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INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of action research based on a video project in my English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The student video project was undertaken by my third year ABC Enshu Speaking III students. The paper will discuss the rationale for undertaking a video project, the practical aspects of completing the project in the classroom, and what conclusions can be reached about the project.

RATIONALE

In undertaking this project I wanted to investigate whether or not a task-based, learner-centred classroom, based on the making of a video, could achieve a higher level of enthusiasm and participation by the students. I also hoped to provide students the opportunity to take some responsibility for their own learning experience.

In the Japanese university setting students are in a passive role, and it can be difficult to motivate them to take any responsibility for their own learning. The traditional classroom is based on the transfer of knowledge from the teacher, as the holder of knowledge, to the student, seen as the empty vessel, in what is known as the "banking method". In this setting students do not have the opportunity to participate in a

meaningful way. This passive role leads students to become non-participants in their own education. Shore & Freire (1987) have this to say about the culture of silence found in schools,

"the students' internalizing of passive roles scripted for them in the traditional classroom ... After years in dull transfer-of-knowledge classes, in boring courses filled with sedating teacher-talk, many have become non-participants, waiting for the teacher to set the rules and start narrating what to memorize. These students are silent because they no longer expect education to include the joy of learning, moments of passion or inspiration or comedy, or even that education will speak to the real conditions of their lives" (p. 122).

I think it is important for us to try to get beyond this traditional classroom and motivate students to be equal participants in their own education. Students need motivation. They need to feel competent, and they need to enjoy what they are doing. By incorporating the task-based activity of creating a video, we can transform the classroom into a learner-centred environment in which students work together towards a common goal. Let's look at one of Krashen's (1981) hypotheses for language acquisition, *The Affective Filter Hypothesis*, which states that the following affective variables are related to success in Second Language Acquisition (SLA),

1) *anxiety*: Low anxiety relates to success in SLA

2) *motivation*: Higher motivation predicts more acquisition.

3) *self-confidence*: The acquirer with more self-confidence and self-esteem tends to do better in SLA. (Krashen, 1981 p. 57).

The student-produced video project addresses each one of these

affective variables. By working cooperatively in groups, students' anxiety is decreased. They support each other, and no student is forced to work in a solitary environment. The video project depends on student ideas and input. They create a concrete finished project, which they can take home, so they have a vested interest in its success. Hence, they are motivated to do well. Finally, as a result of their lower anxiety and higher motivation they see successes at each stage of the project, and their self-confidence naturally increases.

THE PROJECT

In an attempt to reverse the passive role of the students, and to motivate them to take on some responsibility for their own learning, I introduced the idea of a student-produced video project. It was done in addition to the regular coursework. I felt it would complement the formal debates that were being taught, and help build confidence in their English ability. Initially, the twelve students in the course were not confident of their ability to undertake the project. Having never participated in a project of this kind, they were very apprehensive, but I think it also intrigued them, so they were willing to try. It would entail a lot of work on their part including script writing and memorisation, and costume and set design. The next step was to introduce the stages involved in completing the project. These included preproduction and production. Because of the time constraints of the class schedule, we were able to view the completed video, but had no time to use it in any productive way in the classroom. Therefore, the section on postproduction will be dealt with separately.

Preproduction is a very important stage. A firm foundation at the

beginning helps ensure a strong finish. First, I had to get the students to relax to the idea of performance. We started small and gradually increased the levels of complexity. We started with some drama skill building exercises. This took the shape various communicative exercises. These activities helped to break down barriers in the classroom, and made the students more comfortable working with each other. We started with some simple, non-threatening performance practice; we did mime using gerunds ~ing. Students worked in groups of three, so they were able to support each other. They progressed from an initial apprehensive, slightly embarrassed attitude to one of enjoyment and excitement. For script writing and performance practice students performed mini scenarios based on situational cards that I supplied. For example, as a group, they were given a card (at the airport, at a temple) and had to write a dialogue, and then perform for the rest of the class. The class tried to guess what the situation was. Another exercise, Roll a Role, gave students practice in script writing, character development and performance. They worked in groups of four. The roll of the dice would give each student a character. Once all the students in a group had rolled and gotten a character, they would write a script together. It would have to incorporate all of the characters. Once the ice had been broken, students took on the tasks with enthusiasm. The next phase was to work on the actual video project theme.

