Chapter 71
ICT and Language Learning:
A Case Study on Student-Created Digital Video Projects

Samia Naqvi
Middle East College, Oman

Rahma Al Mahrooqi
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

ABSTRACT

Technology-enriched classrooms have been claimed to produce enhanced learning opportunities for foreign language students. These technologies can be integrated into language teaching and learning inside the classroom or used for independent learning by students outside it. This study involves the use of digital-videos in Middle Eastern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. It attempts to explore if using technology creatively in language teaching has the potential to enhance communication skills and other sub-skills in EFL classes. Omani EFL students, working in small groups, created commercials for products they chose to design and promote using digital videos. These were then presented to the class while each group was responsible for collaboratively writing a report the presentation of a commercial product and wrote about their experiences. Using data collected mainly from student questionnaires, this article reports on this experience from the points of view of students.

INTRODUCTION

The last three decades or so have witnessed an increased call for learner-centered teaching. Instead of teacher-fronted classrooms, educators have called for increased student interaction and engagement in their learning (Carter, 2010, p. 224). This shift, according to Ruschoff and Ritter (2001), has led educators to advocate learning as "a self-structured and self-motivated process of knowledge construction" (p. 231). Hence, the authors continue, the learner has been increasingly positioned "as a self-governed creator of knowledge" (p. 231). As a result, educators have started looking for techniques that could enhance learner motivation, engagement and autonomy, with emerging technologies often viewed as

presenting such opportunities. Because of these new technologies' unlimited potential and adaptability to multiple uses, they have been increasingly co-opted by practitioners in education in general, and by instructors working in TESOL more specifically (Smith & Rilling, 2006, p. 1).

Across the globe, EFL researchers and practitioners acknowledge the fact that technology-enriched learning enhances motivation and is often reported as being beneficial for foreign language learning (Ma & Kelly, 2006). According to Lobet, Demoulin, Kelly, Kelly and Nicoll (2001), "Designing and implementing new pedagogies with ICT tools are now considered a key-factor enhancing the learner's motivation for both language learning and linguistic proficiency" (p. 201).

In addition to these potential benefits, enhancing learner engagement is another advantage of using ICT. Allan (2004, p. 9) states that ICT can achieve this by "offering a rich mixture of learning opportunities", while Sun and Yang (2013) maintain that the use of ICT builds learners' confidence and enables them to develop the learning process and strategies that are most useful for them.

Hence, new technologies offer the potential for autonomous language learning, especially in the context of "globalized online spaces" such as Flickr, YouTube, and FanFiction.net, where it is possible to share and discuss a range of digital artifacts (Benson & Chik, 2010, p. 63). However, despite persistent calls for the integration of technology into ESL/EFL courses, pathways leading to the effective blending of digital resources with more traditional ones remain both vague and complex (Gruba, Clark, Ng, & Wells, 2009). Hence, as Bueno-Alastuey and López Pérez (2015) propose:

There is a need to progress in this line of research by exploring students' perceptions about the usefulness of certain ICT for the development of all skills and areas of language in blended courses (p. 512).

Because student-created digital videos are an instance of the emerging dimensions of ICT, and due to the fact that more research is needed to explore their role in the teaching and learning of English, this study aims to examine students' perspectives on their involvement in creating digital videos in a Middle Eastern context. The paper first introduces Student-created Digital Videos (henceforth SCDVs or DVs) and reviews the literature to provide an overview of studies where DVs were integrated in the language curriculum. The present study is then outlined in terms of procedure, research questions, methodology and analysis of results focusing on important findings and their relevance to EFL teaching and learning. The paper concludes with some of the pedagogical implications of the research and suggestions for future research.

STUDENT CREATED DIGITAL VIDEOS IN THE LITERATURE

SCDV refers to the practice where students, either individually or in groups, take part in the creation of a short video using either online software programs or their own software and hardware. The students engage in researching, recording, directing, storyboarding, scripting, practicing and performing (in those cases where they are the performers), editing and other post-production activities (Henderson et. al., 2010). The videos created by students are presented to peers and tutors and can be posted on Youtube to share with a wider audience. Online publication of their work is a great motivation for students who try especially hard to do their best since they have a very wide and genuine audience. According to Ito et al. (2008, p. 2), "The affordances of new technologies make it possible for individuals to participate

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