The Use of New Media Technological Aids in the Language Classroom: Video and Internet

Mark WONG, Manuel NORONHA & Vivian CHAPLIN
University of Macau, Macau

Language teaching effectiveness can be greatly enhanced with the inclusion and appropriate application of various new media technological aids: video and internet. These versatile teaching tools can provide an important visual and audio stimulus for students who encounter difficulties with language usage and practice, especially inside the classroom. Language instructors can also exercise a greater impact on their teaching methods. They may play one or several short video clips, which may subsequently prompt for further follow-up discussions. Here, the students will be exposed to new forms of vocabulary, pronunciations, and speech patterns. Apart from listening solely to their instructors, students will also have greater exposure to other varieties of spoken English as well.

The internet plays an important role in collaborative learning. Students can progress and immerse themselves in projects and other related activities as directed by their respective instructors. Students should gradually become more independent and responsible during their course of learning. In this context, instructors play the part of getting the students started by supplying additional language and/or technology support. Assignments and research projects will not only be submitted to the instructors, but will be presented to their classmates.

In this paper, the authors will address various issues concerning the use of new media technology in the classroom and also offer some explanations as to how and why students can benefit and enhance their learning capacity as well as maximize their interest with these valuable classroom tools.

Introduction

The integration of videos as a teaching tool, especially in a language learning classroom, could prove to be a multi-faceted option for teachers who wish to boost the students’ level of interest as well as their productivity. This can be achieved by visually introducing the subject to be taught and relating it to a lesson. Students are thus given an opportunity to watch and understand the concepts as they observe what is represented through the use of simulated case reconstruction. Video lessons can be integrated as part of the lesson plan and reinforce multimedia resources teachers already have.

The Link with Multiple Intelligences

Research studies conducted have discovered a correlation with Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences when videos are incorporated as teaching tools in an attempt to maximize learning output. Gardner's theory states that all students are in natural possession of varying degrees of intelligence. Through more diverse teaching applications, instructors can effectively deliver the information by using relevant video

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_multiple_intelligences:
Although there has been a lot of criticism, especially from the psychological and educational disciplines, Gardner's theory is thought to be “based on his own intuition instead of rational analysis and empirical data”. It has also been argued that the intelligences put forward; Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Musical, Naturalistic, Inter and Intrapersonal, among many others, are just other names for talents or personality types.
resources. This in turn allows the students to exercise their visual, auditory and linguistic intelligence. In theory, the rate of comprehension as well as learning retention should be seen as rather higher than learning without the use of videos.

**How Videos Can Be Used Effectively in the Classroom**

Any video resource that is intended to be adapted in the classroom should be firstly previewed by the instructor. The contents must be seen as appropriate and relevant to the students’ learning needs. Careful consideration of how long the screening would enhance the students’ learning capabilities also needs special attention. It isn’t always necessary to show an entire clip. In some cases, if a particular scene is well selected, the message could prove to be more effective.

Instructors may well opt to be near the screen or monitor. This will undoubtedly facilitate clarifying important segments by pointing to the screen or using other peripherals to explain any unfamiliar item of vocabulary that may surface. Alternatively, instructors may choose to sit with the students or wander freely and control the video with a remote control.

Instructors will need to be in full control of the pace of the viewing of the video and the amount of information intended to be taught. They may need to classify, analyze and discuss each segment of the video thoroughly by stopping or pausing where necessary and in order to help the students improve and practice their listening skills. Instructors could also identify and clarify what the students are watching. They can encourage student awareness of different film production values and techniques. Certain technicalities of film making may also be introduced at this stage. Instructors could also explain whether a particular scene may have different results or effects if the director has used different angles or shots. Finally, the instructor could effectively engage the students’ interest in critical viewing rather than viewing for pleasure. This may also stimulate learning potential and at times generate further feedback.

