

Teaching EFL to the iGeneration: A Survey of Using YouTube as Supplementary Material with College EFL Students in Taiwan

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"Technology, especially the emergence of the Internet, is affecting every aspect of education and changing the way we teach and learn." (Chuo and Kung, 2002: 1)

Abstract

This paper explores using YouTube as supplementary material with EFL students in Taiwan. Surveys conducted on the first and last days of class of the Fall semester, 2007, in two sophomore classes (n=69) found they rated the use of YouTube to study English favorably concerning it being (i) interesting; (ii) relevant; and (iii) beneficial. However, students rated it slightly less favorably concerning it being: (iv) motivating within the classroom; and (v) motivating outside of the classroom. Generally, students wrote positive comments regarding the use of this technology, though some student comments highlighted the importance of providing clear explanations regarding how to use this learning tool effectively. Pedagogical considerations for enhancing learning outcomes through the use of YouTube as a source of supplementary material in EFL classrooms are also offered.

Introduction

Ever-changing technological advancements present new opportunities for instructors to incorporate online materials into traditional classroom situations, allowing both learning and teaching to become more interesting and meaningful. Li and Hart (1996) advance the Internet, with its multimedia capabilities and interactive functions, as an attractive medium to conduct instruction, while Meloni (1998) cites increased student motivation, authentic language, and global awareness as reasons for its use in language learning.

According to Paulsen (2001), the effective use of online materials may provide positive spin-offs for learners much the same as if they were immersed in the language and culture while studying abroad. Two important reasons cited for such positive performance are authenticity and motivation. She proposes that "It is no longer a question of whether to take advantage of these electronic technologies in foreign language instruction, but of how to harness them and guide our students in their use." (no page numbers supplied).

Chuo and Kung (2002) report positive results using a variety of EFL/ESL websites as supplementary material with college students in Taiwan. Furthermore, Beatty (2003) presents a clear overview of the increasingly important role of computers in language learning and points out how computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is continually evolving with the advent of new technologies. Taking advantage of the latest technologies,

Campbell (2004 & 2007) describes how weblogs and Flickr (photo sharing) may be used to enhance the learning potential in EFL classrooms.

One certainty remains: the use of the Internet in education is becoming more pervasive as the cost of access declines and connection speeds increase. On December 31, 2007, Taiwan had an Internet penetration rate of 67.4 percent, with over 90 percent of the connections being broadband (Internet World Stats 2007). Further, the YouTube website continues to undergo phenomenal growth in terms of the number of videos posted and hits from visitors: as of July 2006, more than 100 million videos were being watched every day, while over 2.5 billion videos were watched in June 2006 (USA TODAY).



Figure 1: YouTube front page

This paper starts by looking at the concepts of authenticity and student motivation and how they may be incorporated and enhanced by using YouTube as supplementary material in an EFL classroom. The next section expresses the purpose of the study. This is followed by an explanation of how YouTube was incorporated as supplementary material and the methodology employed in collecting the survey data. Two examples of YouTube video clips chosen to be supplementary material are included here. Then the results and discussion, including examples of student feedback, are presented. Some conclusions and pedagogical implications are offered before finishing with the paper's limitations and thoughts on directions for further study.

Authenticity

There has been much debate surrounding the meaning of authentic material (Taylor, 1994). Breen (1985: 61) states that daily, teachers consider four types of authenticity: 1) the authenticity of the texts used as input data for learners; 2) the authenticity of the learners' interpretations of such texts; 3) the authenticity of the tasks conducive to language learning; and 4) the authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom.

Currently, authenticity is generally used to describe material that genuinely exists in the real world outside of language classrooms and is used by real speakers of a language to communicate with a real audience for real purposes. Authentic materials can be used in class as a way to transition students from the classroom to the real world outside. Cheung (2001: 60) proposes that: "Popular culture is a rich source of authentic materials, bridging the gap between formal and informal English learning, and developing learning based on students' daily experience, personal values, attitudes, and feelings." Sherman (2003) presents a convincing argument for incorporating authentic video material into language classrooms. She provides a plethora of practical classroom activities showing how to use video to bring real-world language and culture into the classroom in contemporary, engaging, and productive ways.

The YouTube site contains a large body of material created and posted by people all over the world to communicate their ideas and beliefs and allow for interaction with others through the commenting feature. Thus, YouTube has the potential to connect learners with authentic English input through what is quite possibly already a part of their life experience - there already exists a YouTube site dedicated to users in Taiwan - and provides a context through which they can interact, exchange ideas and opinions, share feelings and participate in a web-based environment.

