# Technology in the Consultation: Using Videos to Achieve Engaging Dialogue and Authentic Feedback

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Roughly thirty percent of the consultations at the UNCG Speaking Center are with non-native English-speaking (NNES) students (Sorenson, 2017). Many of these consultations include conversation practice, pronunciation, sentence structure, and nonverbal communication. It is important that the consultants are well trained in these areas in order to have effective, instructive conversations. However, when a NNES student works with the same consultant many times, the consultant tends to exhaust ideas and topics to discuss. This can then cause consultant feedback to be the same each time because of the exposure to the same strengths, areas of improvement, and topics. Examples of this same feedback can include "your speech rate is not too fast or too slow" or "your word pronunciation was clear."

Simon and Hines (2017) discuss how the implementation of video can help students when they visit a communication center. Last spring, our communication center introduced this concept into our NNES sessions by using virtual reality videos to initiate conversations. But, there is a gap in the literature regarding the use of online videos in NNES sessions. Therefore, communication centers should implement this technique as a catalyst for sparking new conversation and for widening the view regarding how communication centers can impact student success. Ultimately, introducing videos into consultations gives the consultant and NNES student more organic and authentic opportunities for new topics, thus naturally improving the level of feedback given to the NNES student.

In this essay, I provide a case study from summer 2018 that displays the impact online videos in consultations can have on NNES consultations. Summer sessions at our communication center tend to have more consultations with NNES students than any other type of consultation. Although other consultants worked with this student, for the purposes of this essay, I will only focus on my experiences. I gave fruitful feedback to a NNES student who had two to three consultations per day for three to four days during multiple weeks of the summer. I also provide an analysis of this case study to show how the use of videos helped my conversations with the NNES student go smoothly.

Jeong, an international student starting graduate school, began coming into the speaking center to practice his English-speaking skills. Jeong came into the speaking center for roughly four to six appointments per week to practice abilities such as pronunciation, learning the meaning of common sayings, and learning more about persuasion. As a consultant, I know that conversation and feedback can eventually become forced and less authentic while working with the same student over time, so I was initially worried about the volume of these consultations.

Utilizing online videos in the session was a part of Jeong's goals when he came to

practice communication. Jeong came into each consultation wanting to watch a video from a collection that he gathered and have a conversation about it. Since this isn't a typical strategy we use at the speaking center, I was hesitant to see the impact it could have on our conversation and my feedback. During our first consultation, Jeong and I watched a debate video from a YouTube platform called "Oxford Union" about the impact of social media on society. After the video, we engaged in a conversation about the topic, including deconstructing the arguments made by the people in the videos, and I gave Jeong feedback on his English-speaking skills.

Over the next few weeks, I continued to have multiple consultations with Jeong. Since our first consultation went so well, I wanted to continue the use of videos for future consultations. During each consultation, we would watch various online videos on different topics, including debate, TV show clips, and TED talks. The type of video and platform we used was decided between the both of us depending on what topic we wanted to discuss. After each video, we would engage in conversation and I would provide feedback to Jeong as usual. This feedback was similar to that described previously, but I was able to be more detailed and descriptive. For example, I was better able to focus on specific words in his pronunciation as well as provide specific strategies to improve sentence structure. This process continued until right before our communication center closed for the summer session.

This experience changed the way I approach consultations with NNES students who come into the speaking center to practice their English-conversation skills. In the past, consultants, including myself, would have to come up with topics to discuss during the consultation. Sometimes, depending on the topic or how much the speaker wants to talk, these conversations can become highly superficial and surface-level, leaving little room for engaging dialogue. By implementing online videos as a pedagogical technique, consultants can spark new conversations each time they meet with the NNES students.

Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) examine the use of technology in the classroom and how it can influence the level of dialogue between the students and teacher. Videos can be used as a way to provide a "common experience through presentation of a demonstration, film, role, play, short skit, or brief reading" (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014, p. 41). In other words, the consultant and the NNES student can watch an online video together to establish this shared experience, which will allow for a more engaging, authentic and shared dialogue.

Svinicki and McKeachie's (2014) research was limited to the classroom, but I argue that these same pedagogical techniques can be used in consultations with NNES students. For instance, by using different online videos during each experience I had with Jeong, I was able to search for different ways to provide feedback, such as with word pronunciation and sentence structure, as well as different ways to communicate about various topics in English. For example, listening to different videos and topics allowed us to talk about what words and concepts were used and how to properly pronounce them. For example, we watched an Oxford Union debate on the positives and negatives of social media and focused on concepts such as nonverbal delivery techniques (e.g., vocal variety and body movement) and unpacking the arguments made by the speakers. We were also able to use the videos as opportunities to learn different idioms used by different cultures, such as "beating around the bush" or "going on holiday."

Ultimately, this eliminated my overuse of the same feedback during each consultation, which allowed for more learning opportunities. These fascinating conversations most likely never would have existed if we had not begun implementing video into our sessions.

NNES students are a significant part of the work we do at the speaking center. Adjusting to the needs, wants, and goals of these students can be difficult if one does not have the proper tools to hold conversations with someone who speaks a different language. Having consultants implement this new technique of incorporating online videos into NNES consultations can help naturally keep the conversation going and to give them the ability to provide new, quality feedback during each consultation.

**References**

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