



Video-Making in the Foreign Language Classroom: Applying Principles of Constructivist Pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper describes a video-making project in which twenty-four Russian language students at a Malaysian university made their own digital videos in Russian. The article argues that the activity supports a constructivist perspective on education, based on such tenets as the active construction of knowledge by learners, the social nature of learning, the authenticity of the learning situation, and the ability of students to determine their own learning goals. This study describes stages in the video project implementation, gives a brief overview of two student-produced videos, and reports the learners' opinions about the activity. The students' perceptions of the video project reflected the four constructivist assumptions adopted in this study. The paper concludes that involving language learners in video projects is conducive to the application of constructivist principles in the foreign language classroom and that the activity enhances the pedagogical effectiveness of language teaching.

1 Introduction

Video materials have been employed in language teaching and learning since the early 1980s, when the technology became widely available for non-industrial purposes. A vast quantity of video materials has been specifically developed for use in the foreign language classroom. Advances in digital technology in the 1990s created even more exciting opportunities for using video for language teaching and learning (Vanderplank, 2010). However, video materials have been employed as a “static” resource similar to printed sources because the classroom activities have been mainly centered round viewing and listening to the video, reading subtitles, or teaching the target language culture (Gardner, 1994; Moore, 2006). The potential for the more dynamic application of video in a foreign language program, such as involving the learners in the video production, has not been sufficiently explored.

The current paper describes a video-making project implemented by Russian language students at a Malaysian public university and views the project implementation from a constructivist perspective which acknowledges active construction of knowledge by the learners, intensive interaction and cooperation between learners, the ability of the students to determine their own learning goals, and the authenticity of the learning situation. The paper describes the stages by which the video project was implemented and examines whether the learners' perceptions of the project were consistent with the four constructivist assumptions.

2 Literature review

As previous research studies have established, video is not just another technological device to be used in the classroom: it is also a tool for promoting creativity (Loveless, 2002), meaning-making, and “fostering dialogue among students” (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 74). Importantly, studies that focus on incorporating technology into the teaching and learning process, including language teaching and learning, have often adopted a constructivist perspective on education (Blin, 1999; Debski & Levy, 1999; Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra, 2003).

Constructivism seeks to explore and explain how human knowledge originated and how it operates. Phillips (1995) noted that “humans are born with some cognitive or epistemological equipment or potentialities” but “by and large, human knowledge and the criteria and methods we use in our inquiries, are all constructed” (p. 5). The philosophical roots of educational constructivism can be found in the writings of Piaget (1971), Dewey (1960), and Vygotsky (1978). Educational constructivism has been associated with advanced pedagogy (Semel & Sadovnik, 1999). As Windschitl (2002) asserted, “At the turn of this new century, progressive pedagogies are likely to be based on the rhetoric of constructivism” (p. 131)

There exists a vast body of literature on constructivism in education, which reflects a rigorous on-going debate between scholars and researchers that propound various versions or forms of constructivism (see Phillips, 1995). Broadly speaking, the literature on educational constructivism can be categorized as either cognitive constructivism, which focuses on the individual learner’s psychological mechanisms involved in knowledge construction (Piaget, 1971), or social constructivism, which views the construction of knowledge as a social practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Despite the vast differences in the views of, and approaches to constructivism, there exist several points of convergence. Phillips (1995) pointed out two “important overlaps” among various constructivist perspectives on education, i.e. “the necessity for active participation by the learner” in the learning process and “the recognition ... of the social nature of learning” (p. 11). In addition to these constructivist positions, Loyens, Rikers and Schmidt (2007,) proposed two more assumptions that could form “the common ground in the various views on constructivism” (p. 180); namely, the learners’ ability to self-regulate the learning process, which includes setting their own learning agendas and monitoring the learning process, and the authenticity of the learning situation, which necessitates bringing into the teaching and learning practice ‘real-life’ situations, problems, and tasks. Therefore, four important assumptions of educational constructivism generally agreed on by researchers are: (1) an active construction of knowledge by the learners; (2) the social nature of learning, which necessitates intensive interaction between the learners; and (3) the authenticity of the learning situation, and (4) the ability of the students to determine their own learning goals.

