



What Can Video Add to the Learning Experience? Challenges and Opportunities

Chaker Mhamdi ^{1,2}
shaker@buc.edu.om

¹ Manouba University, Tunisia.

² Al-Buraimi University College, Oman.

Abstract. This paper explores the rationale for bringing videos into the language classroom. It studies the various reasons why videos are effective teaching and learning tools. Building on theoretical approaches and classroom real practice, the paper discusses the benefits and techniques of embedding videos into the language classroom. The discussion focuses mainly on the videos as a motivator, a source of authentic and varied language, a visual context, and a factor of variety and flexibility.

Keywords: video, language teaching, authentic learning, visual context, video selection.

1. Introduction

The modern era has been witnessing the influential effect of the Information technology advances which have brought about change in behaviour and attitude of the people. Technologies have infiltrated into various aspects of human lives, and education made no exception (Bruce & Hogan, 1998). In fact, language teaching has been influenced by the ever changing technological developments which have been steadily incorporated in language classrooms. Embedding information technology within language teaching is not a novelty as it has actually been introduced since the 1960s (Lee, 2000).

Using audio-visual tools in language classrooms is not a new phenomenon. Filmstrips were used during the Second World War in a series of training sessions for soldiers (Hovland et al., 1949). The power of audio-visual materials has been recognized in enhancing the learning experience, attracting the attention of learners and increasing their motivation. Thanks to the digital revolution and the proliferation of mobile devices, videos have become an integral part of students' lives which makes perfect sense to bring them into the teaching and learning context, namely the language classroom.

Using video has become a common practice in language teaching and learning today. Due to the expansion of online learning where streaming video plays a paramount role in delivering the materials, today's learners can easily access instructional materials online which have long been traditionally distributed by teachers in classrooms. This media-rich environment compelled teachers to keep searching for effective techniques to create productive learning context. One of these ways is using digital videos to motivate learners and help them understand complex concepts that may be difficult to be explained in the text (Klass, 2003).

This paper explores the theory and actual classroom practice that supports the use of video in the educational context. Video is a practical tool that helps teachers meet their students' needs and achieve intended learning outcomes. However, integrating video into teaching and learning poses some limitations. These will additionally be discussed in this paper. Eventually, suggestions will be presented to help teachers be well-prepared in selecting and designing such digital materials. The use of the term "video" in this research refers to the range of multimedia content in its different modes of delivery in classrooms.

2. Literature Review

According to a series of studies carried out by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting the integration of educational videos in classrooms has been rising gradually over the last three decades (CPB, 1997). This latter survey found the direct connection between the frequency of use of the multimedia tools and students' motivation and achievement. The survey reveals that the students' performance increases with teachers who use video for two or more hours per week. The same study states that students' motivation rises to 70% when using video. Additionally, more than 50% of frequent users of video found that students learn and utilize new vocabulary as a result of video use.

Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) contend that these last 50 years witness three main stages which are: behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. The presence of technologies in education is not a novelty, but each of these three stages is associated with a definite level of technology innovation as well as specific pedagogical theories (Lachheb, 2014).

Audio-visual materials have become practical tools for instructional course delivery (Martindale, 2002). Videos can be used for live broadcasts or recorded instructional activities which effectively capture learners' attention and introduce content that can easily be absorbed.

Incorporating information technology in language teaching has resulted in remarkable changes for teachers and learners alike (Lee, 2000). Nowadays, the interrelation between technology and language use has compelled language teachers to reflect on how their profession has been gradually altered by technology (Chapelle, 2003).

Summarizing studies conducted from 1970 to 2005 that "provide powerful evidence for the educational effectiveness of *Sesame Street*", the children's television program that was most extensively researched, Fisch (2005, p. 11) concludes that among preschoolers, those who viewed *Sesame Street* heavily revealed greater growth in various academic skills and readiness for schooling. Even high school students who had previously watched educational TV programs, including *Sesame Street*, as preschoolers attained higher academic levels, self-esteem and higher grades (Fisch, 2005).