Student Motivation

While it is difficult to isolate the factors contributing to second language learning, motivation has been found to be one of the key elements determining success in learning a second language (Gardner 1985). Motivation has been broadly divided into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated students are defined as those who undertake an activity "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes." Lepper (1988: 292). These students are said to be more inclined to engage in learning due to personal curiosity, enjoyment or interest, and are more likely to value the task undertaken and employ more effortful and effective strategies. On the other hand, students who are extrinsically motivated perform tasks "in order to receive some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself." Lepper (1988: 292). Such students are said to be more inclined to focus on those aspects of the task relating specifically to attaining or avoiding the rewards or punishments.

Learning, according to Auerbach (1992: 9), is most effective when people start with what they know, are engaged in the process and accomplish something they want to accomplish. Ellis (1997) points to integrative motivation, referring to the desire to become familiar with the culture and society of those who use the target language, as the key factor in successful second language acquisition. Following a similar rationale, Cheung (2001: 56) argues that the appeal of English-language popular culture can be used to

motivate EFL students to study English and become "more responsive and active learners."

Others have taken these ideas further and looked at self-motivation, or learner autonomy, whereby students become responsible for their own learning (Dornyei, 2001). Realizing that learners' contributions play a crucial role in the educational process, Rogers (1991: 276) states that, "The only kind of learning which significantly affects behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning."

YouTube, as mentioned, is one readily available source of authentic pop culture material. Encouraging students to interact in an educational capacity with popular culture through English language YouTube video clips may act as a motivating factor for students wishing to further develop their language skills as they endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of the content they willingly access online. Moreover, it is also available for students to engage in outside of class in some form of student-centered, self-directed learning.

Purpose of the study

Using online resources to teach language students is hardly a novel concept. Numerous interesting and insightful articles on the use of various websites have emerged following the rapid spread of the Internet in the late 1990s (Campbell 2004 & 2007; Chuo and Kung 2002; Egbert, 2001). However, articles relating specifically to the use of YouTube as input for EFL courses seem to be lacking.

The purpose of the study is to explore the use of YouTube in an EFL situation by surveying students' attitudes towards using YouTube to study English. In particular, it seeks to gauge students' perceptions of using YouTube as a supplement to regular class materials concerning: (i) making classes more interesting; (ii) being relevant to course materials; (iii) being beneficial to language learning; (iv) motivating students to learn in class; and (v) motivating students to use this material to learn English outside of class.

Methodology

The students who participated in this study came from two sophomore conversation classes (31 and 38 students, respectively) at a private university in northern Taiwan. The same textbook and materials were used in both classes. All of the students were chemistry majors from the Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science, spoke Mandarin as their first language, and ranged from 19 to 21 years of age. This conversation class was their only English language course for the semester.

On the first day of class of the Fall semester, 2007, the instructor gave the students (n=69) a simple questionnaire regarding their gender, access to computers, and experiences using YouTube prior to this course (Questions 1- 5 on the questionnaire; see Appendix B).

Throughout the semester, material from the YouTube website was used to supplement the textbook - *World Link: Developing English Fluency* by Susan Stempleski, James R. Morgan, and Nancy Douglas - and associated classroom materials. All YouTube video clips were shown during regular class time using an in-class computer with a high-

speed Internet connection and projector. The students also engaged in a number of activities, including: completing various cloze worksheets, split viewing, watch and tell the story, and viewing to answer specific questions and spark discussions.

The YouTube videos included clips related to topics selected from the textbook (number of clips = 4), clips associated with vocabulary covered in the textbook (3), clips related to names of people or places in the textbook (4), clips connected to current events (2), and music videos (5). Each clip was chosen for its relevance to material covered in class, viewed by the instructor before class and appropriate vocabulary was taught prior to viewing. Additionally, background and cultural information were provided where necessary to foster student comprehension. Before and after viewing, students were made aware of all web addresses through them being posted on the class portal and encouraged to preview/review the clips at home. Furthermore, students were invited to suggest video clips to be used in class. Two examples of video clips used to supplement the textbook material are displayed below.

YouTube Video Clip One:

In conjunction with the 'Communication' section, Unit 1, Lesson B (page 11), covering interesting historical places in the world, the instructor selected the *New 7 Wonders of the World* video clip featuring the locations nominated for the 2007 New Seven Wonders of the World Competition which may be found at <http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=2fBj2wsimvQ&feature=related>.

