

Article

Microteaching in Isolation: Fostering Autonomy and Learner Engagement through VoiceThread

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Abstract

As ESL and TESOL programs moved to an online or remote teaching mode rather rapidly during the first half of 2020, many of the practical elements of face-to-face teaching needed to be reconciled in the new mode. Likewise, in a TESOL teacher training unit at Macquarie University, Australia, highly practical elements of the unit needed to be changed to an online mode in line with the new restrictions. In order to address these challenges, online microteaching activities were implemented, employing the principles of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) and learner autonomy. Responding to the students' needs, a series of asynchronous tasks were created using VoiceThread, a multimodal asynchronous interactive platform, and enabling tasks facilitated by a combination of videos, interactive H5P tasks and forums. We have found that the new approach not only met the Unit Learning Outcomes (ULOs), including the practical application of teaching methodologies, but also had further advantages. The additional strengths of the approach include increased feedback literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills for students, developing autonomy as learners and teachers, and developing a community and fostering engagement. The present task design is applicable to English for specific purposes (ESP) and general English teaching contexts in both fully online and face-to-face delivery modes.

Keywords

ESL teacher training, Learning-Oriented Assessment, VoiceThread, learner autonomy, asynchronous teaching

1 Introduction

The rapid move to teaching in an online or remote mode has meant that ESL and TESOL programs need to find ways to facilitate tasks that so far have been traditionally performed face-to-face. This paper

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focuses on an ESL teacher training program and the design of a series of tasks to practice microteaching as part of a teaching methodology unit at an Australian university. The challenges included the maintenance of student engagement during times when students had major disruptions in their lives. To ensure equal opportunity for participation, we designed a series of teaching tasks using VoiceThread, a platform enabling multimodal communication, and scaffolded these with two other online tasks to aid deeper learning. Despite the significant challenges of changing modes in the middle of a semester, we have found that the series of tasks had numerous positive outcomes including maximizing student engagement, enhancing learner autonomy and reflective practice. Not only did students meet the Unit Learning the Outcomes (ULOs), but this approach offered unexpected opportunities for learning such as increased reflection.

The next section gives an outline of the teaching context, followed by the description of the issues we met with the teaching moving fully online. We then proceed to the description and analysis of the task design and the outcomes and applications of the suite of tasks in ESL teaching.

2 An ESL Teacher Training Course at Macquarie University, Australia

The context of the present paper is a postgraduate ESL teacher training context at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. The students, both internal and external, are enrolled through the Graduate Certificate in TESOL or Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics and TESOL programs. All are at least bachelor degree holders, and some are qualified school teachers in Australia or overseas. On completion, the TESOL qualification enables them to teach various age groups and in various English language teaching (ELT) sectors. Those who are accredited teachers in the school sector can teach young learners in Australian primary and high schools as EAL/D (English as an additional language or dialect) specialist teachers. Other graduates can teach ESL to adults in the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) industry and migrant teaching sectors in Australia, as well as in EFL contexts overseas.

Enrolled students have a choice to study remotely or on campus. While students studying in a face-to-face delivery mode attend lectures, where they complete tasks, the ones studying in an online mode cover lecture materials through pre-recorded short lecture videos, posting tasks responses in discussion forums, completing online tasks and they also have access to the face-to-face lecture recordings each week.

The teaching unit we are focusing on in this paper is Language Teaching Methodologies. The aim of the unit is to learn to apply teaching methodologies to practice through a range of academic and practical activities. The latter includes regular group microteaching practice in class for internal attendance students, which means short focused peer-teaching in small groups, and a set of independent practical activities for students enrolled externally.

In mid-March 2020, which was our Semester 1 in Australia, when the teaching unit was moved to a fully-online mode of delivery due to COVID-19, the number of students enrolled was 55, both in internal (31) and external (24) attendance mode. In the following section we describe the changed conditions when teaching moved fully online and the steps we took to move microteaching online keeping in mind the challenges students faced.

