

**THE USE OF VIDEO IN ESL TEACHING AND
LEARNING: YOUTUBE'S POTENTIAL AS A RESOURCE**

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ABSTRACT

Teaching ESL learners is indeed challenging. Hence, in coping with the challenges, ESL instructors are constantly looking for innovative idea to enhance the teaching and learning, specifically in ESL classroom. One of the examples of their creativeness in making the lesson more interesting is through the utilisation of teaching aid such as pictures, actual objects, songs, and others. With the advancement of technology, the use of video to facilitate ESL teaching and learning is also popular among ESL instructors. Besides its ability to offer ESL learners with content, context, and language, video could also be creatively exploited by ESL instructors through various ways and for various language teaching and learning purposes. The fast growing number of websites that offer video sharing services such as YouTube, which is also the most famous one, could offer more opportunities for this practice. This paper will discuss the use of video in ESL teaching and learning and the potential of YouTube as a resource in facilitating this practice among ESL instructors.

Keywords: video, ESL teaching and learning, YouTube, resource

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of English as second language (ESL) is undeniably challenging, for ESL instructors are often responsible in making the classes meaningful, practical, and fun for the learners (Ryan, 2001). This is due to several perennial issues such as learners' individual differences, which could influence their English learning process. Therefore, ESL instructors have taken the initiative in varying their teaching strategies to enhance ESL teaching and learning by constantly looking for fresh idea and

innovative teaching materials (Davis, 1998; Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009). This includes the incorporation of various teaching aids or supplementary materials such as images, authentic materials including map and newspaper, songs, animations, videos, and even movies (Burt, 1999; C. Kelly, L. Kelly, Offner & Vorland, 2002; McGill, 2010; Orlova, 2003; Tatsuki, 1998). These teaching aids are employed for several purposes such as to complement the content of a textbook, as set induction to the lesson, as catalyst for classroom discussion, and to add entertainment element into the lesson. In addition, some ESL instructors are using authentic materials as a way to present real English to ESL learners in a more interesting and fun way Davis (1998).

With the rapid advancement of technology, the use of video in aiding ESL teaching and learning is also popular among ESL instructors at all levels (Burt, 1999; Davis, 1998; Tuzi & Mori, 2008; Wolf, 2006; Xiaoning, 2007). In fact, the use of video for educational purpose, in general, is not a new phenomenon as its existence in the educational field has been reported since the early 1960s (Williams & Lutes, 2007). Educators in the field of language teaching and learning were no exception to the phenomenon, as they also took advantage of the exciting new opportunities offered through the development of video technology (Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982) and this practice has also reached to today's generation of language instructors.

THE BENEFITS OF USING VIDEO IN ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

The use of video specifically in aiding ESL teaching and learning is supported by numerous benefits which could be further understood through the following examples:

The ability to present authentic language

The use of video in language teaching and learning is highly known for its ability to provide authentic language learning environment for the learners (Burt, 1999; Tuzi & Mori, 2008; Xiaoning, 2007). Videos such as movies, television programs, and news broadcasts, which generally demonstrate real language that is not simplified and is spoken at a normal pace with genuine accents, are some of the examples of authentic videos that offer the authenticity (Burt, 1999). This real language experience is especially important to ESL learners who have minimal exposure to authentic English as they are not living among the native speakers. Hence, with its authentic content, language learners, especially ESL learners, could be introduced to the nature of the language in a more realistic manner as presented by the characters in the videos. Besides that, the use of authentic video could offer ESL learners with richer understanding of the language because it is essential for them not to be competent in the target language only but also its background, history, and culture (Supyan Hussin,

Nooreiny Maarof, & D'Cruz, 2001). Moreover, this would indirectly allow the learners to see “situations that are far beyond their classrooms” and inculcate cross-cultural awareness among them, which include aspects such as body language, attire, food and others (Harmer, 2001, p. 282).

Increase learners' comprehension

With video's ability to feature moving visual element, along with sound, the combination of these elements would help to increase ESL learners' comprehension because they do not only hear the language but also see it (Harmer, 2001). In other words, they are presented with the total context which includes the paralinguistic and linguistic elements, together with the physical environment (Hick, Hughes & Stott, 1982). Through the paralinguistic features especially, learners would have the tendency to comprehend better as they offer gestures, facial expressions and other visual clues (Geddes, 1982).

Enhance various language skills

Video is also especially useful as it can be utilised to enhance ESL learners' various language skills such as listening, speaking, writing, reading and grammar. Authentic content of a video for example, could be used to focus on grammar and vocabulary such as to introduce new words and grammatical components, supplemented by other production activities (Tuzi & Mori, 2008). Moreover, the content of certain video such as the plot could be manipulated to enhance learners' writing and speaking skills by eliciting their opinions of the plot through their writing as well as their speaking ability. This includes activities such as discussion, debate, role-play, dialogue, and group presentations (Wolf, 2006; McGill, 2010; Tuzi & Mori, 2008; Xiaoning, 2007).

