

Student perceptions of video use in the language class

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外国語授業でのビデオ使用による学生への影響

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Abstract : This article discusses the research that has been undertaken regarding using video in the language class and finds that student perceptions and opinions have largely gone untapped. A brief survey is undertaken of 115 University students studying English in Japan to understand their perceptions and preferences regarding the use of video as a teaching methodology in language classes.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, many articles have been published debating the merits of using video in the language classroom (see Omaggio, 1979; Mueller, 1980; Balatova, 1994; Guest, 1997; Arthur, 1999; Canning-Wilson, 2000) and the various methods that are most beneficial for student development (see Herron, 1994; Herron, Hanley & Cole, 1995; Canning-Wilson, 2000).

The reasons put forward to support integrating video use in the language classroom are varied and wide-ranging : “Video can give students realistic models to imitate for role-play; can increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability; can strengthen audio/visual linguistic perceptions simultaneously; can widen the classroom repertoire and range of activities ... and can lower anxiety when practicing the skill of listening” (Arthur, 1999:4.)

Canning-Wilson (2000) argues that video can help nonnative speakers understand stress patterns and speech rhythms and speed in various situations, as well as being a tool for stimulating and motivating student interest.

Cisar (1986), Lonergan (1994), Guest (1997) and Li-Yun (2000) all present compelling arguments in favor of utilizing video in the language class for its ability to generate interest and motivation and for its ability to present both linguistically and visually a richness in cultural meanings and readings.

Theories and applications

Various methodologies for video use have been discussed and recommended, from single scene or short clips (Hacbarth, 1996; Canning-Wilson, 2000) through to complete film viewing for cultural and linguistic studies (Li-Yun, 2000.)

Canning-Wilson's (2000) work on using video in the language classroom points to the lack of data regarding student performance levels when video is used and whether or not it is actually a beneficial tool for their skill development.

"Considerable confidence is placed in the value of audio-visual aids to enhance the learning of foreign languages, yet there is little empirical data and research to support the proposition that video facilitates in the learning of foreign languages" (Canning-Wilson, 2000.)

Bovy (1981) has also pointed to the difficulty of measuring improvement due to only one methodology in language teaching.

Many researchers claim that watching short clips is a methodologically more appropriate use of video rather than complete film viewing (Furmanovsky, 1997; Davis, 1998; Canning-Wilson, 2000.) Given the lack of data surrounding video use and student performance, it seems strange to make claim to one particular method of utilizing video over another without any research to support such assertions. The research often cited to support this view is by Balatova (1994) but is actually focused more on comprehension and attention span. If the core focus of the class is on listening comprehension then short clips may perhaps be more beneficial, yet there may also be instances where whole films are appropriate, especially for higher level classes. For a discussion of the use of complete film viewing to maintain student interest levels and for contextualizing video work, see Li-Yun (2000).

Some academics have also applied themselves to widening the repertoire of video use from a simple audiovisual, listening/viewing platform to an application level where students are involved in the production of video as part of a language class curriculum. This production of video can range from interviews and mini documentaries to role-plays and presentations. The range of uses for video in the language class is increasing as both teachers and students become more proficient with the technology and more comfortable with it as a teaching and learning tool.

Student centered approach

Academic research regarding teaching methodologies often focuses on performance outcomes or skill levels as a litmus of the value of a particular methodology, but the focus for this article is on the users themselves, the students, and their perceptions of the various forms of video use in the language class. Although, in a controlled environment, theoretically it may be possible to single out the benefits accrued through the utilization of one technique or methodology in the language class, in my particular educational setting it would be extremely difficult to extract results or achievements due to only one method, technique, or even teacher, given that students are exposed to a variety of methods and teachers on a regular basis.

Student feedback can however provide us with valuable insights into how students themselves perceive the methodologies associated with language learning and whether their experience with video in the language class is a positive one that should be employed more regularly. Methods, techniques and technologies that contribute to the creation of a positive and enjoyable learning environment are in themselves valuable tools, independent in many ways of whether students' language abilities empirically improve as a result. A positive learning environment where students enjoy their study leads to increased motivation and desire.

Pintrich (1994) and Perry, Menec & Struthers (1996) state that motivation is influenced by classroom environmental factors, as well as by internal characteristics of learners. Student beliefs and perceptions do therefore influence their ability and motivation to learn.