**Preparation Work**

It would be necessary for the instructor to engage and prepare the students before the video is screened. At this stage, it is important to stimulate the students’ pre-existing knowledge. Instructors could introduce some form of an overview to arouse the interest of the students and also inform them of what they will expect to learn from the video. Some forms of preparation work may include a short reading activity or presenting the related vocabulary from the video. As the video is being played, the instructors could alternatively assign a specific task. Questions directed at various parts of the video can make watching more motivational as the students have to be alert and need to take note of important facts or specific dialogue. Group discussions may also provide a platform for the students to immerse themselves in the topic. Another possibility is for the instructor to show images appropriately paused from various scenes of a video recording and allow the students to understand what will be covered.
**Observation and Follow up Work**

As the students are watching the video presentation, it is important for the instructor to be present. This allows the instructor to observe the reactions of his students. The reactions may act as indications of partial or complete comprehension. Some reactions may also give rise to other areas of interest whereby the instructor can stop the video presentation at any given point simply by the touch of a pause button. Once an explanation is given, the screening can be resumed.

It is customary to switch off the lights while a film is being shown. This not only increases the viewers’ sense of reality, but also provides better visual effects. However, when a video is being played in the classroom as part of the teaching plan, it would be strategically appropriate to leave a few of the lights on. This will allow the students to take notes effectively and to complete worksheets prepared by the teacher.

Once the video presentation has ended, the instructor should perform a follow-up task by going through and explaining the key aspects of the video. At this stage, discussions in small groups or as a whole should be encouraged. Testing for understanding and assimilation may be assessed by including extra activities relating to the video. This could be effectively used to enhance understanding in areas such as vocabulary, tenses, grammatical application through sentence constructions and so on.

**Video as a Listening Tool for Pronunciation**

In some listening exercises we must concentrate on specific dialogue to enable our students to learn. It is necessary to challenge them to listen when dealing with features of pronunciation. Films and documentaries provide an excellent source of authentic listening material for enhancing and improving pronunciation cognitive comprehension skills. This exercise deals with connected speech, in particular prominence (or sentence stress). It is important to emphasise that students will be exposed to more linguistic variety as well as a wider vocabulary selection. Gestures and other forms of non-verbal communicative tools made by the actors or narrators will additionally exemplify the situation.

**Advantages of Using Videos in the Classroom**

- **Creativity and Motivational Factors** - Videos may be perceived as a motivational factor. The advanced technological learning tools provide such a stimulus for young learners as well as adults, therefore more creative lessons can be introduced into the classroom.

- **A Higher Level of Learning Flexibility** - Videos offer the students a temporary chance to escape from the rigid learning patterns often encountered in more traditional settings.

- **Increased Co-operative Learning Skills** – Students are often required to participate actively in smaller discussion groups on various topics relating to the video. The instructor may appoint a group leader, who would then decide on the work distribution in his group. In this approach, students learn to co-operate with each other, often encouraging brainstorming sessions.
Promotion of Media Interest and Literacy Skills – The videos will provide a kind of platform where the instructors can explain to the students how some parts of the video are made. The technique and skills involved in video production may be of relevant interest to the students.

Expansion of Students’ Research Skills - Students will need to communicate and work with each other. Library searches and connection with the internet are some of the more common ways to collect information related to the video. At times, they may also interact with their community as a means of finding the resources beyond the classroom, or perhaps in the library.

Criteria for Selecting the Appropriate Video

Authenticity and Relevance
Television programs, and news broadcasts provide quite a realistic view of different cultures, and their compelling story lines can motivate learners to widen their comprehension capacities. It must also be emphasized that the language is not simplified but is spoken at a normal speed with genuine accents. The underlying importance here is students can compare the accents to their own. They will then have a concept for improvement through imitation of what is regarded as ‘correct’ English.

Instructional Videos
Instructional videos for teaching English have been designed for the classrooms. They are likely to already have been assessed for language and content to suit students of different levels of linguistic competency. Many instructional videos are packaged as multimedia resources that include student workbooks, teacher guides, video transcripts, and audio compact discs.

Length
The length of the video clip is important but this will vary and depend on what the individual instructor sets as the learning objective.

Appropriateness of Content
The content must be suitable for the students’ learning needs and also the different student cultures.

Availability of Related Materials
Most videos are accompanied by prepared pedagogical materials that can be used for language teaching (Headway or North Star series). If, however, the video is being used for presenting language or for comprehension tasks, there are further factors which should be considered.

