



## Global Issues Through Youtube Video Clips

by Mark Shrosbree (Tokai University, Japan)



### Introduction

With the introduction of online video sharing services, such as YouTube in 2005, a wealth of study resources has become available for language teachers and students. With “globalization” currently a buzzword in Japanese further education (Kubota, 2015), there are more and more opportunities for teachers to introduce global issues-related content to their language classes. The short video clips hosted by YouTube can form an invaluable resource for teachers who wish to design their own global issues courses, or for those looking to supplement individual lessons.

When combined with appropriate communicative activities, these short videos can be a very effective language learning tool (for example activities, see Mayora, 2009, Watkins & Wilkins, 2011, and Rebuck, 2012). YouTube videos also offer advantages over and above the kinds of videos which supplement some published textbooks. For teachers, there is the advantage of choice: a huge number of videos is available across a wide range of global issues topics. For students, the authenticity of YouTube videos can be very motivating (Brook, 2011).

There are also particular advantages with having videos easily accessible online. Students can review videos on their own devices, view subtitles in a range of languages, and slow the playback speed. This article will suggest ways to maximise the potential of this video resource, including how to choose videos and incorporate them into the syllabus, prepare videos for classroom use, and design communicative activities, as well as offering some practical tips for using this technology.

### Choosing Videos

Many established media outlets, such as the BBC and CNN, have their own YouTube channels (URLs are given at the end of this article). These can be a good source of video materials as the production quality is high, the content reliable, and the video clips usually of short length. There are also channels designed specifically for language learners from reliable sources, such as *Voice of America* and *BBC Learning English*. Clearly, it is important to choose videos with trustworthy content. Moreover, by going directly to the official channels of these media sources, teachers can avoid the common problem of videos being removed from YouTube.

### Deciding a Focus

For teachers wishing to design a course on global issues themes, or even just a single lesson, it can be very hard to know where to begin. If we take the example of a unit on the broad theme of “Water”, where does the teacher start? Choosing a particular focus is a useful starting point, as it can help the teacher decide the language areas to teach, especially the vocabulary, and prepare communicative activities which address the theme. YouTube video can help with choosing this focus.

A search of YouTube for “water issues” will produce a list of videos, many of which give an overview of water problems. Narrowing the search, for example to “water issues pollution”, will help the teacher to choose a manageable focus. Another way to do this is to type the phrase “water issues” into the Google Images search engine. This will produce a grid of small images that can help the teacher choose a focus. This led in one class to the theme of “plastic pollution” in our oceans, and a BBC news item on microscopic plastic fragments found on the world’s beaches. Such a focus on a tangible, manageable topic can help students to better understand the issue.



### Preparing Videos

There are several points to consider when preparing Youtube videos for the classroom. The first consideration is copyright. Fair use allows YouTube videos to be streamed for their original purpose, which normally includes education. For more information on this, see “What Is Fair Use?” (2016).

The next thing to consider is how to efficiently show a particular video clip in class. To avoid using class time to search through YouTube videos, it’s possible to embed the video you wish to use, pre-set at the precise starting time, in a PowerPoint slide. Here are the required steps:

1. Beneath the video, click on “Share”.
2. Check “Start at”, input the start time of the video, and copy the URL given.
3. Use the “insert hyperlink” function in PowerPoint to link to the YouTube video. The hyperlink can be added to an appropriate image, so that when you click on this image, the YouTube video automatically starts to play at the point chosen.

## Pre-Teaching

Using PowerPoint to link to video clips also helps the teacher to prepare pre-listening activities. Slides containing photographs, vocabulary, data, and graphs related to the video content can be shown prior to watching the video. Vocabulary is of particular concern, especially in videos not created specifically for an ESL audience. The first step for the teacher is to preview the video and choose some key vocabulary. The subtitles function of YouTube can help with this. The following activities have all been successful:

- *Bilingual vocabulary lists.* Students simply translate the key words into their L1 and write an example sentence. A variation is for students to match the word with its definition, before making their vocabulary list (see “Handout” link below).
- *Conversations using vocabulary.* The teacher chooses some of the key words, then prepares questions which use these words. Students ask the questions to each other in pairs. A variation is to have different questions for A and B students.
- *Pairwork quizzes.* The teacher prepares quiz questions related to the themes in the video. There are two sets of questions, one set for the A-student and one set for the B-student. Each question has three choices. Students quiz each other, offer the three choices, and then give the correct answer. This popular activity can help students learn about complex issues (see “Handout” link below).
- *Pair reading activities.* There are many types of pair reading activity. One of the easiest to prepare, but also the most interactive, is where students have to find mistakes in a passage. The teacher prepares a short passage introducing the themes in the video. Two versions are made, A and B, with only slight differences in the two. In the A-version, the teacher changes 5 facts to make them false. The same is done for 5 different facts in the B-version. Working in pairs, students take turns to read their different versions to each other, listen for mistakes, and then decide together which of the facts are true and which are false.

