Sharing Classroom Video for Teacher Development

Clair TAYLOR, John SPIRI, Jun NAGAO

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Abstract

On the one hand, university faculty are expected to engage in professional development throughout their working lives (Borko, et al. 2008). On the other hand, there are not a great many opportunities to interact with colleagues throughout the day (Boon, 2005). In many cases, very little is known about what takes place in a colleague's classroom. Surely, educators can benefit from observing each other, especially when they teach at the same institution or even the same program. Sharing a video of a class activity is one way to open the classroom doors and engage in professional development. Putnam and Borko (2000) wrote about the importance of interactions with the people in your environment to the process of learning and development. In this project, three university teachers met regularly to share and discuss video clips of their classes. The teachers reflected on their classes, shared activities, techniques, and materials, and discussed pedagogy. Analysis of notes made after the meetings indicated that this practice supported teacher development in a number of distinct ways, fostering an increasing sense of trust and openness between the members of the project group.

1. Introduction

University faculty, to a great extent, work in isolation (Boon, 2005). University faculty members rarely, if ever, get the opportunity to observe a colleague's classroom interactions. Most of the non-teaching day is spent in a private office. Interactions may occasionally occur in offices, common areas, or at meetings, but these exchanges do not shed much light on what occurs in the classrooms of colleagues. In short, faculty members generally know little about each other's teaching styles, approaches and methodologies even though they may work in the same department and teach some of the same classes.

One of the authors of this study, John, was experiencing this state of isolation in his work as a lecturer at Gifu Shotoku Gakuen University, a small private university in Gifu, Japan. John is the only native English speaker in the department of education. Moreover, there are no common syllabi for the classes that he teaches; each teacher is expected to design and plan their own courses, working individually. Even John's classroom materials are created in isolation, as he utilizes self-published textbooks, and he has created or adapted many of the supplementary activities. Thus, John felt the desire to hold his own methods up to scrutiny, and to observe the methods of colleagues and compare them, in order to refine his own methods. John was also concerned about finding ways to handle uncooperative students. Since starting to teach at the university in 2011, he had, at times, struggled to keep

overly talkative students focused and classroom management was an issue. It seemed to John that the best place to turn for advice and sharing was to those who were dealing with the same or similar students at the same institution. Thus, he approached his colleagues with the suggestion of starting a teacher development project, using classroom video as a springboard for discussion. Two colleagues, Jun (a native speaker of Japanese, who had just begun teaching in the department of foreign languages) and Clair (a native speaker of English, who had also just started teaching in the department of foreign languages), took up the invitation to join the project team.

We, as teacher-researchers, planned to document the project, with the aim of exploring the benefits that this practice might bring to our ongoing professional development and working lives. We anticipated that interaction between Japanese and native speaker English teachers might contrast different approaches and be mutually beneficial. We also hoped that through participating in this project we could develop good working relationships and achieve a greater sense of integration with our institution.

This paper will first discuss the use of peer observation and the use of classroom video for teacher development before describing the project and its findings.

2. Peer observation

2.1 Direct peer observation

One way to learn more about the teaching styles of colleagues is to observe their classes. Nyugen (2013) noted that classroom observations:

   •allow teachers to see other's teaching styles and reflect on their practices,

   •bring about positive changes in classroom learning for students,

   •when done with care and professionalism, can strengthen relationships among teachers in schools.

Russell (2013) also maintains that observing a colleague's class and meeting for a post-class discussion are very useful professional development practices. He emphasizes that the meetings should be voluntary and reciprocal, and the focus should be on what the observer learned rather than what the teacher did not do effectively. Most peer observation programs lean towards the latter, with a person of authority judging the teacher.