Although this material has no script, it was selected for students to learn about interesting and famous places in addition to those covered in the textbook. Prior to class, the instructor made a list of English names of the historical sites shown in the video available to the students and posted the web address on the class portal. In class, students were divided into small groups and asked to describe each location as they came upon the screen - an activity-rich in generating vocabulary.¹



Figure 2: YouTube New 7 Wonders of the World

YouTube Video Clip Two:

For the 'Listening' section, Unit 3, Lesson A (page 23), related to dangerous jobs, during class time the teacher used the *The Art of Life: Dan Eldon in Africa - Part 2* video retrieved from <http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=wZQWX5tGZF&feature=related> to introduce the life and work of Dan Eldon.² This video was chosen as it has an interesting script, a rich vocabulary and impacting imagery. Furthermore, Dan Eldon is not likely to be so well known as someone such as CNN's Christiane Amanpour shown on the same page. The video clip helped to bring to life material that may otherwise have had much less connection with, and impact on, students. Relevant vocabulary words were pre-taught and the instructor elicited more vocabulary as students wrote down words to describe the actions on the screen. A handout with comprehension questions relating to the text and visual display was also given to the students to answer. A short discussion relating to the pros and cons of such a dangerous job ensued.



Figure 3: YouTube The Art of Life: Dan Eldon - Part 2

Finally, on the last day of class, the students (n=62) were given a follow-up questionnaire (Questions 1 - 10 on the questionnaire; see Appendix B). Like the initial survey, students' YouTube use habits were investigated. Multiple responses to the question "What do you usually use YouTube for?" were allowed. Additionally, questions were asked to gauge whether using YouTube as supplementary material in class was: (i) interesting; (ii) relevant; (iii) beneficial; (iv) motivating in class; and (v) motivating outside of class. The questions were scored on a 5 point Likert scale, with "strongly disagree" scoring one and "strongly agree" scoring five. The questions included an open-ended portion to allow the students to express additional comments if they wished. See Appendix for a copy of the survey (the survey given on the first day of class only covered the first five questions).

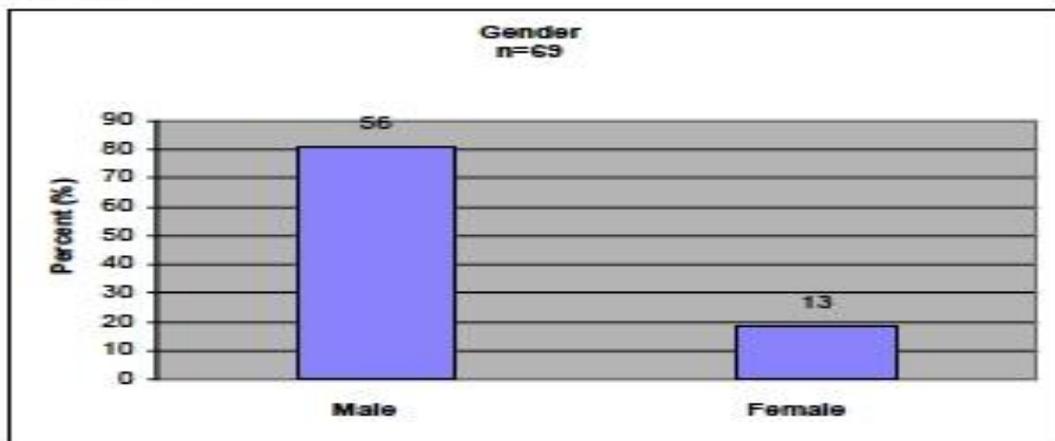
All of the statistical results were calculated using the descriptive statistics function of SPSS for Windows, version 10.0.

Results and Discussion

First Day of Semester Survey:

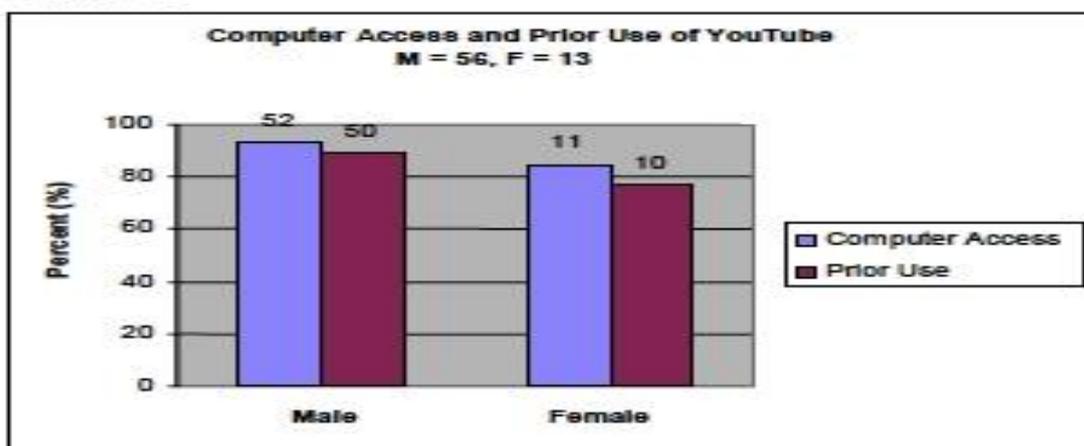
The results in Chart 1 show that of the 69 students participating in the study, 52 were male (81.2 percent), and thirteen female (18.8 percent). Chart 2 shows that over 92 percent of males and 84 percent of females had access to computers outside the classroom, while more than 89 percent of males and 79 percent of females had used YouTube before. (The results in table format are presented in Appendix A).

