

# Improved student motivation and confidence through self-access listening, video forums and talking journals

**William Collins**

Nagasaki University  
william@net.nagasaki-u.ac.jp

**Justin Hunt**

Nagasaki Commercial High School

*In order to improve and develop confidence in their speaking and listening proficiency, students need regular opportunities to speak with other learners and listen to a wide variety of listening content. With large university classes it is difficult for the teacher to monitor students' practice and promote student oral interaction outside of the classroom. Self-access listening and talking journals can give the students a range of listening and speaking options and allow the teacher to check students' practice and comprehension. Video forums can help motivate students and build their confidence by increasing their oral L2 production and extend peer support and feedback beyond the classroom. This paper reports the results of a three year study at Nagasaki University concerning the impact of expanded self-access listening, talking journals and video forums on improving student oral L2 production, motivation and confidence.*

## Introduction

First and second year students at Nagasaki University are required to take English Communication which emphasizes listening and speaking skills. To ensure this focus on oral skills it is important to maximize students' opportunities both to listen to authentic spoken English and to speak in the L2. Because these classes are often quite large, however, it is difficult for the teacher to tailor listening content to each student's individual abilities and interests. The large class-sizes also present challenges in monitoring student listening and extending the support network of student-student speaking and feedback outside class. Finally, because these English Communication

classes are required for non-English majors, many of the students have a low interest in English and thus a low motivation.

One important tool in addressing these challenges is **CALL**. Self-access listening materials can give students greater freedom in selecting listening content suited to their own interests (Chou, 2003; Sherman, 2003). With the use of online listening activities, students can receive immediate feedback on their listening, spurring confidence and reinforcing motivation (Mackey, 2006; Sanz & Leow, 2011). Course tools like video forums and talking journals can create and extend peer support (Gleason & Suvarov, 2011), another important element of motivation (Dörnyei, 2001a). This paper reports the results of an action research study conducted over three years in the first and second year English Communication classes at Nagasaki University concerning the impact of expanding self-access listening options, video forums and talking journals on improving student motivation and confidence and increasing oral L2 production.

## Literature review

### *The social dimension of language learning motivation*

One of the recurring themes in research on L2 motivation is its social dimension. Learning another language involves not only learning the linguistic code such as grammatical and lexical items, but also communicating with other speakers and interacting with other cultures (Gardner, 1979; Williams, 1994). The study of motivation and individual differences is a key component in research on second and foreign language acquisition (Skehan, 1989; Ellis, 1994; Dörnyei, 2005) because they affect not only the individual student's performance and the effort they make (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), but also larger group cohesion (Clement, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994) in the classroom. Gardner (2001, p. 9) defines motivation as a set of "behaviors, feelings and cognitions the motivated individual expresses that the individual who is not motivated does not exhibit. The motivated individual

has goals and desires; has aspirations, both immediate and distal; enjoys the activity of striving for the goal; experiences positive reinforcement from his or her successes, and dissatisfaction in response to failures; makes use of strategies to aid in achieving the goal. (p. 9)

Dörnyei (2003) stresses the temporal variation of learner motivation over time and argues for a *process model of L2 motivation* to account for this variation. This model involves three stages, the *preactional*, *actional* and *postactional* stages. In the *preactional* stage motivation must first be generated and involves such factors as "goal- setting, goal-relevance, goal-specificity and goal-proximity, expectancy of success and perceived coping potential" (p. 19). In the *actional* stage, motivation must be maintained by "knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies, pleasantness of learning experience, sense of autonomy, and influence of the learner group" (ibid). The *postactional* stage is the learners' "retrospective evaluation of how things went and include self-confidence, received feedback, praise and grades" (ibid).

