

# Language Learning in Context

Marie Cosgrove

言語をビデオストーリーの内容コンテキスト(文脈)において覚える

コズグローブ マリー

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*“Believe in your dreams and ideals and pursue them with determination and motivation. Always find the time to do something for other people. Indeed there is nothing more rewarding than making someone else happy”* Fabiola Gianotti, Physicist, CERN.

A famous Italian physicist says we need determination and motivation to pursue our dreams and ideals. For students of language it is essential to empower them to study long hours and take tests like TOEIC, EIKEN etc....

There are two types of motivation, extrinsic motivation which comes from without and can be the chance to take a trip to the country where the language is spoken or the promise of a good job etc.... The other motivation comes from within, intrinsic motivation, and is awakened by stimulus such as an interesting video story, a song with a catchy melody in the target language and interesting study materials..

What is needed for students to want to continue to study the language in context is video , which can be easily accessed on the Internet.

Video in an interesting story form brings to the surface intrinsic motivation and students are learning and acquiring the language in context

One students words!

*“This story was very interesting for me. So I was able to take a class happily. This video excites my study will for English.”*



Figure 1

Fulfilling students needs.

Many students commute to the university so their time for home study is limited. Being able to download these videos into smart phones or such small devices is a big advantage for students to use while commuting. They can do their homework on the train or bus.

Two Students Comments.

*“Watching video is very useful. I watch the video on the train.”*

*“The videos are good for me to study English because it takes about 2 hours to come to the university. I often watch the videos in the trains. The video is very easy to understand.”*

The most important thing for students to improve their English conversation ability is to forget the words “Yes” and “No” and answer all questions in a sentence or sentences. This way they have to find alternative ways to answer questions. They become inventive and creative with English. The students become totally engrossed in English conversation between peers. Pica et al(1996)say “ it has been shown that when non native speakers engage



Figure 2

in genuine communication with each other as opposed to a native speaker interlocutor, they appear to experience a greater degree of involvement in their negotiation for message meaning (data collected from three classrooms during two typical ES communication activities). Pica et al , emphasize that as teachers ask students to work together (pair

work and group work) on communication tasks they can be confident that the interaction can assist L2 learning. (see Cosgrove IATEFL 2003)

This course has online study guides and grammar quizzes that students can access freely. As in previously published papers like CD-ROMs with video the students can study at their own pace and in their own homes or use the university computers. The requirement is online Internet access which most students have. This is a prerequisite to ultimate enjoyment of the course as shown in the graphs made from the questionnaires given to the students at the end of the course in 2009. The majority of students enjoyed the study. The minority did not have Internet access at home and as a consequence the enjoyment decreased. But the benefits were obvious to even these students. Class size also played a factor in the enjoyment as the smaller the class the larger the enjoyment. There were 12 questions on the questionnaire. The first four relate to the actual content of the course

Circle the answer of your choice

1. Which do you prefer?

Clear Pocket book with Internet video study

OR

Textbook with CD

2. Did you enjoy the Internet video study?

Yes

No

3. Have you finished watching all 42 videos in the story?

Yes

No

4. Have you finished all the prints in your clear pocket folder?

Yes

No

In the class with the smaller number of students (Figure 2) the preference for the Internet video study and no textbook is obvious and the number of students who enjoyed the story very much the majority. As this was a vast amount of homework and a lot of writing it is surprising to have so many positive answers. What is even more surprising is that the students ask for more study questions

And keeping up with the demand for study prints keeps the author quite busy.

Even a writing class would not do as much writing as these students did in a year for homework. Watching the videos and answering the comprehension questions must take a lot of their time but they obviously enjoyed it.