The current study does not aim to discuss the philosophical foundations of educational constructivism or the surrounding debate. Rather, it is concerned with the issue of transforming the vast constructivist epistemology into pedagogical practice within the language classroom. Involving language learners in the production of digital video in the target language follows constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning since the main tenets of progressive language pedagogy, such as learner-centeredness, activity-based learning, and a communicative approach, put emphasis on the active involvement of the learners in the teaching/learning process and call for collaboration between learners. All these elements are present in the video-making activity. However, few of the available studies on student video projects have taken a wider constructivist perspective.

A search of databases for research studies on student-produced video in the context of language learning and teaching has revealed that the topic has been a focus of several academic inquiries. Some of the available studies highlight the benefits of making a video in the target language. For example, it has been reported that this activity can provide an excellent foundation for communicative activities and help the learners to activate the language skills they had acquired during the language program (Pearson, 1990). Also, the activity encourages the use of “real-world” language in “real-life” situations (Secules, Herron, & Tomasello, 1992), stimulates greater student participation in learning activities (Phillips, 1982; Yamak, 2008), reduces learner anxiety especially when

speaking in front of the audience (Brooke, 2003), and enhances learner autonomy and confidence (Charge & Giblin, 1988; Gardner, 1994).

Amongst the earlier reports on student-made video, a study by Gardner (1994) offers a framework for the video project organization and implementation. Gardner describes a video project where 15 undergraduate students learning English at The University of Hong Kong made a documentary on the campus eating facilities. He positioned the video project within the self-access learning framework that reflects constructivist requirements for self-regulated learning and learner autonomy.

Gardner (1994) identified two important stages of the activity, namely deciding the project organization and establishing the project's goals. He suggested four possible models of the project organization, namely: (1) all the students in the class participate in one large-scale production; (2) a 'project elite' coordinates the project and allocates work to other members of the class; (3) separate groups of students work on their own small-scale projects; and (4) the project is managed by the whole class which consists of smaller sub-groups responsible for different parts of the project (i.e. writing and editing the script, choosing locations to film, acting etc.).

Regarding the project goals, Gardner advised that they should be focused on the stages of the project implementation (i.e. choosing the topic for the video, deciding how the topic should be approached, identifying the intended audience, and deciding how to present the video), and that the goals must be clear and "immediately perceivable by the learners" (1994, p. 47). Gardner's outline of the stages of video project implementation could serve as useful guidelines for future projects, and some elements from his framework were adopted for the activity described in this paper. The following sections report on a video-making project carried out by Russian language learners at a Malaysian public university.

3 The project

3.1 Background

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is a big Malaysian public university. Study of a foreign language (e.g. French, Japanese, Russian or Spanish) or a local language (e.g. Kadazan-Dusun or Tamil) is compulsory for university students who are proficient in the English language and have attained Bands 4, 5, and 6 of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The duration of the foreign language program was four semesters with four contact hours per week at Levels 1, 2, 3, and three contact hours per week at Level 4. Continuous evaluation was practiced to assess the students' performance. This meant that the final grade was made up of the marks received by the student during the whole semester (i.e. the marks for the quizzes, homework, group assignments, group presentations etc.).

The video-making activity described in this article was carried out in the academic year 2007-2008 by second year students completing their fourth, and final, semester of language study. This activity was done on a voluntary basis, meaning that the students were free to decide whether to write and present a report on some aspect of Russian culture or to make their own video in the target language. For the video, the students could focus on one or several topics from the course syllabus; they had to develop their own storyline and conversations for the video script. Twenty-four students out of a total of sixty-six in the class volunteered for the project.