A central theme in Gardner's (1985) research on motivation is the "integrative" aspect which concerns the learner's identification and desire to interact with members of the L2 group. Gardner's research concerned interaction between French and English speaking communities in Canada and thus had more of a second-language learning focus, but Dörnyei

associated with the language” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 6). Markus and Nurius (1986) posited the concept of “possible selves,” which they defines as what the individual “might become, would like to become, are afraid of becoming” (p. 954). They are “the cognitive components of hopes, fears, goals, and threats” and provide a “conceptual link between cognition and motivation” (p. 954). Dörnyei (2001b) suggests that presenting peer role models to the language learner can be a useful motivational strategy because they can serve as models for the learner’s ideal self. MacIntyre (2001b) has identified both cognitive and affective variables in shaping individual differences in language learners. Among the affective variables he cites are attitudes and motivation, language anxiety and self-confidence

### *Student autonomy and motivation*

Another important theme in research on L2 motivation is student autonomy and self-determination. Noels *et al.* (2000) discuss a self-determination approach to motivation in which there is an intrinsic motivation (**IM**) to “engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do...founded upon innate needs for competence and self-determination” (p. 61). **IM** is found in activities where the learner “can rise to the challenges that the activity presents” (*ibid*), but, as MacIntyre (2002) has argued, the intrinsic motivation of a task is often diminished when learners are offered a reward such as higher grades.

### *Computer-mediated-communication and motivation*

The two dimensions of computer-mediated-communication are time (synchronous or asynchronous) and modality (textual or written) (Hubbard, 2004). The text-based includes e-mail, discussion forums and chat rooms whereas oral includes voicemail and voice-blogs (Sun, 2009). **CMC** has been found to increase language exposure (Chen, 2005) and oral production (Rosen, 2009) and improve motivation through collaborative learning (Chen, 2005; Sun, 2009). Asynchronous **CMC** tools can also “enable L2 learners to express their thoughts at their own pace and feel more confident than in face-to-face situations” (Gleason & Suvorov, 2011, p. 2). These findings are somewhat mitigated by research showing some students viewed **CMC** as “...artificial, or pseudo-communication that did not aid their authentic communication skills in English” (Lin & Fang, 2010, p. 714).

### *Authentic video and motivation*

Sherman (2003) stresses the motivational benefits of authentic video for L2 learners and argues for their value as a source of a variety of real-world situations with “full contextual back-up” (p. 2), as a language model and for teaching culture. Subtitled music videos have also been found to improve student attitude and reading engagement (McCall & Craig, 2009).

### *Talking journals and pair recording*

Previous research on student perceptions of talking journals by Collins and Ruhl (2008) found that when used in conjunction with story maps and active-listening strategies for in-class pair-recording activities and an in-class final exam, they led to a lower incidence of students simply reading their stories. Students in that study also reported that talking journals helped them “think in English” and “feel more comfortable” speaking in English. **321**

## Action research method

The key elements of action research are, according to Burns (1999), (a) identifying and investigating problems within a specific situation; (b) evaluating and reflecting on outcomes to bring about change and improvement in practice, and (c) basing changes in practice on the collection of information or data. In the current study, problems were identified and outcomes were assessed each semester on the basis of quantitative surveys, qualitative student comments and analysis of students' recorded speaking practice.

## Classes prior to study

In 2006 an English homepage with links to audio recorded conversations was developed by the first author as a listening resource for the English Communication classes. The students' listening was not monitored, however. The following year the talking journal was first introduced in the classes. The options then were limited to students recording their stories solo. There was use of music in class, but limited to audio, no videos. And there was no opportunity for students to engage in computer-mediated communication either in writing or orally.

## Research questions

1. How would expanding self-access listening and speaking practice options affect students' motivation to practice their speaking and listening?
2. Which kinds of listening content and speaking practice options would students find most beneficial for improving their confidence?
3. What impact would expanded speaking practice options have on increasing students spoken L2 output?

## Methodology

To measure improvements in student motivation and confidence, this study employs a mixed method data collection survey, requiring quantitative responses to numerical data scale based questions with qualitative comments to strengthen the quantitative data and provide the opportunity for more detailed student feedback. At the end of each year of the study, students were given a survey on how the talking journal, self-access listening and later video forum requirements affected their attitudes about English. Increases in student's spoken L2 output were measured by number, time-length and composition of student talking journal recordings and (in year 3) video forum posts.