## While Watching

It’s important for students to watch the videos actively and to think about the content presented. Here is a selection of activities suitable for students to do while viewing YouTube videos.

- *Watch & Answer Questions.* This activity requires careful thought by the teacher. It’s counter-productive if students can’t answer any of the questions. It’s always helpful to start with easy

questions that students should already know the answer to (eg, those answered in the pre-teaching activities). There can also be purely visual questions to help students with lower listening proficiency. One or two challenging questions can be added for more proficient listeners.

- *Watch & Listen Slowly.* One of the “Settings” options (⚙) in YouTube is to play the video slowly. If students can’t understand the video well in the first viewing, the second viewing can be at a slower speed. Another option is to play the YouTube video through third-party software such as *VLC Media Player*. This player has an excellent slow playback function which does not distort the sound. The YouTube URL can be pasted directly into a dialogue box (Media>Open Network Stream) and the video can be played at two different slower speeds (Playback>Speed>Slower)



- *Watch & Take Notes.* This can be a stand-alone activity, or it can be used as the first listening activity before going on to more detailed comprehension activities. For this, students use notepaper, or space on a worksheet, to take notes as they watch the video. A useful preparatory activity is to teach students useful abbreviations for note-taking. Portsmouth University in the UK has an excellent worksheet for this (URL below). This can provide the source material for two activities. First, students receive the abbreviations, then work in small groups to guess the meaning of each abbreviation. Second, they are given sentences written with abbreviated notes. In groups, they then try to decipher these.

- *Watch & Gapfill.* The teacher prepares a series of sentences with key information from the video. The sentences are numbered, 1, 2, 3, and so on. Two versions are made, one set for A-students and a different set for B-students. Key information in the even-numbered sentences is blanked out in the A-version, while other information in the odd-numbered sentences is blanked out in the B-version. Students watch the video, then try to fill in the missing information on their worksheet. A-students can work together in groups, as can B-students. Next, A-students and B-students get together and work in pairs to check their information and share the correct answers for the blanks they could not fill (example handout available).

• *Watch & Make a Quiz.* After watching, students work in groups to make a quiz about the video. They then ask the quiz questions to another group of students. This activity has the advantage that the questions are tailored to the level of the students. There is also little preparation time for the teacher.

• *Watch & Compare.* With the abundance of videos available on YouTube, it's possible to find two videos on a similar theme and then have students compare them. One option is to compare how two different news channels address the same issue. Another option is to evaluate the persuasiveness of two different videos. Public Service Announcements in particular lend themselves to this activity. For example, the following two PSAs were used for a unit on "Global Warming":

- ◇ "UAE Ecological Footprint Animation"
- ◇ "UK Carbon Footprint Advert"

Students chose their favourite and wrote three reasons for their choice.

• *Watch & Discuss.* For more advanced classes, it's possible to show videos which present controversial themes. Students watch the videos, and then discuss the themes. An example is the issue of battery versus free-range chicken farming (see the YouTube videos, "Food Inc. Chicken Farm" and "How Riverford's organic chickens are reared").

#### Other Uses for Youtube Videos

Apart from the teaching of content, YouTube videos have enormous potential for language learning. One particularly valuable use is to provide language or skills models for students. In global issues classes, teachers will often want students to discuss the issues taught. One way to help students understand how to conduct a discussion is to watch videos of other language learners holding discussions. A useful model is provided by the video entitled, "Group Discussion Good Example ProApplicant". The video can be shown in class, and students can analyse the strengths and weakness of the participants, as well as answering comprehension questions (handout available).

Videos can also be used for study interludes. Learning about global issues in a second language is mentally demanding. Teachers can show short video clips as a break from study. Any video of interest to students can be shown, such as videos about the achievements of their fellow students (e.g. Tokai University students compete in the World Solar Challenge each year) or videos showing dramatic natural events (e.g. the flight of starlings on Otmoor, UK).

#### Practicalities

In order to show YouTube videos, the classroom must be equipped with a digital projector and screen or large monitor. There must also be reliable internet access. Where internet is not available, the teacher can use a portable WiFi device (モバイルWi-Fiルーター) or tether to a smartphone.