3.2 Organization of the project

The most feasible way to organize the project was by forming separate groups that worked on their own videos. This was because not all the students in the class were involved in the video project. In addition, working in separate groups was the preferred method for the students. The instructor did not interfere with the group formation but advised that the groups should not be too large and that the group members should meet for regular discussions and share the workload

equally. Four groups were formed, with each consisting of five to seven persons. The students were asked to keep journals of their work progress at various stages of the project implementation; they could report problems they had encountered while working on the video (including the solutions to these problems), and include any information related to the project implementation.

The students worked on the video project for 12 of the 14 weeks corresponding to the semester. When the scripts were ready, approximately 6-8 weeks after the commencement of the project, the groups submitted their work to the instructor for checking and correction before shooting their videos. The video presentations were done in class during the last two weeks of the semester.

3.3 Choosing the topic

The students themselves chose the themes for their videos. The condition was that they should include topics from the course syllabus in their scripts. Among these topics were “My Family and Friends,” “My Daily Life at the University,” “My Hometown,” “My House/Hostel,” “Talking about the Weather”, and so forth. This was done with the purpose of re-activating the learners’ prior knowledge of the language and to encourage them to employ the linguistic skills they had acquired during the four semesters of language study. The students chose the following titles for their videos: (1) “Wonders of Kota Kinabalu and Kudat”; (2) “Princess with Labu and Labi”; (3) “A Trip to Kuala Lumpur”; and (4) “A Meal in the ‘G.P.’ Restaurant”.

3.4 Deciding how to approach the topic

The students were free to choose a format for their video. For example, they could make a short movie, a talk show, a documentary or a promotional video. Since the linguistic aspect was the most important part of the video project, the instructor advised the students to include conversations or ‘role plays’ that involved each and every group member. When acting in front of the camera, the students were required to speak fluently, use the correct pronunciation, and be comprehensible to their audience. For the rest of the project, the students made their own decisions regarding the video.

3.5 Identifying the intended audience

The audience comprised the students’ Russian language course classmates. Also, the instructor proposed that the most successful videos could be considered for uploading to YouTube, provided that all of the group members involved in the video production agreed. It should be said here that although all the videos were creative, entertaining, and enjoyable to watch, the students agreed that not a single ‘end product’ merited international exposure without some additional editing and ‘mastering.’ However, suggesting the World Wide Web as a potential audience – which was by no means a ploy by the instructor – motivated the students to strive for the best result.

3.6 Deciding on the video presentation mode

During discussions with the students, it was decided that the videos would be presented as a ‘movie show’ in the class so that everyone could see the other groups’ achievements. The instructor believed that this would motivate the students to be creative and produce a better video. Each presentation was to begin or end with a short introduction where the group members would tell their classmates why they had decided to participate in the video project, what challenges and difficulties they had encountered while making the videos, and so forth. A notebook computer, speakers, and aLCD projector were set up in the classroom for the video presentations.

3.7 *Evaluating the video projects*

The instructor informed the students which parameters of the videos would be evaluated. Considering the subject matter, the most important parameter was language use as reflected in the proper use of grammatical structures and vocabulary in the dialogues and narratives. Other aspects to be evaluated were video content, including the selection of topics from the course synopsis and the logical sequence in which they were woven into the storyline, creativity as demonstrated in the development of the storyline, and team work. Setting the parameters for the project evaluation is important because this would nudge the students towards achieving the desirable learning outcomes. Formative assessment was adopted as a method of evaluation. The assessment included the quality of the ‘end product’ (i.e. the video itself), the teacher’s informal observations of the students’ work, and the feedback received from the group members.

4 The ‘end results’

In their videos, the students demonstrated solid linguistic skills, good teamwork, and a highly creative approach. The contents of the videos were well conceived. Students’ grades ranged from A to B+. The following subsections offer a brief synopsis of two student-made videos and share some information from the students’ reports.

