

# **The IALLT Journal**

*A publication of the International Association for Language Learning Technology*

## **DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A VIDEOCONFERENCING-EMBEDDED FLIPPED CLASSROOM (VEFC) IN COLLEGE-LEVEL EFL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper aims to describe the videoconferencing-embedded flipped classroom (VEFC) as a viable instructional design and practice to overcome the present challenge of Teaching English as an International English (TEIL) in Japan's traditional EFL classroom. It will also discuss the effects and implications as a consequence of implementing this VEFC pedagogy in the classroom. Specifically, this paper will describe the four stages of VEFC: 1) out-of-class asynchronous task "connect with ELT scholars"; 2) in-class synchronous task "interact with ELT scholars"; 3) out-of-class asynchronous task "engage in reflective journals"; and 4) in-class synchronous task "collaborate to make a group presentation." VEFC can be an effective pedagogical choice that teachers can adopt to prepare their students to become competent English users in other EFL contexts.*

## **TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH (TEIL) IN JAPAN'S EFL CLASSROOM**

This paper was prompted when one of the authors (Ju Seong Lee; hereafter referred to in the first person) took a course by another (Dr. Yuji Nakamura) titled “English and English education in Japan in the age of globalization” in the spring of 2014 at Keio University, one of the Japan’s major private universities in Tokyo. The school’s reputation as one of Japan’s top global universities has attracted a lot of international students (*The Japan Times*, 2015). The objective of his class was to explore various issues in relation to English policy, teaching and learning in a Japanese context. Using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), Dr. Nakamura facilitated student-led seminar discussions every week that were structured around readings and group discussion of individual presentations. Nearly 20 students (both domestic and international students) enrolled in the course.

Throughout the semester, participating students examined sociolinguistic aspects of the English language such as the changing landscape of the English language and English as an International Language (EIL). For example, demographically there are more than 1.5 billion speakers of English around the world, and more than 80 percent of communication in English is now between non-native speakers of English (Crystal, 2010; Crystal, 1997). This shifting phenomenon has been accelerated by globalization mainly due to technological advancements, influencing the perceptions, behaviors and worldview of people (Block, 2008; Dicken, 1998; Giddens, 1990). Given this trend, in the field of English language teaching (ELT) there have been recent pedagogical calls to expose English learners to different varieties of *Englishes* (e.g., Indian English, Hong Kong English) that reflect such reality of English use and users today (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011).

Although Dr. Nakamura’s pedagogical approaches (e.g., using EMI, student-oriented group discussion) were the reaction to such ELT movements by teaching an EIL concept in the classroom (to prepare his students to perform well in international, multicultural contexts), a majority of the Japanese classmates were neither familiar nor comfortable with different varieties of *Englishes* such as Hong Kong English and Korean English (Lee & Nakamura, 2015). Instead, they still perceived English as the language that was primarily used and owned by American or British people.

## **VIDEOCONFERENCING-EMBEDDED FLIPPED CLASSROOM (VEFC)**

After the semester, Dr. Nakamura and I discussed this ELT dilemma in his classroom: How can we teach EIL effectively in Japan's traditional EFL classroom? Specifically, how can we provide ample opportunities for his Japanese EFL learners to engage in interaction with diverse English users in authentic, multicultural contexts in order to become more competent English users in multilingual and/or multicultural situations (Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010)? The solution we proposed was the pedagogical concept we call "Videoconferencing-Embedded Flipped Classroom (VEFC)." This innovative practice aimed at creating synergy effects by incorporating pedagogical components of the flipped classroom and videoconferencing into teaching EIL in the Japanese EFL classroom.

More specifically, the concept "flipped classroom" was adopted as a pedagogical methodology because it would allow Dr. Nakamura's EFL students to carry out problem-solving tasks outside of the classroom individually and asynchronously (e.g., writing an essay on EIL-related topics on the e-bulletin board), while engaging in a series of synchronous group activities (e.g., listening to the lectures, involving debate or discussion) in the classroom (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). To put this concept into use, videoconferencing – synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) technology that can visually and aurally bring together more than two parties at different locations (Burke et al., 2010; Gillies, 2008) – was selected a viable tool with creative potential. The benefits of videoconferencing in education are enormous since in addition to several economic, academic, and pedagogical benefits, videoconferencing technology enhances EFL learners' motivation, confidence and communicative competence through real-time interaction with real users of English where the conversation takes place in an authentic environment (Burke et al., 2010; Gillies, 2008; Gregersen & Youdina, 2009; Journell & Dressman, 2011; Savignon, 2003; Wu & Marek, 2010; Wu et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2013).