1. Degree of visual support
   If a film or video clip has many scenes that have a high degree of visual support or graphic illustrations, it would enable the students to understand what is being...
said. Documentaries produced by the National Geographic and Discovery Channels are very good examples.

2. Clarity of picture and sound
   It is mandatory that the audio and visual quality must not impede the students’ learning process. If a TV program or news broadcast has been recorded for teaching purposes, then it is important to make sure both the picture and sound qualities are clear.

3. Linguistic Content
   An important factor to consider are the linguistic components, and how they can be integrated as part of the course curriculum, or as a whole.

4. Linguistic Level
   The language level of the video should be appropriate for the level of the class without the instructor having to place too much emphasis on over-explaining.

**Integrating Digital Video (DV) and the Internet in the Classroom**

One of the most inspiring characteristics of the internet is the possibility of integrating video material into a web page. Unfortunately, it is quite a complex procedure consisting of the following: creating, digitalizing, editing, compressing, embedding, testing and publishing are involved in creating good quality video presentations for a wide variety of users with different access speeds to the internet. In general, it is essential for teachers to be advanced IT users, and technical assistance may be required for those without any prior experience.

**Digital Formats**

There are five major digital movie formats, QuickTime, Windows Media/AVI, Flash, RealVideo and MPEG. QuickTime offers cross-platform support, multiple audio tracks, and video/audio streaming. Windows Media may be more versatile than AVI, but MPEG is primarily used for CD and DVD distribution. RealVideo is a streaming technology and is best suited for long video or audio files, although image quality can vary, depending on network transfer speeds. Flash video is becoming very popular for the macromedia plugin, and is the most common plugin on computers today, so nearly everybody can play it. Windows Media is the best format for inserting movies in PowerPoint. High quality digital video files have been most commonly distributed via CD-ROM or DVD because of their large size, but are increasingly distributed via the Internet as network speeds have increased. Streaming video systems like Flash, RealVideo, QuickTime and Windows Media download part of the file into a buffer on your local hard drive; then, begin to play back the file as they continue to download in the background. They also delete the buffered file as it continues to play.
An Inspiring Vision of a Blended Learning Environment

In a recent article for the *Guardian Weekly* (February 16, 2007), Peter Sharma presented an inspiring vision of a blended learning environment of the 21st century demonstrating the application of new media technological aids in the language classroom. It is worth quoting at length from this article:

The teacher enters the classroom early and switches on the computer and the electronic projector. The image on the interactive whiteboard flickers on. The students arrive, their Powerpoint presentations on their memory sticks, ready to deliver their mini-talks. Juan is late, so the students compose an e-mail, guided by the teacher, and send it directly to his mobile phone. The lesson begins with the teacher bringing up the BBC’s website and doing a quick prediction activity using the weekend weather forecast. The teacher (F2F) discusses with a group possible topics for a presentation. He then issues the learners with a CD-rom enabling them to practice fixed phrases and view videos of sample presentations. In the final lesson of the course, the learners will stand up and deliver their presentation to the class […]. The class creates a podcast. Students post the result to the class website and then investigate authentic recordings on the web. This motivates them to download more podcasts onto their MP3 players and listen to them between classes. […] A small group of freelance teachers download Moodle software, and club together to pay for hosting fees. They are now able to support their next course using the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) to communicate with their students between lessons using video. Students can consider their response to the thought-provoking posts on the discussion forum before going to class, and download the class-produced handout afterwards.