## Participants

The participants in the study were all first and second year students in Nagasaki University's compulsory English Communication courses and were all non-English majors. The number of students in each year of the study varied slightly with fluctuations in enrollment. There were 230 students in the first year of the study, 216 in the second and 242 in the third. The students were of similar age, ethnicity, and educational background.

## *Tasks, materials and assessment*

The expanding menu of study options throughout the three years of the study will be presented in this section and then the outcomes that gave rise to each new set of options in the following year will be explored in greater detail in the results section.

### *Year 1: Conversation audio listening and talking journals*

In the first year of the study, a self-access listening and expanded talking journal requirement was introduced into the English Communication classes.

**Listening.** Students were required to submit a listening sheet at the end of the semester noting how often they listened to the homepage audio recordings. Listening content was a set of 25 audio conversations linked to specific story themes in which one speaker told a story about a personal experience and the listener responded with rejoinders, comments and questions.

**Talking journal.** Students were required to use free voice recording software to keep a record of their speaking practice outside the classroom. Students were given the following options. *Story topics free-speaking:* students could choose from the set of story topics listed on the homepage and make their own one to two minute story. While students could first write down their story, when recording they were not permitted to read their story for this option. *Story topic reading out-loud:* as another option, students could write on a topic and then read it aloud. *Graded Reader or other non-student produced free-reading:* Students could read out loud from Penguin's graded readers or read other material out loud. Students saved the audio files resulting each time they recorded their speaking practice on their flash memories. At the end of the school year, the audio data on was collected by the teacher and students received a score based on number and time-length of practice recordings.

### *Year 2: Conversation videos, music videos and free-writing requirement*

In the second year of the study, the options for students' speaking and listening practice were expanded, and a free-writing requirement was introduced.

**Conversation videos.** Video recordings were made of five of the original story conversations with the author recounting the same experiences with a second native English teacher from New Zealand. An additional seven new stories were recorded from the New Zealand teacher's experience. The original five stories were scripted, with a special focus given to vocabulary. The seven new stories were unscripted, to give them an authenticity.

**Music videos.** The author compiled a list of over 100 songs and added subtitles to them. Songs were chosen that told a story, or dealt with themes such as change and overcoming challenges.

**Free writing requirement.** In order to place more focus on improving students' self-expression in English, students' were given a free-writing journal with all of the online story topics as well as other writing topics. A regular timed in-class free writing component was

introduced. Students were allowed to use their free-writing as a basis for free-speaking with the stipulation that rather than simply reading aloud what they wrote, they were to limit themselves to writing a set of keywords or use illustrations. The benefits of recalling the main points of their free-writing on the topic without the need to memorize and recite it verbatim were emphasized.

**Expanding speaking record recording options.** Students were given additional options for their talking journals. These included (1) *Pair-Conversations*: Students were required to record a certain number of pair-conversations outside of class with a partner for their talking journals. *Music Video Speaking Topics*: The first author developed a set of speaking and writing topics related to the themes of each of the music videos. Students were encouraged to write on these topics and record them for their talking journals. *Reading example sentences*: As a way to integrate students' speaking and vocabulary study, and to help students build vocabulary and improve pronunciation, students were permitted to record themselves reading out loud vocabulary example sentences. *Singing*: To make the music videos an enjoyable source of language input, students were encouraged to record themselves singing the songs as they watched the videos and read the subtitles. However, this option was limited to at most 10% of total talking journal recordings.

### *Year 3: Online listening quizzes, video questions and video forum*

In the third year of the study, an online listening course was added to the author's English Communication classes. In addition, the listening options were expanded to include **VOA** News videos. The speaking practice options also expanded to include a video forum and shadowing of listening content.

