



Classroom Interaction during Collaborative Video-Making at Czech Secondary School EFL Lessons

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Abstract

This study explores the use of video-making as a collaborative activity in teaching EFL at two Czech secondary schools and describes classroom interaction between students during the video-making tasks. The use of video-making as a collaborative production task in language teaching has been researched in the past [1], however, the data on its impact on classroom interaction is still scarce and there exists no data on its use in Czech schools. Herein I present the results of my PhD research project at Masaryk University in Brno. Secondary school students were given tasks to collaboratively record their own videos during their EFL lessons, and the data were collected through classroom observation of student interaction, student interviews and questionnaires and teacher interviews. The results indicate that video-making activities may be beneficial to student classroom interaction, engagement and social learning, help diversify classroom activities, cause students to experience positive emotions and teach them skills that go beyond traditional language learning. Further research is necessary to explore the impact of video-making activities integrated into language learning on a larger scale.

Keywords: *vlogging, video blogging, video making, collaborative learning, task-based learning, classroom interaction*

1. Introduction

This article presents research conducted as part of my doctoral thesis, which deals with classroom interaction between students when they work on video-making projects in English. I am conducting a qualitative intervention-based study, describing classroom interaction in detail, as well as collecting participants' evaluations of the video-making activities they practice.

According to Oxford English Dictionary, a vlog or a video blog is "a blog composed of posts in video form; (also) a video forming part of such a blog" [2]. According to this definition, we need to understand what a blog is to make sense of this term. A blog is described as "a frequently updated website, typically run by a single person and consisting of personal observations arranged in chronological order, excerpts from other sources, hyperlinks to other sites, etc.; an online journal or diary" [3]. Thus, a vlog is a website (or often a web page on a larger website) that is usually run by a person and contains video posts (personal observations, information from other sources, links, diary entries, etc.). A vlog is typically arranged in a chronological order and is regularly updated with new entries.

In addition to vlogging, I included other video-recording activities in my study, such as making a mock commercial, a news story or recorded fashion show, because these activities are already used in teaching practice at a lower-secondary school in Brno, and I believe that their inclusion will benefit the field by both shedding light on existing school practices and comparing the experiences of participants with existing video-making projects and ones introduced by me as a novel intervention.

To sum it up, in my study I am collecting data on two distinct cases: the use of video-recording projects that are already integrated into school routine and used by a lower-secondary school teacher and the use of the vlogging intervention developed and introduced by the researcher.

2. Theoretical Framework: Video-making Projects and Classroom Interaction

The focus of my study is qualitative description of the students' social interaction, which would indicate how autonomous, active and engaged students are during the activity and demonstrate how they learn through social interaction and co-construct knowledge [4, p. 135]. In my research, I see classroom video-making activities through a sociocultural lens: it is a process of learning through social interaction with peers and teachers, which is reflected in the interaction approaches students use when creating videos in groups.

Kumpulainen and Wray [4] offer a comprehensive analytical framework for describing classroom



interaction between peers. It includes functional analysis of verbal communication and the analysis of cognitive and social processing that happens in interaction. The language functions suggested for identification are informative, expository, reasoning, evaluative, interrogative, responsive, organizational, judgemental (agrees/disagrees), argumentational, compositional, revision, dictation, reading aloud, repetition, experiential, and affective. Function identification can reveal communicative strategies students use to co-construct knowledge in interaction. In addition to functional analysis, the analysis of cognitive processing approaches (procedural processing, interpretative or exploratory processing or off-task activities) enables the researcher to explore collective knowledge construction on a more generalized level. Finally, the analysis of social processing modes (collaborative, tutoring, argumentative, individualistic, dominative, conflict, and confusion) allows us to describe peer relations and group dynamics as parts of the learning process and collaboration.

