



Video Clips of Dialogues in E-class Assignments

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Abstract

Following E-learning Strategy stipulations, the University of Zagreb has successfully implemented the e-classes and e-Portfolios as very useful and up to date learning tools. A clear description of e-Portfolio assignments is included into the syllabi of English in the courses at the School of Dental Medicine and at the Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology, University of Zagreb. One of the assignments was to film a video clip of a dialogue between the doctor of dental medicine and the patient, or between two lab students discussing an experiment. In order to accomplish their tasks the students were divided in pairs. The video clips can be used to help the teacher assess and monitor aspects of the students learning development. Thus, the teacher can critically evaluate the students learning progress and can identify the areas that require further development. The course work is developed, stored and shared with others within the group's e-portfolio space or e-class notification without jeopardizing the privacy of other materials. The benefits of using the e-portfolios and e-classes in our experience include personalizing the learning experience, allowing the students to draw connections between their various learning experiences individually and in pairs or groups, developing multimedia skills, seeing progress over time, assessing course learning outcomes and the possibility of tutoring each student individually. Apart from enhancing the students' digital literacy we also aim to improve their communicative skills, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Thus our teaching approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Keywords: e-learning, e-portfolio, video clips, CLIL, e-class;

1. Introduction

Any discussion about the problems in Croatian education includes the usual suspects: inadequate and unequal funding, a lack of resources, underpaid and overworked teachers, over-testing, etc. All these have negatively impacted the results of our schools and universities. Some decades ago these difficulties were not insurmountable. However, the situation has changed because some issues seem possible to overcome thanks to modern technology. The lack of motivation is plaguing a large number of Croatian classrooms. The issue is student motivation although it is rarely dealt with. It is undermining the future of our students.

A motivational problem is not always easy to define, although teachers usually have no trouble recognizing low motivation of their students. In fact, the unmotivated student actually is highly motivated to avoid accomplishing the given tasks! [1]. A lack of motivation is a current problem due to the addiction to the gadgets of modern technology. A significant number of our university students exhibit a lack of motivation. This is shown by absence from classes, poor attention to the tutors and other signs of a lack of interest in lectures.

In fact, the teacher is faced with a number of challenges regarding unmotivated students. The first is to change the students' mind-set so that they believe that, if they make an effort, they will achieve academic success. The second is to figure out what motivates the students. The third is to identify the settings, situations, and conditions that the student responds to and that can be used to foster their interest. The fourth is to inspire them to use gadgets for classroom activities, such as KAHOOT or SOCRATES quizzes, instead of using them for non-educational purposes.

Usually most of the students are more concerned about their grades than about learning. Teachers are expected to combat apathy by continually finding new and innovative ways to reach students - through multimedia lessons, group work, games, alternative assessments or whatever it takes. The key to learning is not just repetition, but being able to understand a concept [2]. Teachers have to adapt to the individual learning styles, interests and abilities of each of their students in order to ensure student engagement and skill acquisition. If a student can't learn the way we teach, we must teach the way he learns - times infinity.

Apart from enhancing the student's digital literacy teachers also aim to improve their communicative skills, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Thus, our teaching approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

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As communicators, teachers are always looking for new ways to improve the way students speak, write, and collaborate. The use of dialogues and role play has become common in ESP language teaching. In this way, the students' creativity is stimulated since they need to write a dialogue to explain how to solve a problem they encounter.

Sound subject knowledge and proper methods of instruction are important professional qualities effective teachers have. Teachers - whether they are subject specialists or generalists - need a wide range of different skills and attitudes if they are to assist their students achieve high outcomes. These should include good rapport with students, subject matter knowledge and also an understanding of pedagogical processes to develop the understanding that is required [3]. However, they also need to have the more 'human' qualities such as charisma, compassion, sense of humor, creativity and honesty.

Critical thinking is an eminently practical goal and value since it is based on the skills, insights and values essential to living a more mindful lifestyle. Critical thinking is that mode of thinking — about any subject, content, or problem — in which the thinker improves the quality of thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it [4]. Critical thinking can transform every dimension of academic life: how we relate to our students, how we encourage them to relate to each other, how we as teachers set the standards for academic achievements and so on.

The e-class and e-portfolio systems, which are available to the academic community in the EU and overseas, have been established by The E-learning Centre (CEU). The members of the Croatian academic community are supported by the Zagreb University Computing Centre known as SRCE ("heart") that provides us with the technical back up for the e-class and e-portfolio systems. The two systems allow students, teaching staff and institutions to develop e-classes and e-portfolios for personal use, for presentation or to use them as a learning tool.

The e-class and the e-portfolio systems enable the collection, organization and presentation of qualifications, experiences, ideas, activities and achievements assembled and managed by the teachers and the students [5]. The e-class allows the teacher to organize the curricula for each of their student groups and the student assignments or tasks. On the other hand, the e-portfolio system enables the collecting and organizing of contents in different media such as audio, video, graphics and text. The possibility of interaction with other users and groups is also provided the within the systems.

1.2 The Dialogue Video Clip Assignment

One of the assignments given to the undergraduate students was to record a dialogue in which they were expected to act out a situation they could easily find themselves in a few years as professionals in their respected fields. Such an assignment requires quite a bit of preparation. Firstly, the students are given instructions for accomplishing their tasks. The task is expected to be performed as pair work. Since there are a lot of students in each class, they are given the option to choose a title in order to make sure each pair has a different dialogue. Secondly, the assignment consists of their writing the dialogue and handing in a printed version so that the teacher can correct it. Thirdly, they rehearse their roles according to the corrected script and finally record the video by using their mobile phones. Instructions are also given on the bulletin board to let the students know how to upload the video clip on YouTube. The students are supposed to include the text of the dialogue in the e-class or e-portfolio as a separate document to ensure the teacher can understand and follow the dialogue. The YouTube video clip link is to be included in the written dialogue so that it can be viewed by the teacher and the other students in the group.

Each dialogue is then viewed and evaluated in the classroom. This enables the students to speak the foreign language to the best of their ability since they are not subjected to the peer pressure of having to speak in public. The students make an effort to express themselves in the best way possible by filming the video clip outside the classroom setting in their own time.

The students of dental medicine at the School of Dental Medicine were divided into pairs. They were to choose various topics in the fields of dental medicine and general medicine. The dialogues were conceived to be a visit of a patient to their dentist or doctor (specialist) in order to get the adequate medical help or treatment. This is especially important due to the fact that Croatia has been and will continue to be a favorite destination for a wide range of tourists from all over the world throughout the year. Some of the students had the possibility to film the videos in real dental offices or doctors' offices to contribute to the real life setting. Others used their imagination to record the various situations a patient might find oneself in.

The students of the Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology were also supposed to work in pairs and choose a topic listed in their e-class. Then they were to hand in the printed version of their dialogue for review. Once all the mistakes were underlined the students were to correct their work and



then set out to make the video clip and put it up on YouTube by following the directions put up on their bulletin board. The assignment was to pretend one student conducted an experiment correctly while the other student was not successful. By talking it over they were to come to the conclusion what went wrong in the experiment of the unsuccessful student. The students were to make up the dialogue about the experiment in the target language, which is in this case English, in order to get a grade. Those students who finished the assignment by the due date successfully were also awarded a digital badge, all in hopes of providing additional motivation.

It has been, to our delight, an interesting assignment for our students since most of them took part in it and some even met all of the deadlines for handing in their written and video clip work. Apart from motivating the students, this assignment also motivates us as teachers to come up with new ideas that include such media as YouTube video clips. Thus, their written tasks can be archived as well as their oral presentations, since they can now be recorded on video clips.

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