Is this learning environment achievable in the context of English discourse and intercultural communication? How can such an environment be created given the problems of limited funding for resources, equipment, and teacher training in the application of new media and technology? How can teachers as well as students be encouraged to collaborate in initiatives to broaden their expertise and experience? How important is this collaboration to the development of the disciplines and practice of foreign language teaching, intercultural communication, and applied English language studies? These are some of the issues which the authors of this paper are concerned with in fulfilling their responsibilities as facilitators of learning and pursuing research interests in their related fields. The new generation of teachers can perhaps look forward to their demands for the introduction of new technologies into the classroom being met as hardware and software become more widely available and cheaper, but for the present, collaboration is the key to success in implementing effective learning strategies in ‘traditional’ teaching environments. Intercultural communication, after all, is about collaboration and interaction – the sharing of knowledge, skills, as well as a vision of integrated and productive learning experienced together.
Video and the Internet: Their Role in Blended Learning

In *Blended Learning: Using Technology Inside and Beyond the Classroom*, Peter Sharma and Barney Barrett urge language teachers to embrace the concept of blended learning but be mindful that in the blended learning model the teacher is there to teach as well as engineer learning opportunities and ensure that students are aware of the benefits of using technology. Sharma and Barrett recommend that in a language course there should be a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component combined with the appropriate use of technology. In this blend, the teacher has a clear role: to perform a needs analysis, write the syllabus and teach the course. The teaching is supplemented and enhanced by the use of technology, both inside the classroom and outside. Sharma and Barrett, however, point out that to be successful, the language teacher needs to return to basic principles and forget the “wow” effect associated with technology. Pedagogical needs should be paramount in using technology in the classroom.

As Sharma and Barrett remind us, blended learning is not a new term but its value to English language teaching merits a closer understanding. Originally the term was used in the corporate sector to refer to a way of allowing workers to study while at work using CD-roms or videos. Blended learning has also been used to refer to a mix of pedagogies, to the use of a combination of technologies and to describe how online training can be used with ‘traditional’ classroom teaching. The use of video and the Internet in the classroom is also by no means a new development. In the 1960s and 1970s Richard Sherrington and Stephen PittCorder were advocating the use of television for the teaching and practice of language skills, and in the 1990s Brian Hill was advising teachers to make the most of satellite television and interactive video – describing a variety of activities for developing listening, speaking and writing skills at different levels and exploiting and expanding on the use of these new technologies in the classroom. Meanwhile, DVD had improved on the technical quality of VHS and became accessible on the Internet as well as in shops and libraries.

In the classroom today, teachers will find that the “wow” effect associated with technology has ceased to have an impact on students. With blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools already being used in progressive classrooms, teachers who have not kept up with the new technology will fail to motivate and harness the potential for achieving the aims of blended learning. Those constrained by the rigid demands of teaching from textbooks with their outdated content, culturally inappropriate contexts and dull presentation, will have to struggle to capture students’ attention and fight a losing battle to inspire self-directed learning. Even those teachers who recognize the value of video may only consider using it if it fits into the confines of the textbook-oriented syllabus. It may all too frequently be used as a cosmetic to enliven the unacceptable face of boredom that textbooks present. This sense of boredom will inevitably infuse the content and presentation of the video – no matter how well it is designed and produced.

Technology tools need to be integrated into a syllabus that allows for flexibility of learning and embraces developments in new media that students are familiar with through their exposure to popular culture in local as well as global contexts.

Research in the fields of educational technology, blended learning, language and communication studies has already reached many classrooms through the efforts of educators including: Collis and Moonen (2001); Salmon (2002); Richardson (2006);
Garrison and Anderson, (2002); Weller (2002), and more recently Bonk and Graham (2006). According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, more than 85 percent of public universities offer non-residential “distance learning” courses, degrees, or career credentials, providing an ever changing and improving learning environment through television and the internet. As one Open University student commented, students are finding online courses help to free the learner from the tyranny of the academic timetable and the constraints of the conventional classroom with its ‘teacher talk and chalk’ associations. Today over 10 million students are using distance education as their main access to learning, while those studying in conventional classrooms are increasingly utilizing the new media and technology provided by distance learning education institutions.

Bersin (2004) has compiled a handbook on the best practices, proven methodologies, and lessons learned from these organizations which continue to develop and implement blended learning. Bonk and Graham (2006) have also published a handbook which provides examples of blended learning options that combine face-to-face instruction with online learning in both the workplace as well as more formal academic settings. To address the diversity of readers, *The Handbook of Blended Learning* (HOBLe) includes contributors from a broad range of fields including trainers, consultants, professors, university presidents, distance-learning centre directors, learning strategists and ‘evangelists’, general managers of learning, CEOs, chancellors, deans, and directors of global talent and organizational development. These protagonists recognize that information literacy is a key skill needed by today's students who are tomorrow’s workers in the knowledge economy. They need to learn how to use search engines effectively, evaluate websites, be familiar with subject gateways for curricular subjects, adopt information skills models, and develop their intercultural communication skills through foreign language learning to enable them to collaborate and negotiate.