It is also useful to be able to connect a tablet or smartphone to a projector. Adapters for connecting both Apple (Lightning to VGA or Lightning to HDMI), and Android (micro USB to VGA / HDMI) devices are available. While most projectors have some audio capability, it is usually better to bring in a high quality portable speaker which will produce a louder, clearer sound for more effective classroom use.

#### Conclusion

This short article has suggested a number of ways that YouTube videos can be incorporated into language classes on global issues themes. Reputable media sources, such as the BBC, offer numerous short video clips suitable for language classes. By blending video content with interactive methodologies, teachers can create motivating, communicative language learning activities.

Videos can also help the teacher with syllabus design, as they can provide a clear focus for a study unit. YouTube is also very easy for students to access on their own devices which facilitates review and self-study. The main drawback is that authentic materials can be rather challenging for students to understand. It is hoped that more high quality, simplified video materials will become available in future for the majority of English users around the world who are not native speakers.

#### References

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#### Mark Shrosbree

Tokai University, Japan  
<markshros@gmail.com>

<p><b>YouTube Channels</b>  BBC News &lt;<a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/bbcnews">www.youtube.com/user/bbcnews</a>&gt;  BBC World Service  &lt;<a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/bbcworldservice">www.youtube.com/user/bbcworldservice</a>&gt;  BBC Learning English  &lt;<a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/bbclearningenglish">www.youtube.com/user/bbclearningenglish</a>&gt;  VOA &lt;<a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/VOALearningEnglish">www.youtube.com/user/VOALearningEnglish</a>&gt;</p>	<p>“Starlings on Otmoor”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/XH-groCeKbE">https://youtu.be/XH-groCeKbE</a>&gt;  “UAE Ecological Footprint Animation”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/nP1nzCqoT9g">https://youtu.be/nP1nzCqoT9g</a>&gt;  “UK Carbon Footprint Advert”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/m7JlaHeZnP0">https://youtu.be/m7JlaHeZnP0</a>&gt;  “World Solar Challenge”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/mO7jx8OBghw?t=36s">https://youtu.be/mO7jx8OBghw?t=36s</a>&gt;</p>
<p><b>YouTube Videos</b>  “Food Inc. Chicken Farm”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/VRDWabqAXvU">https://youtu.be/VRDWabqAXvU</a>&gt;  “Group Discussion Good Example ProApplicant”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/7wEUEvcyGuU">https://youtu.be/7wEUEvcyGuU</a>&gt;  “How Riverford’s Organic Chickens Are Reared”  &lt;<a href="https://youtu.be/hkB1NRR2JfI">https://youtu.be/hkB1NRR2JfI</a>&gt;</p>	<p><b>Other Internet Links</b>  “Helpful Abbreviations for Speedy Note-taking”  &lt;<a href="http://www.lsbm.ac.uk/assets/pdf/Helpful-abbreviations-for-speedy-note-taking.pdf">http://www.lsbm.ac.uk/assets/pdf/Helpful-abbreviations-for-speedy-note-taking.pdf</a>&gt;  VLC Media Player &lt;<a href="http://www.videolan.org">www.videolan.org</a>&gt;  <b>Lesson Handouts</b> &lt;<a href="https://goo.gl/mHFJe5">https://goo.gl/mHFJe5</a>&gt;</p>

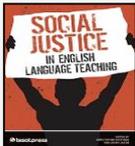
**Sample Youtube Video Clips**

< [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) >

Youtube provides a vast treasure trove of teachable video clips on a wide variety of global themes. Check out some of the topics and titles shown here, then go off and do your own Youtube search.

<p><b>Global Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the World’s Biggest Problems?</i></li> <li>• <i>These are the local and global issues that young people see...</i></li> <li>• <i>If I Could Change the World...</i></li> <li>• <i>Dear Future Generations: Sorry</i></li> <li>• <i>Global Issues and Threats</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Global Citizenship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is Global Citizenship?</i></li> <li>• <i>What does it mean to be a citizen of the world?</i></li> <li>• <i>Global Citizen</i></li> <li>• <i>Global Citizenship is...</i></li> <li>• <i>Citizens of the World (Bassam)</i></li> <li>• <i>We are all connected!</i></li> </ul>
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<p><b>Global Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is Global Education?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is a Global Educator?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why Global Education?</i></li> <li>• <i>Global Education and Global Citizenship (Studio 12TV)</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Global Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If Countries were People</i></li> <li>• <i>25 Maps That Will Change the Way You See the World</i></li> <li>• <i>Scenes from schools around the world</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Stereotypes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which stereotypes are true?</i></li> <li>• <i>10 National Stereotypes that are Simply Not True</i></li> <li>• <i>People React to Their Own National Stereotypes</i></li> </ul>
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