The larger class (figure 4) showed more negative answers but still the majority enjoyed this marathon study. Some students had to share computers with family and could not have enough access to satisfy their needs. Others were not used to doing so much homework. (peer requested homework maybe not their choice)

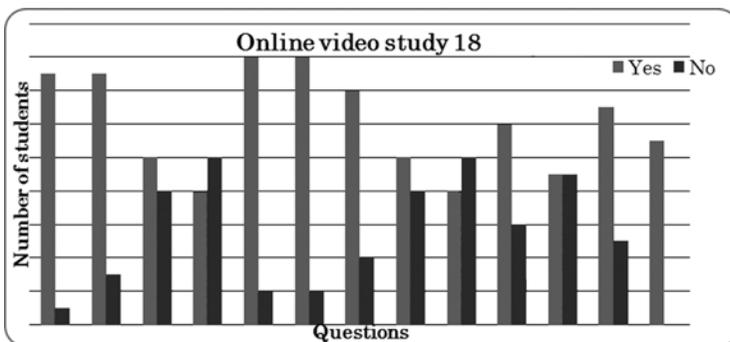


Figure 3

Looking at Q3 in Figure 4 the vast majority finished the 42 videos in the story and more than 2 thirds half finished all the writing of answers to the homework.

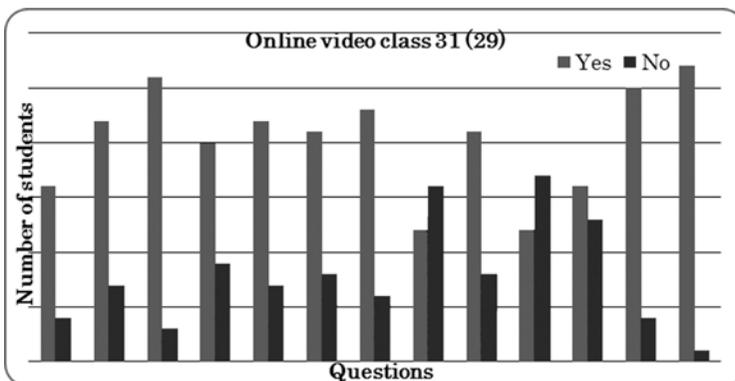


Figure 4

Another larger class with a similar result in preference for the Internet study and enjoyment. However more students finished all the 42 videos and more finished all the homework questions.

5. Do you want to be a good speaker of English?

Yes                      No

6. Do you think English will be useful for you in your future?

Yes                      No

7. After watching the video story do you feel you would like to go to another country?

- Yes                      No
8. Do you have more confidence in your English ability now?
- Yes                      No

The vast majority of students want to be able to speak English and think English ability will be useful for them in the future. Again the vast majority would like to go to travel abroad but surprisingly in the largest classes more students lacked confidence in their English ability than in the smaller class. For conversation practice to be really effective for students smaller class size may be more desirable.

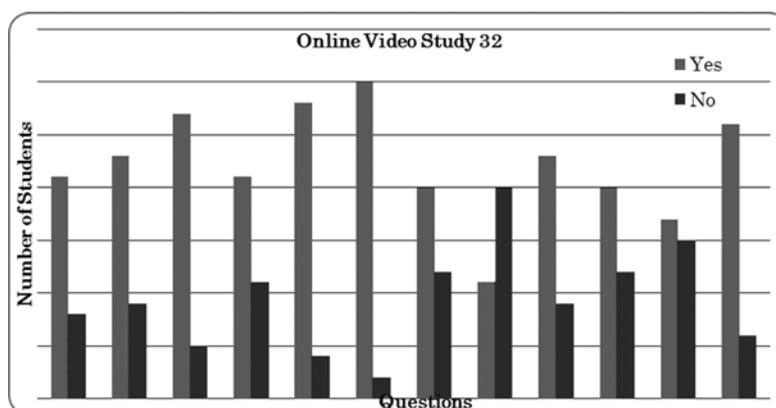


Figure 5

Many students think video is good to improve listening ability and about half think it is good to learn vocabulary. Whether students can measure themselves how much they have learned is something to study further but it has been evident through testing that they certainly learnt a lot of new vocabulary through many hours of on-line home study.

9. Have you watched any other videos in English on the Internet such as  
 Passport              You Tube              News videos              Sports videos  
 Yes                      No
10. Do you think watching English videos is the best way to learn listening skills?  
 Yes                      No
11. Do you think watching English videos is the best way to learn new vocabulary?  
 Yes                      No
12. Have you enjoyed the conversations with a partner in this class?  
 Yes                      No

The enjoyment of communication with a partner is high in the smaller class and seems to show that the smaller group is the ideal for conversation practice. Even so the vast major-

ity enjoyed pair work.