In this paper, drawing on the above-mentioned combined strengths of the flipped classrooms and videoconferencing, we define VEFC as an activity where students engage in problem solving tasks outside of the classroom asynchronously while participating in a series of synchronous activities in the classroom via videoconference.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: DESIGNING VIDEOCONFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM**

In the fall of 2014, while a PhD student at the University of Illinois, I was taking a course taught by Dr. Randall Sadler on the advantages and methods of integrating Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) into foreign language teaching. Dr. Sadler, Dr. Nakamura, and I began exploring how technology might enhance the experience of Dr. Nakamura's students, and decided to integrate videoconferencing as part of this process.

This first videoconference (November 19, 2014) included speakers from Japan (Dr. Yuji Nakamura, Keio U), the U.S. (Dr. Randall Sadler, U. of Illinois), South Korea (Dr. Kilryoung Lee, Hankuk U.), and Indonesia (Dr. Nugrahenny Zacharias, Satya Wacana Christian U.) with myself acting as the moderator and was titled "The impacts of globalization on English and English education from global perspectives." Before the conference took place we created a digital bulletin board to promote interaction between the students and the invited speakers in a virtual environment. The discussion was facilitated by a combination of synchronous (using multiple-way video calls) and asynchronous (email and bulletin boards) technologies. In two test sessions that took place prior to the videoconference, the participants became more familiar with the Skype technology utilized for the videoconferences. These sessions also enabled Dr. Sadler and myself to check and troubleshoot technological issues.

On the videoconferencing date, we held a five-way video conference to enable a real-time dialogue in the format of a panel discussion where four ELT experts could discuss English education in their respective countries and the participating students were able to discuss their opinions on ELT issues (e.g., English policy, English testing). After the videoconference, we edited the recorded video clips and disseminated the materials online (<http://www.eslweb.wix.com/esol-roundtable>). Table 1 illustrates the steps involved in the preparation for the videoconference.

Table 1. Timeline of the 1<sup>st</sup> Videoconference

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time (mins.)</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Aim</b>
Sep. 20, 2014	N/A	Create a promotional video	Promote the videoconference among students and colleagues online

Sep. 25, 2014	N/A	Create a digital bulletin board	Encourage interaction between students and invited speakers online
Oct. 27, 2014	30	Hold rehearsing meeting 1	Review technical issues
Nov. 18, 2014	30	Hold rehearsing meeting 2	Final rehearsal
Nov. 19, 2014	90	Hold the actual videoconference	Videoconference
Nov. 25, 2014	N/A	Edit the video clips of the conference	Disseminate authentic EIL content online

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As expected, the first videoconference started somewhat formally, as none of the participants, except for Dr. Sadler, had previous experience with this form of online interaction. Nevertheless, each participating panelist soon began to speak comfortably on the given topic under the guidance of the moderator for an hour or so. After the panel discussion, the panelists and the students (from Illinois and Keio University) interacted with each other for nearly half an hour as if they were physically in the same classroom, a process that would have been impossible without the aid of Skype technology. During the Q&A discussion, one of the students from the Keio side raised the question, “How can we encourage each government to pay more attention to the needs of English teachers and students?” This prompted the ELT experts and students alike to consider this issue globally. They had an intense semi-structured discussion with only minimal assistance from the moderator.

The first videoconference lasted almost 90 minutes with positive results from both the participating panelists and students. After the videoconference was over, Dr. Nakamura reported that all of the Japanese students seemed to have enjoyed the experience, and continued further discussion with him in the classroom even after the cameras had been turned off. According to a follow-up questionnaire, the students responded favorably that they had learned a great deal from the videoconference because they could hear diverse perspectives on English education from ELT experts and students of other classes, which deepened their understanding and broadened their viewpoints on the issue. In addition, both the participating panelists and students marveled at the advantages of technology and were amazed at the technical quality of the panel discussion via videoconference.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> 2015, the second videoconference took place, connecting five ELT experts from the United States (Dr. Sadler), Japan (Dr. Nakamura), South Korea (Dr. Lee) Indonesia (Dr. Zacharias), and Hong Kong (first time participant

Dr. Andy Gao, University of Hong Kong) with three groups of students from Tokyo, Seoul, and Hong Kong. The theme of this videoconference was “Beyond borders of the inner circles, outer circle, and expanding circle.” This videoconference was innovative and significant in that it was the first attempt to bring together experts and students from the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle countries synchronously to discuss English as an International Language (EIL) issues (Kachru, 1985), allowing us to explicitly demonstrate EIL situations to the EFL students. In preparation for this videoconference, I flew to Hong Kong University (HKU) and facilitated the project in person in collaboration with Dr. Gao, three HKU staff and graduate students who would also take part in the project.

