Utilizing Flipgrid for speaking activities: A small-scale university-level EFL study

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Abstract

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many educational institutions to implement ERT, which resulted in courses going online across Japan. Many teachers were faced with creating asynchronous or on-demand materials to meet the educational goals of their classes. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of Flipgrid as a face-to-face speaking activity replacement. The study used four criteria based on asynchronous teaching as well as feedback from student surveys to determine Flipgrid’s efficacy as a face-to-face replacement and the use it may serve for future online or hybrid English courses. The use of Flipgrid had some observable positive and negative impacts. Students stated that motivation to learn English, as well as their listening and speaking ability grew over the first semester of the course. However, some student participants remarked that they were apprehensive to show their faces on camera for teachers and peers to see. The lack of real-time feedback from teachers may also be an obstacle to overcome for Flipgrid to be an effective replacement for face-to-face speaking activities.

Keywords: Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), asynchronous, on-demand materials

Introduction

In 2020, university teachers in Japan were confronted with an unprecedented situation just weeks before the beginning of the spring semester. Teachers were given as little as two weeks’ notice to adjust their curriculum to an emergency remote teaching (ERT) format. Teachers of English language courses were especially burdened with the task of finding suitable platforms to create the environment necessary to accomplish the communicative goals of their courses.

In my personal teaching context, I was responsible for six English communication courses at a public university in Hokkaido, Japan. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the spring semester, university teachers were tasked with changing their course curriculums from face-to-face to an ERT format.
aspired to give the students ample opportunities to improve their English communicative abilities regarding the four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with a specific focus on listening and speaking. The main reason for a focus on listening and speaking is that EFL studies have shown that Japanese university students tend to rate themselves as being stronger in reading and writing skills than listening and speaking (Takehara, Wright, Kawaguchi, Ishida, Morio & Tagami, 2016).

For many teachers in the traditional face-to-face classroom the textbook serves as the nucleus around which classroom activities are planned. English textbooks which have a productive element (i.e., writing and speaking) often include communicative activities which can be used. The activities included in textbooks are created under the assumption that conventional pair-work or group activities are possible with a classroom filled with students. In the case of ERT, however, facilitating pair or group work with students can be a challenging endeavor, especially when a majority of teachers have little to no experience managing an online classroom. The teacher has ultimately three choices to consider when conducting an online course: synchronous, asynchronous, or a mix of both.

A synchronous class is one that closely resembles a conventional face-to-face class and is typically conducted via video conferencing applications (ZOOM, WebEX, BBB, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, etc.). Synchronous classes require that teachers and students join a video conference at the scheduled time. A popular video conference application that received a great deal of attention from teachers in Japan at the start of the 2020 spring semester was ZOOM (Online Teaching Japan, 2020). Video conferences require a device capable of recording video and voice as well as a fast internet connection for sending and receiving large amounts of data simultaneously, an uninterrupted connection, and sufficient microphone and speaker quality to be effectively heard and to hear what the teacher and peers at the other end of the call are saying. Because of the burden synchronous platforms put on students and teachers alike, many schools advised against synchronous applications to complete compulsory coursework.

Asynchronous or on-demand materials differ from synchronous counterparts mainly because they are available to students at their convenience. For this reason, they were preferred by many schools to meet the needs of students who are less suited to handle online classes during the state of emergency in Japan. In my teaching context, an asynchronous course was necessary to meet the needs of the curriculum of a communicative English course at a four-year public university in Japan.