3 Challenges and New Practices to Achieve Equal Access and Engagement

As all students moved to online learning, the practical elements of teacher training needed to be facilitated in the unit. Since over half of the student cohort originally studied in a face-to-face mode, their transition into a different learning experience needed to be ensured. This transition occurred in March 2020, which meant that the two-week mid-semester break, usually occurring after Week 6, was brought forward to facilitate some planning and development of tasks and materials for the online delivery mode.

Students studied fully online from Week 4 to 13, which was the rest of the semester. In the following, we outline the microteaching aspect of the unit that took place online, the platform (VoiceThread) and the task design we have opted for, and the affordances of this task design to foster learner autonomy and reflective practice. We then draw it together through the concept of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA), which our approach is situated in.

One of the practical elements of ESL teacher training is microteaching, short practice teaching sessions in groups. Microteaching sessions are a safe way to practise teaching skills and theory from the course before the practicum placement. These sessions in teacher education function as ‘structured mediational spaces’ (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). The function of these spaces is to stretch the trainee teachers’ skills and competencies in a safe space while giving an opportunity for trainers to assess trainees’ understanding, needs and concerns in a responsive way (Johnson & Golobek, 2020). As during microteaching the students receive feedback from their peers and their lecturer/trainer, we found it challenging but essential to keep the above “collaborative constructivist view of learning and teaching” (Garrison, 2011 p.9) when it comes to moving these interactions online. It has also been shown that a good foundation of practice needs to be formed at training and the first few years of a teacher’s professional career as it later becomes tacit knowledge, which experienced teachers later draw on (Dudley, 2013, 2019). It is, therefore, important to facilitate good practice early, and microteaching sessions are ideal for this practice.

The microteaching sessions pre-COVID-19 were scheduled in the face-to-face lectures; however, with students’ changed conditions, we decided to move to online asynchronous interaction. In the face-to-face lectures, students were assigned to random groups and had to participate in around three microteaching sessions in the semester. These sessions focused on aspects previously covered in the lectures and lecture tasks, such as teacher talk or giving instructions. However, with the move to online delivery, a new cohort of students had to be catered to. Half of our student cohort had originally not chosen to study online, which meant that some of them had to learn to be online learners: to motivate themselves and organize their own time to engage with the online materials such as pre-recorded lectures, tasks and forum interactions effectively. Additionally, some students were now home schooling their children due to school closures, had continuing work obligations, while others experienced insecure internet connection due to increased online traffic. Lastly, our originally external cohort, some based overseas and in different time zones, did not require to attend a scheduled weekly meeting online as their learning was self-directed. Therefore, unlike Ersin, Atay & Mede (2020), who conducted synchronous microteaching sessions with their fully-internal cohort of preservice English language teachers, due to the above constraints, we decided that an asynchronous mode of online microteaching would be more effective in our case.

4 VoiceThread as a Platform for Academic Interaction

Our aim was to maximize student engagement and provide students with an active learning experience. We found that VoiceThread provided a suitable platform for this. VoiceThread.com (VT; launched in 2007) is a multimodal asynchronous computer-mediated communication tool that allows creating and commenting on a multimedia presentation using voice, video, or written annotation. It is easily embedded into various learning management systems (LMS) and provides a space for students to upload their work in a secure environment, as well as receive feedback both from their tutors and peers, like they would in the face-to-face microteaching sessions. Although not originally designed as an educational application, VT presents pedagogical affordances that have ensured increasing use in a variety of educational settings, especially in language teaching and learning.

In ELT contexts, VT has been discussed as a medium for assessment in online or blended courses. For example, Herlihy and Pottage (2013) carried out formative speaking assessment via VT in a university

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. While the tutors gained extra time to comment on the usually ephemeral speaking performance, their students, especially those with few opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, were able to engage, interact and successfully pass the final summative speaking component. In lending their support to VT use for formative assessment, Stannard and Basiel (2013) emphasise the collaborative nature of the platform and the benefits of peer feedback and self-evaluation in addition to the customary teacher feedback.