The vlogging intervention that I have developed for my project is based on the task-based (TBLT) and project-based language teaching (PBLT) approaches. Task-based learning presupposes activities that engage learners' interest, have a primary focus on meaning, have an outcome (product) and be evaluated according to the outcome, prioritize task completion and relate to real-world activities [5, p. 13]. My vlogging intervention adheres to these principles: when students create vlogs in groups, they focus on meaning and the final product. Video-making is a real-world activity that some of the students whom I interviewed during my piloting stage claim to have already done outside of school. The main goal of the activities is to complete this real-life task in collaboration. Task-based learning is often collaborative. While pair and group work is not a requirement for task-based learning, it is often used by teachers to promote student communication and collaboration [5, p. 3]. Real-world activities in the target language often revolve around spoken interaction, thus it is a logical focus of TBLT. Historically, TBLT was based on the communicative language teaching approach, the main goal of which is learning through communication [6, p. 687].

In addition to TBLT, I followed some of the principles of PBLT in designing the vlogging intervention: targeting significant learning goals (such as acquiring collaboration and public speaking skills), promoting student engagement, using scaffolding, supporting collaborative learning and encouraging student choice [7, pp. 6–10]. Collaborative learning and scaffolding are concepts integral to sociocultural theory.

Thus, I see my research project and intervention as deeply grounded in sociocultural theory: it focuses on social learning that takes place during a collaborative classroom project, and this social learning process is described using a framework grounded in sociocultural theory.

3. Existing Research on Video-Blogging in Foreign/Second Language Learning

Studies on vlogging or video-making as a collaborative production activity for foreign/second language students are scarce. However, as illustrated further, vlogging is a promising tool for foreign/second language learning that could promote collaboration and create a student-centered constructivist environment for learning [8, 9, 10]. Herein, I will present the findings of existing studies on vlogging as a group activity for second/foreign language learners.

3.1 Advantages of Collaborative Vlogging as a Language Learning Tool

The impact of vlogging on the students' speaking skill was explored in two reviewed studies [9, 11]. According to Huang's mixed-methods study [9], students performed significantly better in their speaking test after completing the vlogging project, while Authar and Muflihah's [11] qualitative analysis also showed improvement in speaking. A two-group pre-test/post-test randomized study [12] focused on the effects vlogging can have on the writing skill, and the results showed that the experimental group had higher writing scores in the post-test than the control group. Anas [13] also found out that vlogging can facilitate vocabulary building. Other vlogging advantages reported by the studies are described below.

Vlogs increase students' autonomy [13] as well as promote active learning [9, 13]. Vlogging provides students with the opportunity to learn from their classmates by watching their videos and analyzing their speech [10]. Vlogging gives students the opportunity to give and receive feedback and engage in peer-teaching [9, 10, 14]. The activity can encourage creativity [13] and help learners acquire and practice technology-related skills [9, 13]. Vlogs can be a source of positive emotions and enjoyment [9, 11]. One study has shown the value of vlogs as a self-reflection tool that allows students to improve their performance more efficiently [10]. Students claim that vlogging is motivating [10, 12] and see the tasks as meaningful [9]. Some participants gain confidence [9, 13], a sense of achievement [9], and self-efficacy [15] while vlogging. Jauregi and Melchor-Couto [15] show that the Spanish students' feelings of self-efficacy and evaluation of the project as meaningful increased in the course

of the project, while the Dutch students did not show a marked improvement in these aspects. The same study also shows that the students in both groups had low anxiety throughout the intervention. Some students recommend using vlogging as an activity in schools [12].

In terms of group collaboration, almost all the studies report that vlogging gave students opportunity to work together or improved collaboration between them [9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14]. According to participants, the tasks improved the students' skills in collaboration [9, 11], task distribution [9], conflict resolution [11], giving feedback [10], and understanding another person's thoughts [9]. According to Shuib [10], the collaborative element of the tasks improved the students' motivation and engagement. All in all, there are three recurring themes among students' learning experiences with collaborative vlogging that are reported in three or more articles. Unsurprisingly, they are all related to the collaborative nature of vlogging: the activity is reported to provide opportunity for collaboration or improve collaboration, to teach students skills related to teamwork (giving feedback, task distribution, conflict resolution, etc.), and is linked to peer-teaching and learning from peers. There were also other themes that were mentioned by more than one article: vlogging improves the students' speaking skill, their technology-related skills, such as video editing, their motivation, and confidence and causes them to experience enjoyment.