4.1 *The video “Wonders of Kota Kinabalu and Kudat”*

The duration of the video is 14 minutes and 59 seconds. It can be described as a promotional video about Kota Kinabalu, the capital of the Malaysian state of Sabah, and the town of Kudat at the northern tip of the Borneo Island. The video starts by showing the maps of Malaysia, Sabah, and Kota Kinabalu. A read-over text in Russian introduces the country and the state to the viewers. The students added subtitles in the English language and an upbeat soundtrack. An English translation of the opening lines is as follows:

Malaysia is situated to the south of Thailand and to the north of Singapore. The state of Sabah is in the east of Malaysia. It takes two hours thirty minutes to fly to Sabah from Kuala Lumpur. Sabah is a big state. It has beautiful sea. The weather is always hot here. Kota Kinabalu is the capital of Sabah. The city has museums, library, tall buildings ...

In this short passage, the students combined the vocabulary and grammatical structures from several topics they had learned during the language program. Thus, they used expressions for indicating geographical locations (e.g. “to the north of” and “to the south of”), made comments about the weather, described the means of transportation and the time required to reach a place (“it takes two hours thirty minutes” and “by plane”), and used proper vocabulary to describe the city.

In the video, the students acted-out several scenes. For example, they went to a market to buy local fruits, shopped for t-shirts in a new and trendy shopping complex in Kota Kinabalu, and visited a traditional longhouse. The conversation at the market begins thus:

CF: Good morning. It’s eight o’clock. Here is the market.
 JB: Wow! There are so many people here! What do you want to buy?
 CF: I want to cook laksa for dinner. Laksa is a local dish.
 JB: We could make laksa with fish and salad leaves.
 CF: It’s a good idea. But I cannot eat salad leaves. I am allergic.
 JB: Then, we will cook laksa with cucumbers only and without the salad leaves.

Several topics and grammatical structures were employed in this short exchange. For example, the students used expressions indicating time and location (“it’s 8 o’clock” and “here is the market”), and agreement (“it’s a good idea”). They mentioned the food items they needed to buy, and made plans to cook dinner. The grammatical structures included the accusative case (“to cook laksa” and “to eat the salad leaves”), the instrumental and the genitive case (“with cucumber ... and

without the salad leaves”). The video ends with a list of the “crew members” written in Russian, which includes the video “director,” “producer,” “cameraman,” “actors,” and “consultant.”

After the video demonstration, the students talked about difficulties and problems they had encountered while working on their project, and how they had solved them. The problems were mostly related to technical or linguistic aspects. For example, the camcorder with which the group shot the video at night required the use of a videotape instead of a memory card, and so the students had to digitalize that piece of the movie. For this, they sought help from the university’s multimedia unit. Regarding the language use, the group members said that they had noticed many repeats in the conversations in the first draft of the video script. So, they decided to reorganize the storyline, diversify the information given in the video, and include some new scenes.

4.1.1 Students’ report on the video “Wonders of Kota Kinabalu and Kudat”

The report contains a synopsis of the video, information on the shooting locations, and the names of the group members involved in each stage of the video production. Also listed were the problems encountered during the project, as well as the solutions devised by the group members.

In the report, the students mentioned that their original idea was to make a movie about “three Russian tourists visiting Malaysia on different holiday packages, such as city travel, eco tourism, and food bonanza.” They promptly identified the problems that might crop up due to their limited financial means and insufficient linguistics skills, and as a consequence the team agreed to ‘down-scale’ the original idea and modify the storyline. Instead, they decided to make a promotional video introducing viewers to places of interest in Kota Kinabalu and its environment. They discussed the logistics and decided that while different group members would film at different locations (namely Kota Kinabalu and Kudat), they would combine efforts to produce and edit the video.

