

Focus on

VIDEO IN THE ELT CLASSROOM

1. What is it?

There has been an enormous increase in the availability and popularity of online video over the last decade, enabled by improvements in mobile devices and connectivity. Whether sourced online or included in ELT course materials, video is a popular format in both formal and informal language learning.

A go-to for learning resources

Sites like YouTube and Vimeo have become go-to places for learning how to do just about anything – from baking a cake to developing math skills or learning about solar energy.

Part of life

For teenagers and young adults, video has become a favourite way to consume, create, and share content. Mobile phones offer easy access to high-quality video cameras and easy-to-use apps for editing and uploading video directly to a range of websites.

ELT courses

Many ELT courses now have a range of level-appropriate quality video content that supports teachers and students.

Variety of content

The content and quality of online video varies enormously, but with a little care it's possible to find engaging, entertaining, and informative content that can help to leverage your students' attention and deliver learning goals in a motivating and innovative way.

Types of video

Among the more popular and useful types of video materials available are:

■ 'How to' videos

These show viewers how to do a wide range of things, from cooking specific dishes to fixing a car. They are often language rich and highly visual, which means they tend to be easy to understand, even for lower-level learners.

■ Advertisements

These are usually an ideal length for use in the classroom and are often visually engaging, language rich, and very creative. They can also be quite easy to understand for lower-level learners.

■ Short animated movies

Many of these have a very powerful narrative combined with engaging imagery, and they often touch on more imaginative subjects. They can show students the world from different perspectives.

■ Educational videos

These cover a range of content, from long lectures to bite-sized programs and informative documentaries that are specifically designed for learning. These types of video are generally information rich, which can make it quite easy to design comprehension tasks for them.

■ Music videos

These can be particularly useful for students, as they are designed to be watched and listened to multiple times, and music can significantly help to improve the retention of the lyrics.

■ Movie clips

These are short excerpts from films or TV series. This kind of authentic material can be very motivating and give students the confidence to watch films in English in their own time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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2. What does it mean for the ELT classroom?

Learner engagement

Most students respond well to video and can find it more engaging than text or audio as a medium of instruction, so video can help keep students' attention sharp and focused.

Contextualizing target language

Seeing how and where the target language is being used can help students to understand the language, as well as more complex aspects of language, such as register and appropriacy.

A launch point for practice

ELT course videos can provide us with models of the target language in conversation that students can follow and then personalize for their own practice, perhaps creating videos of themselves using the target language and sharing them with classmates under the teacher's supervision.

Topical content

Videos of topical content can help to make the language learning experience more current and engaging. It's quite easy to find topical video clips online, for example on news channels, which can be used for adapting lessons to cover current events. Many ELT course videos offer documentaries on topics with appeal to a wide international audience, which can also provide talking points on current issues.

Modelling non-verbal communication

English is an international language spoken in different contexts around the world, each with their own cultural appropriacies. Video can give us the opportunity to observe non-verbal communication: the way people use their hands, bodies, and facial expressions to communicate in different contexts. Video can thus provide a model for something that would otherwise be very challenging to teach in the classroom.

Cultural elements

Video is often rich in cultural information about the way people in different cultures live and interact. In most cases, when you watch a clip from a film or TV series, there are cultural elements that help you identify where it was made. Helping students to focus on these elements can help them gain a deeper understanding of different cultures.

Familiarity with cultural references

Various types of video, particularly film and TV, are elements of popular culture that people regularly talk about and reference in conversation, so being able to watch extracts from movies and TV series can help students to integrate and build relationships with others.

Personalized lesson content

The vast wealth of video resources available online makes it possible for you to find content that is relevant to your students' interests and hobbies, so you can personalize your lessons specifically for your class.

3. What are the challenges?

Learning goals

Using video with students can be great, but you need to have a reason to use it. You can't just play a video clip and expect students to learn from it. Neither should video be used simply as a reward for good behaviour. Be sure to find a video that leads to a learning goal for your students.

Accessibility

One of the first challenges of using online video is connectivity. Losing the internet connection in the middle of a video-based lesson can be very disappointing for you and for your students, as can lag or bad picture quality. Be sure to test the video on the screen or projector you'll be using ahead of time.

With online video, you need to be aware of any copyright restrictions. Playing an online video in the classroom is likely to be acceptable, but downloading and sharing it is generally not.

Length of clips

Consider the length of the videos you use. If a video is language dense with lots of fast verbal interaction, it's better to try to keep it short with a maximum of around three minutes. This enables you to replay the clip a number of times without overwhelming or boring your students. Less language-dense clips, especially ones that you are using to exploit for the visual elements such as short animated movies, can be longer. As a rule of thumb, avoid anything that is longer than ten minutes.

