed that AT is a valuable interpretative resource because it stresses the " … context and situatedness by focusing on 'activity' as a bounded system" (p. 1). An activity systems analysis highlights the interconnectedness of learning and doing (Barab et al., 2009) as well as helps us to understand the "nexus of people, technology, and online life" (Sam, 2012, p. 85).

Engeström (1987) argued that learning occurs through an individual's interaction with the other elements in an activity system (Figure 2).

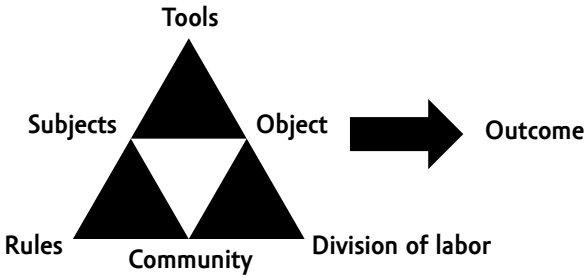

Figure 2. Activity system model (Engeström, 1987)

In the above diagram, an activity is a relation between a subject and object. The tools mediate these two elements. The tools will help support learning and achieve an object. Afterwards, the object is transferred into an outcome. Learners must abide by the rules of the activity and pay attention to the relationship with the other members of the community. In the division of labor section of the activity system, the various tasks are divided up among the members.

Activity systems: Complexities and contradictions

Engeström (2001) believed that the following five principles can explain the complexities in an activity system: (a) The prime unit of analysis focuses on the collective not the individual, (b) Activity systems are multi-voiced and multi-layered, (c) Activity systems are shaped and transformed over time, (d) Contradictions cannot be avoided and they play an essential part of the change process in an activity system, and (e) Expansive transformations in an activity system are possible (pp. 136–137).

Unlike most people, Engeström (2001) perceived friction to be a positive force that can usher in innovation and change. Along the same lines, Stuart (2014) argued that

"... contractions and discontinuities between conflicting areas" have the potential to create powerful opportunities for learning and development within an activity system (p. 350).

Methodology

Setting and sample

The study was conducted in the economics department of a private university in Japan. In 2015, there were 1,601 first- and second-year students enrolled in the economics faculty. There are two scholastic streams in the economics department, a general one that accounted for 71.9% of the first- and second-year learners and an international track, which represented the remaining 28.1%. Students who opt for the international path are usually more proficient in communicative English and have smaller EFL classes than their general stream cohorts. International economics learners are also more likely to join one of the university's study abroad programs.

The sample was taken from two of the researchers' four international and five general economics classes. From these nine classes, 152 students were invited to participate in the research investigation during class time. One hundred and twenty-nine students completed the survey, providing a response rate of 84.8%. The focus group interview participants were purposefully recruited from one of the researcher's second-year international economics courses. These individuals had already experienced recording and watching their poster presentation performances on a mobile device in a previous course taught by the lead researcher. In addition to the familiarity factor with mobile-videos, the learners appeared to enjoy interacting with their classmates and were regularly observed offering each other support. Trust and a high level of comfort among participants are important ingredients in a successful focus group discussion (Liamputtong, 2011). Twelve students were invited to partake in a focus group interview outside of their regular lesson time. Seven participants agreed to this request; the response rate was 58.3%.

Participants

All of the participants identified as Japanese in nationality. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 22 (M = 20). The majority of the students were 18 or 19 years old (76.8%). First year undergraduate students comprised 53.5% of the sample, second year (41.1%) and third year students (5.4%) accounted for the remainder. The majority of the participants were male (68.2%); 31.8% were female. There were sixty-seven (51.9%) students from the international track and sixty-two (48.1%) from the general stream that took part in the quantitative component of the study. The focus group included five male and two female students from the same second-year international economics class. Three participants were 19 years old and four were 20 years old.