**Online listening quizzes.** The listening course was set up using the free and open source course-management system Moodle. The online quizzes all included the following: (1) *A source video*: This was a subtitled conversation, music, **VOA** news or movie scene video, which students could view; (2) *Video questions*: following the source video in each listening quiz was a set of multiple-choice questions recorded by the author using a web camera. Each question was displayed as a video screen shot showing the teacher's face. When the student clicked the screen shot, the video played the teacher asking the question and giving the four multiple choices. After answering a given question in a quiz, the students could check their answer and receive instant feedback and hints. The student then clicked "submit" to complete the quiz and see all the correct answers and their score. (3) *Easy and Difficult Versions*: For each video there was an "easy" and "difficult" version, with the latter worth more points towards the class listening requirement. For the easy versions, the source videos and video questions had subtitles and to answer the video questions, students needed only to type in the correct letter rather than the entire sentence. In the more difficult versions students had to enter the entire multiple choice statement rather than just the letter. (5) *Talking Journal Option*: As an additional talking journal option students were permitted to record themselves shadowing either the **VOA** news report or the multiple choice options in each video question.

**Video forum.** The authors developed a video forum add-on to the Moodle program whereby  
324 students could post a video talk, view and post a video response to other students' video

talks and receive feedback from the teacher. The aim was to add greater interactivity to the free-speaking practice by allowing students to communicate asynchronously online. To ensure that feedback replies were sufficiently detailed, students were given feedback guidelines and were permitted to count feedback posts for their talking journals.

## Results

Students' talking journal and listening data and student survey results are presented and resulting modifications in the curriculum are reported.

### Year 1

**Talking journal.** The audio recordings students submitted in their talking journals were analyzed to determine how much the students were practicing and which options the students favored. The results are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Students' talking journals

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Average number of audio recordings	27.6	34.2	48.2
Percentage of recordings student-produced content	28%	43%	52%
Percentage of recordings non-student-produced content	72%	57%	48%
Average time-length of recordings from student-produced content	1:07	1:23	1:27
Average time-length of recordings from non-student-produced content	4:13	4:07	3:47
Percentage of free-speaking story topic recordings (+video forum in year 3)	12%	25%	22%
Percentage of reading aloud story topic recordings	16%	(Not an option after Year 1)	
Percentage of reading aloud graded readers	72%	23%	12%
Percentage of reading aloud (years 2 & 3) vocabulary example sentences	N.A.	26%	9%
Percentage of pair-conversation recordings	0%	18%	18%
Percentage of singing (years 2 & 3)	N.A.	8%	4%
Percentage of video forum posts (year 3) responding to classmate's video talk	N.A.	N.A.	21%
Percentage of shadowing <b>VOA</b> listening (year 3)	N.A.	N.A.	14%

**Student Attitudes:** At the end of the first year of the study, students were given a survey on how the talking journal requirement affected their attitudes about English. The results are shown in Table 2:

In Year 1, students spent far more time reading aloud English texts produced by others (72%) than producing their own, which may account for the low percentage of students in the first year who agreed that the talking journal improved their confidence in speaking English or enhanced their in-class speaking. However, 60% of students said that the

Table 2: Student attitudes concerning talking journal and video forum

Survey statement	Helped enjoy English more			Improved speaking confidence			Improved in-class speaking		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Strongly agree	13%	28%	40%	10%	27%	33%	3%	26%	30%
Moderately agree	47%	56%	50%	31%	58%	57%	20%	60%	60%
Moderately disagree	36%	16%	10%	46%	13%	10%	53%	14%	10%
Strongly disagree	3%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	23%	0%	0%
M	2.70	3.12	3.29	2.41	3.13	3.23	2.03	3.13	3.19
SD	0.73	0.62	0.64	0.80	0.62	0.61	0.76	0.62	0.60

talking journals helped them “enjoy English more” which did suggest some positive impact on students’ motivation.

**Listening requirement.** Analysis of the listening sheets submitted by the students found that only 7% of students listened to 5 or more of the homepage audio conversations, and 57% reported no listening at all. Students commented that it was “boring” or “difficult” to listen to the conversations in audio form.

## Year 2

Following the addition of the outside pair-recording and free writing requirements and the conversation and music videos in year two, the talking journal data and listening sheets were again collected and the student surveys conducted. Students also gave qualitative feedback on the talking journals.

