

FACILITATING ESL LEARNING USING YOUTUBE: LEARNERS' MOTIVATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Berlian Nur Morat¹, Anis Shaari¹, Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin²

¹PhD Candidate, Universiti Sains Malaysia

²PhD Senior Lecturer, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: billieberlian@gmail.com, anisshaari@gmail.com, jafre@usm.my

Abstract: Teaching English as second language (ESL) learners is undeniably challenging. Hence, in grasping the challenge, ESL instructors are constantly looking for fresh ideas and innovative teaching materials as the means to enhance the teaching and learning. In harmony with today's technology driven world, the incorporation of video into the lessons is one of the instances. As the leading and web's largest video sharing website, YouTube is increasingly being used by ESL instructors as a pedagogical resource. From its plethora of authentic videos to the social networking features, YouTube has inspired a variety of appealing ESL activities. With regard to this unique phenomenon, an advocate of this practice was identified in this research and her ESL learners' motivational experiences of undergoing it were explored. Conducted at one of Malaysia's higher learning institutions, this research was fully qualitative in which the learners' experiences were uncovered through a series of journal entries and in-depth interviews. Through thematic data analysis, the findings demonstrate the potential of YouTube incorporation into the lessons to stimulate, enhance and sustain learners' motivational experiences in ESL learning. This was not only bound in a classroom setting but also beyond it. Moreover, this study suggests the ability of YouTube as a medium to reach language learners of various levels of motivation. The study is anticipated to implicate the ESL pedagogical practices and the future research positively.

Keywords: ESL, YouTube, Motivation,

Introduction

With the advancement of technology, many ESL instructors have adopted teaching techniques that are creative and innovative as to ensure more interesting and fun ESL lessons. This is especially due to the challenge in catering to ESL learners' individual differences such as learners' aptitude, learning styles and strategies, personalities, motivation, and interest; some of the crucial variables that could affect their ESL learning (Dornyei, 2005). Hence, many ESL instructors at all level of education have been creatively utilising images, songs, animations, videos, and even movies as their teaching aids instead of relying on the conventional instruction that typically uses blackboard and chalk as the main tools (Burt, 1999; C. Kelly, L. Kelly, Offner & Vorland, 2002; McGill, 2010; Orlova, 2003; Tatsuki, 1998). In parallel with the pervasive availability of technology and the Internet, in comparison to the other modern teaching materials, the incorporation of video in classroom teaching is especially prevalent among many ESL/EFL (English as a foreign language) instructors (Mohamed Amin Abdel Gawad Mekheimer, 2011; Tuzi & Mori, 2008; Williams & Lutes, 2007). The ability of video to present both audio and moving visual stimuli (Canning-Wilson, 2000) is probably the reason for its popularity as its

usage is correlated with learners' increased motivation in which they perceived the teaching and learning as interesting (Harmer, 2001).

The proliferation of Internet sites that offer free online video sharing services for people to upload, view, and share a variety of videos has provided even more opportunities for this practice (Taylor, 2009). Among the abundance of such websites, YouTube is widely known as the leading one due to the free access to its huge database of online videos. Accordingly, with its ever-expanding popularity, more interest towards YouTube's potential for educational purposes has been demonstrated (Snelson, 2011). In fact, ESL instructors were reported to be among the educators who have been diligently seeking for the different kinds of videos available on YouTube to be utilised for the purpose of language teaching and learning (Godwin-Jones, 2007) when the phenomenon of YouTube was still quite new (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008). Moreover, YouTube is not just a virtual library; it is also equipped with other web 2.0 features which enable communication and interaction among the users. Hence, this implies the opportunities for more ideas in incorporating YouTube as a resource as well as a tool to facilitate ESL teaching and learning depending on the ESL instructors' creativity and effort. Besides that, YouTube is also prominent among the young generations and thus, its incorporation into classroom lesson may contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere in which the learners' affective filter and anxiety level may be lowered (Taylor, 2009).

As the similar issue of ESL learners' individual differences particularly their motivation is also observable in the Malaysian context, there is a need to study if the use of YouTube as resource could help to motivate Malaysian ESL learners. This especially among those who deem English to be foreign and difficult which lead them to be passive, uninterested and quiet while the lesson is taking place (Chan Yuen Fook, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, Norhamimah Rani, & Norazah Abdul Aziz, 2011; Norrizan Razali, 1992; Supyan Hussin, Nooreiny Maarof, & D'Cruz, 2001). In addition, with the use of ICT to assist English teaching and learning is highly encouraged by the Malaysian government (Kabilan, Norlida & Mohd Jafre, 2010), it is believed that there are many opportunities for Malaysian ESL instructors to leverage the potential of YouTube for the purpose. Therefore, this research aims to explore the ESL learners' motivational experiences of undergoing such teaching practice that advocates the use of YouTube as a pedagogical resource.

