

Autonomous Empowerment through Pre-recorded Presentation Software: A Case Study from an EFL Setting at Kanda University of International Studies

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Abstract

More and more meetings and presentations are being shared using webcam communication formats such as Skype and G-chat. Anyone who has ever participated in these kinds of meetings has realized that this format can require a very different communication skill set. How can this format be prepared for and even utilized in and out of the classroom. Using online software students uploaded slideshow presentations to an online program to record themselves presenting alongside their slideshow. The whole process is done online with free software so all the student needs is a computer that has internet access and a webcam and/or microphone. This format was tested in a college EFL anthropology classroom in Japan as a case study, but the possibilities for this process cross over to any subject and level. One of the benefits for students is the autonomous error correction that is allowed through multiple takes of their presentation. Live presentations tend to have a tournament style production, as the student prepares for a one-time take. Even if the student is allowed to do the presentation multiple times in a row they do not get to see their performance. The pre-recorded format allows students to do as many takes as they feel necessary; allowing them to focus on particular points in their presentations. This format also allows time saving and promotes media and computer literacy that students can utilize outside the classroom. The online nature of this tool opens the possibility for peers from distant geographical locations to interact. The pre-recorded presentation research and process as a tool can be used for all facets and levels of education.

1. Introduction/background

We live in the world of the instant replay. Around the planet, all the events are not only being recorded but replayed. And the amazing thing about the replay is that it offers the means of re-cog, re-cognition. The first time is cognition, the second time is recognition. And the recognition is even deeper. (DrFallon, 2008)

New media not only introduces new ways for us to express ourselves, but also new forms of self-awareness—new ways to reflect on who we are and how we relate to others. (Wesch, 2009)

In the last two decades, the world has experienced a boom of new online interactions, which record and stream anyone who can be videoed. Think for a moment if you can remember the first time you heard of the term video record and replay or more recently video chat, video conferencing or better yet new verbs such as “skyping” or “youtubing”. These words and the

concepts they represent are the movement of new mediums of interaction and they continue to grow in variation and exposure. Now Imagine if you can the first time, you saw yourself on video and recognized it was you. Regardless of whether it was on a live stream with a camera connected to a television/computer screen or a recorded video that you were later able to watch repeatedly you witnessed a media that has changed the awareness of self and surroundings. This awareness was theorized by McLuhan (DrFallon, 2008), and experienced by Carpenter (1972) in his interactions with the Sio tribe of Papua New Guinea and further modernized and applied by Wesch (2009) to YouTube. How can these mediums that ignite sparks of self-awareness be utilized for education? In addition, how can education in turn scaffold any new skillsets required for all the mediums that emerge with each new web application?

Now look carefully at a webcam. That's there. That's somewhere else. That could be anybody. On the other side of that little glass lens is almost everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you have ever heard of, and even those you have never heard of. In more specific terms, it is everyone who has or will have access to the Internet—billions of potential viewers, and your future self among them. (Wesch, Michael 2009)

In 1994 Connetix released the QuickCam, the first commercial webcam (Edwards, 2010). The Internet had been making great gains in users since the 1980s and the webcam would increase interest. Being able to share live or recorded video online for a low cost has become almost immeasurably popular. It was in 2005 that both YouTube (Hopkins,2006) and Voice over IP's (VoIP) telephony applications such as Skype and G-chat enhanced the access and use worldwide. Both applications use a webcam and the Internet but YouTube is pre-recorded where as VOIP's are most often live.

For the past eight years these platforms have increased in usership and influence on peoples self awareness. Wesch (2009) eloquently compares YouTube webcam vloggers with Carpenter's observations of the Sio peoples reactions upon first seeing themselves in a Polaroid picture. The Sio people after seeing the moment captured in the Polaroid became self-aware as an individual or perhaps the star of the show in a universe in which they could be the center of—at least according to the picture. The webcam if published can be the most public place on earth observed in the most secluded places by individuals or groups familiar or not to the subject. The recordings transcend space and time and can later be watched by the individual in the video as well. As an anthropologist Wesch is interested in the implications of understanding self and community relationships. Not to mention the aspects of self-awareness YouTube fosters as the user stares into the tiny black dot in the center of their webcam recording the most trivial or momentous occasion. Can what Wesch observed in his ethnography of YouTube and the self-awareness it fosters be used to nurture metacognition in students as they become hyper aware of themselves while interacting with the webcam?