A search of the literature surrounding video use in the language class has revealed a paucity of work that has actually involved student perceptions and motivations regarding video work. A study by Li-Yun (2000) involved student perceptions of viewing previously seen films versus unseen films in the language class and although the results are not totally conclusive as to student preference, the study is however one of the few available that involved students in the analytical process, using their feedback as a tool for constructing a curriculum that utilizes video. Stepp-Greany's study (2002) surveyed student perceptions of different technologies used in the language classroom, and while this study didn't include video in the technologies surveyed, it is still important in its methodology, accessing student perceptions.

Methodology

The brief survey and results that follow are intended as an exploratory study and it is hoped that a fuller study, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and a larger sample of students from different educational environments will be conducted in the future. The questionnaire for this survey was quantitative, with fifteen questions utilizing a five point Likert scale, as shown below:

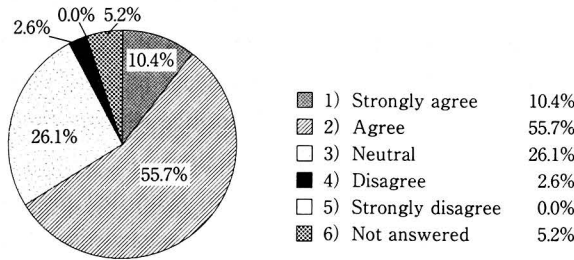
1 Strongly agree 2 Agree 3 Neutral 4 Disagree 5 Strongly disagree

The 115 students who returned surveys for this study on perceptions regarding the use of video in the language class were all second year students at a University in Tokyo renowned for its foreign languages faculty. The students were all Arts students, majoring either in a foreign language such as English or Russian, or in Law or Philosophy. Every student was taking a required course in English, whether as part of their major or in addition to their major courses. Most students were graduates of Japanese High Schools with very little or no experience abroad.

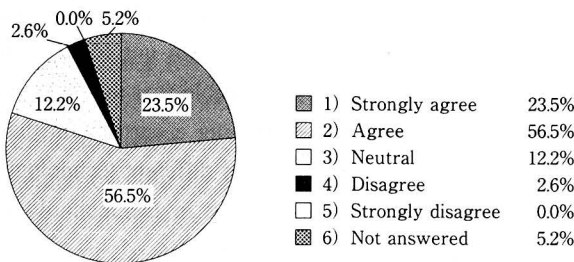
Throughout the year I deliberately employed a variety of methods and techniques associated with video in the language class, from watching complete films connected to themes and topics being studied, watching short clips or scenes, and having students create their own videos, from simple situational role plays on video to documentary style interviews. Not every student however was exposed to each use of video so the main focus of this study was on their experience with films and short clips on video.

Results

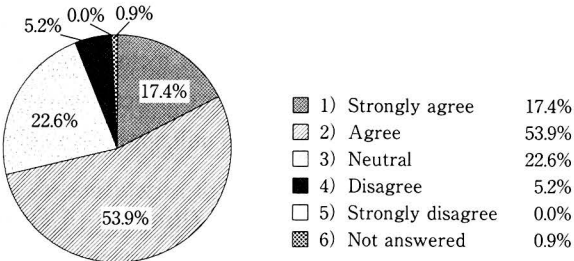
Q01 Watching short clips on video has had a positive effect on my learning and language skills.



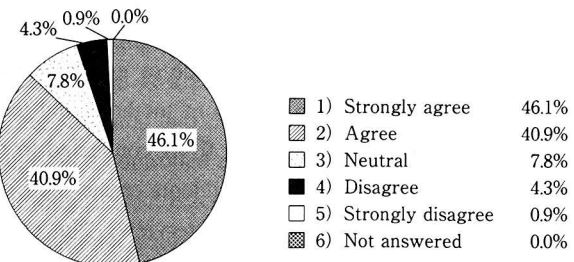
Q02 Watching short clips on video is an enjoyable experience.



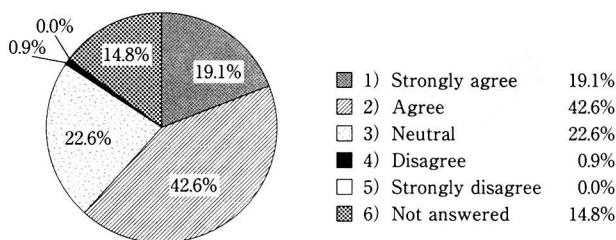
Q03 Watching whole films in class has had a positive effect on my learning and language skills.



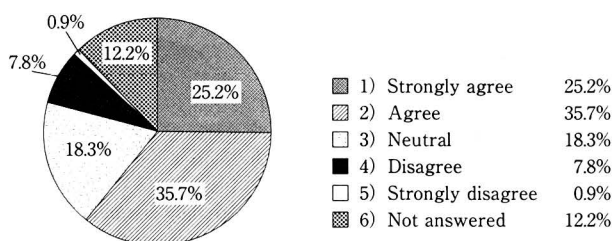
Q04 Watching whole films in class is an enjoyable experience.