The tools of the new Internet provide the opportunities for collaboration and for constructivist learning absent from the conventional textbook-oriented classroom. New students will be experts at using the new Internet and will become meaningful contributors to the vast body of knowledge that is represented by the Internet not the teacher. The teacher will be respected for his or her ability to facilitate this contribution by managing blended learning environments that foster critical thinking, creativity, and ‘real world research’. Robson (2002), an advocate of ‘real world research’, advises that the teacher’s and researcher’s task of searching through databases for example, can be supplemented by networking in various ways. Networking through conferences and meetings using video-conferencing or joining Internet discussion groups (Listservs) are just two recommended ways. Robson comments that: “I have found it heartening to see how, in a list such as EVALTALK (devoted to discussions on evaluating research topics), senior figures in the field often take the time to respond to pleas for help and advice from beginning researchers” (Robson 2002:53).
Examples of the Application of Video and the Internet for Classroom Teaching in the Context of Intercultural Communication

The examples provided here demonstrate the application of video and the internet and illustrate how the new media can be utilized in the teaching of English discourse and intercultural communication.

The first example is a video clip which was selected from the film *The Interpreter* (2005) in which the popular Australian actress Nicole Kidman plays the role of a white-African interpreter, Sylvia Broom, working for the United Nations. Sylvia is the only interpreter in the UN fluent in a minority African language, ‘Ku’, as well her second language, French. The clip features a scene in which Sylvia is being interviewed by FBI agent Toby Keller (played by Sean Penn) following her report of a secret conversation she has overheard, in the Ku language, revealing a plot to assassinate President Edmund Zwane of Matobo (a fictional African country). President Zwane is responsible for the murder of her brother, although it was unknown to Sylvia at the time, but was revealed to the audience in the opening scenes of the film. In fact Sylvia already blames President Zwane for the death of her parents who were killed by a landmine set by the President’s security forces terrorizing communities and suppressing dissent. We learn that France has submitted a motion to be voted on in the UN General Assembly to have the President tried for genocide in the International Criminal Court at The Hague.

This video clip illustrates how language can be misinterpreted with potentially dangerous consequences. We also learn how the process of intercultural communication can be affected by cultural, political, as well as personal factors coming into play.

A discussion focusing on the interaction and discourse in the conversation between Sylvia and Toby exemplifies this. In particular, the meaning, nuance, and implication of key words were identified, for example: “A whisper disguises the quality of a voice.”/ “You wouldn’t mind if he was dead?” / “I wouldn’t mind if he were gone.”/ “Your profession is playing with words, Miss Broom.”/ “You’ve had a tough year, lady.” The students were then directed to the Internet to look for the film’s website and for reviews commenting on the content, performance of the actors, and director Sydney Pollack’s interpretation of the story. One review concluded with the observation: “The film also tosses a “message” about world leaders out there, which was an interesting aside and fun for Poli-Sci graduates to mull over.” The website also directed students to films in the same genre including: *13 Days; The Assassination of Richard Nixon; The Contender; Enemy of The State; Hotel Rwanda; The Manchurian Candidate; No Way Out, and The Last King Of Scotland*. Students were impressed by the way in which Sydney Pollack had been able to secure permission to shoot scenes for the film in the real United Nations Building. This led to research on the rules and procedures in place to protect staff and dignitaries while allowing the public to have access to international buildings such as embassies, consuls, and the World Trade Centre. Students found it amusing that FBI agents have to subject themselves to a security check in the UN Building because it is international ‘territory’ on US soil.

