Becoming 'YouTubers':
Using webclips in the ELF classroom

'YouTubers'を育てる：ELFクラス内でのWebclips使用法

Michelangelo Magasic, マガシック・アンジェロ

Tamagawa University, Center for English as a Lingua Franca, Japan
angelomagasic@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the suitability of webclips as a medium for use within ELF teaching. It presents practical methods by which to include webclips in ELF classes focusing on the combination of two literacies: watching and making short web movies. In order to highlight the contribution of these literacies to an ELF curriculum, the exercises are discussed in light of Björkman's (2013) recommendations for ELF classroom practice. In particular, the medium of webclips supports Björkman's suggestions because: it presents a diverse range of English speakers and communication situations, it is an interactive learning material which reflects real-life English, and, when used as a practical exercise, the medium encourages learners to develop their own voices and modes of expression.

KEYWORDS: ELF, CALL, YouTube, Online Video, Film

1. INTRODUCTION

English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth, ELF) is a recently developed paradigm which highlights the growing role of English as a language for international business, academic, touristic and recreational communication while positing a greater equality between native and non-native English speakers (Björkman, 2013). Part of the reason for the development of English as a common language for the world's inhabitants is the increased physical and virtual propinquity caused by the processes of globalisation (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewy, 2011; Poppi, 2013). In light of this, the technology of the Internet can be seen as implicitly related to the development of ELF and does as such merit attention within an ELF curriculum both as a method of content delivery and as a communications platform. Over the last decade, the rise of the participatory Internet as fuelled by faster connection speeds and lower data storage costs has allowed for the development of video hosting websites (Jenkins, 2006). Online video can be seen to be a key element within the landscape of the second generation Web 2.0 and provides an ideal vehicle to bring English language audiovisual material into the ELF classroom. Here, Snelson and

Perkins (2009) have commented on the affordances of online video for language learning, explaining:

> The current manifestation of video technology brings the combination of a global online delivery system and an interactive interface that permits both viewing and authoring of video content, which extends previous video capabilities to include greater levels of engagement with the media. (p. 20)

Indeed, a growing body of literature has begun to explore the possibilities of online video for language learning (Brook, 2011; Duffy, 2007; Hamilton, 2010; Muniandy & Veloo, 2011; Oddone, 2011; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011).

Webclips can be defined as short, user-made videos available on video hosting websites. Webclips developed as a form of user-generated content (UGC) and generally feature low production values (Burgess, Green & Jenkins, 2009). Video hosting websites are best exemplified by YouTube, a Google owned company with over 1 billion users and a near endless repository of audiovisual content (YouTube, 2015). The field of online video hosting is, however, rounded out by a variety of smaller and niche sites such as Vimeo and Daily Motion. Between them, video hosting websites hold a diverse range of amateur and professional content spanning almost all genres and ranging from seconds long to hours in duration. The meteoric rise in the popularity of these sites over the last decade can be attributed to the fact that webclips are a participatory genre in which the viewer is encouraged to engage in content production (Burgess et al., 2009). Accordingly, users may easily upload their own video creations, and, following which, use a personal profile in order to manage their video collections as well as curate content created by others and respond to communications. People who regularly upload videos of themselves are known as YouTubers. Some of the most popular YouTubers have millions of subscribers and are increasingly recognizable within popular culture as celebrities in their own right.

Given their status as audiovisual material, webclips may be said to demonstrate four main advantages (Magasic, 2016). These four benefits of audiovisual materials for language learning are: 1) their status as an authentic text which demonstrates vibrant scenes of life-like communication including language features such as slang and idiomatic expressions; 2) their ability to demonstrate the different verbal features employed within the English language including the variety of accents employed by different national, regional and cultural groups as well as changes in stress and tone for emphasis; 3) their ability to demonstrate the paralinguistic communication involved in English communication like gesture and facial expressions; and 4) their status as a motivational resource which interests students and helps bring to life the concepts which are discussed in class.

2. WATCHING, MAKING AND PARTICIPATING ONLINE

In this section, the paper will explain the twin literacies of watching and creating online films and the benefits of each before exploring the potential for class participation in online video communities. The first method of interacting with streaming video is watching. Given the huge variety of videos available on the Internet, the teacher needs to employ discretion in finding appropriate material for the classroom. The benefit of this wide library, however, is the ability to expose students to a range of language styles and communicative scenes. Here, Watkins and Wilkins (2011) have stated that "YouTube is an ideal vehicle to teach World Englishes and expose students to a variety of English dialects" (p.117) (See also: Hamilton, 2010). Aside from a purely linguistic benefit, webclips can also broaden students' cultural awareness of the world of English communication as they not only hear but also see embodied, often highly personal, displays from different global contexts (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). Once the teacher has selected an appropriate clip (or assembled a playlist of multiple clips), this can be shown to students either individually on their personal devices or collectively via a projector screen. By screening short clips of a few minutes duration, students' cognitive load is reduced as they have a manageable length of material to follow and analyse. To help facilitate comprehension, English captions may be added to the viewing screen. Moreover, when watching independently, students have the ability to replay certain difficult sections of a clip as many times as they feel is necessary. It can also be a beneficial strategy to watch videos which model the video types which will be made in class so that students can gain an idea of the generic conventions of webclips such as self-filming and the use of titles and pop-ups to provide additional information to the audience. It is hoped that if students enjoy watching content and can develop the strategies to find and access material on their own through independent viewing, they will be motivated to continue viewing outside of class.