One of the writers of this paper, John, experienced a classroom observation program at a university in Akita, Japan that can be considered "summative" because it assumes an evaluative purpose (Huy, 2013). Colleagues were instructed to evaluate each other on various measures, and the evaluation was designed to be an aspect of each faculty member's evaluation process, which was directly tied to salary raises and cuts. Naturally, this induced a substantial degree of anxiety about both conducting observations and being observed. Perhaps influenced by the evaluative aspect, colleagues tended to evaluate each other very highly. That, in turn, prompted the director to dismiss peer evaluations in the evaluation

process (even though on paper they should have been one aspect of the teacher's final evaluation), stating that peer evaluations could not be trusted because of the consistently high scores colleagues gave each other. While observing colleagues classes, John noticed that the value was learning from effective teaching methods and skillful teacher-student interactions, or being challenged by alternative ways of teaching, rather than trying to evaluate a colleague. It was the judgment factor of evaluating colleagues, combined with the concrete implications of potential pay cuts, that caused anxiety and compromised the peer evaluation process. It seems more appropriate to use peer observation for a more friendly "formative" evaluation (Huy, 2013, slide 6) undertaken to improve teaching practices and to develop as teachers.

Russell explains the potential of peer observations as, "a low-tech way of incorporating reflective practice into day-to-day classroom teaching" (p 23). However, given the varied schedules that faculty members keep, just finding the time to observe a class can be a challenge. Moreover, observers may feel like they are imposing, or disrupting the class, while teachers may feel uncomfortable with a colleague sitting in their class, especially should a lesson not go smoothly. Furthermore, during a typical 90 minute class, much time might be spent on things with little value to an observer: silent writing or reading, or an extended discussion, for example. An alternative method of observation which integrates all the aforementioned benefits of 'live' peer observation without the drawbacks is to use video.

2.2 Peer observation using video

Videotaping lessons has been a teacher development tool for many years (Baily, Curtis & Nunan, 1998). As such, studies have attempted to ascertain its efficacy. Fadde & Sullivan (2013) created an innovative program whereby teachers viewed videos of their own lessons, made written observations, then compared their observations with those of an expert educator. This research suggested that pre-service teachers will benefit from gaining skill to observe and glean meaning from video of themselves or others teaching. Meanwhile, de Mesquita, Dean & Young (2010) argue that utilizing professional development video can improve teacher preparation, spur teacher development and serve as a way to gather accurate and reliable data. Finally, researchers such as Sherin (2004) and Borko et al. (2008) have found that in-service teachers also derive great value from participating in video clubs which utilize classroom video for professional development. Given the fact that individual teachers have refined techniques, methods of dealing with uncooperative students, unique approaches to teaching content, etc., it stands to reason that colleagues can learn from each other. Thus, the potential of peer observations, either done in person or by video, appears great for experienced teachers as well as pre-service teachers. Thus, videoed lessons have the potential to not only aid a teacher's self-reflection, but also, when shared with colleagues, serve as a vehicle for professional development among both pre-service and in-

service teachers.

Video lends itself well for autonomous teacher development projects. Colleagues may take video of their own lessons, edit or choose a section to be viewed, share it with colleagues, and meet to discuss. As O'Neill (2012, p. 37) notes, "Cheap, ubiquitous technology has made video production and distribution accessible for any teacher." The subsequent discussion can either be open to any sort of comment, or the colleagues can decide on one particular aspect of the video: the way the teacher gave directions or told a story, the way students responded, or the written or spoken result. An example of this kind of "share" is one carried out by Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (1997), three experienced teacher-educators who decided to videotape their classes and discuss the videos with trusted colleagues as part of a fruitful year-long professional development project. Just as Russell (2013) emphasizes, the focus in these kinds of projects can be on the observer learning from the teacher rather than judging or evaluating him or her. The lack of pressure is crucial. "We undertook [the development sessions] voluntarily, so there was a sense of ownership and commitment" is how Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (1997, p. 553) summarized their experience.

Taking a video and sharing it possesses several advantages over physically observing classes. As long as a video recorder is available and functioning, classroom video can be taken by the teacher during any class. Also, the scheduling and other obstacles that appear when trying to go into a colleague's class to observe are non-issues. Then, once the video is taken, it can be watched, or re-watched, any time and with any colleagues. Clips which do not illuminate any relevant point—such as when students are simply writing something—may be shortened or edited out altogether. Borko et. al (2008, p. 419) note, "video makes teachers' own classrooms accessible in a way that other mediums simply cannot, and therefore has the potential to be a powerful catalyst for change and improvement." Furthermore, taking a video of a lesson and sharing it with one or more colleagues is a way to increase the professional interactions of university faculty.

