

# Teachers' uses of YouTube videos to improve English skills: student attitude survey

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**Abstract:** *Videos are now popular with online English classes, and the use of videos claims to be effective in teaching English skills, grammar, and specialized areas. The researcher discovered that the students feel more motivated and become more active during the lessons based on her own class observations and preliminary interviews with students enrolled in the business English course at Thuongmai University. With such a simple technique, however, it turns out that the lessons need more preparation in terms of content and radical methodology rather than just embedding some authentic videos in the learning and teaching of English so that the students can better their English skills, learning motives, and professional business knowledge.*

**Keywords:** *YouTube videos, embedding, English skills, students' attitudes*

## 1. Introduction

Video-based learning is not a new theory in language teaching methodology (York, 2011). Studies showed that videos have been helpful teaching material for teachers to enhance students' language learning skills (Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990). In addition, using videos is proven to be efficient in encouraging students' cognitive development (Medina, 2002) as they enable language learners to attain vocabulary and grammar, encourage pronunciation ability, and increase their linguistic skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The researcher is ambitious to reflect on the results of using videos in her English lessons at a university in Vietnam. The findings will be of great use in teaching and learning business English in more widely accepted contexts.

From the review of the literature and the specific teaching and researching circumstances, the author has come up with two research questions.

What are students' changes in their attitudes as the teacher uses videos in teaching English?

What are students' comments and suggestions on the use of videos in teaching English?

## 2. Theoretical background

*Teaching four English skills using authentic YouTube videos: a student-centered approach*

Compared with traditional English teaching, such courses truly put into practice student-centered teaching strategies. YouTube has been credited with being at the forefront of the social media revolution and the development of user-generated content and

has also led to a greater democratization of society and empowerment of individuals.

Richards (2006), Educause (2006) and (Alwehaibi, 2013) considered Youtube as an effective source of providing authentic materials anywhere, anytime as long as there is an available internet connection where learners can use it to improve vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, listening, reading, writing, and speaking free of charge.

Nejati (2010) considered YouTube a platform that plays a "pivotal role in practicing the target language and its pragmatics, engaging students in active and productive projects, preparing them for likely future encounters in computer-mediated communication, learning more about other cultures, and preparing them for becoming autonomous learners". He also described YouTube as an "unlimited resource for language acquisition and learning" and helps people "listen to all kinds of spoken language (formal, neutral, informal) and genres (songs, parodies, debates, political speeches, talk shows, lectures) and learn a lot of vocabulary in context, which, without a doubt, will help memorization".

Teaching interactive English through using YouTube videos: a more communicative approach

Herron (1995) suggests that when a visual stimulus is used in conjunction with spoken language, student comprehension scores improve significantly. Numerous other studies also support the use of video in language classrooms based on the importance of including non-verbal, paralinguistic components of communication to assist learners in their understanding

and construction of meaning when conducting listening activities (for example, Hasan, 2000; Shin, 1998). Literature on the use of video in the L2 classroom suggests that it may help students visualize word meanings. In keeping with this idea, Shrosbree (2008) underpinned the notion of considering video over audio-only sources for listening activities: There is an obvious appeal to using video in the language classroom. Instead of the rather unnatural task of listening to a disembodied voice emanating from an audio player, learners are able to see the speaker and elements of the surrounding environment (p. 75).

### 3. Methodology

This small study was with 50 students of a business class in Thuongmai University, the teacher is also a researcher. The intervention was in the second half of the first semester (August to November, 2021), i.e., 7 weeks after teaching without using videos in the lessons. Furthermore, 10 students were randomly interviewed to receive their comments and suggestions over the use of videos in the business English at the end of the semester.

The researcher used two instruments to collect qualitative data (1) using notes and observation on students' changes in their attitudes as the teacher's using videos in the English lessons; and (2) interviews with questions which motivate students to give their own comments and suggestions for using videos in the class

The Research Procedure consisted of two stages: (1) The first seven class meetings go through with no videos being played in the business lessons and (2) within the course, the teacher uses some techniques with videos embedding in English lessons, then she observes and takes notes regarding students' changing attitudes.

#### *Activities using YouTube 1: two ways of doing a dictogloss*

The first way is to do a traditional dictogloss activity, with the use of video to aid student comprehension. Preparation for this activity requires the teacher to create a short narrative text based on the contents of a chosen YouTube video before the lesson is carried out in class.

