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Student-Created Videos as ESL Homework Assignments

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Student-Created Videos as ESL Homework Assignments

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English To Speakers of Other Languages

By
Griffin Childers
May 2020
Student-Created Video as ESL Homework Assignments

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by
Griffin Childers
May 2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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Instructor/Chairperson

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April 16, 2020
April 16, 2020
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Date
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ABSTRACT

There is a constantly growing number of people around the world who are learning English as an additional language. A lot of innovation has been focused on classroom teaching techniques, but homework pedagogies are vastly underrepresented. In contrast to interesting and interactive classroom activities, homework assignments are often uninspiring, focusing on worksheet completion and memorization. This project is a workshop presentation to be given at ESL focused conferences such as the TESOL conference. The presentation will provide discussion and hands-on training to teachers to learn how to create effective homework assignments in which students will create and narrate short videos allowing them to practice English speaking skills in real-life contexts. The underlying theoretical framework for these homework assignments is the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). Students will experience a language event when creating the video, then review the videos in class, discuss and learn from them, and then formulate a plan for the next assignment. If these assignments are given consistently, the teacher will have an archive of videos to assess successes, progress, and difficulties for each student and the class as a whole. Although this project can be used in many types of ESL classes, it will be most effective in classes with students who seek to develop communicative competence, and classes that focus on speaking.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The solution to effective learning beyond classroom activities in almost any subject is often homework. Teachers of many subjects, including English as a Second Language (ESL), assign homework in hopes that students will expand their understanding and skills beyond the confines of a classroom. Homework is often assigned as a way to “catch up” when classroom activities take longer than expected. Homework gives students more exposure to the subject matter, instilling the information that was presented in class, or previewing material that will soon be presented in class. Although homework seems like a great addition to classroom instruction, homework is only a valid solution to this problem when it is actually completed and understood by the students. All too often, students opt out of homework, or simply fill in the correct answers so that they can get credit for doing their homework.

It can take an English Language Learner (ELL) up to six years to become effectively proficient in English. For many, that is simply too much time (Hakuta et al., 2000). When life conditions make it difficult to attend classes, many students will drop out, or just stop going to class (Medin, 2018). Effective homework assignments can help to reduce the time to English proficiency by extending learning beyond the classroom, allowing students to learn more in less time (Tam & Chan, 2016). In actual practice, however, many students don’t have the time, or the motivation to do their homework (Bennett, 2017). Homework is simply not engaging enough for students to feel the necessity of completing it (Shih, 2012). Amiryousefi (2016) explores the
benefits of homework, finding that students that did homework experienced an increase in learning objective success, but that the majority of students spent less than one hour per class session doing homework, with many students spending fewer than 30 minutes on homework per class session. According to Kilar-Magdzierz (2017), most students spend over three hours a day on social media. According to these findings, students spend three to six times more time on social media than they do on homework.

Tam & Chan (2016) describe homework as focusing on one of two types; drilling assignments that build on rote memory skills, and non-drilling assignments that involve thinking and imagination. Many teachers default to drilling assignments, simply because these assignments are easier to grade, and review. A similar assessment of homework places homework into four categories (Cooper et al., 2002). Likely the most common type of homework assignment is Practice homework, which is meant to reinforce current skills being covered. Preparation homework is meant to give students a preview of material that will be presented in upcoming lessons. Extension homework utilizes current skills but applied to new situations. Lastly, Integration homework requires the student to apply multiple skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or creative writing.

While most homework activities may improve an ELL’s reading and writing skills, there is little opportunity to practice speaking outside of the classroom (Sun, 2012; Young & West, 2016). To develop skills in a second language, students need a high quantity and high quality of practice (Young & West, 2016). In-class speaking practice can be difficult for a teacher to manage and allows minimal time for each student to practice. A teacher may sit with each student for a moment to have a short conversation, but this leaves the rest of the class
unattended, thus wasting valuable classroom time and slowing the learning process. These exchanges are usually short, and non-spontaneous, and only monitored by an instructor who likely is eager to move on to the next student, and the next activity. Homework assignments that involve speaking are often unmonitored. Students may be assigned to speak with another ELL or a native English speaker about a topic as a way of practicing, but the teacher has no involvement and has no way of assessing the success of these activities.

Kleanthous & Cardoso (2016) surmised that ELLs are more motivated and perform better in regard to productive skills when they know that there is an audience of peers. Simply knowing that somebody is listening can improve an ELL’s speaking practice and performance. Traditional homework activities are not capable of creating this type of motivation.

When homework is done it can be effective. Getting students to complete homework assignments can be as challenging as the homework itself. Students need speaking practice outside of the classroom, but traditional homework assignments don’t call for effective speaking practice. Homework needs to be reformatted to be fun, engaging, and easy while effectively giving students opportunities to practice speaking skills.
Purpose of the Project

This project is to create a presentation designed to inform and inspire ESL & English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on ways to create homework assignments designed to give students more speaking practice through creation and narration of short videos. These homework assignments are fun and engaging, thus inspiring students to actually complete their homework.

A lot of research and training has been directed towards classroom teaching techniques for ESL instruction. Although many teachers use very creative, fun and engaging teaching methodologies in the classroom, homework assignments have remained largely unchanged and the effectiveness of homework in ESL settings is under-researched (Fukuda & Yoshida, 2013). Bookwork is uninspiring, repetitive and offers little or no feedback. Students may feel that they can complete workbook assignments with or without a teacher and associated class. Some teachers assign students to write a journal as homework. This gives the teacher insights into their students’ writing abilities, but students may feel uninspired with open-ended topics such as writing about their typical day. Homework assignments almost never involve speaking, and if they do, they are simply for practice. Speaking practice outside of the classroom is beneficial for English learners, but this practice cannot be shared with the instructor. Feedback cannot be given, nor can assessments be made from this kind of out-of-class practice.

Teachers often commit a lot of time to plan in-class activities. Goals and objectives are often based on what can be accomplished during class. Homework is often an afterthought. When it comes to homework, many teachers will simply assign pieces of the current chapter or unit that has not been covered in class in the hopes that the completion of these assignments will help to reinforce the skills that students are learning in class.
An added benefit to following the principles that I have laid out is that teachers will have an archive of videos for each student, giving both the teacher and the student to observe progress throughout the term. When common errors or mistakes are observed, the instructor can plan lessons accordingly to address those difficult areas.

Little attention is given to the development of homework assignments through the process of teacher training. This project will summarize research findings regarding homework and provide ideas and techniques that teachers can utilize to develop compelling experience-based homework assignments that students will be excited to complete.

Although this project will inspire new homework pedagogies for teachers of all levels, the primary audience is teachers and students in non-credit English programs. English curriculums that have a strict goal of preparing students for higher education and standardized testing, may not fully benefit from this project. These schools may still be able to benefit from implementing this system at a low level such as an introduction video at the beginning of the term and a follow-up video at the end or students can create videos as a way of earning extra credit points. Community-based non-credit schools and programs designed to focus on communicative competence can benefit from fully implementing this project. Students at the beginning to intermediate levels can benefit from this project through practicing basic vocabulary and sentence structure, whereas advanced students can produce mini-presentations every week allowing them weekly opportunities to use their English language skills in challenging ways. The scalability of this project will ensure its usefulness to all levels of English learners and can be implemented as a primary homework pedagogy or as an occasional fun assignment.
Theoretical Framework

The basis of this project is rooted in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb, 1984). In his original paper from 1984, Kolb describes ELT as having four primary steps: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. According to Kolb’s theory, concrete learning describes a learner learning something new, or experiencing something in a new way. This step will typically be completed through classroom work under the guidance of an instructor. After concrete learning, the next step is reflective observation. After students learn new material, they will be put into a position of reflection as they prepare to use that new knowledge to create their videos. The next step of ELT is abstract conceptualization. Poorly designed activities may skip this step in the learning process. Activity design must be created to think of new ways to use the language to express ideas from simple nouns to more abstract descriptions of feelings and desires. The last step in the Experiential Learning Theory process is active experimentation. This step will allow students to use their new knowledge in experimental ways. The important thing is that the students are experiencing this process, rather than simply reading a book and filling in answers.