Instrument

The questionnaire for this study comprised 22 questions (Appendix A). The instrument was divided into the following three sections: (1) demographics, (2) student perceptions, and (3) open-ended questions. The first part of the survey consisted of four demographics questions: (1) age, (2) nationality, (3) gender, and (4) class standing. Obtaining demographic

data from research participants is important to ensure that the sample adequately reflects the population to which the findings will be generalized (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The second section of the questionnaire was a frequency scale that measured the participants' perceptions of mobile-videos, poster presentations, MS PowerPoint presentations as well as peer- and self-reflective feedback. There were sixteen questions; 14 are positively worded items and 2 are negatively worded. Answers were recorded using a 6-point Likert scale with the following responses: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (somewhat disagree), 4 (somewhat agree), 5 (agree), and 6 (strongly agree). This scale was a suitable one for the cultural context of the study. Many Japanese students have a tendency to remain neutral on issues and not express their actual opinions in order to avoid confrontation (De Leersnyder, Boiger, & Mesquita, 2013). Cronbach's alpha measured the internal reliability of the scale. The internal reliability was lower than anticipated (a = .61). However, this notable statistical shortcoming does not detract from the fact that all of the survey items in their totality paint a more complete picture of the participants' perceptions when viewed in conjunction with focus group and open-ended responses.

The third part of the survey asked two open-ended questions. These questions were included to discover the participants' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile-videos in an EFL presentation class. The questionnaire was not based on any existing instruments. It was developed from the research team's observations, experience, and critical reflections during the action research cycle (Burns, 2010). A native-speaker of Japanese who has a high-proficiency in English translated the survey instrument into the students' first language. Sperber (2004) reminded us that translating surveys for use in cross-cultural research projects has a number of inherent hazards that can threaten the validity of a study. The "committee" translation approach enhances the validity and reliability of the survey instrument because two or more bilingual individuals independently review the work of the first translator (Råholm, Thorkildsen, & Löfmark, 2010). Keeping these words in mind, two additional native Japanese speakers with a similar proficiency in English reviewed the initial translation and recommended a few minor changes. The committee approach was also used to translate the focus group interview questions (Appendix B) and the participant information sheet.

According to Liamputtong (2011), a focus group is a "dynamic discussion" involving 6–12 individuals who have comparable experiences or concerns and come from similar backgrounds in terms of culture and social standing (Sagoe, 2012). This methodological tool was beneficial to this study because it allowed the researchers to better understand mobile-videos "through the eyes and hearts of the research participants" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 8). The focus group questions were developed with the study's research questions and theoretical framework in mind. According to Ruff, Alexander, and McKie (2005), the success of a focus group interview relies heavily on the researcher carefully developing questions that will give participants the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their experiences. Two colleagues critically analyzed the focus group questions and minor revisions were made.

Data collection and analysis

The steps in the research procedure are highlighted in the following flowchart (Figure 3):

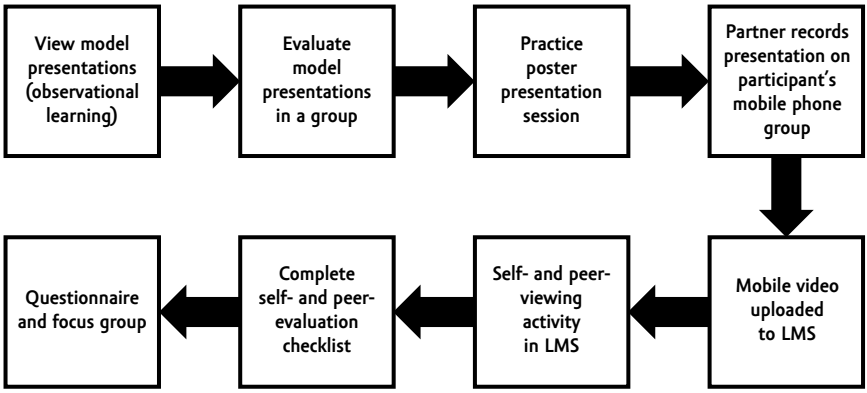

Figure 3. Overview of the research procedure.