#### *Activities using YouTube 2: What happens next?*

A simple activity that can get students thinking is the "What happens next" activity. The activity requires students to guess what will happen after the teacher pauses a video halfway through. One positive aspect of this activity is that it appeals to a whole range of student ability levels and ages.

1. Make sure the video is in full screen mode before you show it to students. Actually, the reason for this is that most video titles actually give away the ending.

2. Play the video to students and check comprehension at key points.

3. Give hints as to who the main characters or people in the video are.

4. Ask students to guess what they think will happen. If necessary, provide students with the start of an example sentence: "I think ... is going to [will] ..." To motivate students to write, it is suggested that students should be told to "be as imaginative as possible and that everyone must write something down if they want to see the end of the clip".

5. Students write down what they think will happen on paper.

6. the teacher collects in the papers, highlights any trends, and corrects errors.

7. Finally, play the end of the video and praise those students who guessed correctly.

During the second stage, the researcher observes the changes in students' attitudes in terms of their excitement, willingness to volunteer, their activeness in the lessons.

### 4. Results and discussions

#### *The researcher's observations*

More students volunteer to talk in the lessons. They become more alert and active in responding to the teacher's lessons and show more in interest through rising their voices, smile more and tend to argue with other classmates' ideas instead of simple agreements with most of their peers as the seven first class meetings.

Individual students seem to be more efficient when they carry out the first type of activity, especially the modified version of the activity:

The teacher may start with students brainstorming vocabulary around a specific subject, or give them a premade word cloud to discuss with their groups/partners.

Show students the video that you want them to narrate.

Students write words from the movie that they think may be useful onto their worksheet. It is a good idea to get students to check the words with each other to increase the number of words each student has written.

Watch the video again. Before the viewing though, tell students to think about how they could illustrate what happens in six (or however many you designate) frames similar to a comic. Give students a time limit

to complete their drawings.

After they have completed their storyboards, have students create a caption underneath each picture describing what happens in each scene.

Finally, there are two follow-up options: (1) have students read their captions to each other so that they can compare their linguistic accuracy (but more importantly, other people take on the story); and/or (2) play the video one more time, and have students give their narrations individually, or to the rest of the class as it plays.

For second type of activity (the ‘what happens next’ task), students work more productively among the members of the discussion groups.

#### **Findings from mini-interview**

“Watching videos to learn English is fun”, “not boring and feeling sleepy in the classroom anymore” and “expecting to go to English classrooms every day”. Moreover, one female participant mentioned that she watched the YouTube videos instruction at home to review the learning contents.

*Q1: What do you like most about using videos in the business English course?*

Students provided various responses to this question. The two most common responses to this question were joyful and learning. For instance, student A indicated that he enjoyed watching YouTube videos to learn English. He could hear the native speaker’s pronunciation and learn the 100% pure English speaking. Also, student D shared her thoughts about how the instructor helped them learn English effectively. She valued the video on the benefits of e-commerce and could listen and watch native speakers’ explanations in the target language.

The learning activities, including watching videos, doing pair discussions, writing worksheets and taking quizzes, appeared to have merit in helping students’ cognitive growth in the EFL classroom.

*Q2: What do you dislike most about using videos in the business English course?*

Students had different responses to this question. The two most common responses to this question were about workload and difficulty. Student B voiced the concern that she spent much time completing assignments. She had many worksheets to do from other teachers and felt tired to do the follow-up. Meanwhile, student E mentioned that he did not like doing the worksheet assigned by the instructor because nobody could help him with the homework at home. Meanwhile, the findings presented that watching

YouTube videos can reduce students’ anxiety in asking and answering questions.

*Q3: What are your suggestions using videos in the business English course?*

Most students mention the time limits are too short for them to discuss and then present so they sometimes need to watch videos at home, and then they can spend time discussing with peers in the class and the teacher should ask students to give feedback on their classmates’ presentations to make sure that other students also involve in the class during the presentation-making sections.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

It is obvious that we cannot easily conclude over the effectiveness of using videos in business English course only through observations, or asking several students because in operating the lessons, the teacher may resort to so many techniques that she may not be fully aware. Besides, even though the use of videos could be useful to students in developing English skills, grammar as mentioned by many researchers, the effectiveness of videos towards the success in teaching business English has not been transparently confirmed. This small research is a preliminary study which highlights some students’ positive remarks, constructive suggestions and active changes in learning and teaching atmosphere in an online business English class in order that teachers may have more motivations to integrate more techniques including using videos during the teaching procedures.

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