Working from a theme provides a common reference point for the class and hones the students' skills of working within a set of defined parameters. How do we determine the theme? A theme may arise from something the class has viewed previously in the classroom, or it could be teacher designated. The teacher can arbitrarily decide on a theme to be worked on, or it can be derived from the students. If the

students are highly motivated, they may express an interest in exploring a particular theme. As it was the first time for these students to undertake this kind of project, I designated the theme, folk tales, but gave the students the responsibility of choosing the tales they thought were appropriate. Students had to decide on which folk tales they would do. Through most of the video-making project I tried to give as much responsibility as possible to the students. I felt it was important for them to really feel it was their project, and not just something the teacher was imposing on them. The twelve students in the course brainstormed folk tale ideas they thought would be appropriate to use in the making of a video. Once students had identified the two folk tales they wanted to work on, the next step was to divide into groups. The students divided into two groups, and each group chose a different folk tale. The two tales chosen were "The Crab and the Monkey", a Japanese folk tale, and "Cinderella" (see appendix for student transcripts). The next two areas to work on were character development and story building.

Students were allowed time to work on their characters. This can be done before or after the script has been developed. They were asked to assume a character in their mind and answer certain questions about themselves as that character. For example, they asked questions like the following: What is my character? Am I happy? Sad? Angry? Do I have any likes or dislikes? Any hobbies? Do I have any features that are unusual such as walking with a limp. Am I married? Do I have any friends, children, enemies?

Once the theme had been decided upon the groups worked on their own scripts. They did this by writing a summary of the tale, and then

dividing it into acts. Each student in the group was given an act to write up in dialogue form. This was done as a homework assignment. The following week we used some class time to peer edit the scripts and put the acts together. As a group they made changes and added narration to the final draft. The final script was typed up by one student from each group, and copies were made for everyone. Outside of class time students were responsible for coming up with ideas for their own costumes and making them. They also worked on set props that could be easily moved. Then it was time for rehearsal.

Students had the chance to rehearse outside of class as well as in class. This gave me the opportunity to make recommendations for improvements, and help with pronunciation and intonation. The video was filmed in the AV studio on the fifth floor, with the kind help of Mr. Kono. The week before the taping I booked the studio for forty-five minutes. Students were given the chance to become familiar with the setting where the filming was to be done, and the equipment that was to be used. This helped things move much more smoothly on the day of the filming.

The production day was divided in two. Each group was allocated forty-five minutes for the actual filming process. I found that the students needed the time. They were new to this kind of exercise and I did not want stress to take away for the enjoyment of completing the project. The two groups were in different degrees of readiness for the actual videotaping. There were varying levels of skills and motivation within the groups that had to be taken into consideration. Of course, group dynamics had to be taken into account, too. How well did the group get along? Were there any personality conflicts? Which stu-

dent set the pace for the group? Was there an obvious group leader?

The first group needed more time. They needed work on their organisational skills. The group did not have any one student as a leader, so decisions were hard to make quickly. They had to work very hard to finish within the allotted time. The second group was more cohesive and more prepared. They had definite ideas of how they wanted the taping done, and had no problem finishing well within the time limit. Because of time constraints, the post production phase was not as in depth as I had planned. I edited the video, and the class was able to get together to view the video in January.

Although time did not allow for it, the post production stage is also an important part of the whole process. At this point what I have is the video product of the students efforts so far. It can be viewed as entertainment and played for the class, or it can be viewed as authentic examples of student produced content that can be exploited in numerous ways. The advantage with student produced content over commercial content packages is that the students have a vested interest and therefore are more interested in working with the material.

There are many different ways to exploit the tapes in the classroom. Below I have listed a few examples:

Specific content questions: This could take the form of questions and answers on paper (listening, reading and writing skills), or completed as an oral exercise (listening and speaking skills)

Summaries: Students are required to watch the video and write a summary of the content (listening & writing skills)

Information gap: Students are given a gapped transcript and required to

listen and fill in the missing words or phrases (listening and writing skills)

Video evaluations: Students learn the criteria for video evaluation and apply them to what they have seen and give feedback to one another (listening, writing and speaking skills)

Learning assessment: "What did I learn" statements can be done either orally or as a writing exercise (speaking or writing skills)

Theme extrapolation and structured discussions for more advanced groups (listening, writing and speaking skills)

CONCLUSION

In undertaking this video project I wanted to find whether or not a task-based, learner-centred classroom achieved a higher level of enthusiasm and participation by the students.   I also wanted to provide them the opportunity to take some responsibility for their own learning experience.   Students chose two folk tales and proceeded through the different stages of production.   I found that the students were able to rise to the challenge presented to them.   Giving students the chance to create their own videos in the EFL classroom allowed them to practice the target language while communicating a meaningful message. Students are creative individuals.   They were capable of producing a quality product that demonstrated their ability to communicate a message in a foreign language.   It also gave students the opportunity to become responsible for their own learning.   Students enjoyed it and were motivated to participate.   This achieved the goal of increasing the involvement of students with their own education.   For students to become more involved in their own education, they had to become more self-motivated.   Finally, it provided me with a source of rich content

upon which further lessons could be based.