Learning through experience is fundamental, and natural to a person’s development throughout life, and most of what people learn in life is through experience (Philominraj et al., 2018). Experiential learning should include concrete experience, should be followed by a reflective observation, should include abstract conceptualization, and should include active experimentation (Reyes-Chua, 2013). (Lubis et al., 2018) found that implementing project-based learning and experiential learning models greatly improved English language communicability with ELLs. Bookwork simply does not reproduce real-life language use. Language must be
associated with a language learner’s environment, at different times of the day, and in different settings. The use of a new language must be used, thought about throughout a student’s normal life, outside of the classroom. A language learned in books and confined to being used only in a classroom is not as useful as a language that is understood at all times, in or out of the classroom.

First languages are acquired not learned. An infant hears his or her parents and other people speaking and the process of acquiring the language begins. Associations are made between sounds and the objects, actions or feelings that those sounds represent. As the child grows, grammar structures develop as well as a more expressive vocabulary. Secondary languages, by their nature, must be learned. Language teachers and material developers must attempt to summarize, define, and explain what is decided to be the most important parts of a language in a way that can be studied, practiced, understood and put into use. Although much can be learned by practicing, and repeating, the process of experiencing language in real-world settings and situations will help a language learner in a way similar to the way one acquires their first language. By combining traditional learning styles in the classroom with experiential learning through homework assignments, students will be well prepared to learn quickly and effectively.

**Significance of the Project**

There are several benefits related to this project to both students and teachers. Students don’t want to spend their valuable time doing homework. Some students simply don’t have the time to sit down with their books, in a place where they can concentrate without distraction for enough time to effectively complete homework. Instead, many students skip homework
assignments, or they complete just enough to get a passing grade. We live in a busy and
distracting world. Hours of distraction are right at our fingertips. Like many people, students are
susceptible to the distractions of their smartphones. They are constantly distracted by social
media posts from their friends, family, celebrities, etc. Text messages, emails, and
advertisements are constantly vying for attention.

Google has reported that over 93 million selfies are taken every day by Android users
alone (Google Photos, 2016). YouTube (Press—YouTube, n.d.) states that over 5 billion videos
are watched on their video streaming service every day by over 1 billion viewers in 91 countries.
Technology and the information that it carries is becoming more and more a part of everyday
life, yet most classrooms have remained ultimately unchanged. People love to take selfies. They
love to post videos and watch other’s videos. This project will put students in the position of
using selfies and other photos and videos that they will shoot themselves as a way to learn
English. Instead of being a distraction, students will be able to reinforce their language learning
using their smartphone.

Many teachers feel that insufficient out-of-class study time is to blame for their students
not achieving the language skills that are desired (Fukuda & Yoshida, 2013). This motivates
teachers to assign more homework in an attempt to achieve goals. This increase in homework
can have a detrimental effect. Homework can feel like a chore, even a punishment at times. Even
a highly motivated student can feel overwhelmed with a challenging homework assignment.
Many teachers issue quizzes in class to encourage students to do their homework creating
extrinsic motivation, rather than encouraging intrinsic motivations (Bénabou & Tirole, 2003).
Overwhelming amounts of homework can cause a student to give up, so homework shouldn’t feel like a chore. It should be fun, and it should give students real-world practice.

Teachers assess their student’s English language skills at the end of a term, and often during midterm and less commonly at several other points through the term. Teachers are also constantly assessing their students through observation. Although a lot of assessment is done, it is more difficult to assess improvement. Traditionally, the only way to assess improvement is to compare assessment or placement test scores at the beginning of the term to scores at the end of the term. These scores are helpful but do not give a teacher an idea of how a student has improved in communicative competence. By following the system outlined in this project, a teacher will have an archive of videos for each student from the beginning of the semester all the way to the end. Progress can be noted and compared. Teachers may elect to review before and after videos with each student as a form of a progress report.

Not only will the homework assignments in this project be easy for the students to complete, but they will also be easy and helpful for the teacher to assess. The teacher must only watch each submitted video and make an assessment, noting successes and challenges for each student. Pronunciation, grammar and even sentence length are among the items that a teacher may be looking for. A teacher can address an individual student who continuously makes the same errors and mistakes. If a common error or mistake is being made by multiple students, then the error correction can be a major topic during the next class. Being able to hear students speak about images that they are capturing on video will give teachers a new level of assessment, allowing the teacher to create more useful lesson plans for their students.
The aspect of experiential learning of this project will help students learn English more effectively by allowing them to experience language outside of the classroom. Students will be encouraged to shoot a video at any time, not just during a predetermined homework study time. A student may shoot a short video on their way to work, when they get up in the morning while eating dinner, etc. Students will have assignment parameters that will always be on their minds. They will always be looking for the shot that they need. Most importantly, they will be thinking about it in English, and then speak out-loud English on the video when they are ready.

Philominraj et al. (2018) drew a connection between intelligence and experience, claiming that the two are mutually connected. Reyes-Chua (2013) looked closely at experiential learning in her research study, describing experiential learning as the development of new concepts through new experiences. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation are the key factors of experiential learning (Reyes-Chua, 2013).

Watching and reviewing the videos in class will allow the circle of learning to continue. Students can learn from their peers’ videos, and camaraderie will develop as all students realize that they are all equally vulnerable, but that success will be achieved together. Some students may choose to be creative with their video content, others may be silly, while some may simply complete the assignment. This is all part of experiencing language and learning from that experience.
Limitations

Because of the strict curriculum of many learning institutions, this system may not be possible for all establishments. Schools with objectives of preparing students college entrance exams and language requirement assessments may be forced to maintain a more traditional curriculum.

This system may also not be accepted by some students, or parents of students. There are many people who believe in traditional methodologies and will not pay for or invest time in experimental pedagogies. There will be those who reject Experiential Learning Theory simply based on what they view as normal and not normal.

Technical limitations may also exist. This project assumes a bring your own device (BYOD) system, allowing students to use their own smartphone. Although much of the world’s population has, or has access to a smartphone, there are still populations of learners that do not, or who do not meet the minimum requirements needed to participate. While some schools may be able to provide equipment to students, this may require training on using smartphone cameras. An assumption is being made by this project that participating students will be current owners of a smartphone and that they are familiar with using the camera, and capable of uploading videos, photos, and audio to a “turn in” server.

When shooting videos in public, there is always a possibility of capturing a person’s image who does not wish to be captured on video. As part of this program, students must be taught social etiquette when shooting video and photos in public areas. Some teachers may choose to give students pre-printed cards that explain what they are doing in case they are questioned, but don’t have the language skills to explain themselves.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The claim for this field project is that English language learners must experience English outside of the classroom to learn quickly and effectively. The most common system of out-of-class practice is homework. Three reasons justify this project, which I shall explore through the literature review. Each reason given can stand on its own as a means to improve ESL pedagogies, but together these reasons combine to create a larger more specific need. The first reason that justifies this project is that homework or outside-of-class practice is beneficial to students’ learning outcomes. Secondly, typical classroom environments don’t provide enough instructor monitored and authentic speaking practice to ensure a student’s comfort with speaking English. Third, experiential task-based learning has been shown to be beneficial to learning retention and has also been shown to increase student satisfaction. Each of these claims leads to a need for a solution for fast, effective English language learning that captures students’ interests while encouraging them to practice thinking and speaking in English through homework assignments that can be completed in minimal time.