Watching classroom video is, by now, a well-established practice for teachers in training (van Es, et al., 2006). However, it does not appear to be a common practice among experienced teachers, at least not in Japan's university teaching environment where the writers of this paper are based. This under-utilization of a fine professional development practice is unfortunate, Nemirovsky & Galvis (2004, p. 68) write, "because of the unique power of video to convey the complexity and atmosphere of human interactions, video case studies can provide powerful opportunities for insightful reflection."

3. Video-share project

3.1 Outline

We (John, Clair, and Jun) made video recordings of our own classes, then met to

watch each other's videos and comment on them. The meetings took place approximately once a month, over two academic years. Following the meetings, we summarized and continued our discussions using two different web applications.

3.2 Research question

Our research question was:

In what ways will sharing classroom video benefit our ongoing professional development and working lives?

3.3 Background

Most students who attend our university, virtually all of whom are Japanese, hope to become early childhood education or junior high school teachers in the future. As stated above, John teaches in the education department, while Clair and Jun teach in the foreign language department. Thus, the programs and courses for each of the two departments are separate. However, the English level of students in each department is similar, between beginner and intermediate level.

3.4 Plan and process

As an exploratory research study, several informal formats for the video sharing ("vid-share") were considered. One of the main objectives of the sessions was for several colleagues to engage in "productive discussions" around an issue of common concern, classroom teaching. With a focus on the teacher's performance, initial goals were to capture classroom interactions and teacher performances on video, then consider ways the teacher paced the class, explained various activities, and dealt with disruptive or difficult situations.

It was important to consider the practical and ethical aspects of taking video of classes. At the beginning of the semester, students were informed and their consent was requested. Students were told that the videoing was a key aspect of a teacher training program, and that the video would be shared with a couple of other teachers only. Classes were videoed using a mobile device such as an iPhone, iPad, a video camera set on a tripod, or at times even the video function of a digital camera. Typically, the recording device was set up at the back of the classroom before the class began, turned on, and left on until the class was over. From that angle, the camera recorded the back of the students, which was preferable because it was unobtrusive and thus less likely to make the students feel self-conscious.

However, it took valuable time to complete this set up at the start of the class and,

without an operator, might have missed an interaction that occurred outside its range. This method also provided long, raw footage which at times needed editing. Another method of capturing a class activity was to record students with a mobile device while facilitating and monitoring activities in progress. This spontaneous approach saved precious set-up time. It also helped to create short, usable clips which required little or no editing. The drawback was, however, that the camera was more obtrusive and this could impact negatively on students' interactions.

3.5 Vid-share meetings

A convenient location with adequate space and equipment, one member's office, Jun, was agreed upon. Clair brought an iPad and memory stick; John brought a laptop PC and memory stick; and Jun supplied a large Apple computer, speakers and other equipment.

In the first year of the project, all three teachers shared a video extract at every vid-share meeting. One of the three teachers shared a short clip (about 5 minutes in length) which was discussed for about twenty minutes before the group moved on to the next teacher's clip. Each session took about 90 minutes in total. In the second year of the project, we decided to focus only on a single teacher's video at each session, so that more in depth discussion could take place. This also helped to reduce the workload involved with frequently recording and editing video. Vid-share sessions in the second year typically lasted 60 minutes.

After vid-share sessions were held it was decided to record notes at a common and accessible medium. For several months a wiki page specifically created for that purpose was used to record the topics and notes about our subsequent discussions. The wiki contained a table describing the video with space for each of the two members to comment, still more space for the teacher to comment on the comments, and so on. Initially, the member who set up the wiki wrote the description of the other two members' videos, but when pertinent points of the description were questioned by the video sharer/teacher it was decided that the person who taught the class and prepared the video should write the description. Records of the next several sessions were recorded on the wiki page. It was later decided that a Google Doc would be a better medium for sharing, so team members started utilizing that for descriptions and comments.