Once a video has been recorded it allows for replay to occur. The subject in the video has the ability to watch and re-watch themselves over and over any time after the original recording. McLuhan said replay allowed re-cognition the first viewing would be cognition and the second recognition. McLuhan was considering replay of anything when he originally dubbed the second half of the 20th century the age of replay. Anyone could watch someone or something else repeatedly and as you watch it you become more familiar and experience it more in depth. Wesch (2009) used McLuhan's concept of replay to explain that YouTube vloggers also may have the urge to replay their videos looking back at their former self. How can this self-awareness be channelled into an educational format that encourages metacognition?

2. Webcam education skill set

Seemingly every day a new web application comes out creating a new medium in which we strive to interact successfully or at least coherently in (Wesch 2010). As an EFL/ESL teacher I have spent endless hours thinking of lessons that allow second language (L2) students to pick on and interact with native language (L1) speaker's cues in person, as a competitive speech coach I have worked with competitors on how to pick up on audience cues using appropriate eye contact and body language and as a test preparation specialist I trained students for conversation sections of tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS. I remember how shocked I was when I first listened to a student's recorded TOEFL speech on the computer. I was shocked by the discrepancy between the conversations I had had with student in comparison to what I was now listening to. The student had completely fallen apart when speaking to the computer. When Wesch talks about the first time someone sits in front of a webcam a "Context collapse" occurs. Context collapse happens because the individual doesn't know who is going to watch video and also has no live audience to interact with. In all three of the circumstances as an educator I had only prepared the individual for face-to-face live interactions. Though Wesch's context collapse refers to pre-recorded video of vloggers I would argue that the contrast of the two dimensional screen and VoIP's webcam device, even during live communication, takes some adjusting to. When using VoIPs simple things like eye contact is different due to the location of the webcam above or below the screen. Exposure to VoIPs and online video recording is growing and understanding and fluency in interacting with webcams is becoming more familiar. The need for webcam proficiency is growing every year and will most likely become standard practice in business and social settings. The below statistics were gathered by Matt Szymczyk (2011):

- 79% of laptops now have webcams. (*source: PC world*)
- 72% of 18-20 year olds own a laptop. (*source: Pew Internet & American Life Project*)
- 83% of college students own a laptop. (*source: Student Monitor*)
- More than 50% of Gen Y owns a webcam. (*source: Cisco*)
- As of March 2011, more than 40% of Skype minutes involve video to video calls (*source: Skype*)

This increases the need to scaffold (Vygotsky, 1987) student's presentation and communication skills for VoIPs and online video recording. One approach to this is giving providing the students with a controlled setting with a small audience that they are familiar with. One place to start would be creating presentations online for peers to observe and critique. This not only prepares the students for online webcam settings but may also serve as an autonomous learning environment in which the student's webcam induced self-awareness can lead to metacognition.

3. Proposed procedure

In order to scaffold the students into the world of the webcam classes we'll use an online prerecording presentation software called Knovio (Knowledgevision, 2011). Knovio blends the participant's slideshow with a video recording of the participant presenting just as they would do in a live setting (Fig, 1).

