

Using Web-based Videos with International Distance Learners

Talking About... Learning and Teaching: Technology for Instruction Case Study 004

University of Birmingham

Programme of Study:
International MScs in DL

Modules: various

Discipline: International Development

Start Date: September 2008

Students: between 25 and 35 students for each module

Type: Distance

Technology: Web-based videos

Duration of Activity: scattered throughout modules

Assessment Link: Not directly involved in assessment

Rationale

The use of web-based videos introduces variety to the teaching materials and increases the pool of resources available. Video also helps visual learners.

Practice

Links to web-based (including YouTube) videos can be embedded in the learning platform (WebCT in our case) and these can be used in discussion board activities.

E-Learning Advantage

The use of multi-media increases variety of material and can be more engaging to certain types of learner.

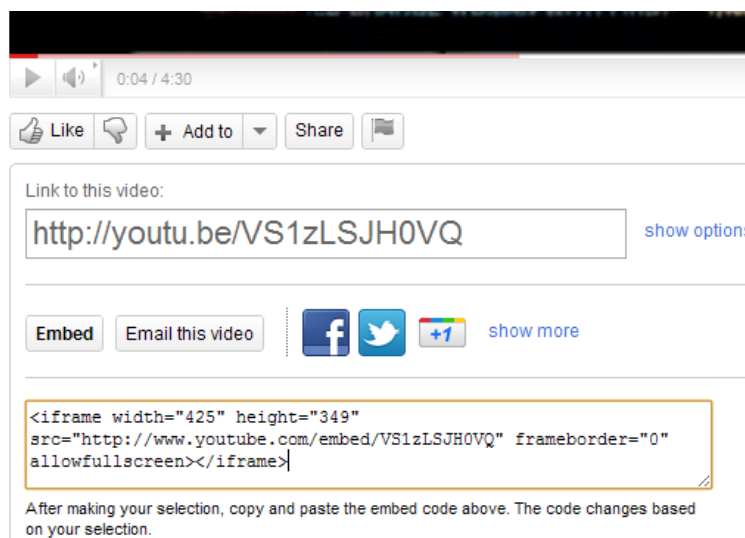
Key Points for Effective Practice and Barriers

Good practice would indicate that, if this type of media is to be used in activities with international students (particularly in countries imposing censorship), alternative exercises need to be available for those who cannot access it.

If the videos are not to be changed each year, then the links need to be checked to ensure that the videos still exist.

If using videos other than from YouTube, then do ensure that copyright rules are being followed and that the videos are not too long. We would normally recommend around 5 minutes as being the optimum length but this is not always possible.

YouTube videos can be embedded into PowerPoint or Web page for delivery to students via your iVLE. Clicking on the Share button directly underneath a video provides you with a direct link or code to embed.



The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there is a video player with a play button, a volume icon, and a progress bar showing 0:04 / 4:30. Below the player are buttons for 'Like', 'Add to', 'Share', and a flag icon. Underneath these buttons is a section titled 'Link to this video:' with a text input field containing the URL 'http://youtu.be/VS1zLSJH0VQ' and a 'show option:' link. Below this are buttons for 'Embed', 'Email this video', and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and a '+1' button, followed by a 'show more' link. At the bottom, there is a code block containing the following HTML code:

```
<iframe width="425" height="349" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/VS1zLSJH0VQ" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>
```

 Below the code block is a note: 'After making your selection, copy and paste the embed code above. The code changes based on your selection.'

Conclusion

Video can provide variety in online teaching materials but it should be used with caution and has to be appropriate to the learning outcomes.

Showcase: Online videos

The Rural Poverty module makes extensive use of YouTube videos in its group discussion board activities throughout this six week module.

Concern was initially expressed that some students might not be able to access web-based video due to either national censorship or technological problems, so a poll was taken of the students before they started the module. Fifty per cent of the intake claimed that they would be unable to access web-based video and so alternatives had to be found for those students. On the discussion boards students were given the choice of either using the designated videos or their hard copy reading material to engage in the activities. This worked well. No students were excluded from the activity, and those who were able to view the videos really enjoyed them as an alternative to text-based reading.

Links were provided directly from WebCT to the videos (and an indication of length given for each one so that students knew in advance what to expect). The videos were mostly YouTube, with one or two provided directly from NGO sites. Students were then given a series of questions to address on the discussion boards. They were encouraged to be critical of what they had read/seen and to reflect on particular issues being addressed in that unit.

Videos used ranged from how carbon trading can solve global warming, to getting girls back to school in Nigeria.



Programme of Study:
Distance

Module: Rural Poverty and Development (DL)

Discipline: International Development

Start Date for use of YouTube video: 2008

Students: around 30 – 35

Approach: Group work

Learning environment:
Web-based video via WebCT

Design Team: Dr Robert Leurs (module convenor); Dr John Watson (co-tutor); Linda Curry (e-learning manager)

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