4. Findings and discussion

Our findings are presented in two sections. The first section describes global changes which were observed as the project progressed over the two year period. The second section presents the analysis of the recorded data.

4.1 Observed changes

As the project developed over time, two major changes became apparent. First, there was a change in focus. Initially, the three participants had planned to observe and seek feedback on teacher performance and teaching skills. The intention was to concentrate on what the teacher was doing; to explore, as stated above, the way the teacher interacted with the students and set up activities. However, very early in the project the scope of our interest became wider, and we found ourselves more interested in the kinds of activities, materials, and approaches that each teacher chose to use in their classroom and the way learners reacted to those activities.

The second change was a gradual deepening of trust between the participants. At the outset of the project, one member video-recorded a class and then, feeling self-conscious, deleted the file without even watching it. All of us reported some level of anxiety in the early stages of the project and struggled to select an extract from one of our class videos which we felt comfortable sharing. For example, at the first vid-share, one of the members shared an extract in which the teacher did not appear at all, featuring only students. In the second meeting the member shared a clip in which the teacher's voice was audible but the teacher did not appear in the frame. Later, the member shared clips in which he appeared, but initially only very briefly. It took time for us to develop a sense of trust and openness towards each other. The initial meeting structure, in which each member shared an extract at each session, helped to build this sense of trust. Only after a year of sharing did each member feel safe and comfortable enough to be the main focus of a vid-share meeting.

4.2 Emergence of themes

The wiki and Google Doc data provide a record of the sessions and the teachers' reflections in the days and weeks following the meetings. Analysis of this data showed that the vid-share meetings helped foster professional development in a number of ways. Six main themes emerged: (1) *Noticing skillful practice,* (2) *Suggestions for improvement,* (3) *Acquisition of activities,* (4) *Recognition of shared experience,* (5) *Attention to institutional problems,* and (6) *Reflection on the research process*. The first five relate to teacher development. The final theme consists of comments related to the vid-share project itself, which helped us focus on ways to improve the quality of the research. Each of the themes will be discussed below.

Theme 1: Noticing skillful practice

Many of the comments made on the wiki and Google Doc expressed admiration for one or more aspects of teaching practice evidenced in the video that was shared. The members noticed and praised specific skills demonstrated by the teacher. The strengths that

were identified included preparatory skills such as materials creation, as well as classroom teaching skills, as the following comments illustrate:

> *The handout was beautiful.* (Clair, July 12th 2012)

> *Use of music was nice way to indicate transition* (*from teacher's explanation to st[udent] talking*). (John, December 12th 2012)

> *The ppt [PowerPoint presentation] was beautifully made, and looked really engaging.* (Clair, January 30th 2013)

This positive feedback is likely to have contributed to the growing sense of trust among the vid-share members. Borko et. al (2008) notes, "To be willing to take such a risk [showing a video of one's own class], teachers must feel part of a safe and supportive professional environment." Positive, constructive feedback is a key way to achieve such an environment.

These expressions of admiration have the potential to drive forward teacher development and improve practice in two ways. First, when one teacher notices an aspect of a colleague's work which is well executed and successful, all the members in the group have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, and may decide to change or upgrade their own performance in that specific area. In that sense, the vid-share members are acting as "near-peer role models" to each other (Murphey, 1998; Murphey & Arao, 2001), with members selecting specific skills to model and adopt into their own practice. Both the inclination or intention to change and actual change in practice are observable in the data:

> *Also, it was interesting to observe how Clair gives verbal feedback and complimentary remarks to students. Maybe I should start doing that more.* (Jun, July 12th 2012)

> *Since bringing my students into the library to see graded readers* (*inspired by Clair's video!*) *I have gone in several times to try out some readers on my kids.* (John, June 30th 2013)

While video clips themselves were a source of inspiration for change, the discussions which followed the sharing of the video clip were at least as useful. Watching the video only gives the observers access to the way the skill appears from the outside. Teachers can attempt to imitate what they see, but this may not be an easy task, even when the composite skills are noticed and identified, as this reflection on a storytelling activity shows:

> *I was really impressed with John's storytelling skills. It's actually very difficult to do what John was doing, even though he made it look easy: to chunk but still have*

natural intonation and other pronunciation features, to tell the story with emotion, to simplify the story, and to have key phrases repeated in the story. (Clair, September 20th 2013)

However, the vid-share discussions allowed us to articulate more fully the internal factors which made this stage in their lesson so effective, and this gave us valuable information which could contribute to our future success in attempting a similar task:

John also said that he really likes the story. I think that is something that helps the performance. I don't have any particularly strong feeling about the folk story I use, so I think I need to find a story I am more emotionally attached to. (Clair, September 20th 2013)

The commentary on John's story telling lesson also highlights another way in which positive feedback can assist teacher development. The feedback and discussion in this case helped John to realize his strengths in this area of teaching, and by celebrating these skills John felt empowered:

The discussion session was really inspiring for me as well. I had viewed it as a rather ordinary if not uninspiring video to share but comments by Clair and Jun made it very worthwhile. All three of us felt the power of storytelling and felt a desire to build on that. (John, September 20th 2013)

Teachers, isolated in their offices and with little or no feedback on their work, have few opportunities to celebrate or reflect on their own strengths. If, on occasion, activities do not go as well as expected, teachers may begin to doubt their skills or lose confidence in their abilities. As Gaikwad and Brantley (1992, p.15) note, "When teachers complain of feeling isolated, it is reasonable to expect a negative impact on their attitudes and energy levels. [...] isolation is likely to result in burnout and feelings of intense vulnerability." We found that affirmation of skills from colleagues in a vid-share session can provide a boost to confidence and a sense of motivation and excitement about the activity.

Theme 2: Suggestions for improvement

One straightforward way the members of our group helped each other find ways to make our classes more successful was through making suggestions. When one of us expressed some concerns or difficulties about some aspect of their class, the other members volunteered possible ways to remedy the situation. The comments show that these ideas were considered helpful:

I received some very good suggestions including having individual students come to the front and lead a task as a teacher would. This would be especially appropriate

for my students who are education majors and will become teachers. (John, June 21st 2013)

Even when teachers were generally satisfied with their class, the observers were able to make practical suggestions which might be used in future classes to enrich or facilitate the lesson or to avoid potential problems. One example of this kind of comment followed Jun's vid-share of class in which a Christmas Party was held in the regular classroom. An alternative venue for this kind of class was suggested, which is designed specifically to hold social events:

> *I recommended [using] the [conversation] lounge for this type of class, as the atmosphere can be really enhanced by the furnishings.* (Clair, January 12th 2013)

The suggestions made over the course of the project spanned a range of situations. Ideas to improve classes included using technologies or specific applications for certain activities, changing the seating layout, setting time aside on the first class of the semester to explain class rules, and introducing penalties for poor classroom behavior. We were able to draw on our own experience to suggest ideas for the other members to consider, providing more possible choices for each teacher to select from when making decisions about classes.

Although there were a substantial number of suggestions recorded in the wiki and Google Doc data, these types of comments constituted a surprisingly small percentage of the vid-share notes. Before embarking on the project, we had anticipated that following a video share, the other members would offer critique and advice on how to improve our teaching. In fact, there were fewer comments of this nature than we had expected. Indeed, many of the suggestions for improvements came from the member who was sharing the video, as the teacher critiqued their own lesson. In the process of preparing for the vid-share, teachers had reflected on activities and events in their class and formulated concrete ideas to resolve the issues they had encountered. Thus, the group acted as a sounding board for the teacher to reflect aloud and articulate what they would do differently when approaching this kind of lesson or activity in the future. The following comments illustrate this process:

> *I think on this occasion the task needed more scaffolding, and should have come earlier in the course* (*during the unit on trends*)*, not in the review lesson* (*at the semester end*). (Clair, January 30th 2013)

> *I could have had them read [aloud] what they had written instead of me reading it to the class.* (Jun, September 19th 2012)

These peer and self-generated ideas were one of the ways these vid-share sessions supported teacher development.