A mobile software application called Flipgrid (Flipgrid.com) was chosen as an asynchronous platform for conducting speaking activities with students. Flipgrid is a cross-platform application that works on iOS, Android and computer which enables users to make a video recorded “response” which is posted to a thread which Flipgrid calls a “Topic.” Flipgrid was acquired by Microsoft in 2018 and all of its robust offerings of features (video creation tools, unlimited storage, extensive database of free images, etc.) are available for free for teachers as well as students. Flipgrid is by far the most widely used online video creation and sharing platform in the education domain. It has been used in classes of various fields, especially in America. There are also many studies in the literature investigating Flipgrid’s effectiveness in oral skills (Mango, 2019, 2021; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019; Petersen et al., 2020; Shin & Yunis, 2021). However, literature around the utilization of Flipgrid and its effects on Japanese language students are less common. This paper centers on the efforts to implement Flipgrid in asynchronous courses along with investigation of its efficacy for conducting speaking activities in a communicative-centered EFL course. The positive and negative experiences from both teachers and students will be presented and examined in this paper.
Literature Review

Digital natives

It has been commonly asserted and observed that wireless technological devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones have become ubiquitous with today’s learners (Karaasan et al., 2018; Looi, et al., 2010; Pivec, 2007). These “digital natives” have a potential to learn differently from those before them because they live “e-lives” that are always connected to wireless networks, accessing and sending information in real-time via “blogging, online shopping, social networking, online gaming, file sharing or chatting.” Karaaslan et al. point out, however, that while these learners have accepted technology as an “inseparable part of their lives and are quite digitally skilled,” they have not necessarily yet acquired the ability to “learn through digital technologies” (Karaaslan, et al., 2018, p. 54).

Flipgrid

Flipgrid was developed in 2014 by Professor Charles Miller at the University of Minnesota, which makes the video discussion platform a relatively recent language teaching tool (Young, 2018). Before the novel coronavirus pandemic, Flipgrid had been trialed and studied in a variety of teaching situations (online, hybrid, HyFlex) and subjects, primary through tertiary levels, such as business classes (McLain, 2018; Keiper, White, Carlson, & Lupinek), visual arts (Johnson & Skarphol, 2018), engineering (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019. At this time, limited research exists regarding Flipgrid’s effectiveness in foreign language learning. One of the earliest published studies that examines the efficacy of using Flipgrid in a language teaching context is McLain (2018) who found Flipgrid to be an effective learning tool for Business English Writing students in Korea. Student-participants in McLain’s study reported that Flipgrid was beneficial for them to engage in language practice from home. Many participants also reported that they had perceived an increase in their English-speaking ability. Tuyet and Khang (2020) studied the effects on anxiety that Flipgrid had on their EFL students in Vietnam. They found that Flipgrid had a positive effect on reducing stress and anxiety when speaking English among many of their students.

The most notable research related to this study is Mango (2021) who conducted a study using Flipgrid with 30 students enrolled in an Arabic as a World Language (AWL) course in America. The purpose of Mango’s study was to investigate his students’ attitudes and perceptions of the use of Flipgrid including its advantages and disadvantages. Mango found that 53% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Flipgrid helped them develop their speaking and listening skills and confidence in public speaking. Mango also conducted qualitative research using an open-ended questionnaire asking for what students thought were the advantages and disadvantages of using Flipgrid for speaking activities and found that respondents rated Flipgrid positively because it:

1. provided a stress-free environment for speaking and listening,
2. allowed for tracking of language progress

These two themes made up about 75% of responses, and the third theme which made up about 25% of responses, the use of Flipgrid:

3. built confidence in speaking and listening skills

Fourteen respondents also pointed out some disadvantages of using Flipgrid:
1. lack of immediate feedback (27%)
2. discomfort with speaking publicly (14%)
3. forgot to do assignments or had technical problems (14%)
4. assignments were tedious (9%)

Research purpose

Flipgrid was seen as a viable tool to conduct speaking activities in an online, asynchronous format. It was chosen based on the recommendation of Monica Burns, the host of Easy EdTech Podcast, as well as some colleagues in the Online Teaching Japan (OTJ) community. However, in order for Flipgrid to effectively replace face-to-face speaking activities, it should be operable with the following criteria noted by Bailey and Hammett in assessing the viability of online asynchronous listening activities (2020, 2021):

- Authentic and appropriate content creation
- Learning management system (LMS)
- Management and assessment
- Deadlines