3.2 Challenges of Collaborative Vlogging as a Language Learning Tool

Students in six of the seven reviewed studies [9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15] highlighted the challenges that vlogging posed for them. Some notable examples are the time-consuming nature of the task, especially editing the vlogs [9, 11, 12, 13], experiences of shyness or lack of confidence [11, 13], insufficient knowledge about the video recording process and tools [13], difficulties caused by a lack of stable Internet access [13], other technical difficulties [11], difficulty to select content and topic for their videos [9], feeling lost and needing more instructions from the teacher [15], and not having enough language skills to help each other and work efficiently [10].

As we can see from this chapter, most of the studies report challenges in vlogging; however, not all the students experienced challenges. Practical application of vlogging in the classroom requires addressing all possible challenges and helping students overcome them; thus, it is an important area to focus on.

The existing research on the use of collaborative vlogging in foreign language teaching is scarce, which shows that the topic requires further exploration. The studies presented herein provide evidence that vlogging improves students' cooperation, develops their skills related to working in a team, and provides opportunity for self-reflection and self-evaluation while also providing a vast array of other benefits that do or do not relate to collaboration. However, none of the studies reviewed here give detailed descriptions of student classroom interaction, which I am doing in my own study.

5. Research Methodology

The goal of my study was to find out how students interact between each other during collaborative video-making projects that are part of their EFL lessons. To this end, I conducted a qualitative intervention-focused study, during which I 1) created an intervention based on systematic vlogging in English for higher secondary (střední škola) school that meets the requirements of teachers and the curriculum, and 2) described in detail both the implementation of this intervention in a higher secondary school and the implementation of existing video-making projects designed by one of my participants who teaches in a lower secondary school (2. stupeň základní školy). In my description, I focused on classroom interaction during the video-making activities, as well as on the experiences of the students and teachers with their implementation.

5.1 Research Questions

My research questions were the following:

1. How do students interact when they systematically create videos in groups as part of their secondary school English lessons?
2. How does their interaction change over the course of a series of video-making projects?
3. What opinions do the students and teachers have on design and implementation of the video-making projects?
4. What differences can be seen between the teacher-developed and the researcher-proposed video-making activities with regard to questions 1-3?



In this article, I will only present one part of the results, which relates to the first question, and only in relation to 2 out of 3 classes that I observed. Questions 2-4 will be answered in future publications.

5.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

To collect the data during the projects, I used classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with the students and the teachers, student questionnaires and reflection sheets. The classroom observation checklist, the interview questions and the questionnaires were based on the classroom interaction analytical framework by Kumpulainen & Wray [4], as well as included questions on the teachers' and students' opinions on the video-making activities. The student interviews were conducted in the same groups the students completed their projects in. The interviews, questionnaires and reflection sheets served to provide data on both classroom interaction and the students' and teachers' opinions on the video-making projects, while the observations served only to record the students' interaction in groups. The reflection sheets were primarily a pedagogical tool developed and distributed by one of the teachers so that the students could reflect on the activities after they were conducted. The teacher provided me with the collected answers and I decided to use them as an additional data source.

5.3 Sample

Since I am applying a qualitative methodology with an emphasis on the specific context, detailed description of classroom interaction and personal experiences of the participants, I used a small sample (3 classes) with a purposeful selection. My sample can be divided into 2 distinct cases: one was the lower-secondary school, and the other — the two classes in the trade academy. The lower secondary class teacher already had extensive experience giving his students from other classes video-recording tasks. Thus, he did not need the intervention I offered, but planned, prepared and conducted his own video-recording projects that also included class presentations, preparing the visuals like posters or outfits for a fashion show, interviewing other students, and other creative activities. However, the core component of two of the three projects conducted in that classroom are video-making, while one more project included video-recording as an addition to the main presentation (the fashion show). I decided to integrate this case into my research despite considerable differences with the other two classes, because I believe that it is especially important to study the experience of teachers and students who are already integrating video-making activities into their school routine and learn from their projects, in addition to building my own intervention and offering it to the other two teachers. This gave me an opportunity to compare and contrast these two cases, which I will do in the next stage of my data analysis.