Other studies have focused on VT in connection to building an online community of learners. Cummins and Gouripeddi (2015), for instance, found it effective in promoting scholarly engagement in a blended postgraduate course. Their end-of-semester survey noted an increased sense of community, engagement and learning, despite some limitations such as not being able to skim a video or voice comment. As an asynchronous discussion tool, VT has been found to help promote participation strategies that support an effective online community of inquiry (CoI) (DeNoyelles, Zydney & Chen, 2014). The CoI framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999; Shea et al, 2014) posits that learning occurs through the core elements of social presence (group cohesion and communication), cognitive presence (constructing meaning through communication), teaching presence (organisation of educational experience) and learning presence (including planning, performance and reflection in online learning). The affordances of VT help address multiple presences, for example, by using audio to stimulate discussion and feedback (deNoyelles, Zydney, & Chen, 2014).

While the benefits of VT for language learning and teaching, as well as online community building are generally acknowledged, accounts of VT use in teacher training contexts are scarce. Some literature exists on interventions designed to improve pre-service English language teachers' pronunciation (Ghoneim & Elghotmy, 2016), on professional development of early childhood education professionals (Gillis, 2012) and in-service ESL teachers (Akasha, 2011). However, most relevant to our situation is a study by Kirby and Hulan (2016), whose search for a way to build community and discussion in teacher training online coursework found that VT provided a better sense of peer engagement than the traditional text-based discussion forum alone. Their postgraduate students also claimed VT allowed for deeper learning and understanding, despite a bigger time commitment in preparation for posting. Crucially, some stated that VT "resembles the classroom setting more" than an online discussion forum (Kirby & Hulan, 2016, p.94).

Despite some studies on the benefits of VT in teacher training settings, to the best of our knowledge, none have discussed the usage of this platform specifically to facilitate practical training elements. This was our main challenge as the Language Teaching Methodologies unit moved to online delivery due to COVID-19. In deciding on such novel application of VT in the now fully-online teacher training course, we considered its advantages and potential drawbacks. In line with the principles of collaborative learning (Dooly, 2018), moving the practical components of the course to the VT platform makes everyone's work visible, which in turn is expected to promote the community of learning and the uptake of peer feedback. Moreover, the asynchronous nature of VT communication allows time for reflection, comparison and learning from others (Dooly, 2018). Although not all students were expected to be confident users of this new social interaction platform, most had a degree of familiarity with VT technology, having completed a self-introduction task in a separate unit of the study program. Additional VT training was provided in our unit as well. Through the online microteaching activities, we also intended to prepare our students for the final assessment that includes videorecording a mini-lesson and writing a self-reflection on their teaching. Thus, we believed the affordances of VT technology would match the learning needs of our students.

4.1 VoiceThread task description

Two VT tasks were designed for the remainder of the semester (indicated as VT2 and VT3 in Figure 1), but we soon discovered that it would be beneficial for the students to complete an additional one earlier, to familiarize themselves with the process of recording themselves and posting videos (VT1 in Figure 1). According to our plan for future semesters, VT1 involves the recording of a simple procedure, like giving instructions to a class, and is a controlled and short task. VT2 then focuses on how to teach one language skill or aspect, such as a pronunciation element of the students' choice, thus making the students' task less controlled but still focused. As students gain confidence and underlying skills, in VT3 they are required to choose any language focus and task and record themselves teaching it. Thus, scaffolding teaching skills is achieved through gradually easing the restrictions in task completion. We would like to note here that as we only ran VT2 and VT3 in Semester 1, we will be commenting only on those in this paper.



Figure 1. An outline of the activities leading up to the final assessment task
(credit diagram: www.presentationgo.com)

To maximize the efficacy of the microteaching activities in VoiceThread, we decided to add two sets of enabling tasks: one focusing on peer feedback and the other on reflection, both integrated into the course LMS represented as purple and orange stages in Figure 1 that shows VT and LMS task sequence). The LMS tasks built on ideas of learner autonomy, reflective practice and learning-oriented assessment (LOA) to support teachers in the development of their teaching practice. Lecturer presence is essential for effective online learning and this can happen through direct feedback to students' individual tasks and also through task design enabling peer interaction (Stone, 2017).