The criteria were developed to assess asynchronous listening activities because criteria dealing with such language-learning activities did not exist in the literature, and it was only due to the unprecedented changes that were brought on by a worldwide pandemic that has made ERT prevalent only very recently. The criteria, however, are not limited to assessing speaking activities, but rather any asynchronous language activity which uses an LMS. It is my belief that the criteria can also serve the purposes of assessing the viability of asynchronous speaking, reading, or writing activities with the following constraints:

1. The criteria are centered on assessing the implementation and execution of activities in an asynchronous online class. They may be helpful in the development or implementation of online asynchronous activities. The criteria were not intended for the use of making assessments on the content within the activities or how the content may be received by students. As such, the criteria should not be used for selecting or developing the content or the material within the activity.
2. In an asynchronous online class, it is recommended that teachers not only consider the above criteria, but also their students’ language ability, interests, motivation, learning needs, goals of the class’s curriculum, and other contextual factors.

This paper seeks to understand both sides of the proverbial coin in terms of how the teacher and students viewed the asynchronous speaking activities using Flipgrid. The above criteria will be discussed from the user/teacher’s viewpoint in section 4.1. As for the students, a survey which included Likert-scale questions was administered to students of six sections of a EFL class to obtain feedback to questions related to the efficacy of using Flipgrid for speaking activities which will be presented in section 4.2. Two additional student-centered criteria will be explored in this paper that may be just as important in an ERT context, especially when students are tasked with speaking activities. The survey implemented questions to elicit answers to Likert-scale questions as well as contextual answers from respondents related to the perception of their experiences in the asynchronous course according to the following criteria:

- Interest level in English
- Motivation level
- Satisfaction with activities
- Development in speaking ability

**Method**

**Participants**

The study was carried out at a public university in Japan over a period of 13 weeks. Participants in this study were students of mixed levels in a compulsory language course at a public university. Students were predominantly 2nd year students of three majors: sports business (スポーツビジネス専攻), music culture (音楽文化専攻), and art and culture (美術文化専攻). The total students that were enrolled in the course was 141, comprised of 42 men and 99 women. The goals of the course were to improve efficiency and fluency in English communication skills, with a particular focus on listening and speaking.

**Materials**

A topic-centered textbook called Topic Talk by David Martin was selected to be the anchor of the English communication course on which activities would be centered on. Each week a new topic was introduced, along with listening activities based on the current week’s topic, and speaking activities were conducted via Flipgrid which related to the previous week’s topic. This was done so that the course required some recall of previous learning, as well as giving students a chance to familiarize themselves with the topic and its related content and vocabulary before being required to talk about it. This reinforces a typical ESL theory that languages are more effectively learnt when opportunities for review and recall are integrated into the curriculum (Myskow, Underwood & Waring, 2019).

**Procedure**

Participants in this study were students who participated in an English course that was conducted in an asynchronous (on-demand) format. Students were given learning materials and assignment information via Google Drive. Of the two main types of assignments, the first type were listening comprehension activities. These were administered via Google Forms using MP3 Files and YouTube videos as prompts for questions to assess comprehension. The second type of assignment which this study is concerned with was the speaking activities. These were conducted via Flipgrid, which is a forum-like video recording application that can be used on mobile devices (smartphone, tablets and computer via Flipgrid’s official website). Participants made weekly “selfie” videos of themselves talking about topics or answering questions centered on a topic. A teacher-created video was provided to students each week to give students ideas on how to create videos related to each week’s topic. The topics used for the speaking activities were proposed to expand on the topics covered in the textbook. Each week after week three students were to make a video of themselves talking about various topics ranging from 30 seconds to 1 minute. Below are some of the topics which were used for speaking activities each week (note that there was often more than one option for students to choose from within a topic):

1. Self-introduction: What is your name? Where are you from? What’s your hobby?
2. Food: What’s a dish you like to cook (share a recipe or make a cooking video)? Or, What’s your favorite (ethnic) food?
3. Time: Would you like to travel back in time? Why? Or, Would you like to travel to the future? Why?
4. House and Home: Talk about your dream house!
5. Music: Music, books, TV- Which is most important to you? Or, What’s your favorite music/song?
6. Transportation: What will transportation be like in the future? Or, Where would you like to go on a trip?
7. Sports: What’s your favorite sport to play? Or, What’s a sport you would like to try?
8. Friendship: Which traits are important to you for a friend? Or, Talk about your best friend in childhood.
9. Work: Talk about your dream job. Or, Have you had any part-time jobs? Talk about it
10. Final speech: Your future after graduating from university.

