

# **Evaluating the use of video in learning and teaching: the blended learning research project**

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This paper reports the preliminary findings from a project funded by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lifelong Learning Network. This project focused on the use of video in learning and teaching at the University of Worcester. This included video made specifically for teaching purposes as well as the use of YouTube, television content and DVDs. The project sought to explore student perceptions and use of video.

The methodology had two stages: firstly, surveys were conducted with 134 students in three main subject areas (English Language, Geography/Archaeology, Media and Cultural Studies/Film Studies). Respondents were asked about their experiences of the use of video in lectures and seminars, and their own use of video for independent coursework and revision. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were held with 20 students. Four key themes were extracted from the responses to the interviews and surveys.

The first theme concerns students' and lecturers' perceptions and knowledge of video as a learning tool. There is a perception of video as being a 'treat' rather than a serious academic tool. However, our research suggests that video can play an important part in student learning providing certain conditions are met. These include the lecturer modeling the use of video as an academic source.

The second theme focuses on accessibility to improve the learning experience. It is important for students to have the opportunity not only to view video during lectures and seminars, but also to revisit the material independently with guidance from the lecturer. Access to independent viewing of resources means individual preferences surrounding the optimal environment for absorbing new information can easily be fostered by the student (Coffield et al. 2004). Our research shows that Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) can play an important role in providing these opportunities for enhancing the student experience. However, it was also suggested that video content has to be introduced to students by the lecturer before being included on the VLE.

Thirdly, attention and motivation can be improved by the careful use of video. It is important for lecturers to highlight why a particular video is being used and what students can learn from it. Silvia (2008) highlights the importance of interest: 'As a source of intrinsic motivation, interest plays a powerful role in the growth of knowledge and expertise' (Silvia 2008: 57). When a video is incorporated into a seminar, activities need to be carefully planned and thought out so that the relevance of the specific video is perceived. Focusing on short clips through precise editing will pinpoint key information and thus enhance attention.

Fourthly, effective use of video can increase the depth of information processing. Video can help students to make links between familiar contexts and experience and new information. In order for new information to be assimilated, lecturers should identify and encourage the making of links between new information and old information. This enhanced engagement with topics can promote deeper understanding and retention of information.

Overall, the project has highlighted the importance of gathering student viewpoints on the use of video in learning and teaching. The research also demonstrates that video can be used more widely across different subject areas. It enhances learning by stimulating interest and providing different learning opportunities. The use of video, however, does require careful planning. Easy access to resources for students and staff is essential. Students also require support and feedback to build their confidence in analytical use of this valuable tool.

## **References**

Coffield, F., Moeley, D., Hall, E., & Ecclestone, K. (2004) *Learning Styles and Pedagogy in Post-16 learning: A Systematic and Critical Review*. Learning and Skills Research Centre.

Silvia, P. J. (2008) 'Interest – The Curious Emotion' *Current Directions in Psychological Sciences*, 17 (1) pp.57-60.