Theme 3: Acquisition of activities

The data also indicated that the vid-share meetings served to help the members acquire new activities or new versions of familiar activities to use in their classes. In the following comment, Clair reflects on an activity shared by Jun. In this vid-share, Jun had opened his class by showing a very short video clip lasting only a few seconds to the class while half of the students covered their eyes. The students who had viewed the clip then described in English what they had seen to their partner, who made notes in Japanese. Finally, the students viewed the clip again, to see if the notes adequately described the action in the video. This was a variant on a familiar activity which Clair had not encountered before:

> *This was a new twist on the video activity for me. I've usually used longer clips, with Student A narrating / describing what they see, as B listens, then switching and switching back. This tends to be exciting as students have to think quickly. Jun's version here is nice as it is very short, and can be used as a warmer.* (Clair, December 12th 2012)

We were able to expand our repertoire of classroom activities by seeing these activities in action in the videos. We also, at times, developed ideas for new activities through the post-video discussion. In the discussion following John's share of his storytelling lesson, Jun considers applying some techniques he uses in his class to the Scrooge story which John told to his students, coming up with a novel activity:

> *We could jazz up this kind of activity a little by creating some information gaps, which gives a reason to retell the story. For example, everyone shadow talks the first part of the story (who Scrooge was) and then students 1 shadow talk the next part of the story (1st ghost and 2nd ghost) while students 2 cover their ears. Then, students 2 shadow talk the rest of the story (3rd ghost and the ending) while students 1 cover their ears. Then, students 1 retell the story to students 2, and students 2 retell the story to students 1.* (Jun, September 20th 2013)

> *A jigsaw activity with a live listening. I've not put those two together.* (Clair, September 20th 2013)

To keep teaching fresh and encourage teacher development it is helpful for teachers to try out new activities and approaches from time to time. The vid-share provided our members with a means to increase our personal ʻstock' of potential classroom activities and approaches, helping to prevent our classes from becoming stale. This led to real changes in our teaching within the time frame of this project. For example, Clair showed a clip of her

students actually teaching a lesson, and in the ensuing discussion members discussed the merits of having students teach part of a lesson. This vid-share meeting, conducted in the latter part of the spring semester, was perfectly timed as John was looking for a way to get students more involved in a standard class activity. By incorporating student-taught lessons on his fall syllabus, John introduced a significant positive change to his class, directly attributable to the time spent discussing pedagogy with colleagues.

Theme 4: Recognition of shared experience

A theme which occurred frequently in the data was the recognition of shared experience. We were able to understand the classroom situations and difficulties which we shared because we had encountered similar issues in our own practice. These shared experiences allowed us to strongly empathize with each other. In Jun's comment, the use of capital letters shows that he also feels the same frustration as his colleague when faced with students who, despite scaffolding and support, choose to carry out an activity in their mother tongue instead of English:

> *I have a similar problem (students switching back to Japanese) whenever I do a Task-based activity. When students are really engaged, they forget why we are doing the activity in the first place. I usually 1) show and explain expressions and forms the students are likely to use in the activity on the screen beforehand and leave them on during the activity, and 2) tell them that if they use any Japanese, they "lose," and 3) walk around and make sure nobody is using Japanese. HOWEVER they still switch back to Japanese anyway sometimes...* (Jun, January 12th 2013)

The vid-share discussions helped remind us that other teachers also experience the situations, feelings and thought processes that we experience in the classroom. This was particularly helpful when talking about negative feelings or problematic situations such as discipline issues, which teachers might not usually feel comfortable admitting to. Disclosure of less successful teaching moments takes some courage and requires an atmosphere of trust. When the group opened up, shared these feelings, and talked about these difficult issues it created a sense of connection and sympathy between us:

> *It would be too draining to use the amount of energy I would need to maintain 100% rule compliance with that group, and would risk spoiling the atmosphere for those who are enjoying the class. This is a point John made. He didn't want to make a negative atmosphere and turn the whole class into a behavior management session.* (Clair, June 21st 2013)

> *It was such a meaningful discussion. We all have to face students misbehaving in class sometimes, and it was very interesting to see how John handles it. Actually, it was very similar to how I handle it.* (Jun, June 21st 2013)