In this article, I am presenting the first part of my research results, which include data on 2 out of 3 classes. The rest of the data is still to be analysed, thus this article presents results of ongoing data analysis, and the data may be updated in further publications. Jan (the name was changed for anonymization), the first cooperating teacher in a 9th grade (12 students) of a Brno lower secondary school, regularly uses video-recording tasks in his classes. This teacher did not need the instructions developed by the researcher and preferred to use his own activities rather than the proposed intervention. The second teacher, Maria (the name was changed), had never used video-recorded activities with her students and agreed to use the intervention that I had developed. Maria teaches a 1st grade EFL class in a trade academy in Brno with 14 students.

5.4 Video-Making Projects

Below I will describe the video-making activities that were conducted in both classes described in this article.

I observed three video-making projects implemented by Jan in his lower-secondary EFL class. The first project was a fashion show: the students created their own fashion brands and collections in groups, and then presented them during a mock fashion show that was recorded on video. Video-making was not the main goal of the activities, however, the students presented their work to the whole class and in front of the camera, and then they could watch their own and their classmates' videos. The groups were formed by the teacher. The second project was more video-oriented than the first one: the students needed to create their own product in groups and make video commercials and class presentations for their product. The video-making process included planning, preparation, filming and editing. During planning, the students drew a frame-by-frame plan with pictures and speech bubbles for their future videos. The students were free to choose their group mates. During the third project, the students filmed their own news report and presented it during a mock news



show: the videos were recorded and edited, and then some of the students played the role of TV hosts presenting the video as if it was a live news report. The students could again choose their own groups, in which they prepared the video and presentation.

As we can see, the project tasks required the students to engage in video-making in a creative way, especially in the last two projects, where video-making was a core part of the final product collaboratively created in groups. I believe that the first project served as a suitable preparation to the last two, introducing video-making into classroom work and helping the students get used to being in front of the camera.

As for Maria and her higher secondary school class, the activities were proposed by me and included the preparation stage, the main video-making stage and the reflection stage. The preparation stage included watching and discussing a model video (only during the first project), role distribution, topic choice and planning. During the main stage, the students recorded and edited their videos, and during the reflection stage they completed questionnaires and participated in group interviews. During the first two stages, the students received detailed instructions and criteria for the videos. For the topic choice, the students received a list of suggested topics that were related to the content of their past school work, as well as were given an option to come up with their own video topic. Two projects were conducted in Maria's class, both of which followed the same plan with the same instructions, with a different list of topics offered for each project.

6. Results

In this section, I will present the results of the data collection and analysis in both classes that relate to the students' classroom interaction. The rest of the data is still to be analysed and will be published in the future.

6.1 Jan's Class: Classroom Interaction — Functional Analysis

By far the most common interaction type was organizational: discussing the work organization, planning, giving directions on the work process, expressing opinions on how to record or edit the videos, etc. In the teacher interview, Jan called this "service language". Both according to my and the teacher's observation, the service language was mostly produced in Czech. Organizational utterances made up over 31% of all the classroom talk observed (208 out of 664 utterances). Examples of service/organizational language include: questions about how to proceed in task execution, directions on where the filmed student should stand, suggestions and calls to action ("let's do X"), exchanging ideas during planning, etc.

After the organizational utterances, the most frequent observed interaction types were (from most to least frequent): affective, interrogative and evaluative. Each of them made up over 10% of all the utterances (from 72 to 82 utterances over the 3 projects). As some of the utterances could be classified as more than one type, I have decided to choose one most suitable type during observation and mark each utterance once so that the total number of utterances could also be seen from the observation data. Thus, the interrogative utterances were generally marked as interrogative in case they could not be attributed to another type. Even with this approximation, their share in the total number of utterances was over 10%, while it was the third most frequent type observed. Affective utterances that were more frequently observed expressed joy or humor: laughter and jokes were frequent, especially during the second and third projects, where the students chose their own group mates. This observation was backed up during teacher interviews, as Jan said that the students express their emotions more freely when they work in groups that they chose themselves. As for evaluative expressions, they were also observed over 3 times more frequently during the second and third project compared to the first. According to both my observation and Jan's comments during the teacher interviews, common evaluative utterances are short and simple: "I like it", "I don't like it", "It's good/bad/nice/cool...". Jan added that, in his experience, students need help (prompts, questionnaires...) to express their evaluation of their own and their classmates' work, and they do it more easily in writing than orally, and this is backed up by the students' reflections that were generally more detailed than their oral evaluative utterances.