Next, the students can engage in making their own "YouTuber" webclips. To get the ball rolling, the teacher may guide students on how to use digital devices like smartphones or cameras in conjunction with video editing software or applications. Given that webclips are a participatory genre in which amateur production values are the norm and that modern editing software is increasingly user friendly, webclips can be made quite quickly (one or two ninety minute lessons for planning, shooting and editing). While students are given almost unlimited scope in their choice of topic, videos usually feature subjects such as a demonstration of a skill or hobby, a tour of the student's hometown, university campus or club, or a review of a product. The videos are short (two to four minutes), have a speaking focus and are marked by the author according to intelligibility and entertainment value. The completed videos are then shown among classmates and students give feedback on each other's creations and finally vote on which videos were the most

impressive. To do this, students need a device with a copy of their video along with a feedback sheet. Students then swap their device and sheet with a classmate, watch each other's videos and go on to give written (and, hopefully, verbal) feedback to the classmate whose video they watched. Following which the process is repeated with another partner. As there is a class vote on which videos are best, students should be motivated to share their work with as wide an audience as possible. At the end of the lesson, each student will have a sheet which is full of comments relating to their video. The purpose of these comments is to promote dialogue regarding students' communicative and creative skills. This peer recognition is significant as by making YouTuber videos, students are participating in a global culture and, potentially, adding their own voice to an online conversation.

Uploading material to an online video hosting website can transfer students' class work to a global stage and precipitate authentic interactions around this, however, uploading also entails an emotional commitment and as such the decision on whether to do this should be made together by students and the teacher. Here, participation in a global online community has an overt connection to the tenets of ELF in the sense that the user may easily communicate with people from all over the world in English. On the other hand, participation does at the same time have certain risks such as exposing students to negative elements which exist online (such as trolling), as well as potentially compromising the privacy regulations of different academic institutions. With these thoughts in mind, it can be seen that a number of authors have spoken positively of the motivational (Hamilton, 2010; Godwin -Jones, 2012), cultural (Ushioda, 2011) and immersive (Shrosbree, 2008) benefits of an Internet based audience for students. Here, one potential way to reduce the risks of participation in online communities would be to organise interaction with a partner school or class rather than the Internet as a whole (See also: Ke & Cahyani, 2014).

3. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WATCHING AND MAKING

Through participation in watching and making in tandem, students may gain a rich skill set which extends beyond the possible benefits of participating in either singularly. Here, the watching stage is important for introducing (or reinforcing, given that many students are already YouTube users) the language models featured in webclips, while the making stage provides an opportunity for students to produce a webclip using their own ideas, language, and interpretations of the genre. This process of watching/making webclips can be seen to produce three outcomes. The first outcome is the activation of students' media consumption. One criticism of the use of audiovisual material within language classrooms is that this can be a relatively passive activity. Here Seferoğlu (2008) states, "It is also important that the teacher does not let students associate films only with leisure and entertainment, and watch the films passively as they might watch television" (p.8). By engaging

in both sides of the production/consumption process, students are able to consider more deeply the processes through which audiovisual media is made including the use of language within. Second, is that students are able to develop their own voice in English. After watching a variety of different models of English communication, students are then invited to contribute to this genre. In making a video about who they are and what they like in English and then sharing this with their peers, students' deepen their self-identification as English speakers. Here, describing the results of a study in which Taiwanese and Indonesia students used online platforms to communicate with one another, Ke and Cahyani (2014) concluded that, "Students gained confidence and started to perceive English as a language they may be able to use" (p. 1). The third outcome is that students gain technical skills and may participate in a global community. Here, the process of making a webclip develops skills in video creation and editing. Moreover, video hosting websites provide a forum where students may interact with people from all over the world in collective discussion, with one possible avenue for communication here being reflection on the process of creating a video.

4. WEBCLIPS AND ELF

In her monograph on the development of the ELF paradigm, Björkman (2013) has made several recommendations for the inclusion of ELF principles within the classroom. This section will discuss the three suggestions which are most relevant to the inclusion of webclips within a learning curriculum. The first is the use of materials with a "variety of accents" (p. 192). Webclips are an incredibly diverse genre that showcase a range of English speakers and communication situations. Introducing this speaker diversity in class broadens students' linguistic and cultural spheres helping to ameliorate the effects of the native-speaker bias present in much English language learning material (Jenkins, 2012). The second suggestion made by Björkman is "the importance of providing the learner with modern and broad based descriptions of language" (p. 191). This recommendation is further outlined by Björkman as language which allows the learner to fulfil a variety of different tasks. In producing a webclip, students engage in a number of different language practices including: constructing and practicing an informative verbal soundtrack for the video, generating supplementary written information such as titles, captions and pop-ups to be included within the video and, potentially, producing the administrative language necessary to participate in social media such as creating a user ID, providing key words and responding to comments that the video receives. As the environment of video hosting sites reflects the productions and discussions of real people, participating in this environment will assist students in developing practical language skills applicable to real life situations. Finally, the third strategy is "the inclusion of pragmatic strategies in teaching and listening material". Here Björkman explains that after consuming authentic materials, "...role-plays and other