APPENDIX

Cinderella

Group members:

Masae Yamamoto

Keita Matsumoto

Atsushi Takemoto

Kumiko Hamai

Masae Nagata

Yuichi Murakami

Scene 1

Narrator: The Fairy Godmother

> Once upon a time, there was a very happy family. The couple had a very cute girl, and they lived happily for long time. But the mother had died, and the father married a woman who had two daughters. To my surprise, he also died immediately after he married the woman. So the girl was left. She was forced to work as if she was a servant by her stepmother and stepsisters. The girl was called Cinderella. One day, a invitation card arrived for them.

(While Narrator speaks, Cinderella is crying and stepmother and two sisters are so hard on her)

Scene 2

M) Every girl in the kingdom is invited to a ball in honor of the Prince.

S1) We got an invitation!!

(When the invitation arrived)

S2) I will dress up!!

C) That means I can go, too.

M) Well, yes. (with a sly smile)　But only if you get all your work done, and only if you have something suitable to wear.

(That day)

　　Cinderella works hard.

S1) This dress suits me very well?

S2) Do you think the prince will fall in love with me?

M) You will be the most beautiful girls at the party!!

C) Can I go with you?

S1) You didn't finish your work!!　You must work hard all the time!!

S2) Do you have a dress suitable for the ball?　Dirty clothes are fit for you!!

M) Do you think you can go?　I can't take you to the ball because I'm ashamed of you.

S1) You are not my sister but my servant.

M) Come along now, girls!

(They go to the ball)

Scene 3

C) Ah, I really wanted to go to the ball.

F) You can go to the ball!

C) Oh!　Who are you?

F) I'm your fairy godmother.　Now let's go to the ball!

C) I want to go to the ball but I don't have a dress or shoes for a party,

so I can't go.

F) It's all right. Don't worry! Leave it to me!

   Look there!

C) Oh! It's beautiful! I can't believe it!

F) Come, let's go! Hurry!

N) Then the Fairy godmother found a pumpkin and two mice, and she changed them. The pumpkin was changed into a carriage, the two mice were changed into two horses.

C) Thank you very much. I'm so glad I can go to the ball!

F) But, you must be back home by 12 o clock midnight. Don't forget! Go. Enjoy the ball!

C) I will. Thank you so much, Fairy godmother!

(The pumpkin carriage with Cinderella in it, left for the castle.)

Scene 4

(At the ball)

M) It's a magnificent party!

S1) Oh, it's very magnificent.

M) Where is the prince?

S1) I want to see the prince!

S2) He is very handsome!

C) What a beautiful castle! There are many people. What sort of prince is he? Maybe, he will be a nice man. Oh, there are my stepmother and sisters.

S1) Look at all the people. I am more beautiful than the others. I wish I had a dance with the prince.

(The prince comes into the party)

S2) The prince is very nice!

S1) Look! He is coming over this way.

P) Excuse me, will you dance with me?

C) Yes.

S1) Really? He didn't ask me to dance with him.

   Who is she!!

P) You dance very nicely.

C) Thank you.

P) Today is a beautiful day.

C) I think so, too.

(Time bell: gong gong)

   I must go!!

P) Why? I want to dance with you.

C) But I'm sorry. Good-bye.

(The prince tried to catch up with her, but he couldn't. He found a glass slipper, and picked it up.)

Scene 5

P) I've never felt like this before. It was love at first sight.

   You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

   I think of you night and day. I can't live without you!

N) Next day, the prince decided to look for the lady who owns the glass

   slipper.

Scene 6

P) I'm looking for the girl who can wear this glass slipper. And I will marry that girl.

M) I heard that the prince is looking for the girl who can wear a glass slipper.

S2) Glass slipper? Why?

M) I don't know. But he will marry that girl?!

S1) So we have to hurry up!

S2) Let's go!!

N) They went to the castle.

(try to wear the glass slipper)

M) It's too small!

S1) It doesn't fit. I can't get it on.

S2) Maybe it suits me. It's too small!

C) I want to try it, too.

S1) Not you! No way!

S2) Go home!

P) Every girl should try this on, so please.
 It's meant for you. It fits you perfectly.

(C: smiling)

P) You are the girl from that night. Will you marry me?

C) Yes, Prince.

N) Cinderella and the Prince lived happily ever after.