However, not all the instances of recognition of shared experience related to negative experiences. Each of us also noted similarities between aspects of the other members' teaching and his or her own. Recognizing that another teacher was operating from the same principles or values, and using similar techniques to achieve a certain outcome was a positive experience served to validate our own practice. John's comment below is an example of this kind of response:

> *I like the fact that students were given the opportunity to memorize a line; this is an approach that Jun and I very much have in common. It gives students the chance to feel they have mastered something in class and builds confidence.* (John, June 14th 2013)

Coming to the realization that we share beliefs and experiences is a powerful antidote for the otherwise relatively isolated working life of university faculty.

Theme 5: Attention to institutional problems

Many of the comments on the wiki and Google Doc relate to vid-share discussions which focused on department or institutional problems such as issues relating to facilities, resources, curriculum, or administration. We were acutely aware that our teaching was constrained or negatively impacted by factors that were outside an individual teacher's immediate control. An example of this is a discussion which focused on some weaknesses in one of the set textbooks:

> *One issue was feeling stuck using a textbook that was decided by committee, not individual teacher, and the expectations of st[udents] after paying for [a] text[book].* (John, December 12th 2012)

Similarly, several of the exchanges explore syllabus and curriculum issues. In one discussion we were concerned that the existing program did not offer a pronunciation class for freshman students, and that there was inadequate time on the syllabus for existing courses to allow for sufficient pronunciation work, with teachers feeling pressure to "power through each unit of the textbook" (Clair, June 14th). We found that we were in agreement about the issue:

> *Like Clair wrote below, it is sometimes hard to find time for pronunciation, and it makes more sense for students to work on it early in their university career as fossilization can occur over time.* (John, June 14th 2013)

We spent time considering how these issues could be tackled and thinking about how to improve the learning experience for the students. We envisioned that our classes would be more engaging and successful if we had access to better resources or facilities:

I wish the students all had an iPad for these types of activities. (Jun, July 12th 2012)

The vid-share sessions allowed us to dream about possible improvements to the campus and the courses.

At first glance, such discussions might not seem to contribute to teacher development. However, by raising these concerns and spending time considering these issues, we may be more likely to seek out opportunities to resolve these problems. In this case, two of the members are part of a Working Group which decides on the set textbooks, and can propose the selection of a different textbook for the following academic year. The Working Group can also rewrite the syllabi for many of the required courses, and all faculty members have a voice in decisions relating to curriculum changes in their departments. The vid-share members sit on various committees which may at some point be in a position to implement the developments that the teachers hope for. These kinds of discussions may have a beneficial effect in instigating change in the long term which may lead to improved outcomes for students and higher levels of teacher satisfaction.

In the course of this video project there were signs that the vid-share discussions could have a positive impact on an institutional level. A vid-share recording students engaged in Sustained Silent Reading using graded readers in class led to expressions of concern about the difficulties students have in locating an appropriate graded reader for their level. Following this discussion, Jun and Clair approached other faculty who were in a position to effect improvements to this situation:

> *We talked about how poor the display of graded readers is in the library and talked about asking the library to improve the way the graded readers are displayed so it is easier for students to access them. We decided to talk to the people on the library committee.* (*I talked to ____ and she said she will support the idea!*). (Clair, May 10th 2013)

> *I'm happy that ____ can support the idea to improve the library display of graded readers.* (Jun, May 10th 2013)

Several months later, the books were relocated and the display improved. Thus, the vid-share discussions acted as a catalyst which motivated us to try to bring about positive change on a institutional level for our students.

Theme 6: Reflection on the research process

A final theme which occurred frequently in the data was reflection on issues related to the video project, both the video recording process and the sharing and commenting process. These discussions may not have contributed to our development as teachers, but may have helped us develop our skills as teacher-researchers.