The data were collected during the fall semester of 2015. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and no incentives were provided. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, the research team provided the students with an information sheet about the project and obtained their informed consent. IBM SPSS version 22 was used to scrutinize the quantitative survey data. The data were first examined for outliers, missing values, statistical assumptions, and two negatively worded items were reversed coded. There were twelve cases (9.3%) eliminated from the data set because two-thirds of the data points were missing. There were one hundred and seventeen cases (90.7%) remaining. Frequencies were generated for all the items. Missing data were replaced with the series mean and z-scores were calculated for the survey. The responses to the open-ended questions were coded and analyzed.

Participation in the focus group interview was voluntary and confidential and no incentives were provided. Before the session began, participants were provided with information about the study and their informed consent was obtained. The individual who translated all of the documents associated with the project served as the moderator while another member of the research team acted as the observer. The focus group interview was audio recorded and it lasted 50 minutes and 4 seconds. Immediately after the interview the observer and moderator discussed their observations. The audio recording was transcribed in full and translated into English by the moderator. Another native Japanese-language speaker, who has a high level of competence in the English language, listened to the audio recording and checked the English transcript. Finally, the transcription, field notes, and reflections were coded and analyzed. NVivo 10 for Macintosh, a qualitative research software package, was used to house and code the data.

Results and discussion

Research question 1: Advantages and disadvantages

The majority of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that poster presentations (76.7%) and class-fronted MS PowerPoint presentations (69.6%) could help them improve their

English language communication skills. The tables containing all of the means and standard deviations can be found in the appendices. Item 5 had the highest mean score for items on the 'Effort and Value' subscale (Appendix C – Table 1). Most participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed (83%) that it is difficult to do a poster presentation in English. Whereas, the same three categories revealed that 78.1% of students felt that it was challenging to do a MS PowerPoint presentation. On one hand, the data for Item 4 is not in the least bit surprising as it merely confirms previous studies (i.e., Wroblewski et. al., 2014) that noted many Japanese students consider public speaking to be an arduous and unpleasant undertaking. However, it was unforeseen that the participants in this study would consider a class-fronted speaking task to be less difficult than a more intimate person-to-person presentation. One of the main benefits of poster presentation sessions is that students find them less daunting and easier than conventional public speaking activities (Tanner & Chapman, 2012). The results from this study contradicted this commonly held notion. However, when the data is examined under a critical spotlight it becomes apparent that the integration of video supported self- and peer-reflections into the poster sessions may have played a part in the perception that it is more difficult to do than a MS PowerPoint presentation. In addition, it is much easier for students to camouflage a lack of effort during collaborative public speaking activities than it is during an individual presentation.

The final item on the subscale focused on the value of a mobile device in an EFL classroom. An overwhelming majority (88.4%) somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that a mobile device is a useful learning tool. Only 3.9% agreed or strongly agreed with item 7. The open-ended responses and focus group interview shed more light on this area. For example, one student commented: *"I would be uncomfortable if another student looks at my pictures or texts."* Another participant worried: *"There is a possibility that the video might be uploaded to the Internet without my permission."* This result was expected as several studies have found that privacy concerns are important to Japanese learners (Kondo et. al., 2012; Stockwell, 2010).