Monkey and Crab

Group members:

Sakuro Maeda

Azusa Mikami

Yuko Hara

Mayu Horii

Kousuke Nozaki

Atsushi Ninzeki

Scene 1

Monkey (M) and Crab (C): This is boring.   I am bored ..

M: Look at that!   There is a something.   What's that?   Hey, Crab.   Go and look!

C: This is a riceball.

M: Really?

C: It looks so delicious.

M: I want to find something, too.

C: Look at that.   There is a something.   Hey, Monkey.   Go and look.

M: Really?

C: What's that?

M: This is a persimmon seed.

C: I sympathize with you.

M: What?   Are you stupid?   This is a persimmon seed!!

Don't you know about a persimmon seed?   It's a wonderful thing.

Once you sow it, you can eat juicy persimmons every year of your

life!!   I sympathize with you.

C: Oh, I'm sorry.   I'm so stupid.

M: All right. I forgive you. However, Crab, why don't you have my seed instead of your riceball?

C: Really? Thank you!! You are so kind. I love you!!

Scene 2

Narration(N): Crab planted a persimmon seed and took care of it for a long time. She gave water to the seed, and sometimes spoke to it in order to help its growth.

C: I'll make you a big tree, or cut you with my scissors!!

N: The young persimmon sprout was so surprised that it grew faster. Finally, the seed becomes a big tree and produces many persimmon fruits.

C: So, I can eat fruits now. Wait! The tree is too big for me to get the fruit.

N: Crab can't eat the fruit. Monkey came across to her and said.

M: I can climb up this tree and help you get some fruit.
      Would you like my help?

N: He climbed up the tree easily and ate a red juicy persimmon.

M: Oh, They're really delicious. Unbelievable!!

N: Crab shouted at him.

C: Hey, this is my tree! Don't eat my persimmons, O.K? Give me some fruits right now!!

N: Monkey ignored her and continued eating the fruit, and finally said.

M: Shut up, silly Crab! All right, I'm gonna give you delicious fruit!!
      You just catch them!!

N: Then, Monkey threw a blue and hard fruit down.
      It hit Crab hard, so she was badly injured.

C: Oh, I'm dying.

Scene 3

Baby Crab (BC): Oh, God mommy.   Are you O.K?   Wake up, wake up!!

C: The monkey hit me with a hard blue persimmon.   He betrayed me.

   I want you to avenge my death.   Please, please.

BC: Oh, she died! (Crying)

Bee (Be): What happened?   Why are you crying, Baby Crab?

BC: My mommy was killed by the monkey.

Chestnut (Ch): Oh, why are crying, Baby Crab?

BC: Mommy was killed by the monkey.

Mortar (Mr): What happened Baby Crab?

BC: (stop crying) A nasty monkey killed my mother.   I can't stand him.

   Let's revenge my mother's death.

Everybody: Yes.   Let's do that.

Mr: Look!   Here comes the Cow dung.

Cow dung (Cd): Hey!   I want to help you, guys.

Ch: Good!   We have become a strong team.

Be: So, let's go to the monkey's house.

(While walking to the monkey's house)

Ch: I'll burn the monkey!

Be: I'll bite him.

BC: Me, too.   I'll bite him!

Cd: I'll make him slip.

Mr: In the end, I'll crush him.

～narration～

Scene 4

M: Oh, I'm freezing. I must warm myself at the fire.

Ch: Hey Monkey! I've made myself piping hot. Take that!!

RED HOT ATTACK!!

M: Ouch, Ouch! What terrible burns! I need cold water right away.

BC: Hey monkey! I'll show you my mother's pain!

I won't let you forget what you did to my mother!

M: Gya!! I can no longer stand this pain. I must get out of here.

Be: Wait, wait! The revenge is not finished yet.

I'll make your face red like your buttocks.

Scene 5

M: Help!! Help!! What did I do?

Cd: Do you remember the mother Crab?

M: What? Crab?

Mr: Ask yourself!! Yeahhh!! (drops on monkey)

M: Ahhhh!!

Mr: You killed Crab.

M: Crab? Mmm ..

Mr: You killed the Mother Crab, throwing hard persimmon fruit at her.

M: Ahhh!! I remember the Mother Crab.

Mr: The Baby Crab has suffered for a long time. Can you understand
hat?

M: Ahhhh!! I didn't know about the Baby Crab.

Scene 6

Mr: Do you surrender?

M: Yes, I surrender.

Be: Can you promise not to do a bad thing ever again?

M: I promise I'll never do a bad thing again.

Mr: We will forgive you.

M: I'm sorry Baby Crab.   Forgive me.

BC: I forgive you.   Let's get along.

M: Thank you very much.

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