A number of other studies emphasize the usefulness of using video with older learners in various contexts. Rockman et al. (1996) investigates the academic impact of school viewing of *Bill Nye the Science Guy* and finds that learners who watched the program were capable of providing more comprehensive and sophisticated explanations of scientific concepts in the aftermath of viewing the show.

Baron (1989) explores the use of video to "anchor" instructions to classrooms. The findings reveal that this experience improves learners' use of vocabulary, a more comprehensive understanding of plot and the ability to infer starting from historical information.

After a six-week study on using instructional TV programs, Barnes (1997) finds that learners in the classes with TV programming outscore their peers in test results, assignments, problem-solving skills and involvement in class activities and discussions.

Currently, extensive research is being done on incorporating technology in language teaching and learning in various Western countries. Nonetheless, this field has recently been gaining a gradual attention in the Arab region (Melliti, 2008). It is this interest in Arab region context that lies behind studying the benefits, techniques, and challenges of embedding video into language teaching and learning. Accordingly, this paper tries to answer the following questions:

- (1) How does using video in language teaching promote learning?
- (2) How can instructors explore video texts?
- (3) What should instructors take into consideration when selecting video?

3. Benefits of using video in language teaching

Research on the use of video in language teaching has challenged the pervasive belief that viewing video is a learner's passive activity. Contrary to this assumption, a growing number of studies consider video viewing "an ongoing and highly interconnected process of monitoring and comprehending and a complex, cognitive activity that develops and matures with the child's development to promote learning" (Marshall, 2002, p. 7).

While it may seem to be passive, video viewing involves the cognitive activity which is necessary to promote active learning. Mayer (2001, p. 19) states that “well-designed multimedia instructional messages can promote active cognitive processing in students, even when learners seem to be behaviorally inactive”. Videos address learners’ various intelligence and appeal to their emotions.

Gardner (1993) initiates eight intelligences that are significantly influence learning styles. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences is important because it allows the identification of learners’ differing strengths and weaknesses. Gardner classifies individual intelligences into eight categories: linguistic, logical-mathematical, special, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic.

1. Linguistic intelligence: Students with this kind of intelligence enjoy writing, reading and speaking. They have “sensitivity to the different functions of language” (Gardner, 1993, p.77).

2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: These students are interested in structure, patterns, and relationships within books and materials. They are drawn to arithmetic games and like to recognize and solve significant problems.

3. Kinesthetic intelligence: It involves physical coordination and dexterity, using fine and gross motor skills, and expressing oneself or learning through physical activities. As mentioned before, these learners process knowledge more easily through corporal sensations.

4. Spatial intelligence: It refers to the ability to perceive a form or an object in its full dimensional form. This type of students thinks in images and symbols. They are likely to mentally recognize the transformation of an object into another easily.

5. Musical intelligence: Musical learners habitually express themselves through music or rhythmic movements. They frequently distinguish diverse sounds that may be disregarded by their peers, and they also sing with “greater accuracy and expressivity” (p.109).

6. Interpersonal intelligence: learners who are endowed with interpersonal intelligence have the “ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals” (p. 239), especially among their moods and intentions. They usually have a leader’s attributes and are good at communicating and detecting others temperament and desires.

7. Intrapersonal intelligence: Learners with such type of intelligence have the capacity of accessing one’s own feelings. This ability entails that learners can understand their inner emotions and they are usually successful in controlling their feelings.

8. Naturalist intelligence: It involves understanding the natural world of plants and animals, noticing their characteristics and categorizing them; it generally involves keen observation and the ability to classify other things as well (Al-Mohammadi, 2015, p. 115).

Gardner’s theory recommends teachers to take the intelligence into consideration when preparing their instructions and teaching materials. The way materials are presented and conveyed to learners influences individuals’ ability to learn. It is this importance of the medium of instruction that gives credit to using video in language teaching as an effective technique.