The explicit modelling of peer feedback in the first enabling task was intended to, firstly, familiarize our students with the principles of effective feedback, such as relation to the original goals and future application (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Block & William, 2009). Following that, the students were able to practice constructive feedback language on model teaching videos. The second purpose was to increase participation in the VT-based microteaching, to minimize anxiety and other negative feelings towards the online task, and to make up for the perceived lack of spontaneous interaction on VT noted by Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna (2016). We also realized that our students would not automatically engage with the technology unless they were aware of its affordances (Egbert, 2018, p.2). Therefore, we recorded short samples of our own microteaching (5-15 minutes) to demonstrate the technical capabilities of VT (screenshots of two lecturers' VTs can be found in Figures 2 and 3) and then also modelled feedback on selected student VT videos.

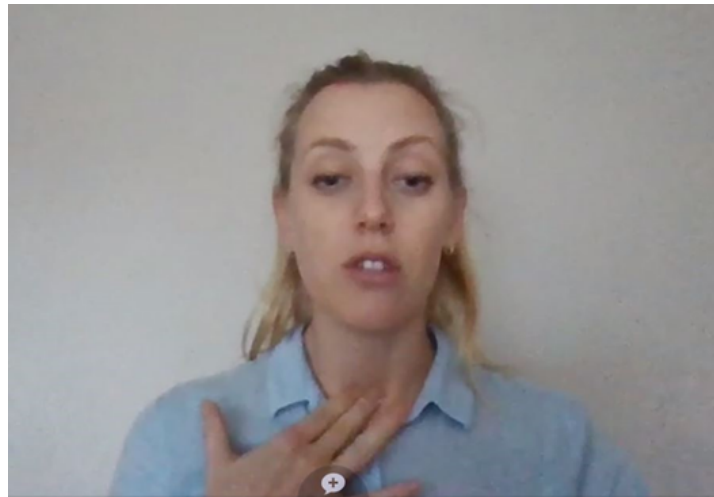


Figure 2. Screenshot of a lecturer modeling teaching pronunciation in VoiceThread 2

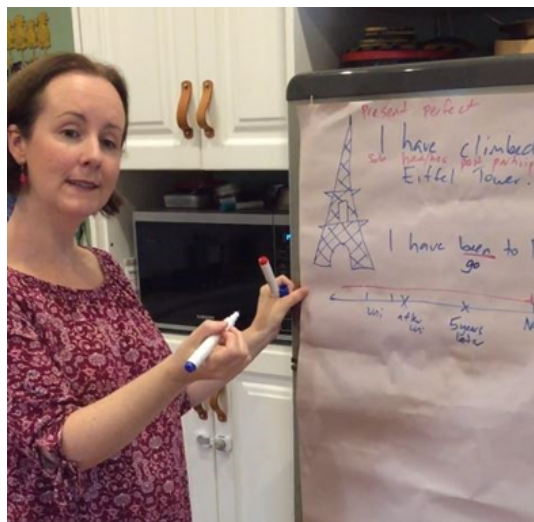


Figure 3. Screenshot of a lecturer modeling teaching a grammar point in VoiceThread 3

The second enabling task promoted students' reflection on their microteaching based on the reflective process described in Harvey et al (2020) that follows this sequence: (i) description of event and related feelings, (ii) evaluation and analysis of experience, (iii) identifying shortfalls and (iv) creating an action plan for the future. Two models of self-reflection were provided as examples, after which the students were invited to write about their VT2 recordings incorporating feedback they had received from peers and tutors. The two enabling tasks together are aimed to direct students towards more autonomous learning and professional practice as reflective teachers, which we will discuss in detail in the following.

4.2 VoiceThread and learner/teacher autonomy

One aim of microteaching is to develop learner autonomy; however, the degree of autonomy that students had to demonstrate was higher in VT tasks. Autonomy has been defined as the "capacity to take control of one's own learning" (Benson, 2011, p. 58) in a variety of ways, including learners initiating and managing learning or having some control over the psychological factors of learning such as motivation, beliefs and preferences. Developing teacher autonomy can lead to higher motivation (Finsterwald, Wagner, Schober, Luftenegger & Spie, 2013) and self-confidence, as well as improved decision-making skills (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). It has been recognized that many teacher education programs do not promote autonomy, even though it assists them to foster autonomy in learners and has intrinsic benefits for teachers themselves (Benson, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Vieira, 2017).