Anxiety and embarrassment from being recorded was the most frequently mentioned disadvantage because of the realization that others would see the videos. Added to that, their poster presentation would eventually be officially graded by the instructor. The academic literature confirms this finding. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), FLA can be exacerbated by the fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. Students were also worried about the possibility of damaging their peers' devices in the classroom. One participant stated: *"I am worried about breaking a mobile video recorder owned by someone else."*

These concerns were counterbalanced by several perceived benefits. One student noted: "*I can listen to my pronunciation and will be able to find areas that need improvement*." The fact that students could watch mobile-videos more than once was considered a significant benefit. Another participant captured this sentiment when she commented: "*I think it is good that it is easy to watch my performance repeatedly. I can check the video later, so I can improve my presentation next time*." Furthermore, one student stated: '*Instructors can review repeatedly*'. These findings mirror the work of Hensley (2009) who argued that repeated viewing of video files could enhance objectivity and Miles's (2014) contention that self-viewing activities can be a key factor in the development of learner autonomy.

Research question 2: Perceptions

The majority of participants (63.7%) somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that it was stressful to do a poster presentation. However, a larger number (73.7%) of students considered a MS PowerPoint presentation to be a source of greater stress. Item 4 had the highest mean score for items on the 'Affective Factor' subscale (Appendix C – Table 2). These results were expected because previous studies have demonstrated that EFL learners experience less anxiety in a poster session compared to a class-fronted public speaking situation (Prichard & Ferreira, 2014).

Responses for item 9 were almost evenly split with 50.5% of participants somewhat agreeing, agreeing, or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed watching their presentation on a mobile device and 49.2% disagreeing with this statement. The majority of students (64.4%) somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with item 10; while 34.2% were not nervous letting a classmate watch their mobile-video. These two results were not surprising because self-reflective and peer-review activities involving video footage can create a tremendous amount of discomfort (Jordan, 2012; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Most respondents (84.5%) somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that they would be comfortable if their presentation video was uploaded to YouTube. The majority of participants (67.1%) also disagreed with item 15; while 29% somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that they would be comfortable posting their mobile-video on the university's LMS. These results were anticipated because many Japanese people are concerned with who has access to their online files and how that information will be used (Fife & Orjuela, 2012).

The majority of respondents (90.7%) somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that mobile-videos helped them improve their graded presentations. Item 8 also had the highest mean score on the "Presentation Performance" subscale (Appendix C – Table 3). Most participants (83.7%) felt that it was helpful to have a classmate watch their presentation; whereas only 16.3% disagreed or somewhat disagreed with this statement. None of the students strongly disagreed with Item 11. The majority of participants (68.2%) somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that they gave their partners helpful feedback during the peer-review activity; while 28.7% felt that they did not provide any useful advice. These results were higher than expected. However, they echo previous research investigations (Hung, 2009; Miles, 2014) that found video supported reflections enhanced EFL learners' presentation performance and sense of responsibility.

Most students (76%) somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that watching a mobile-video of a poster presentation would help them make a better MS PowerPoint presentation. Only 20.9% of respondents agreed with Item 14. These numbers were totally unexpected and contradicted the results for Item 8. An overwhelming majority (90.7%) of participants felt that watching a poster presentation video on a smartphone screen improved their graded performance. The fact that 76% of students failed to recognize the transfer of learning between different presentation styles also contradicted the data that emerged from the focus group discussion. All of the participants involved in this collaborative interview were in agreement that a person-to-person presentation format sharpened their public speaking skills in other contexts. One student commented: *"Learning how to do presentations many ways is important … Now I can make a presentation in front of foreigners … my* [Japanese language] *economics class PowerPoint presentations will be better."* The noticeable difference between the results for Items 8 and 14 could hinge around two elements. First, the majority of first-year students in the study did not have much

experience delivering a class-fronted presentation. Next, there is an underlying cultural tension between a Japanese-style PowerPoint presentation and the public speaking activities in a typical EFL classroom.

Research question 3: Contradictions and tensions

The final research question explored the systemic contradictions and tensions that surfaced when mobile-videos were incorporated into an EFL presentation lesson. An AT model is especially useful to illustrate the interplay amongst the various components in this study (Figure 4).