4.2 The video “Princess with Labu and Labi”

The duration of the video is 19 minutes and 10 seconds. This black and white video is the students’ own version of a Malaysian classical movie. The storyline is an adaptation of a Malay fairy-tale about a fickle and difficult to please princess and her two helpless servants, Labu and Labi. At the end of the movie, the servants became so frustrated by the unreasonable demands of the princess that they decided to turn her into a rabbit, with a little help from a witch. The scenes and conversations in the video include taking a walk around town, having a meal at a restaurant, deciding what to wear, and so forth. An English translation of the conversation between the princess and the servants at the restaurant is as follows:

- Princess: I am hungry. Bring me the food! And do it fast!
 Servant: Yes, Princess. Here is rice and chicken.
 Princess: Rice and chicken? I don’t like this food. Too salty! Give me water! Fast!
 Servant: Princess, this is chocolate cake.
 Princess: Hmmm... I love chocolate cakes. Bring me juice. Now!

In this short conversation, the students used vocabulary for food items, expressed their likes and dislikes, made comments on the taste of the food, and used the imperative.

From an artistic perspective, the video has funny sound effects and a creative sound track. At the end of the movie, the cast and production team are listed. During the video presentation, the group members explained their choice of topic. They said that they had been attracted by the hilarious storyline and thought that if the characters of Labu and Labi appealed to them, then they would be entertaining enough for the audience to watch. The students said that the main challenges of the project had been writing the script and acting in front of the camera. This was partly because the language had often been beyond their knowledge and memorizing the script had involved some “serious practice to get the perfect performance.” Among the various problems encountered, they

also mentioned time constraints and some technical difficulties, such as editing and combining the video pieces.

4.2.1 Students' report on the video "Princess with Labu and Labi"

In their report, the students wrote that they had decided to make a video because they "wanted to try to do something new." At first, they had several ideas, such as making a documentary about their university or about daily life in the campus. Then they thought of making a short movie about going on a picnic or producing some humorous footage about "a classroom with naughty students." Finally, they decided to make their own version of a famous Malaysian movie. The students considered the unexpected or, as they wrote, "twisted ending" to their video the most interesting part of their project.

The report also contains a weekly work schedule on the project, information on the contributions of the team members to the group effort, as well as a list of materials and equipment the students needed at various stages of the project implementation.

5 Students' opinions about the video project

At the end of the semester, the students were given a questionnaire which sought their opinions about the video project. The questionnaire included such open-ended questions as: (1) What was the most challenging part of this project?; (2) What was the most enjoyable/fun part of this project?; (3) Do you feel that you have benefited from being involved in this projects?; and (4) Would you recommend that this type of activity be continued with your juniors? Why?

The majority of the answers regarding the most challenging part of the video making were related to the technical aspects (e.g. "recording the video," "editing the video," "computer editing," and "first time used the Movie Maker program; had to learn how to use it"). Almost as challenging were the linguistic obstacles, typified by answers such as "speaking in the Russian language was challenging" and "memorizing the script was difficult." Also, the students mentioned problems related to the creative side of the project (e.g. "planning the scenario and storyline was tough," "planning to make a good video was challenging" and "acting is difficult"). Three students wrote that time constraints had posed the biggest challenge.

Regarding the second question, the majority of the students wrote that interacting and cooperating with their team members was the most enjoyable part of the project. The students enjoyed "gathering together and recording the video" and "treating ourselves to a meal after the work." They appreciated "the cooperation and support given by the group members" and the fact that "every group member was happily involved." Other than this, some students stated that they had appreciated the opportunity to speak Russian (e.g. "I could use the Russian language more frequently while working on this project"). Some students enjoyed the creative process of making the video (e.g. "I liked creating the video storyline" and "I liked acting, which I did not think I could do").

When answering Question #3 about the benefits of the video project, all the students stated that they had benefited from being involved in this project. The most widely perceived benefits related to improving one's language skills and boosting one's linguistic confidence. The typical answers in this category were "I used Russian more often compared to working on the previous semesters' projects," "writing the script allowed me to improve my knowledge of grammar" and "(upon completing the project) I feel more confident to act and speak in Russian." Another cluster of statements related to enhancing one's computer skills and knowledge of video-making programs (e.g. "I learned some techniques to combine the video," "I learned to edit the video by using the Movie Maker software," and "I learnt how to edit the video. This can be useful in the future"). Some students identified enhancing one's social skills and the ability to work as a team as the biggest benefit. The answers they gave were "I got closer to my group members," "I learnt about team work, trust and support from each other" and "I learnt how to cooperate effectively".