There are three basic modalities through which learners process information. These are visual, auditory and tactile. Based on these three modalities Silverman (2006) derives three primary learning styles: visual-spatial, auditory-sequential and tactile-kinesthetic. For the visual-spatial learners, taking in new information goes through the process of visualizing the whole concept and thinking in holistic images. On the contrary, auditory-sequential learners learn in a sequential step-by-step process where thinking in words processed auditorily is a basis. The third group of learners, tactile-kinesthetic, prefer application and demonstration over verbal explanation. They process information through sensation and physical touch.

It is in this context that the contribution of video in language teaching lies. The advantages of using video are obviously apparent for visually-oriented learners (CPB, 1997). It can also benefit auditory and tactile learners through video inclusion of speech, sound, and opportunities for demonstration. Actually, all learners, regardless of their strongly dominant modality, gain benefits from an instructional material that use video. Citing Wiman and Mierhenr (1969), Marshal (2002) states that “people will generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, and 50% of what they hear and see” (pp. 7-8).

Using video in language teaching helps convey information through two sensory channels, namely visual and aural. It allows for using various presentation modes that encompass pictorial and verbal

representations (Mayer, 2001). Accordingly, videos enable instructors to communicate the same content to learners via concurrent modalities providing learners with “multiple entry points”. Following this same line of thought, Wetzel (1994) contends that

The richness of these forms of information benefits learners by enabling them to learn through both verbal and visual means, to view actual objects and realistic scenes, to see sequences in motion, and to view perspectives that are difficult or impossible to observe in real life (as cited in CPB, 2004, p. 5).

Using video can promote learners’ awareness on the interconnectedness between modes such as pictures, captions, sounds, and movements. The mixture of text, moving images, and still images in video results in learning benefits better than a tool that rely on only one of these components (Aiex, 1999, p. 2).

Videos have an ability to communicate with the audience on emotional and cognitive levels, which gives them the power to affect viewers’ motivation and affective learning. Three theories have been explained by Marshall (2002) on how learning takes place through a good selection of videos. This selection is “based on the ability of the entertaining media to engage the learner, activate emotional states, initiate interest in a topic, and allow for absorption and processing of information” (p. 7).

The first of these three theories is Arousal Theory. It deals with the way communicative messages invoke multiple degrees of generalized emotions. Affective and motivational elements including concentration, perseverance, and enthusiasm are the focus of Short-Term Gratification theory. The third theory is that of Interest Stimulation which stipulates that entertainment is a key factor in promoting learning and creativity by igniting learners’ imagination and interest in a topic.

Using videos is an effective tool for language teaching, but its greater positive effect is on visual learners (CBP, 1997, p. 12). As Barron (1989) argues, video create contexts for learning when “in some situations video is even superior to a field trip . . . because the video can be replayed and reviewed as often as necessary” (p. 3).

4. How can video be best explored in the language classroom?

As technological advances continue to develop and to be more user-friendly, instructors continue to acquire more technology skills that are being integrated into their instruction. A recent study conducted by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting reveals that 92% of teachers said that using video supported them to teach more effectively, and 88% of them confirmed that using video increased their creativity skills (CPB, 1997). As with other educational tools, the advantage of using video depends on the way it is implemented in the actual practice. Effective integration of video into language teaching requires preparation before, during and after viewing (Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

There are three components or general strategies to a lesson plan that integrates video. These are the preparation phase which deals with pre-viewing, the presentation phase which refers to viewing and post-viewing, and the expansion phase which involves beyond post-viewing (Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

During the preparation phase, language teachers set the main goals for using a certain video and decide on the selections that will support reaching the purposes. For instance, to activate existing knowledge or establish hypotheses, a video can be used to brainstorm through using stills or titles. Such tasks can be at the beginning of an activity to stimulate interest, during an activity to demonstrate and visualize concepts, and at the end of an activity to review and reinforce content (Al-Mohammadi, 2014).