Moderately common types of interaction utterances (each making up 40-60 observed utterances over the 3 projects) were responsive (necessary to respond to interrogative utterances) and compositional (mostly needed to collaboratively compose the script of the videos or presentations). Other types of utterances observed over 10 times across the 3 projects were expository (33 times), judgmental (agreement or disagreement — 24 times), reading aloud (needed for presentation and script composition — 17 times), argumentation, dictation and text revision (11 times each). The rest of the utterance types were identified less than 10 times overall: informative (7), reasoning (6), repetition (2)



and experiential (2). The informative type was marked during observation only in case any other types did not apply to an utterance which was aimed at providing information, however in most cases another type appeared more fitting: the information could relate to organizing collaboration (organizational), be part of a responsive utterance or a description or demonstration (expositional). Repetition was commented by Jan during a teacher interview as rare, and he pointed out that he did not see a reason for the students to frequently repeat each other's words during collaborative tasks of this kind.

Student questionnaires generally show similarities with the observation data: organizational, evaluative, compositional, interrogative and responsive utterances were marked as produced "all the time" or "often" in half or more of all the questionnaires. One notable exception is affective utterances, which are reported as frequently produced only twice, while appear often in observation and are noted as frequent in the last 2 projects by the teacher. This might be explained by the difficulty of identifying their own emotional expressions and reactions that the students could face. Another point where student questionnaire data diverges from both the observation and the teacher interview data is "reasoning in language", which is mentioned as produced "all the time", "often" or "sometimes" by most of the questionnaires. This might be explained by the ease of identifying one's own "thinking aloud" process rather than observing it in another person, but could also be explained by different interpretations of the word "reasoning" (uvažování in the questionnaires).

6.2 Jan's Class: Classroom Interaction — Social and Cognitive Processing

As it was done by other researchers of classroom interaction [4, p. 112], I analysed the cognitive and social processing modes on an episode-by-episode basis rather than on the utterance level.

As for social processing, the most frequently observed episodes were individualistic and domination (32 and 27 out of 77 identified episodes respectively). Confusion (7 times), collaborative (6) and argumentative (4) episodes were identified significantly fewer times, while tutoring was coded only once, and conflict did not appear in observation. Most (6) of the confusion episodes took place within one student group during the second project when the students struggled to understand the task and even asked the researcher to clarify what they needed to do. Conflict that would not be productive and would not find its resolution (unlike argumentation episodes that tend to be resolved productively) was not identified during observation or reported by students or the teacher in questionnaires, reflections or interviews, thus I believe that it is safe to say that conflicts like these did not occur during either of the projects.

As we see from the results, there exists a significant gap between observed individualistic and domination episodes and collaborative episodes. Partially the gap could be explained by the relative ease of identifying domination and individualistic episodes: it was clear to me as an observer whenever group work was dominated by one leader, whenever someone was not participating or when the students were working independently from each other. Apart from this, the reason might be that collaborative mode is described as one that is characterised by equal participation, which I rarely observed during real-life collaboration: very often participation was not equal in one way or another, which does not mean that overall input of the students is significantly unequal. The students had different roles: some of them were more active during planning, some during script composition, others during filming or presentation. There was typically one leader in the group who often took up a significant portion of organizational activity. Additionally, if we add the episodes mentioned in the student interviews and reflections to the observed episodes, the gap between individualistic (38) and domination (34) episodes and collaborative episodes (15) appears narrower.

As for cognitive processing, the most commonly observed episodes were off-task processing (48 out of 107, 15 of which happened in one student group during the first project). This, again, might be partially explained by the ease of their identification: it was mostly clear to me as an observer when the students were not performing their tasks. When they were working on their tasks however, it was not always clear if their cognitive processing could be categorized as procedural/routine or exploratory/interpretative, thus not all observed episodes of student work were marked as either of the two.