The tools for this class have changed very much since the first questionnaire. Now many students can access the Internet with mobile phone and can watch and listen to the video anywhere. Even in class, (figure9) during checking of the comprehension questions homework, the students can quickly check again if they made a mistake..This has made life much easier for commuting students and students who may not have Internet at home. Mobile phone access to the Internet and wi-fi has changed the way students learn. Also for Japanese students who are busy with part time jobs or club activity etc.. they can easily do their homework of listening anytime and anywhere.

“the most effective learning will occur during the process of carrying out the research for oneself” Wray, 2009

Students using their own data collected in answer to video comprehension questions, requested by peers and supplied by the author teacher. The students use 40 clear pocket folders containing the answers to the questions on the prints supplied. The answers written by the students are to be obtained by watching and listening to the video story many times and at the students own pace. The total concentration on the task is obvious. Nobody noticed the photograph (figure 6) being taken they were so deep in concentration to fill in the blanks in the story test paper using their clear pocket folders..

Information gap or close blank exercises of the story content help students writing ability as well as understanding of English grammar and sentence structure. If students successfully complete these tasks they achieve satisfaction and this gives them resultative motivation the motivation that learners develop as a result of their success in learning the second language.

Schacter (1987) 501-18 States about implicit memory that “subjects demonstrate that



Figure 6

they possess a particular kind of knowledge by their performance on a task, yet they are not consciously aware that they possess the knowledge and can not gain access to it explicitly” p513 From this we can assume that students don’t know until they try to use it in conversation and discussion exactly how much implicit knowledge of the target language they have. The same goes for information gap tasks, quizzes etc..

After studying for 6 years minimum at junior and senior high school level without much chance for oral and auditory practice, the enjoyment of following a verbal story in the target language as well as pair work in the classroom is the realization that they can speak and achieve and also hear other non native peers communicate successfully.

A student’s plea “*This story improves my listening skills. So, I want to watch another story*

*as soon as possible.*”

Another student states something the author realized when learning Japanese. *“The video story is helping to improve my listening skill. It is also helping to improve my writing skill.”* The value of listening skills to improve writing skills. The author graduated in advanced Japanese after many years of intense listening. The most enjoyable being watching Japanese movies and easy television drama. The listening was an invaluable source for writing sentences in Japanese.

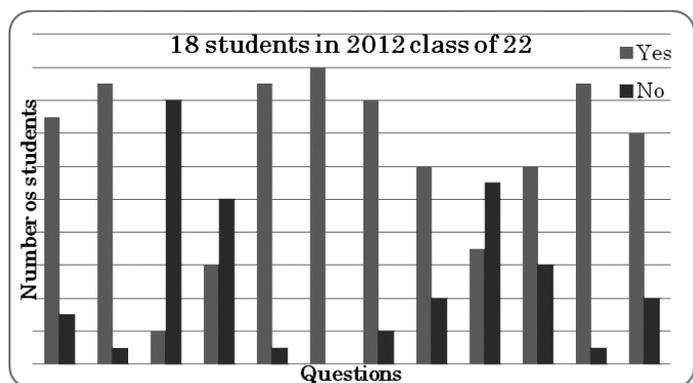


Figure 7

Comparing students opinions of the video story by creating another graph of the same questionnaire three years later shows us that the number of students who are enjoying the video story is almost all. Only one student has not realized the enjoyment. As the class is

in the middle of the study it is possible to investigate the reason for not enjoying. One can surmise that the student has not done all the homework so does not feel the enjoyment. Surprisingly the reason for a “No” was that the student wanted to do more group discussion in the class and in actuality he did enjoy and appreciate the video study.

The left side of the graph is Yes and in Q. 3 only 2 students have watched all the videos. As the class is not finished it is natural to have mainly No answers for Q3 and for students not to have finished the comprehension questions Q. 4. What is interesting to note is that the number of students who want to be good speakers of English is 100% of those surveyed and the number who think that English will be useful for them in the future increased as well. The number of students who enjoyed and who think it is good to improve their listening skills is the same. Questionnaires grew at the end of the year are too late. Listening to students opinions is why the author made more and more comprehension questions as students requested them. Questionnaires during the course are very helpful for both student and teacher and take very little time to change into graphs and data for course improvement.