Considering this important aspect of teacher education, autonomy was a key aim in the VT tasks. Students had considerable scope about the lesson content, desired learners and their approach to the video. This allowed them to take control over many aspects of the video. The students engaged in online learning were required to initiate and manage their projects in their own time and their own way. They were also asked to actively watch others' videos and comment on them at any time within a two-week window. Students managed their own microteaching group and were responsible to their peers to provide feedback, decreasing reliance on the lecturer, who became a facilitator during the tasks.

The reflective aspect of the tasks also increased the students' autonomy as they gradually developed their ideas about teaching and learning. In reflective practice, a teacher actively collects information about their experiences, beliefs and feelings about teaching and learning (Farrell, 2016). Activities such as journaling and peer discussion about beliefs and values around teaching can help teachers to become more reflective (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Moreover, taking videos of classes can assist developing teachers to see what is actually happening and reflect on the difference between intention or perception and reality (Harmer, 2015). Therefore, reflective practice is useful for teachers to understand their own practice and be able to make decisions in the classroom and elsewhere (Farrell, 2016). The scaffolding tasks leading up to the first VT task (indicated as VT2 in Figure 1) were designed to assist students to give helpful, critical feedback and take on feedback themselves. Students were also led through how to write reflections incorporating feedback and theory and discussing what they would change next time. The VTs and the scaffolding tasks can all be seen to promote reflective practice.

In order to support students over the course, our online microteaching tasks were based on the principles of learning-oriented assessment (LOA). Assessing teachers in teacher education has moved from a focus on exams and observations to a greater number of assessment types including self-assessment, peer assessment and practical tasks (Tigelaar & Van Tartwijk, 2010). LOA reflects the shift in assessment modes as self-evaluation and peer feedback are used to increase learner engagement in the assessment process (Carless, 2007). The most important aspect of LOA is its focus on learning rather than judging, with feedback feeding forward into future learning (Carless, 2007). This can also assist with 'feedback literacy' (Carless & Boud, 2018), where self and peer feedback over time assists students to act on feedback and understand the feedback they receive. The VT tasks fit the criteria of LOA, with an emphasis on self-reflection and peer feedback, and the aim of feeding forward to the summative assessment and the students' future careers as teachers. In VT2, students learnt how to use the platform, practice ideas from the course, give feedback to others and reflect afterwards. In VT3, as the students became used to VoiceThread, elements from the rubric were introduced for peer and self-feedback. This allowed students to share an understanding of the criteria for assessment, which assisted them to prepare for the final assessment (Tang & Chow, 2007). They were actively engaged in using the assessment criteria, providing feedback to others and reflecting on their own practice. These skills can help them to be successful in the course as well as their future careers as teachers.

5 Outcomes

The main merits of this online microteaching model are the continued fulfilment of the Unit Learning Outcomes (ULOs), increased feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018), and ICT skills for students, as well as developing autonomy as learners and teachers. In addition to this, we have also found that VT helped develop a community and foster engagement. In the following we discuss our observations as we taught through the semester and relate them to these positive outcomes.

We have found the series of tasks useful in facilitating a growing understanding of how to give and receive feedback. This helps students to reflect on their own practice and is an important skill for their careers as teachers. In almost all cases over VT2 and 3 the feedback students gave to their peers followed recommendations from the scaffolding task focused on constructive feedback. Positive feedback was

given about specific areas (e.g. *I like the way you managed the class*) rather than general areas (e.g. *You are a great teacher!*). Constructive criticism offered included phrases such as *Why don't you try...* and *I'm wondering if...* as well as modals and hedging language (perhaps, maybe) to frame suggestions for future change. Students also followed the spirit of the recommendations and used other suggestion language that was not explicitly taught in the first enabling task such as "One suggestion is...". We did not find overly-negative pieces of feedback. In fact, in VT2, students seemed reluctant to give negative feedback and some did not provide any suggestions at all. By VT3, many students had developed the 'sandwich technique' (positive feedback, constructive criticism, positive feedback), which had been recommended by us as a format. The development of more nuanced feedback that aligned more closely with the rubric and learning outcomes of the course, demonstrates increased feedback literacy and a shared understanding of assessment, both features of Learning Oriented Assessment (Carless & Boud, 2018; Tang & Chow, 2007). These outcomes were a result of the asynchronous written feedback we used on VT, which allowed us to analyze, review the comments and support students to improve their critical feedback to others.