Literature Review

Video and Its Motivating Feature

Of all the possible benefits of using video, its usage specifically for language teaching and learning, is highly associated with its motivating quality (Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Hammer, 2001; Wolf, 2006) which is considered the pillar for a successful ESL classroom (Lile, 2002). Given that video comprises moving visual and sound elements, when coupled with interesting activities, this could help to stimulate learners' interest as they have the chance to not only hear the language in use but also see it (Hammer, 2001). Furthermore, when used as a learning material, its combination of moving visual and audio stimuli may aid in enlivening the language learning experience and making it more meaningful by bringing in the real world into the classroom (Burt, 1999; Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982). According to McGill (2010) also, videos which demonstrate interesting and authentic situation in which relevant English is being utilised, are able to attract ESL learners' attention and interest. Moreover, group activities such as group discussion, role play, group presentation and even video production, are among the common activities that can be derived from the incorporation of video for the purpose of language teaching and learning (McGill, 2010). Hence, by implementing such activities, ESL learners

could possibly become more interested and motivated in learning English as it is said that learners' interest could be sustained through activities that are not only enthusiastic, meaningful, and challenging, but also group-based (Nikitina, 2009; Supyan Hussin et al., 2001).

YouTube as a Resource to Facilitate ESL Teaching and Learning

There are several reasons suggesting YouTube's potential as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning. First and foremost, apart from its immense popularity as a video sharing website, YouTube is also known for its huge database which hosts millions of videos of different categories. Thus, depending on the teaching and learning objective, ESL instructors are able to use videos of various types by exploring its huge resource. Not only that, since YouTube consists of videos which are uploaded by users from across the globe, this would also be useful to authentically demonstrate variety of English from all over the world to ESL learners. Apart from that, according to Cheng, Dale, and Liu (2007), YouTube is also known for its user-friendly features which make video searching, watching, and sharing experience, easier. They also claimed that one of the unique and interesting features that differentiate YouTube and its competitors from the traditional media servers is the users' abilities to comment on the videos, bringing new social networking experience to video viewing. Nevertheless, despite these advantages of YouTube, in using it as a resource to facilitate ESL teaching and learning, there are certain challenges that require prior consideration. These include the requirement of a stable Internet connection, the restriction imposed by certain learning institutions on YouTube, the demanding nature of this practice and the copyright issue of some of the videos.

Motivational Theory and Model Underpinning the Use of YouTube as a Resource to Facilitate ESL Teaching and Learning

Steers and Porter (1991, in Suslu, 2006) suggest that there are three important aspects that are related to motivation: what energises human behaviour, what directs or channels such behavior and how this behavior is maintained or sustained. Among the various motivational components underlying the concept of motivation, according to Brown (2000), extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are the "most powerful, dimensions of the whole motivation construct in general", particularly in accomplishing a task (p. 164). Motivation has been identified as one of the essential aspects of individual differences that could determine the success and failure of second and foreign language learning (Dornyei, 2005; Wu & Wu, 2008). To illustrate, according to Rueda and Chen (2005, in Wu and Wu, 2008), students who have higher level of motivation in learning second or foreign language are mostly able to achieve better grades and more proficient in the target language. Learners who are demotivated, on the other hand, tend to be passive, disinterested, and not involved with the activity (Bettiol, 2001). Besides that, according to self-determination theory, when learners are interested in learning, want to perform well in the activities, or enjoy it, they are identified as self-determining or intrinsically motivated (Schneider, 2001). Therefore, ESL instructors can motivate their learners through engaging classroom activities (Williams & Lutess, 2007). Malone and Lepper (1987) also state that intrinsically motivating activities are activities that will engage learners for no reward other than the interest and enjoyment which derive from the activities. In achieving this, the material should be interesting, challenging, relevant, rewarding and learners could receive some sort of satisfaction from learning (Lile, 2002).

Research Methodology

Participants

In conducting this research, an ESL instructor of a Malaysian higher learning institution was chosen based on the main criterion that she was practicing the use of YouTube as a resource in facilitating ESL teaching and learning for the enhancement of various language skills. Figure 1 represents the summary of the types of activities that had been conducted by the ESL instructor with the aid of YouTube throughout the one semester duration in one of her ESL classes. For the purpose of data collection, seven ESL learners from the participating class were selected through purposive sampling. They were chosen to represent each English proficiency level of low, moderate and high, according to the result of their previous semester's English subject, as well as based on the

also their study.