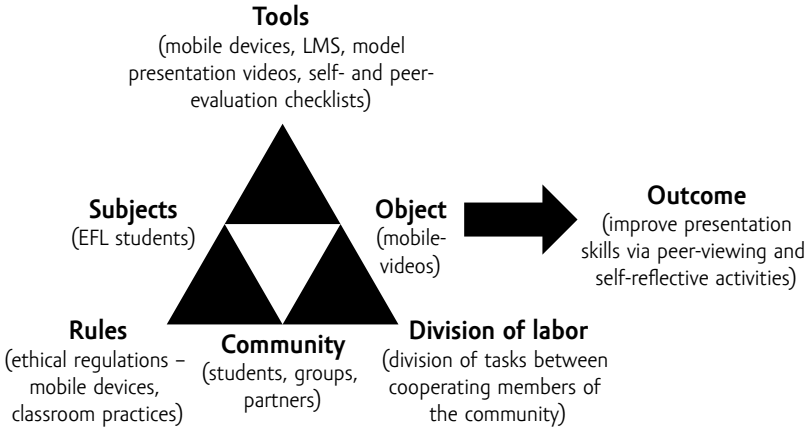

Figure 4. Mobile-video activity system model (adapted from Engeström, 1987)

The mediation of tools in an activity system is a fundamental part of AT (Engeström, 1987). This meditational process exposes subjects to contradictions and discontinuities (Stuart, 2014) within the system and paves the way for learning to take place (Hung, 2009). Engeström (2001) argued that friction within an activity system could be a positive force that ignites the fires of innovation and change.

The data that emerged from the focus group interview revealed that the process of mediating tools as well as the complex interactions between the different elements of the activity system generated a great deal of tension. The first major source of friction revolved around cultural compatibility. One participant commented: *"There's a big difference between Western-style and Japanese presentations … we can do it* [Japanese presentation] *without making a video."* All of the students felt that *"foreign presentations"* were more enjoyable to watch because they are *"… easy to understand … have good summaries and use lots of visuals."* On the other hand, Japanese presentations *"use lots of sentences in the slides … it's hard to read and listen at the same time."* However, six of the participants felt that a *"Western-style"* presentation was more difficult to do. One student stated: *"I can just speak* [Japanese presentation] *now I need to worry about catching the audiences attention and using my hands."* These words were not surprising because an EFL learner's confidence to speak English can be weakened by Western-style teaching practices (Cutrone, 2009). It is possible that some

of the intercultural static could have been reduced if the students had more time to practice their presentations.

All of the participants identified various time constraints with the mobile-video project. One student noted: *"downloading a video from Manaba* [the university's LMS] *was slow … it takes a long time to watch and provide* [peer] *feedback."* Another participant commented: *"the room was noisy … it was hard to listen to my presentation ... I had to watch it a number of times."* On a similar note, one student was frustrated when he was forced to redo his presentation because the cameraperson's finger was on the smartphone microphone.

Inserting a new tool into an EFL presentation lesson created a number of unforeseen technical problems. Modern day mobile devices are widely touted as having a vast storage capacity (Andreescu, 2015). However, the results from this study contradicted this widely accepted notion. The participants indicated that extra storage space on their personal mobile devices is actually quite limited due to their numerous photos, videos, game apps, and music files. One participant passionately stated: *"I need some notice to prepare my phone – Tell me one week before! I started to record but I had to redo the presentation because my memory was full."* Another individual noted: *"I had a low battery … I could not finish my presentation."*

The final and most important source of friction that emerged from the tool mediation process centered on the increased levels of stress the learners experienced when they made an English-language presentation in front of the lens of a mobile device. It was no great surprise to hear one participant say: *"it's not relaxing … the camera makes me nervous"* because these words echoed the findings of previous studies (i.e., Nielson & Harder, 2013). In addition to performance anxiety, the self- and peer-viewing activities created friction within the activity system. One student noted: *"if I do a bad presentation I will be reminded about it because there is a video."* Another participant commented: *"I hope my feedback is helpful but I don't know … if someone says my presentation was no good it would stay in my mind."* Even though inserting a mobile device into a presentation lesson created a certain amount of stress, it was not an insurmountable obstacle for the participants. In fact, many individuals benefited from the challenge. One student captured this sentiment in the following manner: *"Because there is a camera in front of me I have to do a good job … I need to be serious when I watch my partner's video."*

Engeström (2001) claimed that the constant fluctuation of the various activity system elements creates unavoidable contradictions and frictions that are an important part of the change process. The findings from this project echoed Hung's (2009) study that contended the mediation of video enhanced the learners' language development.

