

COMMON LAND

A video project to help visiting and exchange students broaden their experience and understanding of life in Britain

Project aims

- to stimulate students' language skills and cultural awareness
- to encourage participation in the host community



The 'Year Abroad' experience

'Many studies show that a period spent abroad not only enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields, but can also improve language learning, intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness.'

(Erasmus Programme. 2014)

One exchange student described his visit to York like this.

'Because of the British friends I made, and the experiences we had, I found myself living British culture, not just learning about it. My time in York... has changed my perspective, my friends, my speech and my life.'

(University of York, 2013)

To support this kind of experience, CELT offers a module in 'English Language, British Life.' The video project has been developed, in the first instance, to enhance this module but will be used more widely to supplement other courses for international students.



Observations

In one class, an average of more than 7 in 10 learners agreed strongly that:

- The videos give an insight into British life.
- They help develop listening skills.
- They are a good stimulus for discussion.
- They are interesting.



Why video?

Digital technology has made the production and sharing of high quality video practical and commonplace. The medium enables language learners to explore how words are embedded in a cultural context by showing setting, body language and unfolding action and relationships.



How are these videos different?

The videos are a series of mini-documentaries on aspects of contemporary British life. International students play a central role in planning and presenting the films, thus providing a *visitor's eye view* of Britain. All videos are shot on location, e.g. one about the countryside was made in Snowdonia with the cooperation of a farm manager.



E-mail from a colleague in the ELT industry:

'The key is that it's authentic, and it covers slightly unexpected topics. I also like the fact that international students are interacting in the video; there's already a natural script in place. There's the dimension of regional accents, which is important for diversifying listening types. Plus, now I've found out about the role of alpacas as fox deterrents, which is really interesting!'

What now?

We are currently piloting the classroom materials and aim to develop self-access versions, perhaps in the form of an App.

We hope to interest other institutions in sharing our materials, perhaps through a centrally-based resource to which other universities can contribute.



How you can join in

You can view the films at

<http://www.york.ac.uk/celt/video-project/>

We invite feedback on the link on that page.

We are interested in making contact with:

❖ individuals, either staff, students or members of the community, who have ideas for films in this series

❖ colleagues from other institutions, who might like to become partners in this project

❖ developers with App skills who could collaborate on materials development

We will be running a one-day workshop on 'Making Video for Language Learning and Teaching' in the autumn term, as well as an in-house lunchtime session.

References

Erasmus Programme (2014) *Erasmus for HE*. Retrieved 13 June 2014 from: <http://www.erasmusprogramme.org/en/about-us/sec/11/>
University of York (2014) *Guide for Visiting Students*. Retrieved 13 June 2014 from: http://www.york.ac.uk/media/study/pre2014images/studyabroad/visitingstudents/21279_A5%20Visiting%20Students%20brochure%20web.pdf

The project team

Chris Copland, Senior Tutor in EFL,
Centre for English Language Teaching
chris.copland@york.ac.uk

Huw Llewelyn-Jones, Technical Supervisor,
Dept. of Languages and Linguistics
huw.llewelyn-jones@york.ac.uk