To succeed in actively engaging students with video necessitates creating the appropriate setting for such learning context. Though this seems to be an obvious taken-for-granted assumption, a study of mass media use in two schools in the district of Massachusetts reveals that in many cases videos are use for non-optimal purposes (Hobbs, 2006). In this way, making use of video as “edutainment” reinforces “the passive viewing and unquestioning acceptance of received material that accompanies growing up in a video environment” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 43).

To assure a beneficial viewing of videos, it is important to set expectations for viewers and provide a context for the activity. This will provide students with authentic learning opportunities (Al-Mohammadi & Derbel, 2014). Such authentic videos can be employed at any level of classroom instructions. Viewing video segments can be repeated more than once to involve a different task in each visual activity. Students are not expected to understand every word of the video, but they are rather encouraged to glean meaning from visual cues. Successful exploration of video can guarantee material for linguistically meaningful activities.

During the presentation phase of the video, that is viewing and post-viewing activities, the purposes vary from understanding overall to detailed information, encouraging active viewing, and increasing learners' awareness of comprehension strategies. For such learning goals, teachers can rely on various activities such as listening without images, viewing without sound, full viewing, script-oriented tasks, and culture-oriented tasks.

There are various possibilities for exploring video texts. Depending on the purpose for playing a video in the classroom, teachers can play only part of the video and leave room for students to hypothesize. Using pauses and still frames and replaying video sequences can help focus on detailed viewing. In such a context teachers can easily interrupt viewing to check students' understanding. Teachers can also opt for letting students explore videos with or without scripts.

For the expansion phase which takes place during the post-viewing activities, teachers can expand tasks to include playing games, re-writing video scripts and dialogues, and guiding students to produce their own videos. Additionally, teachers can choose to replace the soundtrack with students' narrating voices and select some sequences for out-of-class viewing activities. In this way, the authentic videos that are integrated into the classroom activities can ignite viewers' creativity.

5. Selecting authentic video in language teaching

The process of selecting video is essential to integrate this medium into language teaching effectively. Selecting the appropriate content is crucial to the success or failure of video as for any other educational technology. The quality of the content and its appropriateness to the purpose influence the effectiveness of its use (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015). Videos that provide effective visual demonstrations, dramatize concepts, appeal to emotions and have instructional strategies can maximize students' learning.

Throughout the process of selecting authentic video, four questions have to be taken into consideration by instructors. The first one is **who** the audience of the video is. This question aims to identify the target group, their age, prior language, and linguistic abilities. The second question is **what** video sequence should be used. This has to do with the content of the video and its length. The third question is **why** the material should be utilized. Here the focus is on the reasons for using the video and the purpose behind its exploration. The fourth question is **how** the material will be exercised. This question seeks to tackle the strategy and techniques of using the video before embarking on the task.

There are some factors that should be taken into consideration when evaluating the appropriateness of videos to be integrated into language teaching. These include variation in the presentation, appropriate narration, chunking and sections organization, meaningful samples, provision for open-ended questions, development of critical thinking skills, opportunities for extension and possibilities for reviewing and expanded activities.

Hampe (2006) states that the effectiveness of video decreases once selection starts to depend on non-visual components of video such as non-visual information, "talking heads", and information with no physical evidence. Because video communicates auditory and visual information, these two aspects have to work in concert to guarantee effective use of video.

The audio/visual correlation is an important aspect that has to be kept in mind when selecting a video. Sounds, pictures, and words should work jointly to enhance meaning. This audio/visual correlation should be assessed by teachers in the selection process through raising questions such as is the video necessary to enhance comprehension? Does the video facilitate understanding? Can the video visuals stand alone with no text?

The careful selection of video tracks is crucial to fulfilling the outcomes set at the beginning of the language class. Based on learners' proficiency levels, their prior knowledge and backgrounds, their learning styles and preferences, students' learning outcomes and instructional objectives, various video tracks can be incorporated into language teaching. But, not all types of videos are appropriate for all learners, proficiency levels and learning outcomes (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015).