Limitations

There are notable limitations to this study. The most obvious one is the survey instrument used in the quantitative component of this investigation had a low internal reliability. This unfortunate reality prevented the researchers from utilizing data from inferential statistical tests to see if there were differences in responses based on the students' demographics. Future researchers would be wise to find an existing instrument, obtain permission from the author(s), slightly modify it to their own context, translate it, and conduct a pilot study to ensure the instrument had a satisfactory internal reliability. Unfortunately, the time constraints on this project did not allow these important steps to be taken. Another limitation is that only one focus group was conducted with second-year students. A focus group with first-year students would have enhanced the data. Two of the researchers work at the

institution where the study was conducted and the participants were drawn from their various EFL classes. This reality created issues related to power and influence (Creswell, 2014) as well as the risk of personal bias (Burns, 2005). The research team was conscious of these elements and thus adhered to ethical research practices to minimize any negative repercussions. The final limitation revolves around the fact that the study was conducted at a private university whereby the socioeconomic status of the participants can be quite different from students attending public institutions. Future research in this area must include learners from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds as well as different parts of Japan.

Conclusion

This action research project utilized a questionnaire and focus group interviews to develop a deeper understanding of how mobile-video could aid in teaching English-language presentation skills in the Japanese university classroom. The researchers discovered that the participants in this study were concerned with issues related to privacy and personal property when utilizing mobile-video recording devices. Furthermore, students identified cultural differences between Western and Japanese styles of presentation to be a possible point of tension. However, they recognized several benefits to using the devices for self- and peer-assessment, such as being able to repeatedly view the recordings and to objectively notice areas of their performance that needed improvement. Like all educational technology, mobile-video is not a panacea that will magically transform students into masters of public speaking. Nevertheless, it can be an effective tool for the teaching of English-language presentation skills if instructors carefully consider the issues identified in this research project as well as the unique context in which they teach.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire (English version)

Mobile-Video Research Project

This questionnaire is for research purposes only. All data will be examined and will not be used to evaluate your grade. Thank you for your assistance!

1. What is your age? _____ years
2. What is your nationality? _____
3. What is your gender?
   a. Male _____
   b. Female _____
   c. Prefer not to answer _____
4. What is your academic standing?
   a. First-year student _____
   b. Second-year student _____
   c. Third-year student _____
   d. Fourth-year student _____
   e. Other: Please explain _____
5. Please respond to the following statements with a number that represents your opinion.

Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Somewhat agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
A) It is difficult to do a poster presentation in English.						
B) It is stressful to do a poster presentation in English.						
C) It is difficult to do a **class-fronted** *(speak in front of the entire class)* PowerPoint presentation in English.						
D) It is stressful to do a class-fronted PowerPoint presentation in English.						
E) A poster presentation can help me improve my English communication skills.						
F) A class-fronted PowerPoint presentation can help me improve my English communication skills.						
G) A mobile device (i.e., smartphone, iPad) is a useful learning tool in an efl class.						
H) Watching my poster presentation on my smartphone helped me to improve the graded presentation performance.						
I) I enjoyed watching my presentation on my mobile device.						
J) I was nervous to let my partner watch my presentation video.						
K) It was helpful to watch to have my partner watch my presentation video.						
L) I did not mind giving my mobile device to my partner to record the poster presentation video.						
M) I gave my partner helpful feedback after watching his/her presentation video on a mobile device.						
N) Watching my poster presentation on a mobile device will help me make a better class-fronted presentation at the end of the term.						
O) I would be comfortable if the teacher posted my presentation video on Manaba+R.						
P) I would be comfortable if the teacher posted my presentation video on YouTube.						