Surveys

Two surveys were administered to the participants via Google Forms that included questions to elicit responses to their experiences using Flipgrid for speaking assignments in an asynchronous/on-demand learning environment. Students consented that their responses would be used anonymously for the purposes of improving the course contents and academic research. The institution in which this research was done also consented that the results of the study could be used for academic research. The first survey was administered at the beginning of the semester and included a question to respondents to state their English interest-level. The second survey was administered at the end of the semester and consisted of questions to determine students’ English interest-level, perceived motivation-level, satisfaction with Flipgrid, and various other questions to determine what students perceived about their experience using Flipgrid as a speaking activity replacement. The survey included quantitative Likert-scale as well as qualitative open answer questions. The beginning-of-semester survey received a total of 132 responses, and the end-of-semester survey received a total of 102 responses.

Results

Efficacy criteria

The first four efficacy criteria stated in 2.3 to determine the efficacy of Flipgrid for replacing face-to-face speaking activities will be presented and discussed in this section. The four criteria are the following: authentic and appropriate content creation, learning management system (LMS), management and assessment, and deadlines.

Authentic and appropriate content creation

Referring to section 2.1, Flipgrid could be considered a well-tuned application to address today’s learners in an online asynchronous learning environment for a number of reasons. The first reason is that it is created first and foremost as a mobile application for smartphones. Flipgrid utilizes the users’ front and rear smartphone cameras to record videos with time-limits. The camera interface provides users with a number of customization tools for their videos in a layout similar to Instagram, a popular application among university-aged Japanese (see Figures 1 and 2). Students can be creative and personalize their videos by adding pictures, drawings, and text as well as adjusting the “filter” which can soften complexions and alter the color tone of the video.
The major differences with Flipgrid and Instagram is that the latter is used for daily dissemination and consumption of media, while the former is an educational tool that appears to mimic the aspects that make Instagram a popular application among students in Japan and abroad. Flipgrid gives the teacher of a class the freedom to decide what kinds of topics and questions to discuss. Flipgrid also has a library of shared topics and questions that are free to use or change to fit the needs of the teacher and of his/her learners. Refer to Figure 3 for an example of a teacher-created topic and questions. The teacher can decide a title and image to go along with the topic’s questions. Flipgrid allows students to take a photo to appear as the “thumbnail” for their video. These settings and other customizable options allow students to personalize and be creative with their videos, hopefully creating more motivation to complete the assignment.

**Learning management system**

During the period of ERT in 2020, many universities across Japan required the use of learning management systems, also known simply by the abbreviation LMS. The LMS used at each university may differ as well as how they are operated such as the features or tools which are available to teachers to disseminate course contents. A feature that appears to be both necessary and ubiquitous among LMS in Japan is the ability to distribute text, images, and documents to students via a messaging or announcement tool. Flipgrid gives teachers the ability to easily on-board students into their Flipgrid classes via “Join Codes” (see Figure 4). After entering a “Join Code,” students are prompted to enter an assigned username, or login with their institutional email, depending on which option the teacher designates when setting up the class on the Flipgrid teacher website. Flipgrid gives the option for the teacher to create individual usernames or, if available and allowed by the university, use institutional emails for on-boarding students. For the purposes of disseminating content, Flipgrid can generate QR codes which when scanned prompt users to download the
application and automatically enter the “Join Code” for them, leaving the student with only needing to input their username, or log in with their institutional email. Flipgrid also allows the option to embed each “Topic” into an LMS that supports HTML coding (such as Moodle). In any of these cases, Flipgrid provides various options so the teacher can straightforwardly disseminate the content for students to access through the LMS.