Homework Effectiveness

Since language doesn’t only take place in the safety of a classroom, many ESL instructors use homework to encourage students to study and practice English outside of the classroom. Vatterott (2009, pp. 1–10); Cooper (1989) & Tam & Chan (2016) point out that the majority of research regarding education focuses on classroom techniques, and students’
experience in the classroom; that little work has been done to look at efficacy or techniques of homework. This seems counterintuitive since most educators believe that homework is a necessary component to education, yet comparatively little research has been done on homework as compared to classroom techniques. I can say that from my own experience of being in a graduate-level TESOL program, that very little time was spent in my classes discussing the topic of homework. None of my classes discussed how much homework to assign, how to make homework fair for all students, or how to make it enjoyable yet effective for students. When learning to teach, we focus on classroom techniques and strategies, classroom management, and lesson planning, but many teachers simply do whatever seems right when it comes to homework assignments, with disregard to empirical evidence as to what is and is not effective. As new teachers, we are left only with our own past experiences regarding homework to guide us in assigning homework (Glawe, 2011, p. 23).

The debate over whether or not to assign homework to students has gone back and forth since the mid-nineteenth century with various school districts mandating homework minimums to completely eradicate homework altogether (Vatterott, 2009, pp. 1–10). The debate continues to this day, and the specific field of ESL is not immune to questioning the pros and cons of homework. Despite this long-standing debate, research on homework is somewhat limited (Cooper, 1989, p. 5). Homework pedagogy is commonly centered on institutional curriculum standards, or individual teacher’s own beliefs rather than research findings.

Homework has long been standard practice within education to reinforce and expand on classroom lectures and activities (Tam & Chan, 2016). Homework can be used to help students to learn vocabulary, grammar, improve test scores, develop good study habits, and become
self-regulated learners (Amiryousefi, 2016; Cooper et al., 2002; Fukuda & Yoshida, 2013; Tam & Chan, 2016). According to Amiryousefi (2016), proponents of homework credit homework by giving students more time to study and learn than the classroom can provide. Tam and Chan (2016) say that homework gives instructors insight into their students’ progress and shortcoming. Homework as an assessment tool can be very beneficial for teachers. Teachers are constantly monitoring each student’s progress and understanding of the subject matter during classroom hours, and checking homework increases teacher’s observation abilities. Homework is most effective when assigned by teachers who understand the benefits of homework, carefully assess the level of difficulty and potential benefits. An effective teacher must be able to assure that the assignment will appeal to their students (Bembenutty, 2011). In order to ensure that students benefit from doing homework, more training should be given to teachers on the specific subject of homework (González & Sánchez Núñez, 2017).

Tam and Chan (2016) argue against homework claiming that the detriments of homework outweigh the benefits. Students may feel overwhelmed by homework, or that it’s just a mundane task which must be completed every night, inducing more stress than learning outcomes (Kohn, 2006). Amiryousefi (2016) mentions that schools in China are reforming homework policies with an aim at inspiring students to learn and grow their knowledge, rather than spending hours every day on memorization and drilling. Likewise, Tam and Chan (2016) also state that homework assignments should be based on interesting tasks and activities that inspire students to learn. Kohn (2006) describes a common practice of teachers assigning homework not with a specific learning goal, but simply because they feel that the students should work on something outside of class. Glawe (2011) goes as far as saying that the stress caused by homework is the
root cause of many children’s sleepless nights and stress levels that are much higher than expected for children. Although homework can be seen as a stress-inducing, time-consuming activity, the majority of research shows a benefit to continued learning beyond standard class-time, and that the benefits of homework can be considered to be above average when compared to results of no homework (Cooper, 1989, p. 167). Perhaps the most significant and common negative effect of homework is the amount of time students must spend outside of class on homework.

In their study, E. González & Sánchez Núñez (2017) discovered that the students in their study spent about 113 minutes per day on hobbies and about 87 minutes per day on homework. Mojdehi & Bazargani (2018) found that students were willing to work harder and learn more when learning activities centered around their personal interests. Tam and Chan (2016) interviewed teachers and students to assess feelings about homework. They found that most teachers feel that homework is necessary to help students learn, but that they felt that a large number of their students did not put the necessary time or effort into completing their homework. Many students felt that homework took up too much time and that they would often neglect it. Amiryousefi (2016) had similar results in their study finding that the majority of teachers believed that homework was a necessary and important part of learning. Both of these studies agree that although homework may be beneficial, the benefits only arise when students actually do the homework.

Many studies have shown that more time spent on homework equates to better academic performance, but Cooper (1989, p. 93) points out that this correlation may simply be that good students do more homework; not that spending more time on homework makes for better
students. Flunger et al. (2017) showed that the amount of time spent on homework is not a valid indicator of the level of a student’s motivation to learn. Students have busy lives outside of school, but homework is assigned, sometimes with strict deadlines and students are either rewarded for completion or punished for not completing (Vatterott, 2009, p. 88). This system of grading doesn’t take into account the fact that different students work at different speeds, and a homework assignment that takes one student twenty minutes to complete may take another student several hours, yet classroom time is always consistent. This creates an unfair time commitment for different students. Vatterot (2009, p. 88) continues this thought with criticism of teachers’ expectation that students should arrange their personal schedules to ensure completion of homework assignments with disregard to the student’s personal responsibilities such as work, family or religious practices. This consideration is especially important in an ESL/EFL setting where students may be dealing with many complications in their personal lives, and school is only one part of that.

There are many reasons why students don’t complete their homework on a consistent basis. Damon (2017) claims that homework is time-consuming, can have little perceived value, and lacks qualified help or immediate feedback. Damon (2017) continues to state that sometimes students simply don’t like the format of their homework assignments; that different students prefer and learn better from completing different types of tasks. In their study, Mojdehi & Bazargani (2018) found a significant increase in motivation when students were given homework assignments that pandered to their individual interests, rather than a universal assignment for all students in the class.
Although there has been significantly less research aimed towards homework than classroom pedagogy, there has been some notable research on the topic. Research results on homework have varied from harmful to helpful (Cooper, 1989, p. 28). Despite the various results, most educators believe that there is a benefit derived from homework (Amiryousefi, 2016). By looking at individual students’ needs, teachers can develop more effective homework assignments (Mojdehi & Bazargani, 2018). Students’ time is important. Homework assignments should do more than absorb a student’s valuable time. One of the most common reasons that students don’t finish their homework is time constraints (Damon, 2017). With training focused on homework pedagogy, teachers can learn to assign more effective and engaging homework assignments.

**Speaking and Pronunciation Pedagogy**

Although written communication skills are important, the ultimate goal of many language learners is to be able to speak the target language (Lubis et al., 2018; Yükselir & Kömür, 2017). It is difficult, however, to incorporate ample speaking practice into curriculums that are often based on the goal of passing standardized tests. One solution to this is to include multimedia technologies to give more opportunities for speaking practice without interrupting existing curriculum goals and objectives.

There are a multitude of reasons for a person to learn English such as job opportunities, the pursuit of higher education, travel, refugee programs and survival in an English speaking community. Although written English is an important skill for most learners, oral communication is of utmost importance and also causes much anxiety for learners. Many English learners consider their speaking skills to be very weak, and their listening skills to be somewhat weak
(Coskun, 2009). Although intelligibility is of utmost importance, a language learner must also feel comfortable enough to speak out loud.

With practice comes confidence, but many classes don’t allocate adequate time to pronunciation or general speech practice (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014). Course designs that are more learner sensitive have been shown to increase confidence and motivation (Basco & Sang-Ho Han, 2016). By skipping over pronunciation sections in textbooks, instructors convey the message that pronunciation is not important. English instructors should emphasize the importance of pronunciation at a communicative level, and provide plentiful opportunities for students to practice (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014, p. 142). Time on task is an important determiner of potential language learning, but new studies show that quality of practice may be as important (Young & West, 2016, pp. 59–60). When used correctly, multi-media technologies can greatly benefit the quantity and quality of language practice.