As introduced above the student was found and he had also taken TOEIC, as a private student and not with the university and he realized the value as the TOEIC listening was slower speed than before. See p9 students words in italics middle of page.

Students words give insights into the depth of thinking of some students.

*“I’m interested in other country’s culture. When I watched video, I could find many differ-*

*ence from Japanese common practice. The video help my listening skill up. Moreover I want to speak English because I think “Listening” and “Speaking” is the most important skill.”*

The pocket folders are easy for the teacher to check in the classroom and students have pride in their neatness and organization skills which will help them in the future. Smart phones are making life easier for students with long commutes and/or no Internet access at home. Dictionaries have become lighter and more compact but with much more helpful data such as pronunciation of words that can be listened to and screen writing functions to rapidly identify Japanese Kanji etc.

As students request more and more video stories like the one they are studying in this class it is hoped that Publishers who have such videos will make them readily available through online stores such as i tunes so that students may purchase them at reasonable prices to fulfill their need for Language in Context in an enjoyable medium.

Very few students read Japanese books these days and far fewer read English books or other language books. Many countries such as the USA and UAE are providing their students with i pads to use for study.

As students seem to love such gadgets it not only means they are helping the environment by reducing the need for paper textbooks. but also increasing students enjoyment With excel and word functions



Figure 8

and e-mails we could reduce the use of paper in the classroom almost entirely. Let's listen to the opinions of our students and use the most enjoyable tools to activate their intrinsic motivation and implicit memory and make their language learning successful

## Conclusion

As shown in previously collaborated research using CD-ROM containing video short stories Cosgrove et al 2010., students enjoy learning with video. They can achieve success as shown in improved test results and improved motivation. And determination. Therefore publishers should put their video stories online in podcast form so students can easily access them like i tunes which are popular and can be purchased at any convenience store. Videos that have been made for L2 Ss are much easier to understand for non native speakers than movies which aim at a native speaker market. Many teachers use movie dialogues, as a means of teaching listening and conversation skills but it is a long tedious process as the author previously tried such methods. When only the teacher has the video

it is a long exhausting process to teach with video. Perhaps only eight short stories can be taught in a year or one part of a movie. But when students have the video they are empowered and can study at their own pace and for their individual needs. They have an appetite, which is not being matched by the publishing industry who continue to make textbooks that are not researched for effectiveness with students. Giving students lists of good movies to watch may be a good option but if they are reading subtitles in their own language the effectiveness as a language tool is reduced. The value is in the content.

Language learning should be an enjoyable activity and language learning in the context of a situation or story is the most interesting and understandable for the learner. It also seems to awaken intrinsic motivation and implicit memory as the students become excited about the story and when they can hear the conversations they feel happy. Students words. *“Studying with video is a lot of fun for me. But I watch transcript . Because my listening skill is not very well. When I can understand what Anne and Sarah to say, I am very happy. I become more confident to listen.”* Students are told not to read the transcript as they must become accustomed to listening.

Only by listening many times will their ears become accustomed and also because they start to remember the words they hear. As their listening vocabulary increases the speakers seem to be speaking slowly. Students words *“Speaking at natural speed is difficult to listen for me. studying by video I felt listening speed slowly at the TOEIC.”* As the student wrote, a noticeable ability to hear spoken English slower than previously experienced so the author experienced when studying Japanese listening passages. At first they were so fast it was incomprehensible but after many times listening to the words out of class ( homework) and study of the content in class time the listening passage seemed incredibly slow. It was amazing that what had seemed so fast could be actually so slow. The same happens with the students as they spend time checking their comprehension in class and continue listening at home or during commutes or wherever, they experience happiness when they can hear all the conversations and comprehend. The author studied by tapes and walkman and walkman CD player with no visual material. Studying while watching the action in technicolor must add another pleasurable dimension to students lives.

Hopefully this form of learning will increase in Japan and for the protection of the environment and reduction in global warming a reduction in the reliance on paper textbooks.



Figure 9

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Figure 10



Figure 11

(コズグローブ マリー 本学非常勤講師)