FIGURE 3 Flipgrid topic with description and instructions for students

Management and assessment

Teachers need the ability to manage their classrooms so that students are clear as to how to complete assignments. Teachers also need to be able to assess student work and make those assessments available to students to easily view and understand. Flipgrid allows the teacher to create “topics” to be created using a teacher account. A topic is similar to a new thread that you might see on a forum website such as Reddit. Within the topic, the teacher can include a title and directions for how to complete the assignment (refer to figure 3). The teacher can also create his/her own video to give verbal instructions to accompany written ones and/or give an example of how to adequately complete the task. These topics, as well as selected videos, can be “duplicated” or copied to other classes so that the teacher doesn’t need to create similar or identical assignments from scratch. At this time, Flipgrid’s user interface via website or smartphone application is available only in English. Using an application completely in English could be understandably overwhelming for foreign language students and could discourage them from completing their speaking assignments. Teachers can help mitigate this current shortcoming by making “how-to” or tutorial videos by screen recording and narrating how students can log in to the application and complete their assignments by going through all the necessary steps. The teacher may need to consider writing certain instructions in the learners’ L1 so the students can more easily understand how to successfully complete assignments. If Flipgrid could someday provide multi-language support for users of the application, it would likely lead to less “teeth pulling” by the teacher, easier participation by students and as a result, less burden on the teacher to foresee and mitigate issues that come from this deficiency.
Flipgrid gives the option to export all student responses via their website. The website creates a CSV download which includes information regarding student names, timestamps, video-lengths, as well as the assessment scores the teacher made for each student’s video. This feature can make grade compiling an easier task to manage for the teacher.

Flipgrid provides teachers a tool for assessment; however, this tool is currently only available through Flipgrid’s website (see Figures 5 and 6). Flipgrid provides the teacher with a scaled grading rubric. By default, a preset rubric with two criteria (ideas and performance) is set, however, the rubric criteria can be changed, and additional criteria can be added by the teacher along with the desired point values. However, at the time of writing, this feedback can only be seen by students who provide the teacher with their university or personal email address. Note: The current feedback feature will no longer be available after August 2021. It’s unclear if it will be replaced with a different feedback feature or eliminated entirely. The teacher also has the option to write a comment for each student’s video. These comments can be written publicly (seen by everyone in the class or privately: seen only by the student who is written to). Currently, private comments can only be written via the teacher website (https://admin.flipgrid.com).
Surveys

Two surveys; an entrance survey and an exit survey were administered to six sections of the same course. The following survey questions were asked of student participants to determine their satisfaction with Flipgrid speaking activities, as well as how student motivation and interest level in English were impacted throughout a semester of online asynchronous communicative activities.

自由回答：前期の授業を終えて一番思い出に残っている事は？
Free answer: What is the most memorable aspect after finishing the first semester of the course?

The students were asked open-ended questions about what the most memorable aspect for them was after finishing the first half of the course. Of 102 total responses, 48 mentioned making or watching Flipgrid videos as being the most memorable aspect of the course.

尺度：前期を終えて、現在英語にどれくらい興味がある？（1－嫌い → 10－とても好き）
Scale: How interested are you in English now, after the first semester? 1 (hate it) → 10 (love it)?