Finally, when asked whether they would recommend that this activity be continued with their juniors, 22 students, or 91.7%, gave a positive answer. Many of the respondents commented that though the video project was more challenging and time consuming compared to writing a report on Russian culture, it was also more rewarding. Another reason given in support of the video-making project was that one could “learn more things” and be more creative. There were only two students who thought that the activity should be discontinued. One student wrote that the project “takes more time and requires much tedious work,” while another respondent complained that it was “hard to delegate tasks.”

6 Discussion and conclusion

Involving language learners in a video-making project in the target language offers a feasible way to infuse constructivist pedagogical strategies into foreign language teaching. In addition to many linguistic and non-linguistic benefits, the activity has the great potential to develop learners’ “knowledge building capabilities” (Shewbridge & Berge, 2004) and to promote close cooperation between students in the learning process (Gardner, 1994); it also necessitates that the learners set clear learning goals (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). As Shewbridge and Berge (2004) pointed out: “It is only natural that a constructivist approach be considered when designing instruction for (video) production.” (p. 36) Besides, working in groups on their own videos proved a learning experience for the students that was, “learner-centered, action-centered, and process oriented,” all of which are referred to by Wolff and Wendt (as cited in Eckerth & Tschirner, 2010, p. 54) as constructivist pedagogical principles.

The students’ perceptions of the video-making project reflected the four assumptions of the constructivist perspective on teaching and learning adopted in this study. The first of these assumptions referred to an active process of knowledge construction by the learners. It entails adopting an activity-based learning approach, which allows learners to be active ‘actors’ rather than passive ‘spectators’ in the learning process (Dewey, 1969). In the video project, the students become active creators of knowledge by combining language, technology, and the arts. Involving the language learners in making their own video provided a unique learning situation and fostered “alternative positions from which students can think, debate, and act” (Goldfarb, 2002, pp. 73–74). Instead of sitting in the classroom watching a movie in the target language and listening to the conversations or reading the subtitles, the students developed their own scripts, scenarios and dialogues in the target language. This way the students took ownership of their learning through selecting previously learned material and generating the language which was personally meaningful for them.

Video projects have the potential to enhance the pedagogical effectiveness of language teaching because, as the students’ answers to the open-ended questions show, working on them stimulated language production (e.g. “I used Russian more often compared to working on the previous projects”), necessitated the reactivation of their prior knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures (e.g. “when working on the script we had to study all the grammar and grammatical cases”), and enhanced the learners’ language skills (e.g. “writing the script allowed me to improve my knowledge of grammar” and “upon completing the project I feel more confident to act and speak in Russian”).

Another important tenet of constructivist epistemology is that people construct knowledge in a social context (see Vygotsky, 1978). This necessitates close and constant cooperation between the learners. As the students’ responses to the open-ended questions and their progress reports show, working on their own video projects involved intensive interaction (e.g. “every group member was happily involved in interaction with other group members”), promoted cooperation and mutual support between the learners (e.g. “I enjoyed cooperation and support I received from my group members” and “it was fun to work with my team and discover each others’ talents”), and strengthened the unity between the group members (“I made mistakes yet my friends supported me” and “everyone would laugh at their mistakes instead of blaming each other”). Encouragingly, many students mentioned that working together as a group, cooperating and receiving the support of

their peers had been the most enjoyable aspects of the project. This reaction may indicate that the learners were psychologically and emotionally open to the new learning experience. Some researchers (among them Buffe & Viallon, as cited in Vanderplank, 2010) have also observed the video project's ability to activate communication between learners.