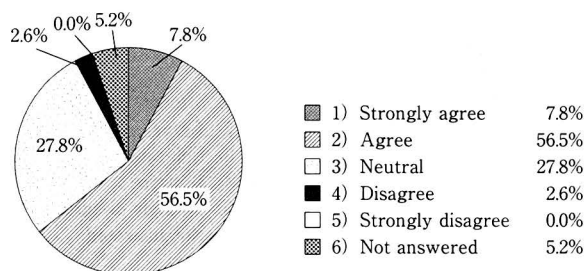
Q05 Producing videos for assignments has had a positive effect on my learning and language skills.



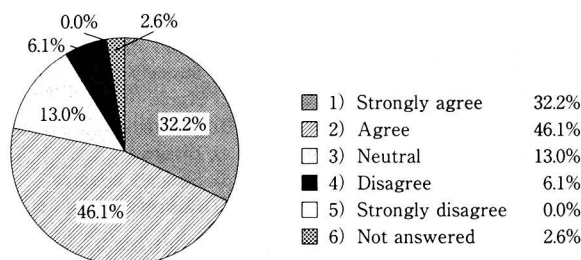
Q06 Producing videos for assignments is an enjoyable experience.



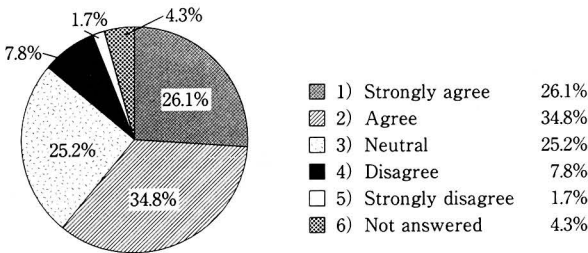
Q07 Video work in general is relevant to my present and future use of English.



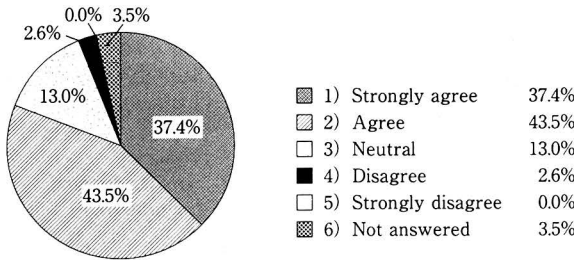
Q08 Watching clips and whole films has helped me to learn about English speaking cultures.



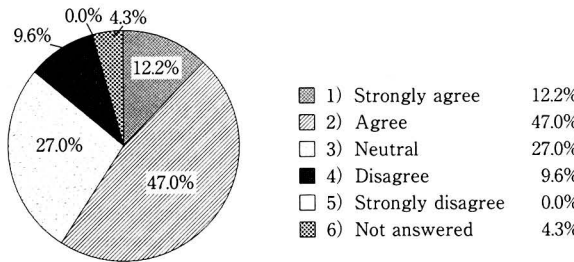
Q09 Watching clips and whole films has increased my motivation to study English.



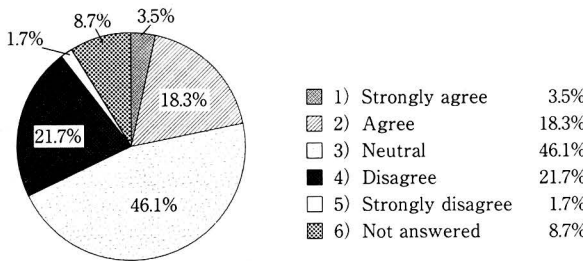
Q10 Watching clips and whole films makes the language class more interesting.



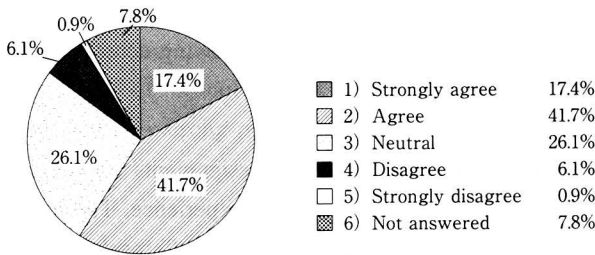
Q11 Clips and whole films should be connected to issues or skills being studied in the class.