As recently as the 1980’s ESL teachers’ only guidance for teaching speaking and pronunciation was simply what seemed right to the teacher. Little direction was given in textbooks; only including simple drills and minimal pairs exercises (Derwing & Munro, 2015, p.7). Many teachers felt underequipped and would avoid teaching pronunciation altogether, going as far as bypassing pronunciation lessons in textbooks and workbooks (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

There have been some interesting studies on ways to give learners more oral productive practice. In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in interest and implementation of technology for the purpose of language teaching (Yükselir & Kömür, 2017). Derwing & Munro (2015) opine that the most significant technological advancement in the last century that
helps with pronunciation was the tape recorder. Until this invention, ELLs only opportunity to hear English spoken was from their instructor. This limited students’ exposure to English to one voice. Today, we have digital recorders that can record nearly limitless numbers of recordings that can be saved and sorted in a way that makes it easy to access any specific recording. Videos can be created, edited and sent digitally via email using only a smartphone that many people now own or have access to. Students now have access to millions of videos on websites like Youtube.com, as well as broadcast and streaming services featuring movies and television shows. Most importantly, is that these audio and video files are not only available for students to hear and watch, but students can also create their own audio and video files for practice, assessment, or communication purposes. Mroz (2018) tasked a small group of ELLs with speaking into an Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) system such as that available in Google’s G-mail software that can turn spoken audio into text. By speaking into a voice recognition system using their own smartphone or computer, the students could watch their spoken words translated into text on the screen giving instant feedback as to whether their pronunciation was understood by the computer.

Sun (2012) used speaking voice-blogs to give students speaking practice. The gains found in this study were that students became more expressive in their speech, but did not show an improvement in pronunciation or language accuracy. The majority of the students in this study, however, did report increased confidence in speaking at the end of the study. Since confidence is an important component of speaking skills, this improvement alone makes this process beneficial. The studies by Mroz (2018) and Sun (2012) agree that increased speaking
practice can help students achieve their goals of English fluency or communicability in a
time-efficient manner.

Pereira et al. (2012) studied students using babelium.com. In this study, students would complete different tasks such as recording videos of themselves reading out loud and replacing English dialogue from movie clips with their own voice. The results of this study showed that students actually spent more time making these videos than they would have typically spent doing book-based homework, yet they didn’t feel like they were doing homework. These students had fun making these videos. In this study, Pereira et al. (2012) found that students benefited from the extra speaking practice and that instructors felt more informed of their students’ speaking skill level and progress.

Derwing & Munro (2015, p. 23) credits digital technologies for greatly expanding the possibilities for teaching pronunciation while pointing out that there are many benefits yet to be discovered. Young & West (2016) saw improvements in oral communication through the use of asynchronous multimedia communication practice, although they believe that more research is needed to ascertain what areas of oral language production can most benefit from it. The findings of Young & West (2016) however do suggest that asynchronous communication is not necessarily inferior to face to face practice.

Young and West (2016) found that many techniques were project-based, and included self-evaluation and revision activities. Research findings show that multimedia-based oral communication learning strategies increased the amount of time that students spent speaking English, and it also improved the quality of this practice.
Sun (2012) credits blogs as being useful tools for active, interactive, and collaborative communication. An online blogging environment provides learners an environment where they can find creative and dynamic ways to communicate while also giving and receiving feedback to and from other students (Sun, 2012). Since blogging can be an interactive learning tool, it encourages students to be more engaged in the learning process (Kleanthous & Cardoso, 2016). This process involves students writing, or recording audio/video blogs and posting to a shared server. Other students are encouraged to respond, which elicits responses again from the original poster, thus creating a complete feedback loop. Since students know that others will be reading, listening to, or watching their blog, they are more motivated to perform well and do their best (Kleanthous & Cardoso, 2016).

Technology is here to stay. The effects of social media, digital photography and video, and blogging can not be denied. If used correctly, these technologies can be utilized in ways to help students to learn and to feel more engaged in their learning experience.

With the common feeling by many English language learners that their speaking skills are the weakest of their English skills, it is apparent that ELLS need more speaking practice in their Curriculum. Many English language classes do not give students enough speaking and pronunciation practice to give them confidence or motivation to speak English in real world situations. Time on task is an important factor in learning, but quality of practice may be even more important. A large number of studies and experiments have been done, with positive results, using multimedia to provide this needed practice. By being able to listen to recording, watch videos, and create audio recording and videos of themselves students can get much more quality practice then they can get in a standard classroom environment. Creative uses such as
voice to text give students a way to actually see the words that they are speaking, in real time. Students tasked with creating voice blogs have shown an increase in confidence and expressiveness. By sharing these voice or video blogs with their peers, students can learn by responding and commenting on other entries. This, and other types of asynchronous multimedia communication has been shown to be effective, and may even be less stress inducing than real-time communication. All of these studies have shown that the use of technology in the form of recording, and sharing of language skills can be beneficial in an English language learning environment, and there seems to be a wide range of creative approaches to this, many of which have not yet been discovered.

**Experiential Learning Theory**

A quote often credited to Benjamin Franklin, “tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve and I learn”, quickly summarizes the concept of experiential learning. There are many variations of this quote throughout different time periods and cultures, and although the actual origin of this quote is up for debate, the idea remains true to Experiential Learning Theory as summarized by Kolb (1984). Although experience is at the core of ELT, Kolb (1984) explains that experience is only part of the learning process; that the experience is preceded by exposure to new information, and is followed by a conscious observation and review of the experience. Lubis et al. (2018, p. 130) state that students feel more motivated to participate in experiential tasks, knowing that they will share their experiences with other students when the task is complete. In other words, the experience is more beneficial when observed, reviewed, and shared.
A trend in educational research centers around incorporating social media into language instruction. Kleanthous & Cardoso (2016) used blogging as a way for students to practice written English skills to comment on the content of the classroom activities, and to comment on each other’s comments as well, opening up a dialog discussion using and practicing written English. In this study, the instructor was able to compare the early writings of each student, with later writings. A noticeable improvement was made with most students over the course of the semester using these techniques. Shih (2012) also used blogging to encourage learning stating that e-learning is a cost-effective way of teaching, while also increasing convenience by removing geographical barriers. Shih (2012) found that since many students were accustomed to commenting on social media posts, that incorporating online commenting into an ESL instruction was an easy transition for students, linking something they spend time doing in their first language, but now using English instead. The experience of blogging and commenting in English leads to successful learning by simulating real-life experience, as opposed to completing lessons in a workbook, which although helpful to learning, is not related to any kind of real-life experience.

Seilstad (2012) points out that although there are many online resources for English learners, there are not yet clear pedagogies for teachers to utilize those resources effectively. Because of this, Seilstad (2012) promotes a hybrid learning experience, combining classroom instruction with media and materials that can be accessed online. Chen (2013) promotes experiential learning in a way that places the teaching in a collaborative role alongside their students, as opposed to only lecturing and instructing. Chen (2013) states that when students discover new knowledge through experience, that they obtain a sense of achievement in finding
that knowledge, and therefore the new knowledge is maintained more so than simply reading a book. In this study, Chen (2013) instructed students to watch a video of their own choosing on Youtube, and then describe the video to the class in English. Since these students were allowed to choose a video that interested them, the learning process incorporated their own interests into their language learning. In this study by Chen (2013), the findings showed that while students benefited from the video description activity, it was difficult to manage the teacher-collaborator role with the students.