Task preparation time

If you are using an authentic online video, you'll need to create tasks to help students focus and extract meaningful learning from the clip. This involves designing pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing tasks and follow-up activities in much the same way as you would with reading or listening texts. This can be time-consuming but also be very rewarding. And of course, once you have designed your lesson, you'll be able to reuse it with other classes and improve it over time.



Authentic language

Dealing with authentic language can be very motivating but also very challenging for students and you need to get the balance right. If the content is challenging, make the tasks easier and give more support within the tasks. Make sure that any while-viewing tasks don't require students to write, as this will take their attention away from the screen and make it more difficult for them to notice what is happening.

Appropriacy

Be sure to check the content for cultural and age appropriacy. Depending on where you are and the age of the learners you are working with, this can be very important. The accepted standards for clothing and behaviour vary between different societies across the globe, and it is important to think about how your video represents cultures and how they will be perceived. For online videos, you should check the website the video is hosted on for any potentially inappropriate advertising or links to other websites.

Cultural references in humour

Many authentic videos, especially comedy films or sitcoms, depend on references to elements of popular culture which may be unfamiliar to students. Hearing people laugh and not understanding why can be an uncomfortable feeling. Visual humour tends to be much easier to understand.

Matching video content to course content

Building video-based content into the syllabus can be challenging, and if you are looking for a video that fits into a specific part of your course, then this can also be quite time-consuming. You'll need to develop your online search skills to find and follow good sources.

4. How can this be implemented?

Using ELT course video

If you haven't used video in class before, one good way to start is to use the video content provided with your ELT course. This material is language and content graded for your students and will be culturally appropriate. It has been designed to fit with your syllabus and has ready-made tasks and activities that can help you easily structure the materials into your lessons. It also comes with a transcript of the language used.

Creating tasks

With online video, you need to structure tasks around the clip. It's useful to think about video as you would audio or text and structure the lesson in three parts:

Pre-viewing

Use a task or tasks to help prepare the students for what they are going to watch. This could be inputting language they will need, predicting content, or helping them access information about content.

While-viewing

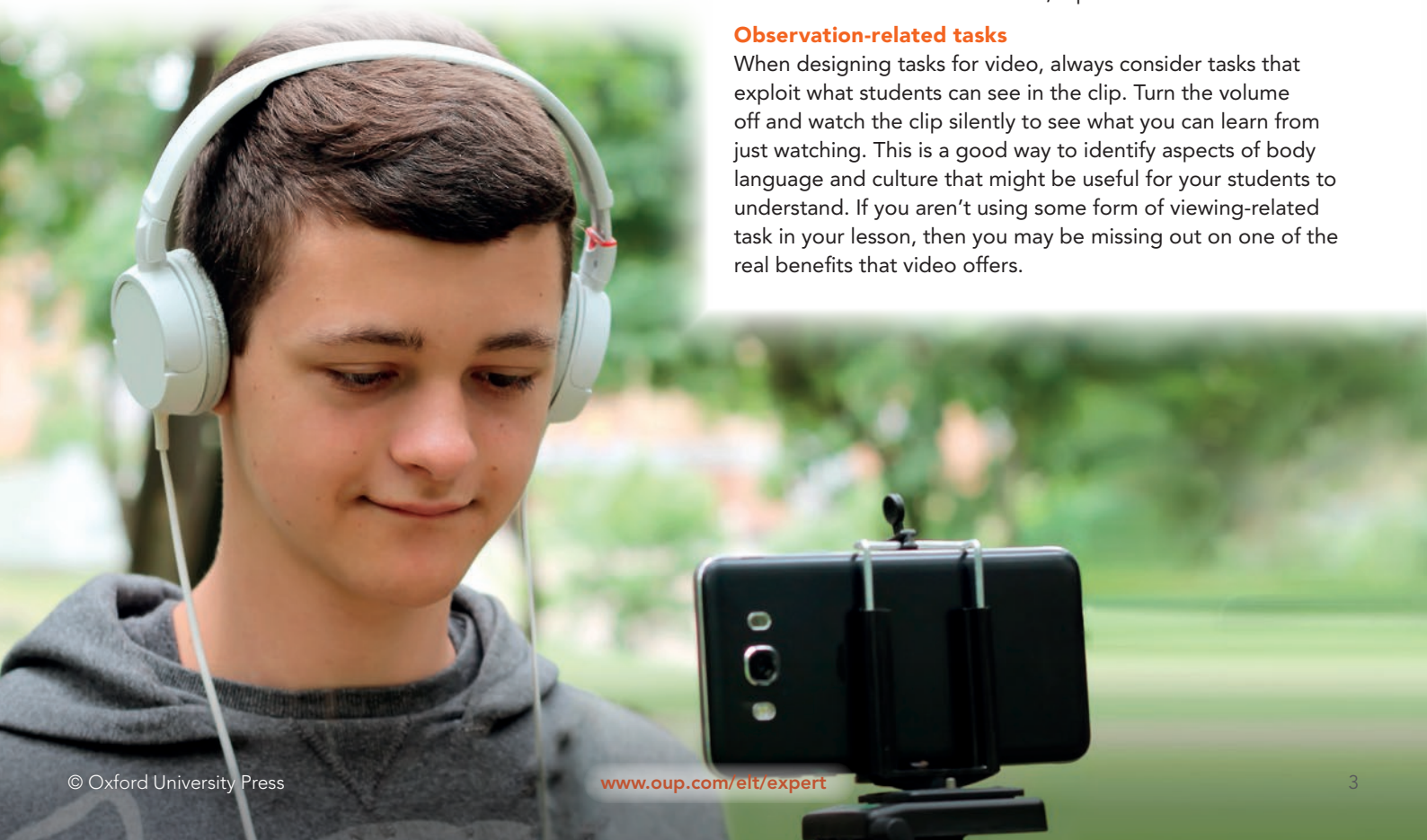
A while-viewing task gives the students a reason to watch and focuses their attention on some aspect of the clip. This could involve checking information, sequencing events, looking for cultural references, or focusing on body language.