Nevertheless, according to Mohamed Amin Abdel Gawad Mekheimer (2011), the integration of video based material, “inducing satisfactory viewing comprehension and presented in an integrated language skills instruction, is a valuable approach to whole language teaching” (p. 5). Hence, videos should be utilised with the purpose of integrating all the skills through activities such as guided practice and interactive follow-up discussions among all the learners as well as with the instructor. However, in employing these activities, it is important that ESL instructors pay close attention to various characteristics of the learners like their proficiency level in ensuring the success of the implementation.

Motivating

Of all the possible benefits of using video, specifically in language teaching and learning, its usage is highly associated with its motivating feature (Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Hammer, 2001; Wolf, 2006). This feature is indeed essential as motivation is considered the backbone of any classroom including ESL classroom (Lile, 2002). The combination of moving visual and sound elements, coupled with interesting activities, could help to stimulate learners' interest as they have the chance to not only hear the language in use but also see it (Hammer, 2001). Moreover, it could help to liven up the language learning process and make it more meaningful by bringing in the real world into the classroom (Burt, 1999; Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982). According to McGill (2010) also, videos which describe interesting, authentic situation in which relevant English is utilised, can attract ESL learners' attention and interest. Hence, they would possibly be more motivated to learn English, which they may have found difficult, through the exciting way.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN INCORPORATING VIDEO IN ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are a number of factors that need to be considered in assessing the usefulness of video material such the video length, sound and picture quality, language density, *appropriacy*, and relevance of the video (Taylor, 2009):

- In terms of video length, it is essential for ESL instructor to ensure the video is neither too long nor too short. Hammer (2001) asserts that the use of video between 1 and 4 minutes is suitable enough as it “can yield a number of exercise, demonstrate satisfying range of language, easier to manipulate, and can be highly motivating” (p. 283).
- The visual and sound quality of the video is also important as video with poor quality may distract learners' engagement and interest (Hammer, 2001).
- It is also important for ESL instructor to ensure that the video usage is able to meet the teaching objectives of the lesson by considering its relevance and appropriateness (Xiaoning, 2007). Hence, ESL instructors may choose video material which highlights particular grammatical, curricular, or thematic objectives (Wolf, 2006). This is also to avoid the possibility of non-optimimum

uses of video among ESL instructor, which do not contribute to ESL learners' meaningful English learning (Hobbs, 2006).

YOUTUBE AS A RESOURCE TO FACILITATE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

The rapid development of technology has indeed created more opportunities for the use of video to facilitate teaching and learning as video sources are now plentiful and readily available (Taylor, 2009). The invention of Internet, for example, has provided numerous online video resources that could be exploited by ESL instructors. With the Internet becoming more significant and accessible in today's generation, the number of Internet sites that offer online video sharing services is also increasing. Among them, YouTube is well known for its huge database and its popularity is indeed reflective through the number of upload and viewing recorded in which in the year 2007 alone, an average of 65, 000 uploads and 100 million videos were viewed per day on YouTube (Godwin-Jones, 2007). With its massive online video database and popularity, YouTube seems to have high potential, particularly, as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning. This is proven through its rising popularity among ESL instructors who are turning to YouTube as a resource especially in incorporating video for the purpose of ESL teaching and learning (Duffy, 2008; Godwin-Jones, 2007).

ADVANTAGES OF USING YOUTUBE AS A RESOURCE TO FACILITATE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are several reasons behind YouTube's potential as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning. Besides its immense popularity as a video sharing website, it is also known for its huge database, user-friendly features, and social-networking characteristic. These are also among the advantages of YouTube that can be exploited by ESL instructors for educational purposes:

Huge video database

According to Yudhi Herwibowo (2010), every day, about 65000 new videos are being uploaded on YouTube with around 100 million video clips being watched by its users from across the globe. This phenomenon demonstrates YouTube's potential as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning. Moreover, ESL instructors are able to

explore various types of video through YouTube's video categories such as autos and vehicles, comedy, education, entertainment, film and animation, music, news and politics and others. With this variety of video, ESL instructors would have the opportunity to use video for different language learning purposes in various creative ways. Not only that, since YouTube consists of videos which are uploaded by users from across the globe, this would also be helpful in demonstrating variety of English from all over the world to ESL learners, in an authentic way.

Video length

Apart from the huge database, the length of YouTube videos is another advantage that separates YouTube from other traditional media content servers because YouTube is mostly consisted of short videos (Cheng, Dale & Liu, 2007, 2008). This is mainly due to YouTube's policy of limiting its regular users to upload video of not more than 15 minutes of duration. Hence, video length is one of the essential aspects that need to be considered by ESL instructors in incorporating it in any lesson (Burt, 1999; Xiaoning, 2007), this would allow ESL instructors to choose videos of not only various types but also different length.