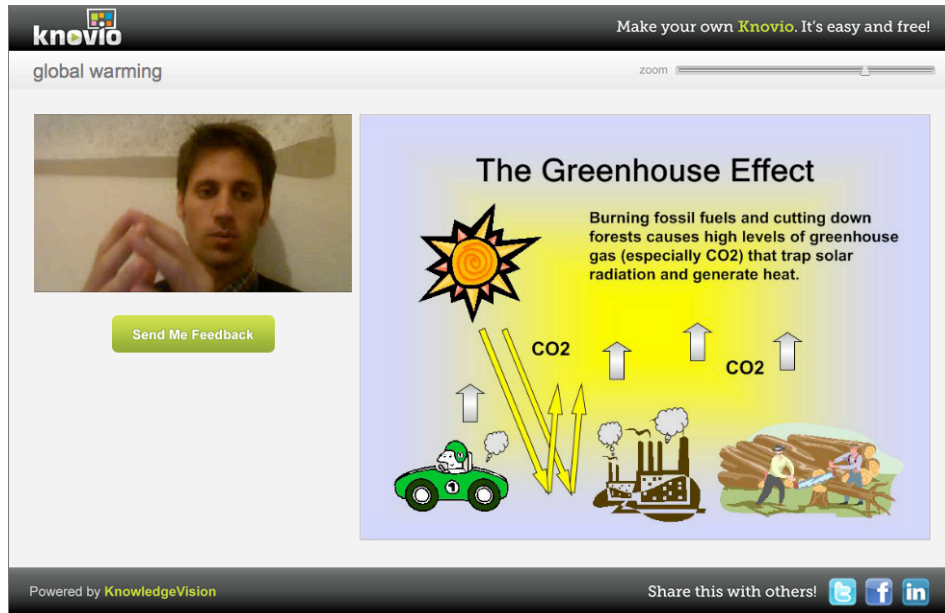


Figure 1. Completed Knovio presentation video

3.1 Uploading a slideshow to Knovio

The student can make the slideshow on Keynote, Microsoft PowerPoint or online with no needed software using Google Docs' presentation tool. After the student finishes the slideshow and makes a free account with Knovio they can then upload the slideshow into the online recording tool (Fig. 2 & 3).

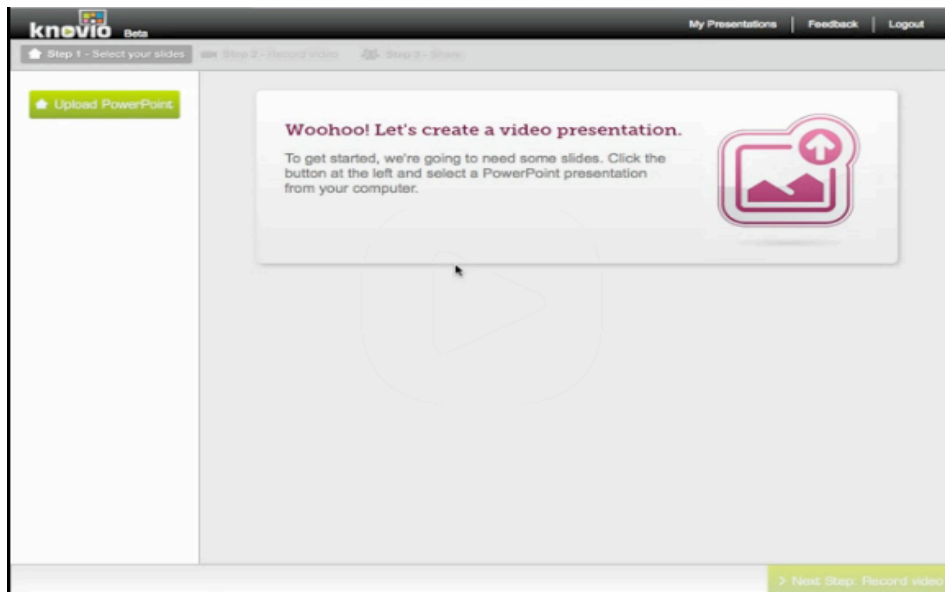


Figure 2. Uploading the slideshow into Knovio



Figure 3. Slideshow uploaded into Knovio

3.2 Adding narration to the slideshow presentation

After the slideshow has been uploaded the student will then continue to record themselves narrating their slideshow while watching it in real time. Please note the narration can be done with a video and audio or just audio alone (Figure 4).