An additional benefit to the students was the opportunity to continue to develop their practical teaching skills even during isolation. Language Teaching Methodologies emphasizes the practical nature of teaching, where students are required to apply theories of language learning to practical tasks for second language learners (ULO1) and develop their classroom management techniques (ULO6). Even when students were confined to their homes, they were able to produce VT practice lessons alone or with members of their households. Some students found creative ways to teach, using soft toys, cushions or even pets as 'students'. Students were able to put into practice important ideas in the course such as giving clear task instructions, modelling and adapting the amount and complexity of their teacher talk.

Additionally, students had the opportunity to increase their understanding of technology such as recording videos and uploading them to VT, which could be used for future teaching, whether fully online or through blended learning. Students received instructions and demonstrations on the use of VT, but they could also be seen sharing extra knowledge with each other. One student in the course wrote a clear instruction guide on making and uploading VTs effectively, which she posted in the class forum. In light of the current worldwide situation relating to workplaces and classrooms in particular, the ability to utilize technology is an important skill that teachers are likely to require in the future.

The students' developing autonomy could be seen in the VT tasks over time. As previously mentioned, the tasks were designed to facilitate student autonomy, with the students having more choices about the direction of their VTs, and two weeks to submit VTs and peer feedback. These aspects of the tasks allowed students to control and manage their learning, which is important to autonomy (Benson, 2011). A wide variety of task types and learner groups were represented in VT3, from younger children to adults, with students choosing a task that they felt was important or necessary for their learners at their age and stage. We have found that students increased their confidence in the value of their own opinions as there was more constructive criticism in VT3. This is because giving constructive criticism can be seen as emotionally risky, especially when it is not known what the reaction can be. Equally, the ability for students to receive and learn from feedback can be tied to self-efficacy (Carless & Boud, 2018) and therefore one of the cognitive aspects of autonomy (Benson, 2011).

In the VT tasks, students can actively be seen developing their own theories about teaching and learning and becoming reflective practitioners. Several students mentioned that creating VTs had been the most useful aspect of the course, as watching their own videos had helped them to realize that their perceptions of their own teaching diverged from the reality. These comments align with Harmer's (2015) observation on the usefulness of self-analysis of video lessons where teaching practices become visible. In their reflections and comments on peer feedback, students specifically mentioned how receiving peer feedback and reflecting on it had changed their approach to teaching. Comments of changes that the students stated they would make to their teaching included specific aspects such as

the way they would run a specific activity in the future. Students also extrapolated specific comments to make wider comments that would apply to teaching more generally. For example, a peer comment on a decontextualized language point made a student realize that they should contextualize language in general in their teaching. This example was typical of student reflections and demonstrates the effect of peer feedback and self-reflection on the students' development of their own ideas about teaching and learning. Furthermore, in the essay part of the unit's final assessment task there was explicit mention of the feedback provided on microteaching and implicit use of the reflective tools provided in the second enabling task. This development of reflective practice can be built on in students' future (or current) careers as teachers, providing a basis to continue to evaluate and improve their own practice over time (Harmer, 2015).

We found that VT was a useful tool in addition to the course LMS when it came to fostering a community of students and encouraging academic engagement. As face-to-face lectures were no longer possible, the fully online mode of delivery promoted a more inclusive approach towards previously external students. Through VT, students were able to virtually meet, see, hear and interact with colleagues whom they might not have met otherwise in a pre-COVID-19 environment. Although the course LMS remained the main vehicle to manage the unit and provide information to students, the VT platform allowed for more 'real-life' interaction and increased connection, thus creating a more integrated student body.