The type of video tracks to be selected for language teaching should complement the curriculum and instructional objectives. There are some film categories that serve these objectives. These include educational films, animated films, social issue films, mystery and suspense, historical drama, and historical narratives. Given that wide range of choices, language teachers can easily find what they are looking for in their search for the right topic and language practice. Nevertheless, this variety of choices

may be challenging for teachers as in some cases it is very probable to come across various video tracks that are suitable for the choice of activity. For this reason, teachers should pay attention to which video tracks better serve the learning outcomes with a careful focus on the flow of information before and after the video track.

To make video selection a less challenging process, there are a number of guidelines that are useful for language teachers to bear in mind. First, the video track should fit into the syllabus and serve the course objectives. The content of the video should provide opportunities for language practice and relate to the topic under focus. Second, careful attention should be paid to the language level of the video to be selected for language practice. Third, the video length is an important factor to be considered in the selection process. Fourth, teachers should consider the relevance of the selected video to learners' prior knowledge and cultural backgrounds. Fifth, teachers should think of accompanying tasks to the video before and after the presentation. Paying attention to these factors will help choose optimal videos that maximize visual elements which can make a language class more effective and help learners retain more of the content.

A useful video track should include the intended linguistic content for instructional objectives. In most instances, for language classes seeking to develop communicative performance, this aspect means current, useful and accurate language in an authentic situation. Teachers can prepare in advance a detailed checklist that contains the diverse linguistic features and language functions which they intend to cover in their language class and gauge the content of the selected videos based on the items of this list.

The selected video should be thematically interesting. This factor seems to be obvious, but it actually requires a careful attention on the part of teachers. Any video selector should consider various relevant variables to come up with an interesting video track that successfully catches learners' attention. These variables include the different characteristics of the target audience, level of proficiency and learning outcomes. Taking into consideration these factors, teachers can set thematic parameters for their video selection. In this way, the selected video track will present the viewers with a situation of a discreet story with a beginning, middle, and end. Accordingly, the target audience can better identify with the context of the video and its characters.

It is worth mentioning that although the incorporation of video into language teaching has been proven to be an effective teaching tool, using it in practice poses some limitations. For instance, an effective use of video requires much preparation from the part of teachers. Due to the overload of teachers, which is generally very common, it is not easy to find enough time for video selection, previewing of videos and lesson preparation. Moreover, the availability of the necessary equipment for playing videos is not always guaranteed. Additionally, not all educational institutions have adequate video library sections which pose more challenges on the part of teachers to find justifiable video tracks that enhance students' learning outcomes. This is in addition to the powerful effect of today's audiovisual technology which can influence its audience and may cause loss of instructional objectives.

These limitations pose challenges to teachers for a practical integration of video. But, they can be circumvented by careful attention to them in advance. The selection of appropriate video tracks is not always an individual task. Teachers planning to use video in their classes should be aware of all instructional, content, and technical issues. Eventually, they need to have a backup plan for any probable urgent cases.

6. Conclusion

In this modern era, the advancement of technology has influenced all facets of human lives and education made no exception. The technological advances and the easy and direct access to digital resources have enabled language teachers to successfully integrate video into teaching and make classroom activities more interesting.

This study explores the benefits of embedding information technology within language teaching. It presents how the effective use of video enhances the learning experience and increases learners' interest and motivation. Investigating the theory and actual classroom practice that supports the use of video in the educational context, this study advocates that video is a practical tool for teachers to create a productive learning context that enables them to achieve students' intended learning outcomes.

Additionally, this paper discusses various video selection criteria and the probable practical challenges to incorporating video into language teaching. It eventually suggests some useful strategies to overcome those limitations. Since the aim of this paper is not to examine a specific case study or to apply a

theoretical approach in a certain context, it is recommended that further research builds on this paper and other current literature on the use of video in language teaching to make empirical research on the topic. Additionally, it will be useful to conduct studies on the booming emergence of online video streaming sites.

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