Post-viewing

This is the part of the lesson where students work with what they have extracted from the video. This could involve discussing what they saw, working with language from the clip, or some form of continuation from the clip, like writing the next scene or reenacting the action from the clip as well as creating their own version of it – videoed, if possible.

Observation-related tasks

When designing tasks for video, always consider tasks that exploit what students can see in the clip. Turn the volume off and watch the clip silently to see what you can learn from just watching. This is a good way to identify aspects of body language and culture that might be useful for your students to understand. If you aren't using some form of viewing-related task in your lesson, then you may be missing out on one of the real benefits that video offers.



5. Over to you

Using video can bring variety to your classes and add an additional level of interest for students. It's great to take this on as a project with other teachers in your staffroom or your learning network and share any lessons or materials that you create. This can help reduce the workload and also enable you to get some feedback on the way you are using video and see how other teachers approach it.

Talking points

- 🗨 How have you used video in your classroom?
- 🗨 What kinds of video do you think your students would be interested in?
- 🗨 What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the video materials provided with your ELT course versus materials that you find online?
- 🗨 What online sources of ready-made lessons do you know about?
- 🗨 What challenges would there be to using video in your classroom?
- 🗨 How could you overcome these challenges?
- 🗨 How could you work with other teachers to share video materials?
- 🗨 How could you get started in creating your own video-based lesson?

6. Further reading

10 ways to use videos in ELT

👉 <https://www.myetpedia.com/10-ways-to-use-videos-in-elt>

Eight Ways to Use Video with English-Language Learners

👉 <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/ell-engagement-using-video-larry-ferlazzo-katie-hull-sypnieski>

Using Video in the Classroom

👉 <https://eltexperiences.com/using-video-in-the-classroom/>

Video in ELT – Theoretical and Pedagogical Foundations

👉 <http://mx.nthu.edu.tw/~katchen/professional/KATE%20paper.htm>

Video shorts

👉 <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/nikpeachey/silent-videos/>

Ready-made lessons

Lesson Stream

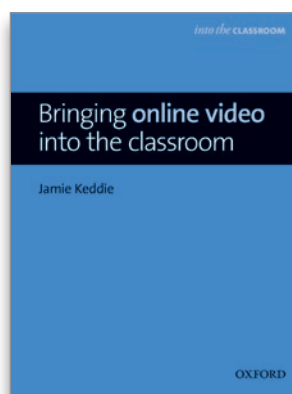
👉 <https://lessonstream.org/lessons/>

Filming English

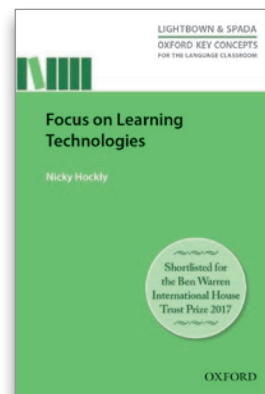
👉 <https://sites.google.com/view/filmingenglish/home>

Film English

👉 <http://film-english.com/>



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