User-friendly features

Another advantage of YouTube as a resource for ESL teaching and learning is its free accessibility. Moreover, due to its popularity, YouTube videos are also widely embedded in various websites and blogs, making it highly accessible for numerous purposes including for teaching and learning. Besides that, YouTube is also known for its user-friendly features, which make video searching, watching, and sharing experience, easier (Cheng, Dale & Liu, 2007). Besides the common search button, where users can type the topic of a video that they are looking for, YouTube's main website page offers easy navigation for users to explore its videos from various categories. Other than that, YouTube constantly reminds the users of its new and trending videos through its trending feature.

Social networking characteristic

According to Cheng, Dale, and Liu (2007), the users' abilities to comment on the videos is one of the uniqueness of YouTube compared to other traditional media servers. Therefore, ESL instructors could exploit this feature to be integrated as part of the strategies in using YouTube as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning. This

is especially because the social networking characteristic has been identified as one of the major contributors towards YouTube's popularity (Cheng, Dale, and Liu, 2007). The comment section for example, could be used as a medium to promote peer-to-peer interaction among the learners, especially in encouraging them to use English among their peers, through this activity.

CHALLENGES IN USING YOUTUBE AS A RESOURCE TO FACILITATE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Despite its numerous advantages as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning, there are certain challenges that need to be considered by ESL instructors in using it for the purpose. First is the Internet connection because as YouTube is an online video-sharing website, its users are required to be connected to the Internet. Therefore, it would be a challenge especially in using it in a setting where the Internet connection is absent or slow. This is mainly due to the fact that high bandwidth capacity is needed in viewing YouTube videos especially of high quality.

Besides that, due to several concerns such as YouTube's offensive content and bandwidth issue, YouTube is facing some restriction by certain institutions around the world including learning institutions (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). Some institutions only allow YouTube to be accessed after certain period of time while some have taken even more drastic approach by imposing ban on YouTube. Apart from the technical challenges, in using YouTube as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning, this practice also demands ESL instructors' effort and time. This is because ESL instructors may have to spend more effort and time in choosing suitable videos to be integrated into ESL lessons especially in ensuring the visual and audio quality of the video. Last but not least, copyright issue is another factor to be considered because due to this factor, some videos could go missing on YouTube (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). Therefore, ESL instructors might have the tendency to lose the videos that they have searched for and found or subscribed to, due to this issue.

YouTube Video Downloading

In overcoming the identified barriers, some of the possible ways are by downloading the content from YouTube using certain software or converting YouTube videos into other format and later save them onto a flash drive or a hard disk via certain websites or software (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). Various websites and blogs have also dedicated

pages on the different ways of downloading YouTube content including for educators, to be incorporated into teaching and learning.

STRATEGIES IN USING YOUTUBE AS A RESOURCE TO FACILITATE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING

As discussed earlier under the benefits of using video, video could be used to enhance ESL learners' various language skills through numerous interesting ways. Duffy (2008) believes that the use of video, particularly from YouTube, should not be passive and suggests several some guidelines in using it for teaching and learning which could also be applied to ESL context:

- **Segment** which refers to watching video in short segments. This is indeed important in ensuring the learners' interest would not wane throughout the viewing process (Taylor, 2009).
- **Notes** which is useful in developing learners' note-taking skills. This activity, which involves several steps such as viewing, rewind, replay and checking, could be implemented to initiate classroom discussion or brainstorming session.
- **Pause** in which ESL instructor could temporarily 'pause' the video at certain scenes and ask learners to predict or recall what will happen next.
- **Sound off** could also be employed to enable learners to narrate certain scenes using the target language.
- **Picture off** is another activity that would allow learners' productivity by asking them to describe certain scenes using audio clues.
- **Focus** by giving learners a specific responsibility while viewing the video. ESL instructor could introduce the video with a question, asking learners to look for certain things, or unfamiliar vocabularies. This is to keep learners on task and direct the learners' learning experience with the objective of the lesson.
- **After** refers to the post viewing activity which includes ESL instructor's evaluation of the video usage from several aspects such as learners' interest, learners' understandings as well their experiences and feelings.

CONCLUSION

In this modern era, the advancement of technology has indeed enabled ESL instructor to incorporate the multimedia element such as video into ESL lesson in making the teaching and learning activities more interesting. This is highly supported by the booming emergence of numerous online video streaming websites such as YouTube, which offers free access to huge video database. With its immense popularity and rich database, YouTube has been recognised for its educational potential including as a resource in aiding ESL teaching and learning. Its various features and different types of video could be exploited by ESL instructor in enhancing various language skills through a variety of interesting activities.

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