The third constructivist assumption which this study adopted -- the authenticity of the learning situation -- was in evidence in both the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the video-making project. Linguistically, the learning situation was close to authentic because the students were re-creating 'real-life' situations in their videos, such as shopping, eating out, deciding where to go for a meal, and choosing means of transportation. These situations required the use of real-world language and demanded appropriate socio-linguistic behaviours, such as employing formal or informal forms of address and giving culturally acceptable responses in various situations. From the non-linguistic perspective, the authenticity of the learning situation was supported by the fact that the students worked on their project outside the classroom. This means that the world around them was both a source of ideas and the venue to implement these ideas and to apply their knowledge, which further authenticated the learning experience.

The authenticity of the learning situation also meant that the learners faced various unexpected problems while working on their video, which might not have happened had they been learning in the shelter of the classroom. As evidenced by the students' progress reports and answers to the open-ended questions, the learners encountered a number of problems related to the technical side of the video-making, such as converting the video files from one format to another or learning how to use unfamiliar computer software (e.g. "I used the moviemaker software for the first time, had to learn how to use it," "(the biggest challenge) was editing the video" and "combining the video was difficult"). They also had to overcome problems related to creating and performing in the Russian language ("preparing the script for the video was a big challenge" and "getting pronunciation right was difficult").

The fourth assumption of educational constructivism adopted in this study was the ability of the students to determine their learning goals. Working on their own project outside of the classroom for the duration of the whole semester necessitated thorough planning at each stage of the project by all the group members. This gave the students a significant degree of control over their own learning which was conducive to developing the ability to self-regulate the learning process and to setting their own learning agendas. As the students' work progress reports show, the implementation of the project was separated into several stages, the work schedule was set and the goals to be achieved at each stage were established. The students decided on the themes of their videos, developed the scenarios, and wrote the dialogues. Though some students mentioned that planning the scenario and the storyline had been the biggest challenge, this perception shows that the learners realized the need to set their own learning agendas. As one student explained, "planning the storyline" also meant considering how to include various themes and topics covered in the course syllabus in the script. This indicates that the students had to be aware of and practice self-regulated learning.

Since the video-making activity described in this article was a pilot project implemented by the instructor for the very first time, some modifications and improvements are possible. For example, besides an oral briefing by the instructor, students should be given written guidelines before they begin their work on the project. These guidelines would help students to set the project goals more effectively and serve as a road map for the duration of the project. Also, the instructor needs to devise proper evaluation strategies. Thus, a detailed grading rubric that explains how the video would be evaluated (i.e. the parameters and the allocation of marks) would nudge the learners towards desired and more solid learning outcomes. Steps towards developing a grading rubric to evaluate student video projects done in the context of a constructivist language classroom have been taken (see Nikitina, in press).

To conclude, there is no framework for practicing constructivist pedagogy and there are no clear guidelines for the implementation of constructivism in pedagogical practice. Constructivist pedagogy remains "less a model than a descriptor for instructional strategies" (Windschitl, 2002,

p. 136). Therefore, attempts to create learning and teaching contexts suitable for the application of constructivist pedagogy remain heuristic, and various pedagogical strategies are being employed and tested for their suitability in particular classrooms with particular types of learners. Nevertheless, according to Kaufman (as cited in Eckerth & Tschirner, 2010, p. 54), constructivist pedagogy with its emphasis on the learner, learning process and social nature of learning can serve as an invaluable addition to the traditional 'instructivist teaching.'

This paper proposed that greater incorporation of digital video into language teaching and learning is a viable way of promoting progressive language pedagogy. This can be achieved by placing the emphasis on learner-centeredness, learner autonomy and the ownership of the learning, activity-based learning, communicative tasks that involve real-life situations – all of which are in concord with constructivist perspectives on education. Last but not least, video-making in the target language is an enjoyable and memorable activity that can be comfortably adopted in various language classes with learners at different levels of language proficiency.

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