**Talking journal.** The following outcomes were seen in the second year (1) *Increase in student speaking practice outside of class*: The average number of audio recordings submitted by students for their speaking records increased from 27.6 in the first year of the study to 34.2 in the second year and the percentage of student-generated content increased from 28% to 43% (see Table 1). (2) *Improved Motivation and Confidence*: In the year 2 survey (see Table 2). 84% of students stated that the talking journal helped them enjoy English more, up from 60% in the first year of the study. The change was greater in the other two questions. 84% of the students agreed that the talking journal helped improve their speaking confidence, compared to 41% for this in the first year, and 86% agreed that the journal helped improve their English speaking in class, compared with 23% in the first year. (3) *Limited Spoken Interaction among Students*: Despite the increase in spoken interaction out of class with the introduction of the pair-recording requirement for student’s talking journals, it was not possible for classmates other than that one pair-recording partner to listen to that student’s story and give any kind of feedback.

**Listening.** Student listening sheets showed a modest increase in student’s outside listening, with students viewing an average of 11 music videos and 3 conversation videos. *Inability to Monitor and Evaluate Student Listening*: It was not possible for the authors to independently



### Year 3

With the addition of the video forum and the online Moodle listening course in the final year of the study, student talking journal recordings, video posts, feedback posts and online listening records were analyzed, and the students answered a quantitative survey and gave qualitative feedback concerning each of the three components.

**Talking journals and video forum.** The following results were seen concerning the talking journal and video forum. (1) *Increased Speaking Practice*: The results show that students practiced their speaking outside of class an average of 48.2 times throughout the semester, with the percentage of student-generated content rising to 52%. (2) *Motivation and Confidence*: Modest increases were seen in the students who said the expanded talking journal and video forum helped them enjoy English more, feel more confident, and improve in-class speaking (all 90%).

**Online listening course.** With the introduction of the online listening course in year 3 it was possible for the first time to verify students' listening. There was a complete online record of each student's listening history including which quizzes each student took, how long it took them to take each quiz, their scores, and the answers they gave for each question. The online listening histories of the 242 students in the third year of the study showed that only 5% completed fewer than five listening quizzes, 12% completed between five and nine quizzes, 35% completed between ten and fourteen quizzes, 18% completed between twenty and twenty-four quizzes, and 8% completed all twenty-five quizzes. A survey was also conducted on the three key types of online listening quizzes. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Student survey results concerning online listening activities (Year 3)

Survey statement	Helped enjoy English more			Improved listening skills		
	VOA	Music	Conversation	VOA	Music	Conversation
Strongly agree	39%	56%	44%	56%	26%	38%
Moderately agree	54%	43%	54%	41%	57%	51%
Moderately disagree	7%	0.8%	2%	3%	17%	11%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%
M	3.32	3.54	3.4	3.53	3.08	3.27
SD	0.60	0.52	0.53	0.57	0.67	0.65

Students reported that each of the three activity types, the **VOA** news, conversation and music video activities helped them enjoy English more (93%, 99% and 98% agreement respectively), and improve listening skills (97%, 93% and 89% respectively).

### Qualitative student comments

In order to explore students perceptions about the self-access listening, talking journal and video forum and gain insight into which aspects of each were seen by students as affecting their motivation to study or confidence in their listening and speaking ability, students **327**

were asked to respond to open-ended questions before answering the quantitative survey questions. For each of the three components, students were asked, "Were the self-access listening activities/ video forum / talking journal a good way to study English for you? Why?" The question was given in both Japanese and English. 173 of the students responded in year 2 and 202 in year 3. Comments were classed as typical that appeared at least 5 times. The majority of the student responses were in Japanese.

1. I enjoyed seeing videos about different countries/cultures. I wanted to understand what they were saying.
2. (Immediate) feedback was very good. When I got the answers correct, (I felt good so) I wanted to do more quizzes.
3. There were so many choices, I didn't know what I was supposed to do.
4. There were many listening options, and I enjoyed trying the different ones.
5. There was variety so I didn't get bored.
6. Sometimes the computer said my answer was incorrect, and I tried many times but I couldn't get the right answer. It was stressful.
7. It was useful to do the same listening activity twice. I could (understand better the second time and) improve my score, so I felt improvement.
8. (With basic, intermediate and advanced versions for the same video) I felt like I was improving when I could do well on the more advanced version after doing the basic.
9. I wasn't used to listening to multiple choice questions in video (form) so I felt it was difficult.
10. It was interesting to have video questions. I could replay the questions so my ears got used to the English more and more.