The group discussed issues related to our methods of recording, choice of recording

device, camera angle and audibility of some segments. It was not easy to place the camera in the right location to guarantee that the teacher would be in the shot. In some clips the teacher's head was cut off. The members also experimented with different approaches, finding limitations with each. When a recording device was set up at the back of the room, teacher talk was clearly audible but it was not always possible to hear students' responses to the teacher. Recordings of pair-work activities taken in this manner just resulted in a cacophony of sound. It was impossible to hear what any individual was saying. Sometimes we used editing software to edit out these sections so that the group could simply focus on how activities were set up and wrapped up, Which was effective but time-consuming, and left the group curious about how the activity actually progressed. This fixed camera approach also took valuable time at the start of the class to set up, particularly if a tripod and camera were used. We felt that this produced a harried start to the class and left us feeling unprepared and less able to connect to the students. At other times we attempted to record pair and group work by circulating the room and filming a single pair or group using an iPhone or iPad. This produced better recording outcomes, but in some classes appeared to prevent students from fully engaging in the activities:

> *I was aware that during the 'discussion' part especially, the camera inhibited output* (Clair, January 12th 2013)

It also meant that the teacher did not appear in the shots, and could not give their full attention to facilitating and monitoring the activity because they were busy recording. We did not find a perfect solution, but we found that even imperfect video could be a useful springboard for discussion, and that by reflecting on these issues we were able to share tips and suggestions to try to minimize problems.

A number of the comments related to the project process. It was not always possible to schedule vid-share meetings while the class we had recorded was still fresh in our minds. Participating in the project made us more aware that the timeliness of the meetings was an important factor to consider:

> *Doing this video share was delayed. I had intended to share something at the end of the first semester, in July, and now it's September.* (John, September 20th 2013)

In the initial stages of the project we had not decided on a means of recording notes, instead focusing on becoming comfortable sharing video and building a sense of trust in the group. Early efforts at sharing on the wiki lacked detail because there was a lag between the vid-share session and entering the notes. Also, attempts to summarize others' videos were sometimes inaccurate or misunderstood, which jarred with the teacher who had shared the video. Through the discussions and practice we were able to work out an effective way to approach record keeping:

I wish we had decided to use this wiki from the start and summarized our own bits right after presenting them. (John, December 12th, 2012)

We continued to reflect on and refine the vid-share process, switching to an easier to use medium for notes (the Google Doc) and reducing the number of videos shared per meeting to just one, to allow a narrower focus and in depth discussion which was easier to recall when writing our reflections in the Google Doc.

5. Conclusions

The vid-share sessions yielded a number of specific and wide-ranging benefits which were broken down into six categories in this paper: noticing skillful practice, acquisition of activities, suggestions for improvement, recognition of shared experience, attention to institutional problems and reflection on the research process. These categories may prove useful to teacher-researchers considering similar professional development projects.

The project led to professional development and greater collegiality among the members, leading to tangible benefits as we incorporated new activities and approaches into our classes as a direct result of the vid-share meetings. These psychological and social benefits that we experienced are consistent with the findings of other researchers. Bailey, Curtis & Nunan (1998, p. 554) write, "We also benefited from sharing the results of our efforts. The collaborative dimension helped us learn from discussing one another's products as well as from viewing them." Regarding the process of taking and sharing video, Wallace (1991) writes that it converts "what is subjective and ephemeral into something that is experienced in common and capable of analysis" (p. 17).

While we felt the project to be beneficial in many ways, the technical aspects of setting up equipment, editing video, and finding a mutually agreeable time and place to meet were practical challenges that had to be overcome. There were also affective issues to be overcome. Not all faculty members who were invited chose to participate. It also, took time for the three of us to overcome initial reticence to show ourselves teaching on video. This reluctance is not uncommon. In the Borko et al. study, two of the four participating teachers were not willing to be videoed and hence did not participate in that way. Borko et al. noted that other video-share meetings, called "video clubs," did not continue past the first meeting due to self-consciousness.

Finally, Borko et al. (2008) speculate that a strong community is vital to the success of a video-share project. It should be noted, however, that the three participants in the present study barely knew each other at the outset of this project, as two of us had just started at the university. Thus, in our case, the meetings led to a greater sense of community rather than being a prerequisite. This indicates that the key to this kind of project is a willingness to collaborate and make oneself vulnerable to peers for the sake of professional development.

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