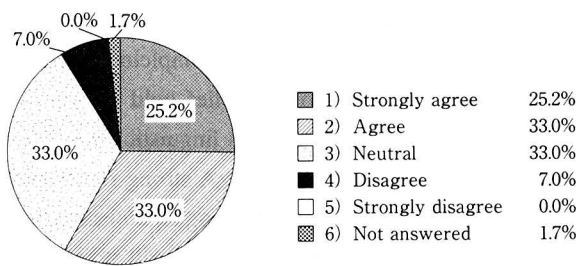
Q12 Watching short clips is more beneficial to my learning than watching whole films.



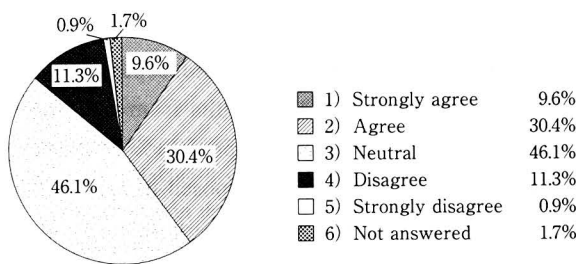
Q13 Watching whole films is more enjoyable than watching short clips.



Q14 I would like to see more video work in the language class.



Q15 I would like to see an increased use of other technologies in the language class.



Conclusions

Although this is only an exploratory study of 115 students, some initial conclusions regarding student perceptions of video use can be garnered from the results.

I have combined “strongly agree” and “agree” results in this conclusion as a total for positive answers and have done the same with negative answers.

66.1% of students found that watching short clips on video had a positive effect on their learning and language skills and 71.3% stated that this was also true of watching complete films in class. This points quite clearly to the fact that students see viewing video clips and films as positive methodologies for their language skill learning. 80% of students found viewing short clips an

enjoyable experience and 87% found viewing complete films enjoyable.

Obviously these results point to student enjoyment and a belief in the value of using video technology in the language class, with complete film viewing actually just beating short clips in student ratings.

61.7% of students believe that producing videos for assignments was beneficial for their learning and language skills and 60.9% found it an enjoyable experience. The lower results for this kind of video work can in part be explained by the “not answered” results of 14.8% and 12.2% as not all students were involved in video production.

64.5% of students believe that video work in general is relevant to their present and future use of English, with only 2.6% giving a negative answer to this question. Again, overwhelming support for the perceived relevance of video work in the language class.

78.3% of students stated that watching both clips and complete films helped them to learn about English speaking cultures, giving credence to the belief held by many teachers that video can contribute in the study of cultural elements as well as linguistic ones. 60.9% also stated that clips and films increased their motivation to study English. A strong result was given in answer to the question regarding clips and whole films making the language class more interesting, with 80.9% agreeing with this statement, something that teachers should take heed of in their curriculum planning. On the topic of clips and films being connected to issues or skills being studied in class, the results were not as strong, yet 59.2% of students did agree with this. This result is perhaps sufficient for teachers to take note that it is perhaps better to find relevant and related video clips and films.

The issue of short clips versus complete films is one that has perplexed many teachers and created strong opinions in both camps of believers. The results from the students in this study though point to a preference for complete films over short clips. 59.1% of students find watching complete films more enjoyable than watching short clips as opposed to the 7% of students who disagreed. Only 21.8% of students agreed that watching short clips is more beneficial to their learning than watching complete films, with 23.4% disagreeing and 46.1% staying neutral on the issue. This points to the fact that although some teachers may hold that short clip viewing is pedagogically more sound, given student attention span and issues regarding comprehension, students themselves do not see clips as more beneficial and actually regard complete film viewing as more enjoyable. One of the main points of this research is the need to understand and consider student beliefs, perceptions and preferences regarding language learning methodologies, so it would seem that teachers should take particular note of these results in their decisions regarding the use of video in the language class.

Regarding an increased use of video and other technologies in the language class, it should be pointed out that the students in the survey were subject to more video use than students in other teachers' classes, yet 58.2% agreed that they would like to see more use of video, with only 7% disagreeing. The interesting result here was regarding an increased use of other technologies besides

video in the language class, with a greater percentage neutral on this issue, 46.1%, compared to only 40% in favour and 12.2% against the idea.

Although most language learning settings are implementing various computer-based learning aids and utilizing an increasing array of technologies, it would seem that students are fairly undecided about these developments, with no strong preferences either way as yet or perceptions about the benefits of such technologies.

Student perceptions are an important tool to aid teachers in understanding more about various teaching methodologies. This survey is only an exploratory one given the small sample size and it is hoped that a similar survey with a greater selection and sampling will be carried out later this year. Given this reservation, it is still valuable to access the perceptions that such a group of students have regarding the use of video in the language class and their beliefs about it as an effective teaching and learning tool.

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