Philominraj et al. (2018) drew a connection between intelligence and experience, claiming that the two are mutually connected. Reyes-Chua (2013) looked closely at experiential learning in her research study, describing experiential learning as the development of new concepts through new experiences. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation are the key factors of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Reyes-Chua, 2013). Although Reyes-Chua (2013) achieved successful results while teaching through experiential learning, limitations were found in the topics that could be taught through experience, and that there was inconsistency with the influence of each student's previous experiences and the way that they interacted with the experience in the assignments. Because of all of these findings, it would reason that experience with speaking would be extremely beneficial to language learning, and speaking practice is an activity that is given limited time in many ESL classrooms (Sun, 2012; Young & West, 2016).

In the study performed by Kleanthous & Cardoso (2016), a noticeable improvement in writing skills was observed at the end of a semester in which blogging was used as a method for English writing practice. This study also offered opportunities for students to upload audio
recordings of speaking samples. Only about one-third of the students in this study opted to upload audio. With limited samples, results could not be determined; concluding that more samples would be needed to assess the effectiveness. Chen (2013) found favorable learning results when researching pedagogies that place the teacher in a collaborative role, working with students to create short videos that showcase their language skills. Although the results of this study were positive, the challenge faced was more cultural, in that many students feel like a teacher should be more of an authoritarian leader, than a collaborator.

Summary

Numerous studies, many more than can be referenced here, have shown the effectiveness of homework for learners of a multitude of subjects. Although some studies have shown that homework can cause stress, and anxiety in some students, the benefits still remain. To avoid the stress-inducing effects of homework, assignments should be enjoyable for students, and the benefits should be transparent to students. It seems that homework is a practice that is here to stay, but the method in which teachers design homework assignments has much room for improvement. Another area of English language pedagogy that can be improved is in speaking practice. With limited classroom time, many teachers struggle to give students enough exposure to speaking English. Many teachers know that their students need more speaking practice, but the methodologies aren’t yet created. Modern advancements in digital technology are creating many new ways to allow students to record their speech, to listen to recorded audio or video from other students, teachers, and movie and television clips. Multimedia technology is giving teachers new ways of teaching that were previously not even dreamed of. To complete the solution to more effective homework assignments, and using multimedia technology, we finally look at
Experiential Learning Theory to bring these ideas together. Research has shown that people learn better from experience. Using multimedia in a way that allows students to experience language and then share that experience with their peers will allow students to enjoy their learning experience while increasing their language skills.
CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Brief Description of the Project

This field project consists of a slide-show supported presentation intended to be used as a workshop presentation at ESL conferences such as TESOL, CATESOL and other conferences and learning symposiums for teachers of English to speakers of other languages. The presentation is designed to appeal to teachers of all levels and from different types of educational institutions from community-based non-credit schools to college level; even tutors can benefit from this presentation. The presentation walks teachers through a hands-on workshop to learn how to develop homework assignments that utilize student-created short videos.

The theoretical framework for the material taught in this presentation is Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), as written by Kolb in 1984. I chose this theoretical framework as the basis of this project because I felt that it works for both the instructional modalities of this program, as well as the method of teaching the workshop presentation itself. The teaching method taught uses ELT to guide the student experience through four main steps. These four steps represent a progression that doesn’t end after the last step, but instead, the learner takes what was learned to start the process anew.

Although any step along the sequence can be viewed as the first step, I will simplify by starting with the concrete experience itself. This first step involves students having an experience, in this case shooting a short video in which they speak aloud about the images being videoed. This experience is a departure from typical homework assignments in that students can complete the experience at any time, at home, at work, on campus, in a park, etc. The students
are encouraged to be continuously aware of the assignment throughout their day, thus encouraging them to think about their English assignments and think about their surroundings in English. This step of concrete experience can be referred to as the *do* phase since this is the step where the students actually do something.

Once the experience has been done, the next step is known as *reflective observation*. In the context of this homework assignment system, this step involves reviewing the student’s videos. By watching the videos, students relive the experience, thus bringing back their memories of the experience itself. Students may note areas of improvement as well as take pride in successes. Students will watch videos done by other students as well. Watching other videos will simulate the experience captured in that video for all of the students watching. This step isn’t intended to analyze the content, but simply to watch, observe, and relive the experience. Further analysis is held for the next step of *abstract conceptualization*.

*Abstract conceptualization*, which can be more easily referred to as the *think* phase is when conclusions and learning opportunities can be realized. A teacher using this system can now delve deeper into the content of the videos looking for common errors and mistakes that can be corrected, exhibiting well-done videos as good examples, and examining entertaining or creative videos to maintain a level of fun in the classroom. This *thinking* phase aims to bring academic relevance to the *doing* experience. This phase can provide a rich and complete lesson plan, or it can be a quick review with only a few relevant points. However deeply the teacher decides to delve into this phase, there should be one more significant learning takeaway that students can carry forward into future lessons. These takeaways will carry through to the final phase of the ELT process.
The final step, before returning to the first step, is *active experimentation*, also known as the *plan* phase. In this phase, the teacher should guide students in speaking practice using the videos as support. At this time several videos will have been viewed and discussed, so students' knowledge should be activated. The teacher can replay a video with the sound muted, or pausing at specific moments, and call on students to speak about the objects on the screen. This phase of ELT gives students an opportunity to digest all of the material, learning from each other’s videos and the teacher’s lectures and instruction. This experimentation will give students confidence for their next concrete experience.

These phases will cycle over and over, continuously building upon each other. The concrete experience is reviewed, learned from, synthesized for future use, and then another concrete experience, and so on.

These steps will be outlined and reviewed in this presentation, but also incorporated into how the material is presented. I will guide participants through a hands-on introductory video-creation activity to provide a concreted experience for the participants. After this, we will review some of the videos, as outlined in the steps of ELT. During the abstract conceptualization phase, we will discuss what we’ve learned so far from the experience. And finally, in the *active experimentation* phase, the workshop group will discuss how students will be able to apply what they have learned towards the next assignment, and also how the work-shop participants may be able to begin to apply this system to their own teaching.

After discussing Experiential Learning Theory, and how it can be applied to student-created video homework assignments, the participants will engage in a series of concrete experiences. Participants will work in groups to design an outline of a classroom lesson plan for
a specified level of students. Most participants will be very familiar with this process, but the
more important part of this process is to create a homework assignment based on what has been
discussed so far. A discussion of this process will give participants an opportunity for reflective
observation, learning from what they have already done, and hearing what others have done.

The participants will now teach their lesson to another group and also be taught a lesson
by that group. This is a concrete experience that will be discussed later during the presentation.
Once lessons have been exchanged between groups the participants will be free to leave the
presentation and wander around creating videos. They will be given about fifteen minutes to
complete their videos before returning to the presentation room. The groups that taught each
other will spend about ten minutes reviewing what the videos that they made (reflective
observation). This will be followed by a group discussion of the process (abstract
conceptualization) where participants can share any observations, concerns, or questions. The
discussion will continue into active experimentation as we discuss some of the possible
applications of student-created video as homework assignments.

To round out the presentation I will point out some of the benefits of this system as
discovered through my research. I’ll also discuss some limitations and possible blockers that
teachers may encounter when incorporating this system such as programs that are designed to
help students to pass standardized testing, as well as cultural expectations of homework and
resistance to experimental pedagogies. I will also briefly discuss some software tools that will
allow teachers to organize and archive videos that are submitted by their students, while also
giving students an easy and secure place to upload their videos.
This presentation will teach how to design homework assignments that will utilize student-created videos with an underlying theoretical framework of Experiential Learning Theory. The presentation also follows the steps of ELT to further emphasize the significance of this theory and to show how easy it can be to provide a concrete experience, observe and reflect on that experience, learn from the details of the experience, and then use it to plan for the next experience. Participants in this workshop will leave with knowledge and ideas to incorporate student-created video homework assignments into their own teaching environment.