Figure 1. Qualitative comments on self-access listening activities

Concerning the talking journal, the comments in figure 2 were typical.

1. I never heard my own English speaking, so it was a good experience.
2. It was difficult to talk without reading.
3. It was good to practice my speaking. I felt it became easier to speak English.
4. I felt strange listening back to my own voice.
5. I became more aware of my pronunciation.
6. Free-writing and then recording with keywords helped my speaking.
7. Free-writing a lot helped my English.
8. When I recorded with a partner, I felt my conversation skill improved.
9. After I recorded I didn't listen again so I felt there wasn't much point.
10. When I recorded my (solo) story again with a partner, I could speak more fluently.

Figure 2. Qualitative comments on talking journals (Year 2 and 3)

1. Knowing other students would see my post made me practice more before recording my post.
2. With video recording I couldn't just read my post.
3. I didn't mind audio recording, but I didn't like other students to see my face.
4. When I watched other students' video posts, I learned new English so it was useful.
5. Some students' spoke very well, so when I saw that I wanted to speak well too.
6. I couldn't understand what many students were saying.
7. Some students were reading in the video which seemed pointless.
8. I enjoyed receiving video replies. It made me want to do more posts.
9. I didn't receive feedback so it wasn't very interesting.
10. I could take time to record and post my talk, so it wasn't so stressful.

Figure 3: Qualitative comments on video forum

## Discussion

The qualitative student feedback gives some insight into how the students perceived the activities as beneficial and how the activities fell short of the goal of improved motivation and confidence for some of the students.

### *Self-access listening quizzes*

Student qualitative comments concerning the self-access listening quizzes reflected a number of elements in Dörnyei's (2003) process model of L2 motivation.

**Feedback.** One typical student comment was that the ability to check their answers and get immediate feedback was a motivating because when they got an answer correct, they felt good and wanted to do more quizzes suggesting that improved expectancy of success and perceived coping potential was a motivating factor for some students. The flip side to this was the numerous students who reported getting answers repeatedly wrong and finding this "stressful." In the more advanced activities where students needed to listen to the video question choices and enter the full sentence, many students had the answer correct but misspelled a word. While it is possible to adjust for this when designing the question, some possible misspellings simply do not occur to the teacher. This suggested the need to help students engage in task-supportive learning behaviors such as using online dictionaries to check spelling and meaning of difficult words.

**Scaled quiz difficulty and quiz repeating.** A number of students commented that doing the same quiz a second time they felt they'd improved because they understood better and recognized new words the second time. Many students also reported feeling improvement when, after completing a basic version they were able to do well on the more advanced version. These comments also suggest expectancy of success and coping potential may have contributed to student motivation, and also suggest that some students were engaging in goal-setting strategies, identifying aspects of a listening text they wanted to gain a better understanding of and then recognizing improved understanding the second time.

**Procrastination.** Analysis of the Moodle records of student listening revealed that many students were not listening regularly but listening some at the beginning and then listening a lot in the final week of the semester. This limited the benefit for these students of the listening requirement and suggested the need to help students with goal-setting. One option for addressing this would be grading for regularity of listening as well as amount of quizzes completed, but another less coercive approach, posting regular tallies indicating current student listening points, might be preferable because it poses less risk of diminishing intrinsic motivation. Regularly emphasizing their current tally and the possibility of raising it by doing more activities could lead these students to visit the site more often.

### *Talking journal and video forum*

There was a sharp increase in year 2 in the percentage of students agreeing that the talking journal improved their confidence in their speaking. Student comments in year 2 suggested that requiring students to do a certain number of pair recordings outside of class for their talking journals and the addition of the free writing requirement may have contributed to this. Students commented that free-writing helped them use English more and, when first free-writing then recording using keywords, helped their speaking. Concerning outside pair-recording, students said it improved their conversation skill and, when recorded first solo then re-recorded with a partner, their fluency.