Students were asked this question prior to the semester start and once again during the final week of the first semester to determine their opinions of how the online English course had impacted their
interest to learn English. In Figures 8 and 9 are responses collected at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester, respectively:

**Figure 8** Beginning of semester responses for participant interest-level

**Figure 9** End of semester responses for participant interest-level

Before any analysis can be discussed about the above survey results, it is important to consider that when the question was first asked via a questionnaire at the beginning of the semester, it prompted 132 responses while the second occurrence of the question prompted 102 responses. This discrepancy can be explained in three recognizable ways. First, the beginning-of-semester questionnaire was available to students from the first day of school (May 11th) and received responses until the end of the month (the last response was submitted on May 29th). The second questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester and received responses for roughly a week starting on August 4th, with the last response received on August 12th. The second point was that, however regrettable, due to the circumstances that ERT put on students and their respective contextual situations during the Covid-19 pandemic, some students failed to pursue the course throughout the entirety of the semester. The third possible reason for the discrepancy is that the first survey was less demanding. It included eight questions and the questions were mostly centered on the students’ learning preferences and technology access. The second survey was more demanding as it included 13 questions and some of the questions had two parts. There could be other reasons for the decrease in survey participation which are unidentifiable without asking individual students who failed to participate in the second survey.

With that aside, when looking at the total responses to the question, it was notable there were four more responses in the second instance of the English interest-level question with scores of 9 (9) and 10 (12) when compared to the first instance (5 and 8). Also, the percentage of low scores of 1 to 6 dropped in the second iteration of the question, while the percentage of high scores of 7 to 10 all
These results appear to provide support that a number of students who participated in the course from start to finish believed that their interest in learning English had grown.

Scale: Did your motivation to learn English increase or decrease through the semester?

In question 9, survey participants were asked to rate how their motivation was impacted throughout the semester. A score of 1 was defined as “my motivation has decreased greatly” 「意欲がとても減った」, and a score of 10 was defined as “my motivation has increased greatly!” 「意欲がとても増えた!」. See Figure 10 for participant responses:

![Participant motivation responses](Figure 10)

Within a 1 to 10 scale, a score of 5 or 6 could be considered a neutral response with 5 leaning slightly negative and 6 leaning slightly positive. Considering this, only a total of 15 respondents rated the course as impacting their motivation to learn English somewhat negatively. On the other hand, the remaining 87 responses rated the course as having a positive impact on their motivation. 26.5% of respondents gave a rating of 9 (9.8%) or 10 (16.7%). These results have to be understood in the context that the question was asked, which was a broad assessment of the course as a whole, including the other assignments such as listening activities, teacher rapport, satisfaction with online learning in general, etc. As such, the responses to this question cannot be generalized as to the effect that the speaking activities conducted via Flipgrid had on students’ motivation to learn English.

Scale: Has your ability to speak English improved? 1 (not grown at all) → 10 (grown very much!)

![Participant improvement in English speaking responses](Figure 11)
In question 10 of the survey, participants were asked to rate perceived growth in their ability to speak English. A score of 1 was “no growth” while a score of 10 was “grew very much!” This question resulted in about 93% (95) scores of at least 5. Also, 58 out of the 102 respondents, or 56% rated their perceived improvement as a 7 or higher, meaning that they felt they had improved markedly in speaking ability.

尺度、自由回答: Flipgridの話す練習の満足度は？
Scale and free answer: How satisfied are you with Flipgrid's speaking practice?

![Figure 12 Participant satisfaction with Flipgrid's speaking activities responses](image)

The last survey question included in this research asked students to rate how satisfied they were with Flipgrid as a speaking activity. A score of 1 was defined as “not satisfied at all” 「全く満足してない」 and a score of 10 was defined as “very satisfied!” 「とても満足！」. The scores received in question 5 were markedly more diverse than those from the questions related to motivation or English interest level and highlighted some understandable limitations of conducting speaking activities via ERT. There were also notable high scores given which highlight some advantages of using an application with diverse and useful features for communication activities. The average score of the responses was nearly 7 (6.96). Part b of question 5 asked respondents to explain their reasoning for the score they selected. When analyzing the student responses in part b for themes in their responses, it was found that 60 responses contained favorable comments and 46 responses contained critical or unfavorable comments. In figure 13 and 14 are chart representations of the themes found when analyzing student responses in regard to their positive and negative experiences using Flipgrid. Some notable student excerpts from the survey question will also be presented and discussed.