**Development of the Project**

The development of this project was done with both students’ and teachers’ needs in mind. In my limited experience with teaching English, I have consistently observed a lack of homework compliance. I have had the opportunity to do in-class observations of some very good teachers. One teacher would typically assign students to write in a journal to be turned in weekly. Another teacher would assign sections of the book that weren’t covered in class as a way to “save time.” These teachers were really great at classroom instruction. They interacted with students, inspiring them to participate and experiment. About twenty percent of the students that were assigned to write a journal turned in a journal, and of those, some only wrote a few sentences. The teacher that assigned activities from the workbook didn’t check to see if students completed the assignments. The assignments would be reviewed in class, and I observed many students writing in the answers as the teacher reviewed the answers.
It's hard not to notice when students access their smartphones in class. Social media is a powerful force. Noticing this, along with my observations lead me to begin thinking about why social media is so attractive to students, while homework is such an avoidance. I questioned where these two could meet in the middle. There has already been a lot of research and work done regarding the incorporation of blogging within an ESL curriculum, and some research has been done with utilizing video technologies as well. Homework has traditionally been under-researched, and the teachers that I’ve observed show that homework is often overlooked; not seen as part of the lesson plan, but assigned at the last minute with little thought toward hopeful outcomes. I wanted to find a way for students to use the familiar camera technology on their smartphones to complete homework assignments, in a way that wouldn’t feel like a tedious memorization based time-consuming task. Finally, I settled on the idea of students creating videos as their homework assignments.

Once I settled on this concept, the pieces started to fall into place. I surmised that this type of assignment could be worked on at any time. Not only does this solve the problem of students lacking adequate time to complete difficult homework assignments, but it also opens up the students’ learning environment. When learning is only done in the classroom, and perhaps at a workspace at home, then the concepts and skills learned can sometimes be relegated to those locations. A student may be very confident in the classroom, but in the real world, the knowledge slips away. With the homework assignments that I’m outlining, a student will be encouraged to think about the current assignment throughout their entire day. Inspiration can strike at any time, not just during designated homework time. This can help break students out of environmental blocks.
Many ESL classes struggle with providing enough speaking practice for students to become comfortable with speaking English, especially in classes that don’t focus on speaking or conversational skills. I have yet to become aware of a homework assignment that gives students speaking practice. A teacher may assign students to talk to somebody outside of class, but there isn’t a way to observe this; there is no follow up. My homework system gives students regular speaking practice. Students that are perfectionists, and want to get their videos “just right,” will only be getting even more practice and they shoot and reshoot videos over and over. As students get more speaking practice, the teachers involved will also have an opportunity to truly observe the students’ performance.

The possibility of observation was a big inspiration for this project. ESL teachers know that there are many ways to observe and assess their students’ progress. Test scores, class participation, and assignment completion all give teachers insight into their students’ progress. While daily observation is very valuable for teachers, only test scores given throughout the semester give insight into progress. Progress tracking through test performance, however, can be misleading. Some students are better at taking tests than others. A student may become more comfortable with taking tests over time so what may look like progress in English language skills, may only represent progress in taking tests. By assigning students to create videos as homework, a teacher will have access to an archive of videos for each student. By viewing videos completed at different times of the semester, a teacher can see and listen to a student’s progress by observing pronunciation, sentence length, use of varying vocabulary, and confidence in speaking. A video archive of student performance is much more effective and accurate than the teacher’s memory. Teachers may find that even struggling students have made improvements
in certain areas, while also identifying trouble areas that can use more work and practice. In addition to the observation of standard skills, teachers may also see an increase in students’ creativity.

Creativity was another factor in developing this project. I feel that when a language learner is able to be creative when using a new language, that learning will embed deeper into their permanent abilities. I have long believed that the use of humor in a language being learned marks a turning point in the learner. The use of humor in a target language signifies a higher level of language use. With this in mind, I wanted to create a project that allowed for creativity. My presentation encourages teachers who use this system to allow for creative language use. Homework assignments can have open-ended objectives. Rather than practice specific vocabulary by repeating a specific sentence, students will have tasks such as describing their favorite outfit or to talk about their favorite meal. Students may be tasked with describing their commute to work, or their morning routine. Even when practicing something like irregular verbs, an open-ended task can allow for much more creativity than a fill-in-the-blanks worksheet. While creativity will not typically be required, the use of open-ended objectives will allow for plenty of creativity. For example, if the assignment is to describe one’s kitchen, a student may instead make a joke about not cooking and instead give a short tour of a neighborhood diner. As long as a video is done with spoken narration, the task should be considered complete.

Early in the development of this project, I had all of these ideas, but I didn’t know what to do with them. Early on in the brainstorming process, I thought I may partner with an existing class in which I could implement this system. The logistics of that was impossible without a true buy-in from a teacher. In hindsight, the decision not to partner with a class was the right choice
as the COVID-19 pandemic caused massive school closures about halfway through this current semester. I also thought about creating a guidebook that would give guidelines and example lesson plans based on common chapter topics in ESL textbooks. This idea seemed limited, and the format of communication is only one way with a booklet. Although I would do plenty of research, I felt that my limited experience would leave a book with many shortcomings in knowledge. It was finally decided to share these thoughts and related research as a workshop presentation with the intention to present at TESOL and other similar ESL teaching conferences. This format allows for discussion between me as the presenter and the participants, who will likely represent a wide range of experience levels. These discussions will allow for this project to grow and evolve over time. The completion of this project is only the beginning of something that will continue to grow and improve over time.

As I began to develop this presentation, I had many ideas and benefits, but I had little direction as to how to present these ideas. I began with a straightforward lecture, walking participants through how to support vocabulary instruction with this system, and then grammar, and then reading, etc. Although I could be thorough with this method, it left no room interactive participation. It felt wrong giving instruction to a group of teachers with more experience than me. Through discussions with my instructor, it became apparent that the presentation should be more a workshop, rather than a lecture. A workshop would allow participants to exchange ideas, and to work together to solve this problem. It also allowed me as the presenter to be less of an expert, and more of a supplier of inspiration, using my research and limited experience to actively work through the problem-solving process of creating a homework assignment that supports classroom lessons by having students create short videos. The workshop format allows
me to simply guide the participants, but to use the collective experience of the participants to develop materials.

As I worked on the second draft of my presentation, now with a more focused direction of a workshop, I decided to incorporate the merits of Experiential Learning Theory into my presentation. In general, most hands-on workshops will fall under the guidelines of ELT, but I chose to make it clear that the same theory driving the principles of the presentation, are also driving the presentation itself, thus showing the effectiveness of ELT.

I feel confident that this presentation will be a success once public gatherings are once again allowed and encouraged. I believe that I have balanced this presentation with a theoretical lecture, hands-on experience, and group discussion. The aim of the presentation is not to give absolute specific guidelines, but to bring these ideas into teachers’ existing teaching activities.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

As the English language continues to grow as an international language of business, academics, science, government, and travel, more people than ever are motivated to learn English. English learners encompass a wide range of learning backgrounds from first-time learners both young and elderly to learners who study English as part of their standard public education curriculum.

Traditional homework assignments simply do not capture the interest and attention of busy students. Many ESL pedagogies do not fully utilize the possibilities of homework and students respond accordingly. When little effort is given by the teacher into homework design, then little attention is given by the students to complete the homework. Typical homework assignments are often merely memorization tasks that do not take advantage of creative thought or the unique personalities and needs of each student. When students are uninspired by their school-work, they often turn to their smartphones and social media as a more entertaining distraction. This leaves teachers competing with social media for their students’ attention. Because of such distractions, and lack of motivation, a lot of homework is left undone. This is especially true in the field of ESL.