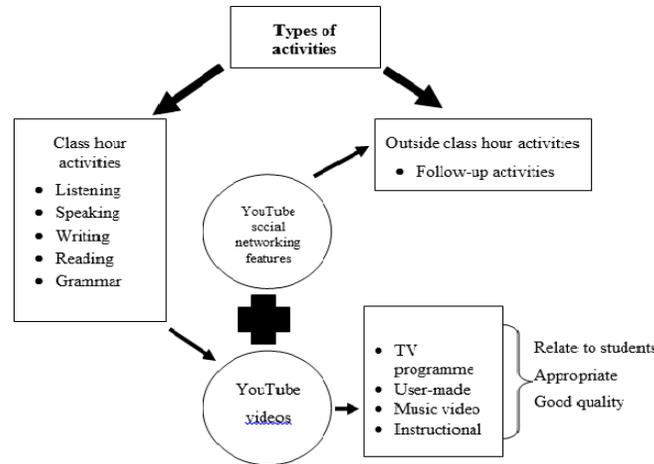


Figure 1: The Lessons Using Resource

Execution of the YouTube as a

Data Collection Procedure

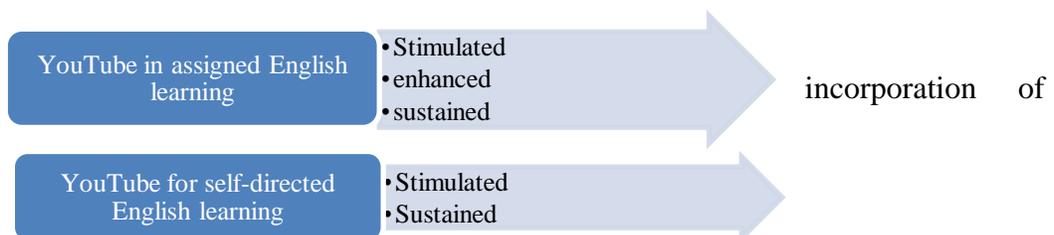
As the aim of the whole research was to explore the ESL learners' experiences of undergoing English lessons that incorporated the use of YouTube as a resource, the data were collected through three qualitative methods which were journal entries, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. However, for the purpose of this paper, only data obtained from the in-depth interview sessions which are related to their motivational experiences are discussed. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the seven ESL learners at the end of the semester. However, a pre-interview was first carried out with them to establish rapport and to explain the purpose of the interview as well as the confidentiality aspects. To ease the interview process, as the learners were of different proficiency levels, the interviews were mostly conducted in Bahasa Malaysia with a little mix of English based on the participants' requests.

Data Analysis

In preparing the data for detailed analysis, several steps as proposed by Creswell (2003) were implemented which include reading and understanding the data, transcribing the interviews and arranging them into several types. The thematic analysis was then conducted starting with a coding process or data reduction of the meaningful ones by organising them into chunks of different categories. Then, the codes were used to generate descriptions of certain themes which were followed by detailed discussion of the themes including the sub-themes through specific illustrations and quotations. To ensure the understanding of the data presentation and the confidentiality of the participants, they were also assigned with pseudonyms.

Results

The



YouTube as a resource in the English lessons was found to have been able to stimulate, enhance, and sustain the learners' motivation in learning English. As shown in Figure 2, this could be described in the context of assigned English learning and self-directed learning.

 ESL learners' motivation in learning English

Figure 2: ESL Learners' Motivation in Learning English

YouTube as a Stimulator in Assigned English Learning

In this study, the integration of YouTube sources in the lessons was found to be able to stimulate the learners' interest in learning English specifically in a classroom context. This is evident in the interview with the learners when asked about their motivation in learning English through the ESL instructor's usage of YouTube in the lessons. One of the learners, Syarifah, claimed that she felt quite interested in learning English when YouTube was incorporated in the lessons:

Rasa minat sikit [English]
([I] feel a bit interested [in English]) (Syarifah, Interview)

Moreover, three of the learners stated that they were motivated to learn to speak in English with other accents due to the exposure towards the different accents used by the speakers in the videos. As mentioned by some of the ESL learners:

. . . so kita minat untuk tau cakap umm bahasa-bahasa, bahasa BI tapi dalam slang yang lain kan.
(. . . so [I am] interested to know how to speak English but with different slang [accent])
(Aminah, Interview)

Rasa seronok dok dengar depa [mereka] cakap kan. Macam “oh, teringin juga nak sebut” kan. Selalunya bila dah dengar macam tu, balik akan dok sorang-sorang, try cakap bahasa depa [mereka].
([I] feel interested listening to them [speakers in the videos]. Like “Oh, I would like to pronounce words like that”. Usually after that, I would be alone and try to speak like them [with the accents]. (Husnina, Interview)

YouTube as an Enhancer in Assigned English Learning

Besides that, YouTube was found to be able to enhance the learners' motivation in learning English as five of them asserted that they became more interested to learn English. This is illustrated in their respective interview in which they claimed that their interest to learn English increased and they also found it more fun to enter the English class when YouTube was incorporated. As explained by them in their respective interviews:

. . . bila Miss N guna YouTube minat untuk belajar tu bertambah.
(. . . when Miss N uses YouTube, the interest to learn English increases.)
(Zainab, Interview)

Umm, seronok juga [kelas BEL yang lain] tapi tak adalah seronok sangat berbanding yang guna YouTube ni. YouTube ni lebih menarik.
(Umm, [the other BEL classes] are fun but not as fun as the ones using YouTube. The ones using YouTube are more interesting.) (Aisyah, Interview)

Sebelum ni [semester lepas] tak guna [YouTube]. So bila masuk dalam kelas Miss N guna kira macam lagi seronok nak belajar English kan.
(Before this [last semester] [YouTube] was not used. So when I enter Miss N's classes and she uses it, I somehow feel more fun to learn English. (Aminah, Interview)

YouTube as a Sustainer in assigned English Learning

Apart from that, the integration of YouTube in the lessons was also capable of sustaining learners' motivation in learning English. For example, as asserted by Jamal and Husnina in their respective interviews, their motivation to learn English through the activities using YouTube remained the same just like the other English lessons which did not involve YouTube because they have always been interested in learning English. Nevertheless, they found the usage in the lessons to be interesting and not boring. As illustrated in the interview with Jamal when asked about his motivation to learn English through the incorporation of YouTube in the lessons:

Sama saja [motivasi]. [Tapi penggunaan YouTube] menarik la, enjoy. Tak bosan la.
(It's the same. [the motivation]. [But the YouTube usage] it's interesting, enjoyable. Not boring.) (Jamal, Interview)

YouTube as a Stimulator in Self-directed English Learning

Besides YouTube's potential to stimulate, enhance and sustain the learners' motivation in learning English specifically in assigned learning context, YouTube was also found to stimulate the learners' motivation to use it for self-directed English learning as claimed by five of them. This is basically because of the learners' awareness towards the availability of videos for English learning purposes on YouTube through the activities which were implemented by Miss N. This is evident in the interviews when the learners were asked if they were motivated to learn English using YouTube on their own:

So bila tengok video yang Miss N guna so kita boleh tau kata ada video macam ni kita boleh tengok, kita boleh cari sendiri . . .
(So when [I] watch the video that Miss N has used, I know that there is such video that we can watch, we can find on our own. . .) (Aminah, Interview)

Ada macam selama ini macam tak ada guna YouTube sangat untuk improve English tapi bila dalam kelas dah buat macam tu, macam bolehla tingkatkan lagi English dengan guna YouTube. Tengok video atau pun benda berkaitan untuk tingkatkan Bahasa Inggeris.
(Yes like before this, [I] did not really use YouTube to improve English but when [Miss N] has used it in the class, [I feel like] I can improve my English using YouTube. Like watching videos or anything related to improve English. (Aisyah, Interview)

YouTube as a Sustainer in Self-directed English Learning

Apart from stimulating the motivation to use YouTube for self-directed English learning, the use of YouTube in the lessons was also found to help sustain it as claimed by Husnina who was still

motivated to use YouTube to improve English on her own, just like how she had been using it before she underwent the English class with Miss N. As claimed by her in the interview:

Ada. . . kan sebelum dengan Miss N pun, Husnina try macam dengar lagu. Takpun tengok channel mana yang cerita pasal Bahasa Inggeris ni. Jadi, sama saja [minat].

(Yes. . . I have tried to listen to songs before this. Or watch channel that talks about English. So, it's the same [the interest]). (Husnina, Interview)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, it can also be concluded that the use of YouTube in aiding language teaching and learning is capable of stimulating, enhancing and sustaining the motivation of ESL learners. From the learners' claims of being 'interested', 'more interested' and 'always interested' in learning English compared to the other usual lessons, these imply the ability of using YouTube as a medium to reach to language learners of various levels of motivation. These findings are also coherent with those from William and Lutes (2007) which also found language learners becoming motivated to learn English in which they 'look forward to', 'prepared for' and 'interested to join' the classes when video component was incorporated into the lessons; also one of the main features of YouTube as a video sharing website. Hence, based on these discoveries, ESL instructors should take advantage of YouTube's motivating element in ensuring the motivation of ESL learners, specifically, are not only stimulated and enhanced but also sustained.

Besides that, it is important to reiterate its potential to motivate ESL learners towards self-directed English learning especially when the learners themselves revealed to have become aware of the availability of videos for English learning purposes on YouTube. Consequently, this implies the importance of ESL teaching strategies that could provide exposure for ESL learners on how they are able to learn English independently by taking advantage of the ever-expanding web 2.0 technologies. As demonstrated in this research, the ESL instructor was able to bring her ESL teaching and learning beyond the formal classroom setting by leveraging the affordances of a popular social media platform which is YouTube.

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