A common theme found among less favorable responses was that the respondents noted they were not good at speaking or spoke low level English when speaking or writing their speeches and so found the activities to be difficult or tedious (16). A relatively large number of students (14) mentioned discomfort with using the application, such as being embarrassed or nervous to show their face when capturing videos of themselves speaking. Some respondents felt they had limited growth or thought the activities were an insufficient speaking replacement (6). A few mentioned that they wished there could have been teacher feedback on their performances regarding grammar or pronunciation (5). Some others mentioned technical issues with the application, such as not being able to connect or not being able to use it well (5).
High scores could be attributed to positive aspects of their experiences using the Flipgrid application. The most common theme was students who said that Flipgrid was a good experience, they felt skill growth, or felt it was a good activity (22). Another relatively large pool of respondents remarked that it was a fun, interesting or enjoyable experience (16). Several of those respondents noted that they appreciated being able to play back their own and their friends’ recordings and listen to their performances (9). Others noted that they appreciated the opportunities Flipgrid gave them to communicate in English (11). A quote from a respondent in regard to the speaking opportunities Flipgrid afforded these students is perhaps best represented by the following comment:

“It was good because I got into the habit of speaking English every week and giving a speech.”

Another student reported:

“Watching my friends’ video was fun every week.”

A few students noted that the experience of using the application for speaking activities gave them a sense of freedom in learning, which could be identified as observations related to characteristics of autonomous learning (3). Below are three respondents’ comments of their experience using Flipgrid for speaking activities:
1. “I had a degree of freedom and I studied writing.”
2. “I learned by myself.”
3. “It was good to be able to practice at my own pace and submit the best ones (videos).”

All three of these respondents gave the experience a positive score, and judging from their comments, it is conceivable that the autonomous aspects of an asynchronous ERT course were accommodating to their learning experience.

Discussion

While the majority of students were able to successfully complete Flipgrid activities throughout the semester, there were some notable areas of concern:

- Students made errors in vocabulary, grammar or in syntax
- Teacher feedback was difficult to implement in an asynchronous learning environment
- Some students mentioned they were uncomfortable showing themselves in recorded videos

The first two areas of concern were somewhat mitigated in a Spring 2020 update to Flipgrid which allows teachers to leave written or spoken feedback to students as a response to their videos. This is a useful feature that can help teachers provide feedback in regard to the content or accuracy of students’ speaking performances. Teachers can assess students’ performance using a grading rubric, but this cannot be viewable by students unless the teacher had on-boarded the students via institutional email or had access to each student’s personal email address.

The third area of concern is one that was not known until the end of the semester survey was administered. Many students stated they were shy to show themselves in a video that would be viewed by the teacher and their peers. If I had known that some students were bothered by showing their faces, I would have told them that there would be no problem with them instead showing pictures or simply putting the phone away from their faces while recording. Some teachers might deem that in a communication centered class that showing faces in videos is necessary, so teachers should give detailed instructions to students as to what is expected of their Flipgrid speaking assignments.

Conclusion

The use of Flipgrid as an asynchronous replacement for face-to-face speaking activities was overall a positive experience for the teacher and for many students. Flipgrid via their website gives teachers the ability to on-board students into classes, create attention-grabbing topic posts, and provides an assessment tool to evaluate individual student performances according to a customizable grading rubric. The smartphone/tablet application gives students a straightforward interface for recording and customizing video responses. In the student entrance and exit surveys a majority of students noted that their interest in learning English, motivation, and speaking ability grew throughout the course. Most students were also satisfied with Flipgrid as a speaking activity. There were, however, issues providing students with feedback on their videos, and this lack of feedback could make learners uncertain of their speaking performance as well as unaware of errors that should be corrected in subsequent submissions. While Flipgrid is a well-designed and feature-rich speaking tool, it may not at this time be a sufficient replacement for face-to-face speaking activities for every online teaching context due mainly to the lack of easily distributable, timely feedback from teachers which some students may feel is necessary to their success in an English course.
References


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