Moreover, the same weekly practical tasks and microteaching requirements became applicable to all students, whether originally internal or external. This task uniformity allowed us to organize the entire cohort into small-size mixed groups for microteaching and peer feedback, which promoted communication and collaboration. In our weekly meetings and in the end-of-semester survey, we noted the generally positive attitude to group work and reflection on their teaching practice.

Although we kept the weekly text-based discussion forums as part of the unit, we noticed, similarly to Kirby and Hulan (2016), that they did not always promote meaningful communication, as students often reiterated each other's ideas or posted their responses in isolation. At the same time, VT encouraged students to comment on each other's videos more engagingly. A possible reason may be that VT was a novel way to interact, compared to text-based discussion forums that may not offer the interactivity of the video combined with feedback. As a result, the students did not merely follow the microteaching and peer feedback task requirements but communicated in a genuine, interested manner. We believe the asynchronous nature of this communication was in fact an advantage for the students less inclined to communicate in real-time face-to-face environment.

Finally, in our experience, as an online microteaching platform, VT satisfied all the criteria of successful online learning as stipulated by the CoI framework. First, sustained student engagement, even after the medium of communication moved fully online, guaranteed their cognitive presence. The audio and video VT posts presented our students as "real people" (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 1999, p.89) with social presence. The teaching presence, in turn, came not only from the lecturers but from other students in the form of peer feedback. Finally, the learning presence was observed when the students planned, performed and reflected on their microteaching while taking into account the feedback received.

In sum, increased autonomy along with higher engagement appear to be the main merits of this series of tasks. We hope that the practice of self-reflection and collegiality stays with the students in their professional lives after graduation.

6 Reflection

What we have learnt from the first run of these suite of tasks leading up to the final assessment is related to task design. Firstly, clear instructions and task models need to be provided, as students may be tempted to produce an online presentation with slides and commentary rather than a video of their teaching. We realized this after VT2 and made it explicit that students are not to use slides but to video

record themselves. It is thus suggested that if this model is used for tasks to enhance or assess non-verbal aspects of communication e.g. body language in oral presentations, the slides could be either provided alongside the video, attached or in the background of the speaker. Secondly, the suite of tasks increased student workload as microteaching moved outside lecture hours. This means that care should be taken to decrease other tasks in the weeks when VTs are due. As students found the series of tasks valuable, we are planning on making these compulsory in the next semesters by adding a participation mark that includes active engagement with the online tasks.

The series of tasks outlined in this paper would be applicable in any English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. It could be used for oral presentations in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, for communicative tasks in ESP in medical contexts such as doctor-patient role plays aimed at clear communication, for filming meetings in Business English courses. In other words, this approach with the series of VTs and scaffolding tasks is useful for any teaching context that requires the production of and assesses some form of oral genre. In general English teaching, it could be used for speaking tasks such as a movie or book review. The same scaffolding tasks focusing on peer feedback and reflection could be utilized between the VTs in all of the above contexts to achieve similar effects of increased autonomy and assessment literacy.

Finally, it can be used alongside face-to-face courses as well. VT can be used as an addition to face-to-face courses, allowing for practical elements to be done outside of class. In this case it would be used as homework or a pre-class video task. For instance, before class students record a personal experience, which is used as a springboard for teaching vocabulary in class. Moreover, it can be integrated into the lesson through a collaborative task. For example, students complete a communicative task like planning a road trip in class which they film, upload to VT and then receive peer and teacher feedback on it. This feedback can be directed at pronunciation or language for negotiation. With the use of a simplified rubric, students can give each other feedback as well, like in our context. Therefore, used alongside face-to-face teaching, this can enhance learning and increase communicative opportunities and learner engagement.

Despite the challenges that we experienced bringing our unit online, the use of VT was beneficial for our cohort and brought benefits including autonomy, reflective practice and improved feedback and IT literacy. We, therefore, recommend the use of VT in a systematic way combined with enabling tasks and supportive teacher presence in and outside face-to-face classes.

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