Another part of the problem being addressed is the lack of adequate speaking practice. Some learners may prioritize written English, such as those who wish to publish academic papers, but the majority of English learners, no matter what their goals, must acquire skill and confidence to speak English. Unfortunately, many English classes do not provide students with
adequate speaking practice. An important part of any learning goal is practice and time on task. Since classroom time is limited, out-of-class practice or homework is key to providing more time on task. Outside of ESL classes that specifically focus on speaking, it is difficult or even impossible to give students the amount of speaking practice that they need to succeed during class time alone. Teachers simply do not have time to sit down with each and every student to focus on speaking skills. The common solution to this is to have students speak with each other, but proper feedback is minimal in this solution since the teacher only has enough time to spend a brief moment checking in with each student, or group of students. Students need more speaking practice, but classroom time is limited. Students need to be motivated to do homework, but homework pedagogies are limited. My project aims to solve these issues with student-created videos as homework assignments, which will be more motivating for them to do and will provide a large increase in speaking practice.

The purpose of this project is to provide training and a venue for brainstorming ways to use student-created and narrated videos as homework assignments that will support the current classroom goals and objectives. The presentation connected to this project will give background and insights into the pros and cons of homework before giving the participants hands-on experience with creating a homework assignment as well as hands-on experience with completing this type of assignment so that they have a better understanding of what they are asking from their students. The whole presentation is centered around the concepts of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). While many teachers may have learned about ELT at some point in their journey towards becoming a teacher, I feel that revisiting education-related theoretical frameworks is always beneficial. I have seen ELT play a large role in job training, but
it is often overlooked as an effective educational tool. Providing students with a real-life concrete experience can be difficult or impossible in a classroom, but by moving that experience into a homework setting, students can experience the language as a real-life experience. After participating in this workshop, teachers will be much better equipped to create compelling homework assignments that their students will have fun completing.

This project has several areas of significance. The primary significance is to encourage students to complete their homework by making homework fun, and significant to a learner’s familiar home, work, or neighborhood environment. Research shows that out-of-class study and practice add to learners’ progress in almost all learning subjects. Time on task is a big factor in learning (Slama et al., 2017), but requiring students to spend valuable time in their already busy lives filling in blanks, and doing memorization drills can be detrimental to a students satisfaction level even if these tasks have shown improvement in learning levels.

The homework assignments that are outlined in this project are meant to be fun, and less time consuming than traditional homework assignments. A student may not have time to sit down and complete a worksheet or read a passage in a book, but they always have time to pull out their camera to shoot and narrate a short video. Inspiration may strike a student at any time of their day. This is not only easier on the student’s schedule, but it also mimics a real-life use of language. Language doesn’t just happen during class and during homework time; language happens all day everywhere you go. With a list of target vocabulary or concepts at hand, students will be aware and seek solutions to these targets throughout their normal lives between class meetings.
Many educators believe that homework is necessary for students’ success, yet many teachers focus the majority of their efforts on classroom lesson plans and activities, and little or no time on homework lesson planning. Debates over homework are often based on whether or not teachers should assign homework or how much homework to assign, but little discussion is focused on what homework assignments should focus on or what kind of activities should be practiced during homework. Many teachers work very hard to make the classroom learning environment fun and creative. Students are inspired to participate, and they enjoy going to a fun class with fun group activities and learning through tactile, kinesthetic, auditory, and visual stimulus. Homework rarely gets this much attention. When homework is left as an afterthought, not pre-planned by the teacher, students get bored with the assignments that typically focus on book-work. Students may lose inspiration and decide to only partially complete their homework, or not do it at all. Some teachers give no consequences for not completing homework, while other teachers deduct points, which can be hard or impossible for a student to make up. This sort of consequence can cause a student to give up as they calculate their total points and realize that they can not catch up no matter how hard they try.

Much of the training that teachers receive is focused on classroom techniques, but little focus is spent on homework. Teachers need more guidance and instruction regarding homework assignment design. Another significant factor is the amount of speaking practice that students will get through the homework assignments that I have described. Knowing that some students may not be happy with their first try at a video; multiple takes on the same subject will provide even more speaking practice than getting it right the first time. While some ESL classes focus on
speaking, many classes don’t have the ability to provide students with enough teacher-monitored speaking practice to truly succeed.

A primary significance to teachers is that they will have an archive of videos from each student, allowing them to compare videos done early in the semester with those done later. Improvement, successes, and areas of struggle can be identified for each student or the class as a whole. This level of observation can not be achieved with typical in-class observation or test score comparisons. Part of the ELT process is to observe. This step will involve reviewing some or all of the current videos as a class. The teacher can choose which videos to show as examples to support the teaching topic and goals.

My project will provide teachers with the tools to solve these problems. By showing how almost any subject matter or target language can be reinforced with video homework assignments, teachers will have a way to challenge and inspire their students. Since this project contains a workshop presentation with plenty of time for discussion among the participants, improvements can be made to the presentation with every instance of presentation.

Recommendations

The system that I’m presenting here may not work in every learning environment. Schools that must focus on standardized testing may have trouble implementing this system which may seem experimental when students must be preparing for a standardized test. In classes where communicability is of high concern, then this system will be hugely beneficial.

This project would be most beneficial to community-based non-credit classes, and refugee transition classes. These types of classes generally have more open-ended goals of
communicability and survival English. Learners in these classes simply want to learn to understand English and to be understood when they speak English. These homework assignments may provide a fun and easy homework assignment after a long day of learning to read and write English. Assignments for classes like these may focus on identifying real-life objects using proper vocabulary and complete sentences. If students are interested in learning life-skills in an unfamiliar English speaking community, then the teacher may choose to create homework assignments that encourage students to create and narrate videos that describe life-skill events like ordering at a restaurant or describing their bus route to school. Many classes like this teach these skills through book work, or even watching pre-produced videos, but this would give them a chance to actually try their language out in the real world, and get their teacher’s feedback on how they did. A teacher may even choose to have students work on the same subject matter for weeks at a time, making improvements with each iteration. For example, a traditional way to elicit spoken or written language is to ask a learner to describe their day. A teacher may have students describe their day as a video. Then after a week of instruction, and learning new vocabulary and improving grammar, the students would again describe their day. The teacher can see if new vocabulary is being put to use or if other improvements are being made. By the end of the semester, students would have an archive of videos that all describe their day, but each video would become progressively more complex, nuanced and expressive.

This project can also benefit speaking and conversational ESL classes. In-class work and homework can work hand in hand. Videos done as homework can provide topics for discussion during class, which would then inspire the next set of videos, and so on. With speaking practice
both in class and as homework, these students would surely enjoy great progress in confidence and skill level.

With some very minor modifications, this project can also be used to support ESL classes that focus on reading and writing. For homework, students could read a passage as a video. To combine writing and reading, the student could complete a writing assignment, and then read it on camera. Some students may decide to re-write and re-video these passages, which provides extra practice in both skills. Once complete, the teacher would be able to compare the students written work, with the narrated video (or audio-only). Combining these skill sets in this way, I believe, would greatly advance the student’s abilities.

In multiple skills classes that have standardized testing concerns, this project could be used only occasionally. Rather than this be the standard nightly or weekly homework task, it could instead be a task done at the beginning of the semester, at the mid-term, and at the end. This would be less of a homework replacement, and more of a way for students to share their voice, and show the teacher a little bit of their personality. I point this out mainly in support of using student-created videos to support English language learning.