Instructions: Please complete the following questions by writing in the answer. **(Note: Japanese is OK)**

6. What are the **advantages** of using mobile video recordings in an EFL presentation class?

_____

_____

7. What are the **disadvantages** of using mobile videos in an EFL presentation class?

_____

_____

Appendix B

Focus group questions

1. Do you think it's necessary for Japanese university students to study presentation skills in their English language classes? Why or why not?
2. What's the difference between the oral presentation style you are expected to use in your English language classes and the oral presentation style you use in your economics (Japanese) classes? Which style do you prefer? Why?
3. Do you think it is difficult to do a class-fronted (speak in front of the entire class) PowerPoint presentation in English? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it is difficult to do a poster presentation in English? Why or why not?
5. What are the advantages of video recording your EFL oral presentation on a mobile device?
6. What are the disadvantages of video recording your EFL oral presentation on a mobile device?
7. Do you think watching your presentation practice session on a mobile device helped you to improve your presentation performance? Why or why not?
8. Were you comfortable when you teacher posted your presentation video on Manaba+R? Did you have any problem accessing your video on Manaba+R? Do you think Manaba+R is easy to use? Would you be comfortable if your instructor posted your presentation video on YouTube?
9. How did you feel when you watched your presentation video on Manaba+R?
10. How did you feel when your classmate watched your presentation video on Manaba+R? How did you feel when you watched your classmate's video?
11. Was the peer feedback you received helpful? Do you think your feedback helped your classmate improve his/her presentation performance? Explain your answers.
12. Were you comfortable letting another student use your mobile device to record your presentation performance? Why or why not?
13. Do you think that your foreign teachers' ideas about oral presentations are different from your Japanese instructors? Explain your answer.
14. Do you think that a mobile device is a useful learning tool in an EFL presentation class? Are there any tensions you noticed when the students used a mobile video recording in their EFL presentation lessons?
15. Is there anything else that you feel we should talk about but didn't?

** Thank you once again for your time and assistance.

Appendix C

Means and standard deviations of survey items

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for effort and value items

Item	*M*	*SD*
1. It is difficult to do a poster presentation in English.	4.52	1.05
3. It is difficult to do a class-fronted (speak in front of the entire class) PowerPoint presentation in English.	4.39	1.14
5. A poster presentation can help me improve my English communication skills.	5.07	.784
6. A class-fronted PowerPoint presentation can help me improve my English communication skills.	4.87	1.02
7. A mobile device (i.e., smartphone, iPad) is a useful learning tool in an EFL class. [R]	4.65	.951

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for affective factor items

Item	*M*	*SD*
2. It is stressful to do a poster presentation in English.	4.07	1.32
4. It is stressful to do a class-fronted PowerPoint presentation in English.	4.22	1.25
9. I enjoyed watching my presentation on my mobile device.	3.54	1.21
10. I was nervous to let my partner watch my presentation video.	3.94	1.24
15. I would be comfortable if the teacher posted my presentation video on Manaba+R. [lms]	2.57	1.36
16. I would be comfortable if the teacher posted my presentation video on YouTube.	1.94	1.07

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of presentation performance items

Item	*M*	*SD*
8. Watching my poster presentation on my smartphone helped me to improve the graded presentation performance.	4.57	.852
11. It was helpful to watch to have my partner watch my presentation video.	4.19	.912
13. I gave my partner helpful feedback after watching his/her presentation video on a mobile device.	3.78	.835
14. Watching my poster presentation on a mobile device will help me make a better class-fronted presentation at the end of the term. [R]	4.30	1.06