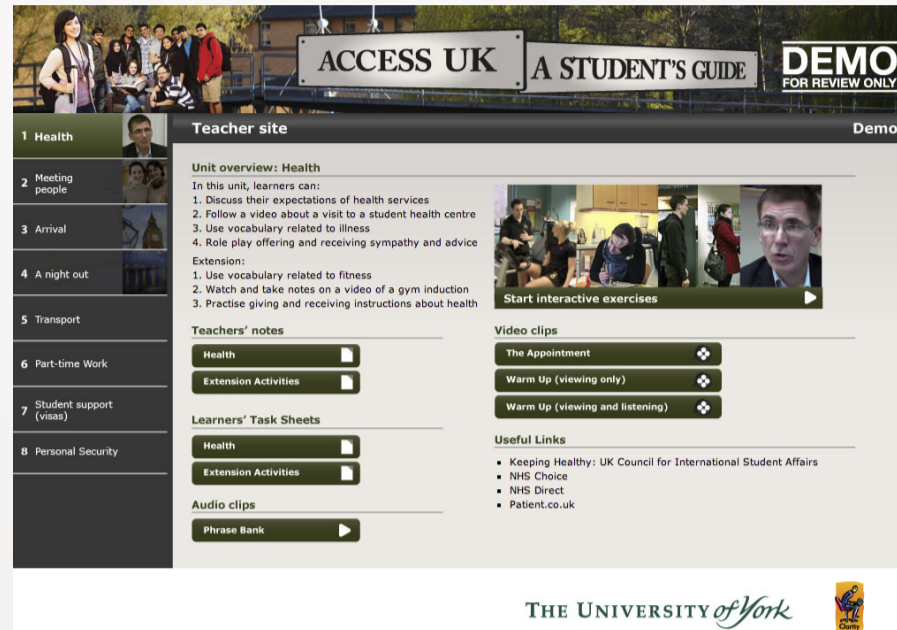




ENGLISH FOR TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION: A DIGITAL VIDEO PROJECT

Authors: Chris Copland and Huw Llewelyn-Jones, Centre for English Language Teaching



THE UNIVERSITY of York

Overview

If international students are to participate in university life, they require a complex set of communication skills. The Centre for English Language Teaching has, therefore, developed a series of video-based teaching materials to address language needs in some of the more common practical and social situations that newly-arrived students encounter. These materials are now available as an online publication for both classroom and self-access use.

We hope to prompt discussion about the project through the questions in *talking points* below.

The niche

English provision for international students tends to focus on language for study needs, eg writing assignments. There is, however, evidence that, for many newly-arrived students, the spoken English they require for practical purposes is a far greater concern.

Finding accommodation or visiting a doctor involve sophisticated language skills, as do making friends or resolving minor disputes with other students. Unless students have the skills to cope with these kinds of routine demands, they are unlikely to concentrate on their course work. More than this, they will not fulfil their potential as members of the campus community.

There is little published material at an advanced level to support this area of learning and virtually nothing designed for the campus environment. We, therefore, aim to fill this niche with a set of online resources published in conjunction with Clarity Language Consultants.

Talking Points:

- What would you regard as the key communication needs of international students?
- Are there any particular situations that might adapt well to filmed sequences?

The medium

Why video? One dimension this adds to audio is that of context. Body language and action can give insight into the relationship between characters, while the location, whether in a pub or on a bendy bus, provides an overall cultural backdrop.

From the advent of VHS tape, the technique of “active viewing” became a staple in English language teaching. This used simple techniques, such as freeze-frame and silent viewing, to stimulate discussion of unfolding video scenes and, through follow-up activities such as role play, challenged the perception of video as a passive educational medium. Ironically, though,

The project

Although originally an in-house project, **Access UK** has now been developed as a commercial product, with the goal of making the materials available to a wider audience.

The series centres around short, improvised filmed sequences. These are streamed in an online environment, where they are accompanied by a full set of support materials. For face-to-face teaching, a tutor can download lesson activities for printing (in effect, the course book) and play video and audio over a classroom projector. This is complemented by a self-access version offering interactive tasks for the independent learner.

Although now available as a commercial product, the project demonstrates the potential for learners and teachers of using relatively inexpensive technology to create their own language learning materials. This will be the theme of a training workshop to be offered by CELT to colleagues in other institutions in the autumn.

Talking Points:

- What are the comparative benefits for language learners of spontaneous language filmed in genuine situations vs. scripted dialogues recorded in a studio?
- Is a web-based course viable for both face-to-face teaching and self-access learning?
- What are the pros and cons of Departments entering into commercial collaborations?

Project Team

Chris Copland (Senior Tutor in EFL)
chris.copland@york.ac.uk

Huw Llewelyn-Jones (Technical Supervisor)
huw.llewelyn-jones@york.ac.uk

there are fewer video materials available now, for English Language Teaching, despite the ease of production and delivery of digital materials and the familiarity with the medium of the YouTube generation.

Talking Points:

- How valid is “active viewing” for language learning and other areas of education?
- How can the interplay between the visual and the verbal be used to promote language learning?