6.3 Maria's Class: Classroom Interaction — Functional Analysis

As in the case of Jan's class, the most common classroom interaction in Maria's class was organizational (200 out of 519 utterances). Again, as in Jan's class, this kind of interaction generally takes place in Czech, even though this higher secondary class was more proficient in English than Jan's lower-secondary one. The second most common interaction type was affective, making up 104 out of 519 utterances. Again, jokes and laughter were frequent during student collaboration.



Interrogative and responsive utterances make up 44 out of 519 each, while evaluative interactions were observed 36 times. Less frequent utterance types were: revision (20), expository (13), judgemental (12) and informative (10). All the other utterance functions were observed less than 10 times each: argumentative — 9 times, compositional and experiential — 8 times each, reading aloud — 7 times, reasoning — 3 times, and repetition — once. If we compare Maria's class to Jan's, evaluative, interrogative and compositional utterances were significantly less prevalent in Maria's class, while affective expressions were observed more frequently. Nevertheless, we can see a clear domination of organizational and affective utterances in both classes. In my view, this indicates high emotional engagement and high involvement of students in planning and organizing their own work, which shows a degree of autonomy. In the teacher interviews, both teachers pointed out that their role during the projects was mostly limited to answering student questions and monitoring task completion, while a large portion of work organization is done by the students themselves.

6.4 Maria's Class: Classroom Interaction — Social and Cognitive Processing

As in the case of Jan's class, in Maria's class cognitive processing episodes have similar correlation: off-task episodes are observed most frequently, procedural/routine ones follow, and the least frequent type is exploratory/interpretative. This, again, can be explained by off-tasks episodes being relatively easy to observe and identify. As for social processing, unlike Jan's class, Maria's class was most frequently observed to engage in true collaborative work, when participation in the group was equally distributed (17 out of 31 identified episodes). Student and teacher interviews reflect that, as both students and the teacher repeatedly emphasized equal participation or inclusion of every student and good collaboration or communication, and in Maria's class students mention these points more frequently in relation to all interview answers than in Jan's class. Domination makes up 8 out of 31 identified episodes, followed by tutoring (3) and argumentative (2) episodes. Unlike Jan's class, in Maria's class individualistic episodes are rare (only 1 out of 31).

All in all, we can see that Maria's class shows more equal and engaged collaboration, while less individualistic work during the video-making projects.

7. Conclusion

Across both classrooms, organizational talk emerged as the most frequent interaction type, consistently conducted in Czech rather than English. This finding highlights the centrality of "service language" in project-based collaboration, as students devoted a considerable share of their classroom talk to planning, directing, and coordinating the work process. Alongside this, affective utterances (particularly laughter and joking) appeared frequently, especially when students worked with self-selected peers, pointing to the emotional engagement that accompanied collaborative video-making. While evaluative utterances also featured prominently, especially in Jan's class, they tended to be short and simple, and were often more fully developed in written reflections than in oral exchanges.

In terms of social and cognitive processing, the results reveal differences between the two classrooms. Jan's students displayed more individualistic and domination-oriented interaction patterns, with relatively few collaborative episodes, although this picture became more balanced when student reflections and interviews were considered. In contrast, Maria's students engaged in more equal participation and showed a higher frequency of collaborative episodes. This can be partially attributed to the nature of the tasks, as tasks in Jan's classroom included more frequent individual work, such as poster or presentation creation. On top of this, according to Jan, his class was composed out of 2 groups merged together and these students tend to be introverted and less outgoing than other classes. Thus, I believe that a higher share of individualistic work is natural in Jan's class. Cognitive processing in both classes followed a similar trend: off-task episodes were most visible, while exploratory/interpretative processing was the least frequently observed.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while organizational and affective interaction dominated in both classrooms, the distribution of social processing modes noticeably varied. Jan's class leaned toward unequal participation, whereas Maria's class demonstrated more balanced collaboration. This indicates that while video-making projects consistently fostered active organizational and emotional engagement, the quality of collaborative interaction was shaped by class-specific dynamics, peer relationships, and the nature of the tasks included into the video-making projects.



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