In comparison to the first two videoconferences, the third videoconference that took place on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2015 took on a more formalized approach with a longer keynote lecture (Dr. Aya Matsuda, Arizona State U.) that framed the focus for the interaction, followed by shorter presentations by the additional speakers, as seen Table 2. Under the theme of “Revisiting principles of teaching English as an International Language (EIL),” each of the speakers had the option to also include PowerPoint slides in their presentation, with the presentations again followed by a Q&A session between the presenters and students. This format gave the students the feeling of being involved in a larger academic conference, while once again giving access to a variety of voices sharing their expert thoughts on relevant topics. This episode of the videoconference was also, for the first time, made available via live streaming, giving access to interested participants anywhere.

Table 2. Procedure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Videoconference Session

<b>Time (mins.)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Topics</b>
5	Introductions	Introducing panelists & audience
20	Dr. Aya Matsuda	Revisiting principles of Teaching EIL
5	Dr. Oda	NESTs and NNESTs in TESOL
5	Dr. Lee	EIL and Teacher Education
5	Dr. Nakamura	EIL and English Language Assessment
5	Dr. Sadler	EIL and CMC
5	Dr. Zacharias	EIL and ELT Material Development
30	Q&A	Interaction among invited speakers & students
	Discussion	
5	Closing	Closing Remarks

PowerPoint slides from the presenters were incorporated as additional instructional materials during the videoconference, which greatly improved students' understanding of the lectures. More importantly, this videoconference was supplemented by opportunity for online chat which provided more options for interaction. For example, one ELT practitioner (living in Australia) was able to interact synchronously and asynchronously with two ELT speakers (from Indonesia and Japan) during and after the videoconference in a Facebook group as it was livestreamed.

As described in this section, videoconferencing technology has allowed Dr. Nakamura and his EFL students to connect with international scholars (from all *Three Circles*) through active engagement and collaboration without any temporal, financial, or geographical limitations (Jung, 2013; Kachru, 1985; Wu & Marek, 2010). Table 3 displays the summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> videoconference.

Table 3. A Summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Videoconference

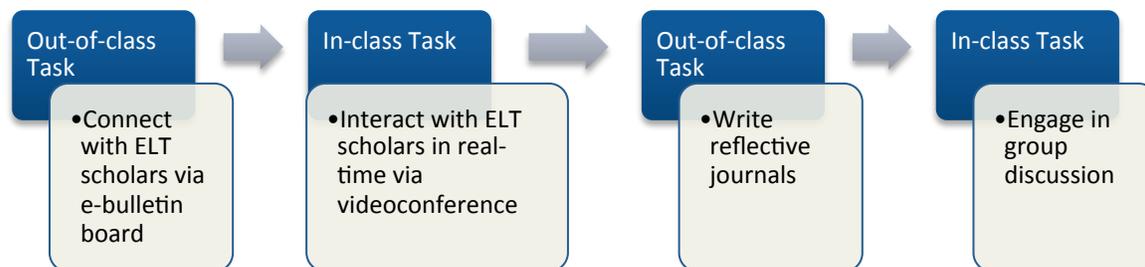
Date	1 <sup>st</sup> Videoconference (Nov. 19, 2014)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Videoconference (May 20, 2015)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Videoconference (Jun. 10, 2015)
<b>Invited Speakers</b>	Dr. Kilryoung Lee Dr. Nugrahenny Zacharias Dr. Randall Sadler Dr. Yuji Nakamura	Dr. Xuesong Gao Dr. Kilryoung Lee Dr. Nugrahenny Zacharias Dr. Randall Sadler Dr. Yuji Nakamura	Dr. Aya Matsuda Dr. Masaki Oda Dr. Kilryoung Lee Dr. Nugrahenny Zacharias Dr. Randall Sadler Dr. Yuji Nakamura
<b>Participating Countries</b>	U.S.A Japan South Korea Indonesia	U.S.A Japan South Korea Indonesia Hong Kong	U.S.A Japan South Korea Indonesia
<b>Pictures</b>			

## INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION: IMPLEMENTING VEFC

This section will describe how Dr. Nakamura implemented VEFC within his course. In spring of 2015, he operated his flipped-classroom both synchronously and asynchronously using videoconference.

First, students connected and interacted asynchronously with ELT scholars using an e-bulletin board prior to the actual videoconferencing. Next, students participated in the 90-minute videoconference synchronously, followed by individual essay writing (outside the classroom) and group discussion (in the classroom). For the essay writing, students could watch the videoconferencing video clips archived on the website (<http://eslweb.wix.com/esol-roundtable>) and write up a reflective journal based on prompts (e.g., your perception on different varieties of *Englishes*). As for the in-class group discussion, once students came back to class, they had a deeper debate/discussion with Dr. Nakamura and their classmates. Figure 1 illustrates the basic sequence of the VEFC.