communicative activities can be used to enable learners to practice" (p. 192). As webclips are a participatory genre, students are able to create their own content and interact with other users of the video hosting websites. Students may respond to the different material they have seen, either through comments or other communicative actions such as 'liking' or 'sharing' a video. Moreover, as the creators of content themselves, students have a responsibility to respond to any feedback garnered by their own videos, for example, answering questions about the content of their video or their creative motivation. Finally, it is worth noting here that while the benefits of the final two points are heightened by having the 'real' audience that comes with participation in an online video hosting website, this audience factor can be simulated by having students prepare videos for their own class group in which presentation, sharing and feedback can be directed toward the students' own class group and teacher.

5. CONCLUSION

The ELF paradigm seeks to reduce native-speaker bias and precipitate awareness of English as an intercultural communication tool. In keeping with this aim, Björkman's recommendations for ELF classroom practice highlight strategies through which a broad range of different speakers are introduced to learners and practical activities focus on the exchange of meaning rather than reproducing native speaker models. The global nature and amateur ethic of video hosting websites mean that they feature a community of English speakers from around the world which students may contribute to. By providing both consumptive and productive functions, these sites allow learners to not only broaden their awareness of English and English speakers but also offer a stage for students to develop their own voices as speakers. Thus, webclips are an effective genre for inclusion within ELF teaching as they compliment ELF tenets and allow for a range of entertaining, stimulating and educational activities in class.

REFERENCES

Björkman, B. (2013). *English as an academic Lingua Franca: An investigation of form and communicative effectiveness*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

Brook, J. (2011). The affordances of YouTube for language learning and teaching. *Hawaii Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series, 9*(1, 2), 37-56. Retrieved from http://www.hpu.edu/CHSS/English/TESOL/ProfessionalDevelopment/201109_TWPspringfall11/9_1-2_Brook.pdf

Burgess, J., Green, J., & Jenkins, H. (2009). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture*. Cambridge: Polity.

Duffy, P. (2007). Engaging the YouTube Google-eyed generation: Strategies

for using Web 2.0 in teaching and learning. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning, 6*(2), 119 - 130. Retrieved from www.ejel.org

Godwin-Jones, R. (2012). Digital video revisited: Storytelling, conferencing, remixing. *Language Learning and Technology, 16*(1), 1-9. Retrieved from http://llt.msu.edu/vol16num1/emerging.pdf

Hamilton, R. (2010). YouTube for two: Online video resources in a student-centered, task-based ESL/EFL environment. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research, 3*(8), 27-31. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/747986483?accountid=10382

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: Exploring participatory culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, J., Cogo, A., & Dewey, M. (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching, 44*, 281-315. doi:10.1017/S0261444811000115

Jenkins, J. (2012). English as a Lingua Franca from the classroom to the classroom. *ELT Journal, 66*(4), 486-494. doi:10.1093/elt/ccs040 486

Ke, I-C., & Cahyani, H. (2014). Learning to become users of English as a lingua franca (ELF): How ELF online communication affects Taiwanese learners' beliefs of English. *System, 46*, 28-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.07.008

Magasic, M. (2016). Learning through watching: Streaming video in L2 English learning. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Muniandy, B., & Veloo, S. (2011).Views of pre service teachers in utilizing online video clips for teaching English language. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 1*(3), 224-228. doi: 10.7763/IJSSH.2011.V1.39

Oddone, C. (2011). Using videos from YouTube and websites in the CLIL classroom. *Kalbυ̨s Studijos, 18*, 105-110. Retrieved from http://www.kalbos.lt/archyvas4_en.html

Poppi, F. (2013). *Global interactions in English as a lingua franca: How written communication is changing under the influence of electronic media and new contexts of use*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Seferoğlu, G. (2008). Using feature films in language classes. *Educational Studies, 34*(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1080/03055690701785202

Shrosbree, M. (2008). Digital video in the language classroom. *The JALT CALL Journal, 4*(1), 75-84. Retrieved from: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.455.9694&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Snelson, C., & Perkins, R.A. (2009). From silent film to YouTube: Tracing the historical roots of motion picture technologies in education. *Journal of Visual Literacy, 28*, 1-27. Retrieved from:http://www.ohio.edu/visualliteracy/JVL_ISSUE_ARCHIVES/JVL28(1)/28_1_SnelsonPerkins.pdf

Ushioda, E. (2011). Language learning motivation, self and identity: Current

theoretical perspectives. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 24*(3), 199-210. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2010.538701

Watkins, J., & Wilkins, M. (2011). Using YouTube in the EFL classroom. *Language Education in Asia, 2*(1), 113-119. Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/11/V2/I1/A09/Watkins_Wilkins

YouTube. (2015). *Statistics*. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html