

On-Line Videos for Teaching Global Issues

by Tim Grose (Global Village, Sapporo, Japan)

Choosing Global Issue Websites

The Internet provides an amazing number of opportunities for enhancing the quality of teaching of global issues. One type of Internet resource that can have a powerful impact in the foreign language classroom is on-line videos. Here are two video sites that I have found to be very useful.

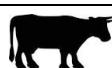


Green
<www.greenthefilm.com>

In the pantheon of ‘cute’ animals that charm Japanese zoo visitors, the orangutan comes second only to the panda. So imagine the shock when we are graphically shown how our behaviours directly contribute to the suffering and death of these animals in their habitats in Indonesia and Malaysia. This is precisely what the DVD ‘Green’ does.

‘Green’ is a 48-minute film (accompanied by a 1-minute trailer) which is freely available for downloading at the website above. It was directed by French director Patrick Rouxel in the year 2009. It’s an astonishingly powerful look at the effects of deforestation on the environment, and specifically but not exclusively on the orangutan.

The soundtrack are the noises of the jungle, chainsaws and bulldozers; there is no speech. The film follows the trees on their journeys through the sawmills and into our communities as furniture or in the form of paper that we chuck away so thoughtlessly. Most seriously, it shows how the land that has been cleared is being replanted as palm oil plantations and how pervasively this product features in so many aspects of our everyday lives. And against this background are the repeated and shocking images of the orangutans and their sufferings. It is powerful.



Alma
<www.almathefilm.com>

Patrick Rouxel followed “Green” with ‘Alma’ in 2011. This 65-minute film has its own website and is also freely available for downloading. The format is similar to ‘Green’ but set in Brazil, where the film looks at the relationship between deforestation and the beef industry. Like ‘Green’, it graphically illustrates how our lifestyles in the developed world directly impinge upon what is happening to the environment half a world away.

Using On-Line Videos in Class

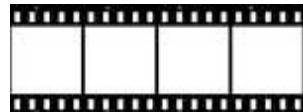
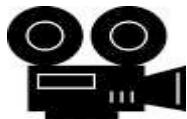
How can we use these two videos in our classrooms? There are several options. Firstly, as there is no commentary, students can make one. They can describe what they see in short segments or can respond to various worksheets provided by the teacher. Predicting is also a useful language activity as is speculating about causes and effects.

Another option is to assign half of the class to watch ‘Green’ and the other half to watch ‘Alma’ for homework, then have them explain what they saw. (This is not difficult as both films are readily available online.) This generally works well. Having students make connections between their own lifestyles and what they see on the screen provides a degree of personalization that makes this an effective language learning exercise. Finally, the homepages for both films contain a lot of background data and useful connections to other sites that provide a useful portal for students to make posters or do further work on these issues. These films are valuable educational resources.

On a final, personal note; although the films are freely available (and this helps to bring them to the widest possible audience), they can also be purchased. A contribution on the part of a teacher or an institution would, I am sure, be appreciated.

Send Us Your Own Favorite Video Clips!

These are two on-line video clips I have used in my English language classes. I have more. As I’m sure you do, too. Why not share a couple that you find especially helpful? Through the auspices of the GILE Newsletter and the GILE website, we could build a useful resource for global issues teachers. To avoid an avalanche of information, restrict your contributions to one or two especially useful on-line videos that you recommend. Just provide access details and a brief description of each clip and perhaps we can enhance the language learning experience of all our students.



Tim Grose

JALT Global Issues SIG Membership Chair
Global Village, Sapporo, Japan
E-mail: <tppgrose@hotmail.com>