**Interactivity.** The student comments on the video forum suggested that the greater interactivity may have improved motivation. Students commented that they could take their time to plan, prepare and post their talk, suggesting that the asynchronous forum may have facilitated interpersonal communication by reducing stress. Some students also comments also suggested that user-generated content contributed to the positive motivation students reported as a result of the forum.

**Cooperative learning and motivation.** The student comments concerning the forum also suggested that part of the positive motivation was due to elements of cooperative and collaborative learning. Some students commented that seeing other students speaking well in their posts made them want to improve their speaking as well suggesting the motivating effect of peer role models. Another comment was that knowing other students would see their posts made them practice more before recording and refrain from simply reading out loud in their video posts. Also receiving feedback posts was reported by students as motivating. Students also reported a number of factors that they found demotivating. These included not wanting to film their faces, not being able to understand another students' post, seeing other students reading in their video posts and not receiving any feedback for their posts.

**Monitoring.** A number of students reported paying attention to their pronunciation and also listening back to their video-recorded talks before posting, suggesting that these monitoring strategies may have contributed to students' improved confidence from the talking journals and video forums.

**Feedback posts as student-produced speech.** The inclusion of students' feedback posts as student-produced raises questions about possible skewing of results in the final year

talking journal results (see Table 1). While the feedback posts are qualitatively different from the other student-produced speech options since it is derived from cues provided by another student's speech, the feedback guidelines required that students in their replies compare their own experiences with those in the other students' post, and make other general observations, requiring that the feedback posts also contain a significant amount of responder-generated content.

## Conclusion

The study results suggest a number of potential benefits from using self-access listening, talking journals and video forums in large university English oral communication classes. With the expansion of listening options over the three year study from audio recorded conversations in the first year to include conversation video and music video and then **VOA** news videos within a Moodle online course in the third, students reported improved confidence in their listening and, as defined by enjoying studying more, increased motivation. Qualitative comments by students suggested receiving instant positive feedback in particular contributed to motivation, and improving scores with quiz repeating and progressing from basic to more advanced versions of the same quiz spurred student confidence. The comments also suggested care needs to be taken to help students with learning strategies and goal-setting to limit anxiety and procrastination.

The results from expanding speaking practice options through the talking journal and video forum also suggested a number of benefits as well as cautionary notes. The relatively low levels of improved confidence reported in the first year of the study prior to the outside pair-recording requirement or the video forum suggested that improved confidence depends in part on a level of oral interaction with other students, a finding also reflected in the qualitative comments. The student comments also pointed to the combination of free-writing followed by recording using only keywords as a factor in the year 2 improvements. The added interactivity of the video forum in year 3 was a possible factor in increased student **L2** production in year 3. This increased production included both student's original posts and feedback posts after viewing a classmate's post.

There are certain limitations and areas of concern with the current study. One limitation was that, due to its being conducted in the context of a class with standardized assessment methods, tasks and materials, the survey findings were not tested through the use of a control group. This leaves unaddressed the existence of other variables in the classes possibly contributing to students' motivation such as the desire to receive a good grade in the course. These factors likely also played a part along with the intrinsic motivation provided by the increased confidence from completing tasks, improving their scores, interacting online with classmates and so forth reported by students in the qualitative comments. A control group could also have addressed the possibility that students increased confidence and motivation resulted in part from their advancing to the next grade level. Another limitation of the current study was that due to the large number of students, students' qualitative comments were collected in writing. Oral interviewing would have been more revealing because of the ability to ask follow-up questions but due to the number of students this was not feasible. Finally, due to the limited focus of this study on motivation and confidence, the students' perceptions of improvement were not independently corroborated. A useful area of further research on the use of self-access listening in particular would be to use the score compiling features of the Moodle application to correlate student perceptions of improvement

with actual scores achieved by the students over the course of the school term to ascertain if improvement indeed occurred.

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## Author biodata

**William Collins** is Associate Professor at Nagasaki University's Research and Development Center for Higher Education. His research interests include teaching and evaluating speaking and listening skills, storytelling, and literature and language learning.

**Justin Hunt** is a lecturer at Nagasaki Shogyo High School. His research interests include CALL, developing information technology applications for language learning, and testing in secondary education.