Pronunciation classes would find great benefit in this project. Instead of vocabulary based targets or other open-ended targets, students may be tasked to pronounce minimal pairs in complete sentences, or to pronounce difficult words, etc. The student-created videos could be in direct support of classroom activities giving students more time on task, and the teacher a way to monitor progress. The teacher can benefit from listening to students’ pronunciation outside of the pressures of class, and note if there are differences between in-class and out-of-class pronunciation skills.
Many software tools are available to support this project. To be successful, a teacher needs to have a safe, secure way for students to upload videos for the teacher to view. The privacy of students should be of utmost concern. Software titles such as Instructure, which is offered as part of the very familiar Canvas system is perhaps one of the most ubiquitous and familiar tools. Others include Kaltura, Panopto, Echo 360, OpenCast, Yuja, and VidGrid. These tools provide video sharing capabilities, but not all offer all of the tools needed right out of the box. VidGrid is my recommended software as it provides an easy upload portal for students to upload their videos. They can even shoot videos directly in the software. Once uploaded, the teacher can easily identify the student who created it, and then sort and organize the videos in any way the teacher wants. The teacher can then use the tool to pick and choose videos to show in class. One interesting option offered in some tools in transcription. The software can listen to the voice on the video and transcribe it into text. This would provide another level of comprehension check, assuming that if the computer can correctly understand, then a human listener would also understand.

This project can be used in many ways and with different levels of frequency. The benefits and adaptability show that this project can benefit many teachers of different levels of English teaching in many different ways. The use of student-created narrated videos delivered within the structure of Experiential Learning Theory to create fun and effective homework assignments can be used in many ways to help many students achieve their goals faster, and with less stress.
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**APPENDIX**

Presentation Slides for the Project

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**Homework That They Will Do:**

**Student-Created Videos**

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**Agenda**

- Overview of Objectives
- Discussion: Pros and Cons of Homework
- History and Theory
- Hand-on Experience - I
- Experiential Learning
- Strategies
- Lesson Plan Activity
- Hands-on Experience - II
- Limitations
- Tools/Software
- Significance & Applications
- Questions and Answers

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This is a hands-on workshop designed to give ESL/EFL teachers experience and knowledge in creating homework lesson plans centered around student-created video and experiential learning.

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**Homework That They Will Do:**

**Student-Created Videos**

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A hands-on workshop for creating fast, effective, fun homework assignments centered around student-created videos
Objectives

Stop losing the battle against social media, and get your students to do their homework

Get hands on experience creating a video-homework assignment

Experience the student perspective
History & Theory

• **Homework - to do or not to do?**
  
  • Some say no...
    
    • School district wide homework ban?
      
      • Improve students’ lives
      
      • Stress, anxiety, depression
      
      • More time for personal relationships
The Problem

- Homework is necessary to achieve goals but it causes stress, & consumes time.
- Easy going teachers don’t enforce homework
  - Students lose out
- Tough teachers punish students for not finishing
  - Students feel stress

The Problem

- Homework is boring and time consuming
- Mostly reading & writing
- Too much memorization
- Doesn’t mimic real-life language use
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Examples

- Listen for vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence length, grammar, etc.

- Take notes while watching/listening

- Encourage asking questions within the video
Hands on Experience!

- Use your own smartphone
- Work solo, with a partner, or in a small group
- Shoot videos in selfie or normal point of view

Hands on Experience!

- Study the list
- When you find something that fits the list:
  - Shoot a video or selfie video of the object or action
  - Use complete sentences to talk out-loud about the image
  - Upload the file to:....
List of Goals

- Introduce yourself
- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- What is your favorite food?
- Your favorite color; video a thing that is your favorite color - talk about it
- Talk about the weather
- What are you wearing?

Email or Airdrop to g*****@gmail.com and come back to your seats

Concrete Experience

Do

- Targets can be straight forward or open ended
- Unexpected discovery
- Multiple targets to keep in mind
- Creative expression and experimentation
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience (doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation (planning / trying out what you have learned)

Abstract Conceptualisation (concluding / learning from the experience)

Reflective Observation (reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Let’s see what you did!
Review some or all participant-created videos

Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)
Reflective Observation

Observe

- Review some or all videos depending on time
- Re-live the experience through watching and discussing
- Good videos are good, but...
  - Videos with shortcomings provide learning opportunities

Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(designing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Abstract Conceptualization

Think

- Process what has been seen
- How can it be expanded/improved?
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses
- Discuss the subject
Experiential Learning Theory

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Active Experimentation

Plan

- Applying what has been learned to the next assignment
- Students will learn by watching other’s videos. Use this to plan for next assignment.
- Connect previous assignment to the next assignment.
Experiential Learning Theory

**Do**
Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

**Plan**
Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

**Think**
Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding / learning from the experience)

**Observe**
Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

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**Strategies**

**Grammar**

- *To be* verbs
- Irregular verbs
Strategies

Grammar

• *To be* verbs

• Irregular verbs

Where are you?
What are you doing?
Where is your friend or spouse?
Where were you yesterday?
Specific verbs from current chapter

Talk about things using these verbs in the past tense:
- To write
- To go
- To drive
- To buy
Strategies

Vocabulary

- Nouns
- Verbs

Talk about things can you list in your kitchen?
Find a tree. Describe it.
Find a red car. Describe it.
Talk about your favorite fruit.
**Strategies**

**Vocabulary**
- Nouns
- Verbs

How do you get to work/school?
- What are you good at doing?
  - Talk about walking.
  - Talk about cooking.

**Strategies**

**Other Skills**
- Reading practice
- Speaking classes

Read a news article out loud (student selected or teacher selected)
- Song lyrics
- Poetry
Strategies

Other Skills

- Reading practice
- Speaking classes

Minimal pairs used in given sentences.

Minimal pairs used in ‘real life’ situations

Make an argument in favor/against a topic.

Lesson Design

Keep in mind...

- Current topic/subject of study
- Hopeful outcomes
  - Are targets specific or open ended?
  - Complete sentences are always better
- Workload
  - Number of items?
Small Group Activity

- Create an outline of a lesson plan based on your topic
  - How would you approach this topic in class?
  - Keep in mind the learning level

- Create a student-created video homework assignment that supports your lesson plan
  - Number of targets?
  - Specific or open ended?

Discussion

- How was your experience with going from topic to lesson plan to homework assignment?

- What do you want your students to get out of this?

- What do you think your students might do?
Small Group Activity - (continued)

- Each group will either be Group A or Group B
- Group A - Teach your lesson to Group B
  - Define student level
  - Overview of in class lesson/topics
  - Assign and give instruction for homework assignment
- Switch - Group B teach to Group A

Small Group Activity - (continued)

10-15 minutes to make your own videos

- Use one group member’s phone to shoot videos for the group
- Send videos to gr******@gmail.com
- Return when done for review
Small Group Activity - (continued)

Find your partner group

• Share your videos with your “teachers”
• View your “students” videos
• Be ready for classroom discussion

Discussion

• Lesson creation
• Doing the lesson
• Reviewing the videos
Limitations

- Will your school be OK with this?
- Technology availability
- Technology learning curve
- Issues of privacy - students and others
- “Public” reaction

Tools

- Streamlined interface for video capture, management, and playback
- Seamless integration with Canvas, Blackboard, and other LMSs through LTI
- Interactive video elements (e.g., multiple-choice quizzes, open-ended questions)
- Multiple options for closed captioning (machine, professional, SRT/VTI)
Significance

For the students
- Fun, easy
- Less time commitment/do any time
- Speaking practice
- Experience language in natural environment

For teachers
- Observable performance/progress
- Leads to fun, productive discussions

Benefits
- Allows students to get creative
- Speaking practice
- Teachers can observe progress by looking at previous videos
- Teachers can recognize widespread difficulties
- Reviewing videos is a great way to create community in the class
- Reviewing videos is a great lecture tool for discussion
Applications

- Community based / non-credit institutions that focus on survival English and communicability
- Great for teaching common vocabulary
  - Vocabulary used with complete sentences has a secondary focus of grammar
- Anywhere that speaking practice is needed

How to apply to your classes

- Daily, weekly, occasionally, only as extra credit?
- Directly support in class lessons, or secondary focuses
Questions

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