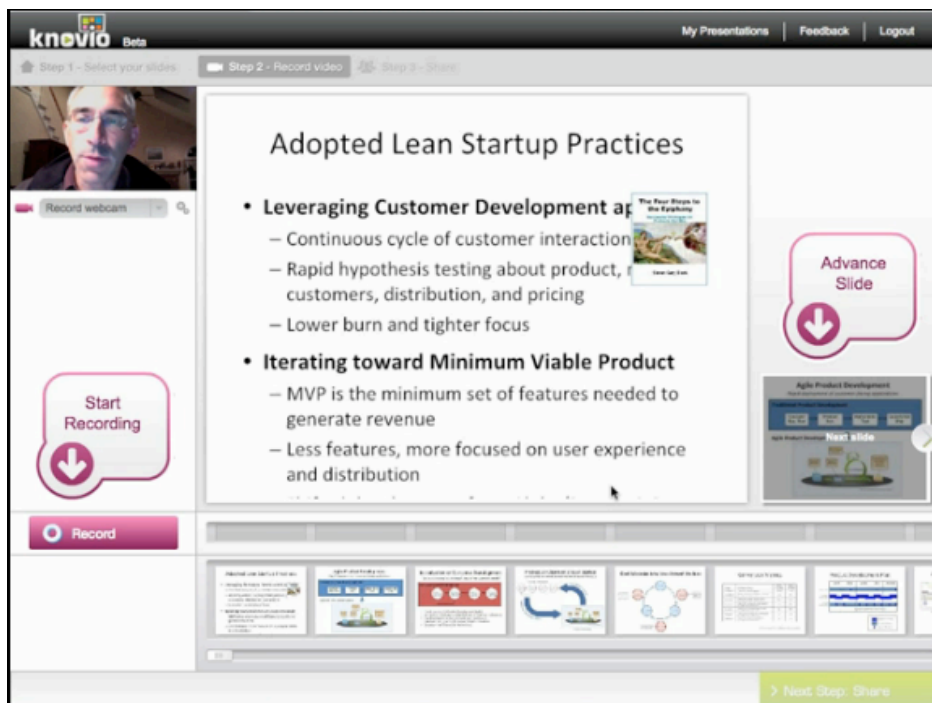


Figure 4. Video being recorded alongside slideshow

3.3 Recording retake explanations

After clicking record the student clicks through the slideshow just as they would in a live presentation (Knowledgevision, 2011). When the student is done recording they will then be able to preview their presentation and if they don't like what they any part of their presentation they can rerecord that slide or the whole presentation if they choose to. One factor to facilitating the metacognitive aspect of these rerecordings is to provide the students with a simple forum in which they can state why they are rerecording and make a plan of action to improve whatever it is they did not like in the current presentation(Fig, 5).

You can do as many or as little retakes of your presentation as you would like.
When you do retakes make a plan for what you will change.
Here is a retake chart. Please write keep a journal for why you did your retakes.

Reason for your retake: (why did you want to rerecord this version of the presentation?)	What do you plan to change in the when you record the presentation again?

Figure 5. Retake chart for student reflection.

3.4 Publishing the finished Knovio video

Finally after the student records a presentation that they are satisfied with they can then share it with others in the class through email, embedding, or Knovio's shared spaces(Fig, 6).

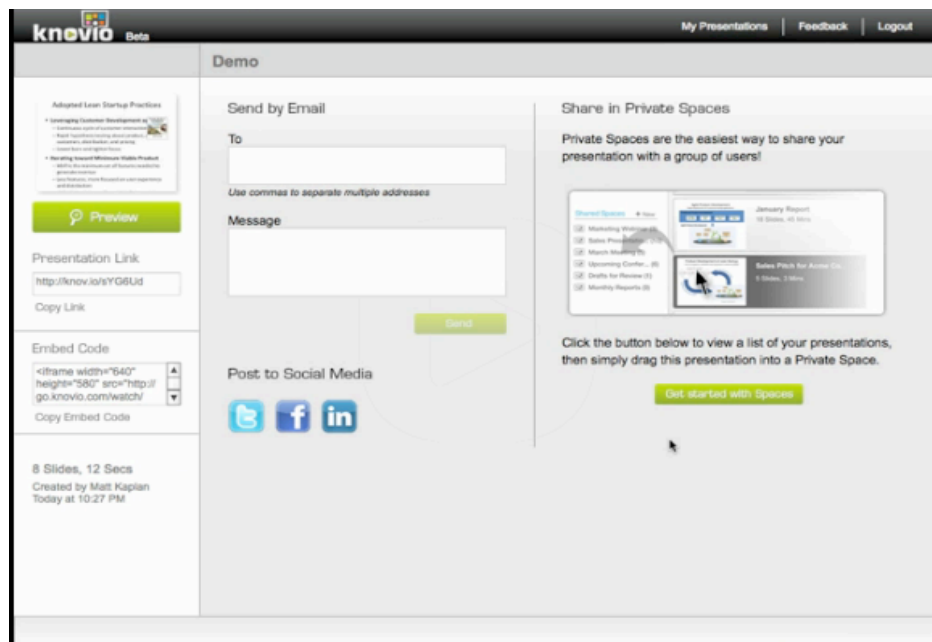


Figure 6. Knovio page too share the finished video.

3.5 Peer feedback on Knovio

After viewing the final presentation peers are able to give feedback in a popup window that appears after the presentation. The individual giving feedback has the option to put their email address with the comment or to leave it anonymous. (Fig. 7)