Another example is the use of a documentary entitled “Extreme: Cosmetic Surgery”. The documentary talks about the pressure celebrities have to deal with in their line of work, particularly forever looking young. Students are given a worksheet with questions for discussion after watching the documentary. One of the questions was “Why is
Pamela Anderson considered a clever businesswoman?" The simple and obvious answer to this was because she used her body to make money. However, in the discussion, students are able to pinpoint the fact that what really makes her a clever businesswoman is that, living a seemingly troubled and roller-coaster lifestyle, she manages to use this to her advantage by manipulating the media into writing articles about her which are of interest to stakeholders and sponsors, making it possible for her to constantly make millions through advertising and other product promotions. This demonstrates the fact that the use of video in the classroom does not limit learning to absorbing information but taking it to the next level by exploring other possible interpretations, encouraging students to analyze and think critically. The discussion is further exploited using e-bulletin board and chat rooms controlled by the teacher. This learning process is facilitated by the use of media other than textbooks.

Research Findings on Students’ Attitudes towards the Use of Video Resources in the Language Classroom

Findings & Discussion of a Survey on Students’ Attitudes Towards the Use of Authentic Videos in the Language Classroom

Respondents were asked to indicate their attitudes toward the usefulness of authentic videos in the language classroom, the use of sub-titles in aiding understanding, and the effectiveness of the classroom activities against a five-point Likert Scale. The mean for each statement was calculated to find out the respondents’ general attitude toward each statement. For the most part, respondents reacted positively to the statements. Except for Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, and 15, the mean obtained indicated that for the most part, participants bordered on agreement on most of the statements, except statement 7, which was expected. Statement 7:

“"I am able to understand the content of the DVD presentations without the use of subtitles”

generated a mean of 2.97. Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, & 15 clearly received a favourable response from respondents.

The composite percentage for each of the three aspects was calculated to identify which aspect was the most favourable. The purpose was to establish the number of respondents who viewed what was being done right and what needed improvement with respect to the implementation of authentic media resources in the language classroom. The results are shown in the tables below. For practicality, the five-point scale was reduced to three (3).

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2 Please refer to Appendix A for Demographics
3 Please refer to Appendix B for details
Table 1 Aspect: Usefulness of Authentic Video Resources in the Language Classroom (Statements 1-6, 15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>16.02%</td>
<td>81.31%</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2 Aspect: Use of Sub-titles in Aiding Understanding (Statement 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.17%</td>
<td>46.73%</td>
<td>26.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Aspect: Use of Sub-titles in Aiding Understanding (Statements 8-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.54%</td>
<td>23.37%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 3 Aspect: The Effectiveness of Follow-up Activities (Statements 10-14)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>69.35%</td>
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Based on the composite percentages, 81% of the respondents, in general, found the authentic video resources to be useful and interesting. 70% found the subtitles useful in aiding comprehension, while 69% of the respondents found the follow-up activities to be quite effective.

**Usefulness of Authentic Video Resources in the Language Classroom**

There is no denying the usefulness of video resources, both instructional and authentic, in the language classroom. While instructional media resources have the advantage of being graded to suit the proficiency levels of the students, authentic resources expose students to how “reel”/ “real” language is used. Authentic video materials: documentaries, features, news programmes, movies, and commercials, both produced locally and internationally, have become all the more popular as educators, publishers and even entertainment companies have come to realize the importance of enhancing media literacy (especially in English) among the masses.

Furthermore, the use of authentic video resources which has been produced locally has the added advantage of students having prior knowledge of the issues being discussed and thus, making it more relevant and interesting to them. In addition, listening to local presenters using English provides students with a genuine model of language use with a local twist. An example of a locally produced English language programme, “House Husbands”[^4], proved to be very successful in class and generated lively discussions.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of the students responded positively to the use and benefits of authentic video resources in helping them understand concepts and issues. With reference to the mean, respondents agreed that the video presentations not only helped

[^4]: TVB Pearl Report hosted by Diana Lin, (November 11, 2005)
them to better understand the topics being discussed in class (mean: 4.32) but also generated interest (mean: 4.27) and enriched their knowledge of the world around them (mean: 4.28). Comments from a student yielded:

> when we learn a new language, we should not only learn the grammar and its usage, but also the language’s culture and background (which) students can hardly get from the textbook. Without videos and the internet, students can only know the language but not understand it.