Figure 1. Flow Chart of VEFC



We have learned that there are several educational benefits to the VEFC for teaching and learning English language. The most obvious advantage is that the majority of students felt that VEFC allowed them to enhance awareness of the diverse *Englishes* (not one English variety) in the classroom by being exposed to different kinds of *Englishes* (Lee & Nakamura, 2015). It turned out that several students had not experienced nor ever thought of other varieties of *Englishes* (e.g., Indonesian English, Hong Kong English) until they took this flipped class via videoconferencing. In the field of ELT, this pedagogical model can be an effective way to expose English learners to different varieties of *Englishes* that could truly reflect the current status of English use and users around the world (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011). Matsuda (2002) argued that if English learners are

exposed only to the English uses and users from the Inner Circle countries (e.g., American/British English), it can negatively affect students' awareness and attitude toward other varieties of English (e.g., Japanese English, Korean English). As a result, ELT practitioners can develop and implement English as an International Language (EIL) instruction using the videoconferencing-based flipped classroom, which can raise awareness of the diversity of *Englishes* in the classroom.

Another advantage is videoconferencing allowed students to overcome geographical barriers and access up-to-date knowledge. For instance, students were able to hear diverse perspectives on the given topic and compare and contrast how certain issues are perceived in different nations just by sitting in a classroom. Especially, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> videoconference, students in Tokyo were able to interact with the keynote speaker (through listening to her lecture and asking questions) after having read her paper, which helped them deeply engage in the content material. This VEFC model can be applied in more creative ways, too. For example, it can provide English learners living in rural areas or in developing countries (where in-person meetings with native speakers and travel are challenging) with opportunities to practice communicative English. In such a way, they can also get the level of English education that students in urban areas are receiving.

In terms of scholarship, videoconferencing can provide multiple opportunities for co-authored publications, presentations, and career advancement for collaborating faculties. For example, the participating professors are currently in the process of working on a co-authored paper based on the videoconferencing talks. It can also expand the record of expertise internationally for the professors and graduate students who are involved in the project.

## IMPLICATIONS

Why, then, are practitioners (not only in the field of ELT but other disciplines) reluctant to use videoconference in the classroom settings? The most serious challenge based on our firsthand experience may stem from a lack of a videoconferencing-integrated pedagogical model. Gillies (2008) points out that there is a dearth of videoconferencing-embedded instruction despite the advancement of technology. We went through multiple planning stages (or trial and error) because we could not find any guidelines or resources regarding

videoconferencing in the classroom. Thus, we expect this paper can contribute to pedagogical knowledge on the use of videoconferencing in the classroom.

Another challenge we faced was the difficulty of scheduling (Gregersen & Youdina, 2009; Sadler, 2007). For example, we found it difficult to arrange an online meeting for the five professors (living in four different time zones) when planning the 2<sup>nd</sup> videoconference. Thus, the coordinator should take into account the time zone of all participants as well as their detailed schedules (if necessary) when designing and implementing the videoconference.

Additionally, we faced challenges due to technological difficulties. Some individuals were not familiar (or comfortable) with the Skype technology and the virtual format of videoconferencing. We could mitigate this lack of confidence and unfamiliarity through a series of constant education and training. Dr. Sadler (whose expertise was Computer-Mediated Communication) and I occasionally acted as troubleshooters before and during the videoconferencing sessions. For a future project, we are planning to collaborate with a private communication company such as “Skype in the Classroom” (<https://education.skype.com>), which would help overcome the technical limitations.

Despite these challenges, we firmly believe that teaching English (or EIL) through VEFC can contribute greatly to students’ learning in the age of globalization as they can connect, engage and collaborate with the world. VEFC can be one of the effective pedagogical choices that teachers can adopt to prepare their students to become competent English users in other EFL contexts.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Ju Seong (John) Lee** is a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). His research interest includes CALL (via videoconference and flipped classroom) and Sociolinguistics – English as an International Language (EIL). He is the best-paper winner of the 6th Annual UIUC College of Education Graduate Student Conference (2015) in USA and 3rd English Scholars Beyond Borders (ESBB) Conference in Taiwan (2016), respectively.

**Yuji Nakamura** is a professor of English at Keio University where he teaches Language Testing and English Teaching Methodology. He is a Past President of the Japan Language Testing Association (JLTA). His research

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**Randall Sadler** is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he teaches courses on Computer-Mediated Communication and Language Learning (CMCLL), Virtual Worlds and Language Learning (VWLL), and the Teaching of L2 Reading and Writing. His main research area is on the role of technology in language learning, with a particular focus on how Virtual Worlds may be used to enhance that process. He has published in these areas in journals including the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *CALICO Journal*, and *Computers & Education*, and has authored chapters and books in these areas.

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