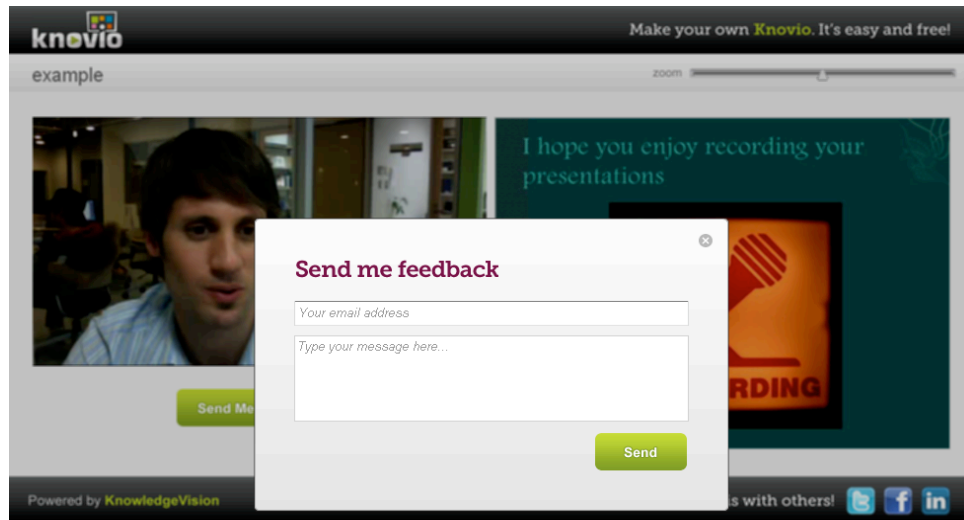


Figure 7. Popup feedback window for Knovio presentations.

3.6 Challenges to the Knovio platform

The technical aspects of Knovio are quite simple but because the program is new as of 2011 so there are still many small issues that may come up when using the program. One of the issues we faced as a class was uploading videos due to firewall issues however this was resolved after contacting the programmers of Knovio. Also in order to have access to the videos as a class we attempted this in two different ways and faced different difficulties with each method. The first was to have only one account as a class. This was a nice system to get the students introduced to the program quickly but if many students tried to record their presentations at the same time the program did not work. To fix this I had the class make their own accounts which worked well for uploading but made it a little difficult to be able to view and share the videos. Even with Knovio's shared spaces the user has to have the email of all who they would like to invite to the space. In short the initial setup can be a challenge but after the program is used once with a class it can then be used outside of class without losing any class time for presentations. Knovio is a free web based program so even with these difficulties it is well worth trying in an educational setting.

4. Pragmatics of Knovio video recording

The most obvious demand to Knovio video recording is that you have to have a video recording device any webcam will work as long as webcam settings are allowed with Knovio. To be published online with Knovio a computer with an internet connection is needed as well. Other than that there is nothing more you need for this platform to work. This Platform could also be emulated by using video cameras and a video library if internet access is difficult. This would however completely change the platform. The videoing and viewing could still be done outside of class and the presence of the camera would still allow for a different set of speaking skills to be nurtured which could lead to a higher sense of comfort with webcams later.

5. Possible positive ramifications of knovio webcam recording

Knovio is not a public space like YouTube and so this will slowly allow the student to emerge into public online spaces. The final recording of the slideshow can be limited only to the class. As a class if the producer of the presentation doesn't know which classmates will view the video they will get a little taste of context collapse, however because the student knows the proposed audience this should be minimal. This will aid in avoiding a context collapse while preparing the students for a more public forum.

The Knovio online webcam recording system allows presentations to be archived and viewed at any time from any computer around the world. The possibilities of sharing presentations with others in a distant education forum are readily accessible.

6. Conclusion

Using online tools to aid in prerecord presentations should in no way replace live presentations for a class but instead be blended in and used as an additional tool and format. If the goal of the class is aimed at presentation and communication skills Knovio should be one of a series of different forms of presentations. However if the class is not focused on these skills this is an excellent platform to save class time as the presentations can be recorded and viewed outside of class.

The online video recording format is definitely needed as more and more interactions demand webcam interaction. The webcam interaction itself opens up students to a context collapse that puts the students in a realm of self-awareness. This realm of self-awareness allows the student to reflect on the skills as a presenter and communicator. With the editing process students can then reflect formally and get a finished product that they have metacognitively edited.

The introduction such prerecording video platforms as a tool for presentations will also continues to benefit students in future study and work. This can either be in the form of preparation or shared presentations for others to view.

7. Further implications

In the initial steps of using Knovio the viewing was only limited to peers within in the class. However due to the online nature of the tool the only thing necessary to share the finished presentations is a computer on the recipients end. Which means classes from other universities even in other countries can share in an academic forum.

The feedback section of Knovio would be an excellent point for further research. Looking at whether anonymity helps with the candidness of peers comments regarding the class presentations. More often than not peers may feel pressured to give a poor presentation positive feedback in order to not hurt the presenter's feelings. The flame wars that happen in the anonymous online forum may be more sincere in the academic setting.

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