This was further supported by another student who stated:

> by using videos students can experience different speaking speeds, different accents and pronunciation … internet is a very important tool in English language (learning) as it really can stimulate and motivate students to work hard on (their) English.

It is duly noted that not everyone agreed with the advantages of the use of new media technological aids in the language classroom. There is no need to use videos and the internet in the classroom because

> … materials provided in the English language lesson are enough and the best… the writers of the textbook have a lot of teaching experience and they will choose the best materials to help us learn English.

Furthermore, it is argued that when using videos and the internet in the classroom, the teacher would not know if the students are sleeping or just playing games on the internet.

On the whole, however, respondents not only agreed that the video programmes are useful but also agreed that they should be an integrated part of the courses offered by the English Language Centre (mean: 4.29)5.

The response to whether or not the video programmes enriched students’ vocabulary, however, was somewhat lukewarm (mean: 3.63). Slightly more than half (51%) of the respondents felt that their vocabulary was enriched while close to 40% were undecided. One possible reason for this could be the use of subtitles or captions.

Subtitles, either in English or the local language, Cantonese, may prove to be useful in enhancing comprehension; however, one cannot deny that the “eye is more powerful than the ear, and will dominate” (Sherman 2003: 16). Thus, whether they need it or not, viewers, will automatically focus on the subtitles. When students concentrate on reading the subtitles, they lose out on listening to the language and thus, miss out on vocabulary enrichment as well. The use of subtitles will be dealt with briefly in the coming paragraphs.

Another possible reason may be the unfamiliar accents or the variety of spoken English which students are exposed to. Most respondents just about agree that the video presentations exposed them to a variety of English accents (mean: 3.88). However, this exposure does not necessarily mean that students will be able to comprehend what was said; thus, there is a dependence on subtitles.

Finally, students’ lack of language proficiency may also be a contributing factor. Because authentic media resources are not graded, it is sometimes difficult to match the content to the students’ level of understanding. This problem may be solved quite

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5 Please refer to Appendix B
effectively through pre-viewing activities, where concepts and vocabulary items are discussed.

**Use of Subtitles in Aiding Understanding**

Subtitles or closed captions are the written dialogues in films, TV programmes and videos usually found at the bottom of the screen (“Subtitles”, *Wikipedia*, [online]). As mentioned above, subtitles may be useful in aiding comprehension. On the other hand, one might question, how important? If the survey is anything to go by, only 26% of the respondents stated that they were able to understand the content of the video programmes without the use of subtitles, while 70% of the respondents stated that their understanding of the content improved with the use of subtitles. Examining the mean, however, shows that the responses were short of an agreement. The questions whether or not students were able to understand the content better with Chinese or English subtitles garnered a mean of 3.9 and 3.85 respectively. This was rather surprising as respondents did not seem to have a preference for the language medium of the subtitles, whether English or Cantonese. As long as there were subtitles, they were able to grasp the content more effectively.

On an interesting note, while studying the number of respondents who disagreed that subtitles were instrumental in helping them understand the content, it was discovered that nine (9) respondents disagreed that they were able to understand the video presentations better with Chinese subtitles compared with the five (5) who disagreed that they were able to understand the video presentations better with English subtitles. On closer examination, it was discovered that the nine (9) individuals, 2 males and 7 females, who found the Chinese subtitles not very useful, had between 5-10 years or more of English. These students may have been more proficient and confident in English and may have found the subtitles distracting. Thus, subtitles may have interfered with their understanding and ultimately, their enjoyment of the presentation.

**Effectiveness of Follow-up Activities**

Follow-up activities may include worksheets, discussions, presentations, and writing tasks. These activities may be done individually, in pairs, or groups. Great care is taken to develop the worksheets so that not only students’ listening and comprehension skills but also critical thinking skills are stimulated. Thus, worksheet activities usually include a short introduction, focused vocabulary items, comprehension questions plus a short writing task where students get the opportunity to express their views on what they have seen.

While great care was taken in selecting video and internet programmes and in developing the follow-up activities, the question still remains, how do students view these tasks? Based on the composite average, 69% of the respondents agreed that the follow-up activities were useful while 27% were undecided.

Most respondents felt that the DVD presentations and follow-up activities were useful in helping them with their listening comprehension (mean: 4.15). One possible reason for this is that the worksheets are usually given at the beginning of the presentation and students are encouraged to read through the questions and get a general
idea of what the presentation is about. This focused listening task may have actually contributed to the success of the activity. As to whether the follow-up activities were useful in helping them with their writing and speaking tasks, most respondents were indifferent (mean: 3.61). One possible reason for this may be the students’ lack of proficiency to carry out the task effectively. To be fair, one has to realize that writing tasks, whatever the length may be, pose a challenge to both proficient and weaker students. Another possible reason might be the students’ indifference to the tasks themselves. Which language teacher has never experienced the up-hill task of motivating students to write and speak up in class?

On a positive note, though, when executed successfully, DVD presentations have been found to be effective in generating lively discussions and ultimately, interesting pieces of writing texts.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief analysis of blended learning and the application of video and the Internet to the learning environment preferred by the increasing number of knowledge literate and technology literate students who will contribute to the development of a knowledge-based economy and cultural milieu.

The authors of this paper are conducting further research on the applications of video and the Internet in the context of English discourse and intercultural communication, especially in the context of Macau which offers a unique environment for intralingual, and interlingual as well as intercultural studies. The recent festival and symposium on Asian American Film, organized by Asia CineVision (New York) and the Hong Kong–America Center, hosted by the English Language Teaching and Research Committee of the Macau Polytechnic Institute, provided an excellent platform for exploring the incorporation of this medium and genre through blended learning into language and intercultural communication teaching. The 12 minute video titled *The Music Palace* – a story of the last days of New York City’s Chinatown theater, nominated for an Oscar Student Award, is proof of students’ enthusiasm for not only the new media but their respect for the developments which have led to improvements in both education and entertainment resources and facilities to be optimized in our schools and colleges as well as in our homes and venues for intercultural interaction and communication.
Appendix A

DEMOGRAPHICS
Participants of the Survey

Participants in this study were students from five first-year language classes and one ESP class, offered by the English Language Centre of the University of Macau. A total of 107 students participated in this survey. Participants included both local and mainland students only. These six classes were chosen because they had experienced the use of the DVD materials and activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of English Instruction</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS OF STUDENT SURVEY  
*The Use of Authentic Videos in the Language Classroom*

The following statements have been reordered according to their mean. Students were asked to circle the response that best reflects their views. 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree, 3=Unsure (Neither agree nor disagree); 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree. The percentage of respondents who either agreed, were undecided, or disagreed with the statements have also been included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations helped me better understand the topics being discussed in class. [S 2]</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>96.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video presentations are useful and should be an integrated part of the English language lessons. [S 15]</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>90.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations provided me with interesting and useful general knowledge (enriched knowledge of the world around me). [S 4]</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>87.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations generated interest in the topics being discussed in class. [S 1]</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>89.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations and follow-up activities were useful in helping me with my listening comprehension. [S 11]</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>85.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations were useful in helping me to understand the readings in the textbook. [S 3]</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>80.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat Agree (Lukewarm responses)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to understand the content of the video presentations better with Chinese sub-titles. [S 8]</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>71.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the video presentations and follow-up activities better when we had combined sections. [S 13]</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>71.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations exposed me to a variety of English accents. [S 6]</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>72.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to understand the content of the video presentations better with English sub-titles. [S 9]</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>69.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the video presentations and follow-up activities better when I was among classmates in my own class. [S 14]</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>68.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The follow-up activities (comprehension questions/worksheets, discussions and writing activities) were useful in helping me understand the video presentations better. [S 10]</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>66.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations enriched my vocabulary. [S 5]</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>51.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video presentations and follow-up activities were useful in helping me with my speaking and writing tasks. [S 12]</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>56.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to understand the content of the video presentations without the use of sub-titles. [S 7]</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>26.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Does not add up to 100% as one or two students failed to state their response to this statement.
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