Chart 1



Number of observations posted above columns.

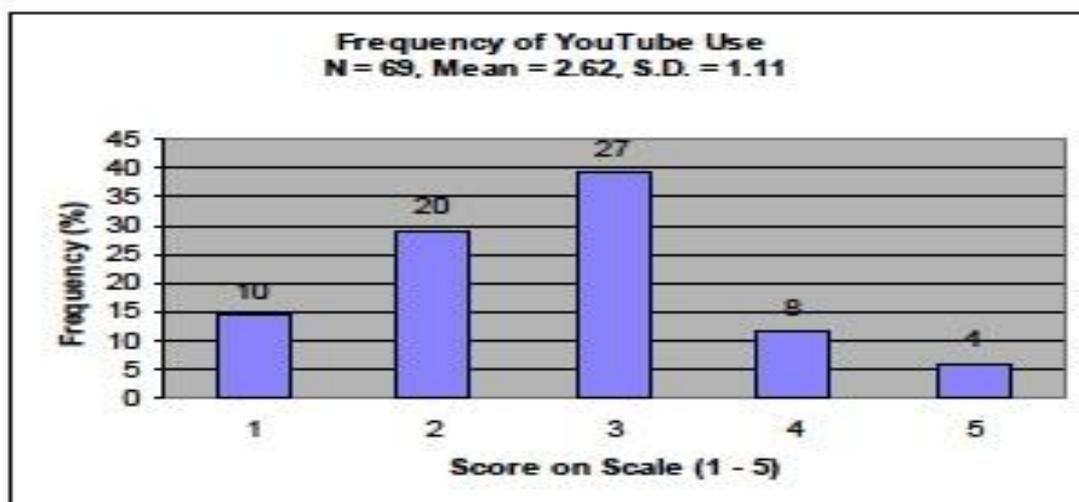
Chart 2



Number of observations posted above columns.

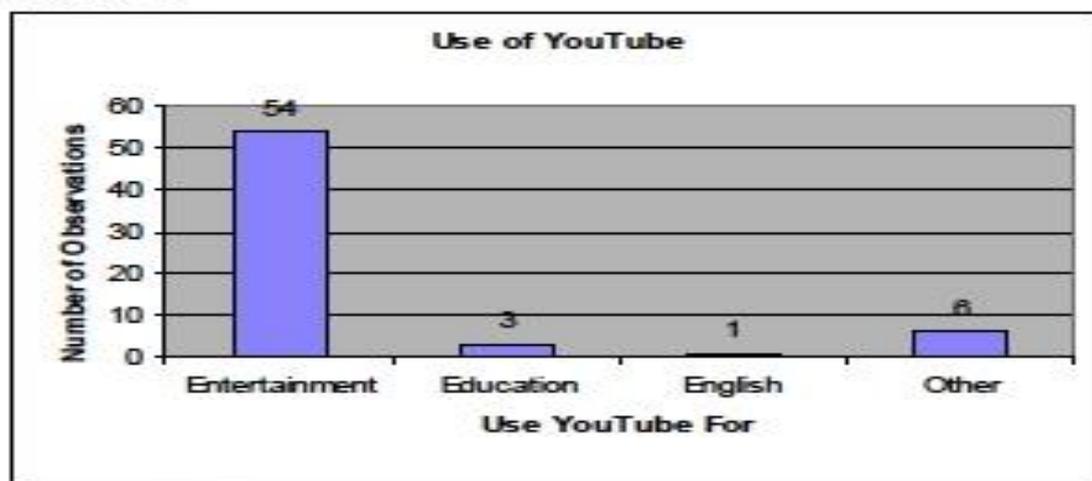
From Chart 3, it can be seen that 56.5 percent of the students selected that they used YouTube moderately or above. However, as shown in Chart 4, even though a large number of students had come into contact with YouTube as a source of entertainment, the majority had not considered using its content to improve their language skills. This hardly seems surprising as YouTube is a pop culture phenomenon primarily designed to attract people for entertainment rather than education. Furthermore, unless students had been introduced to the website by previous English teachers, it is unlikely they would consciously view the video clips with the aim of learning English.

Chart 3



Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 4

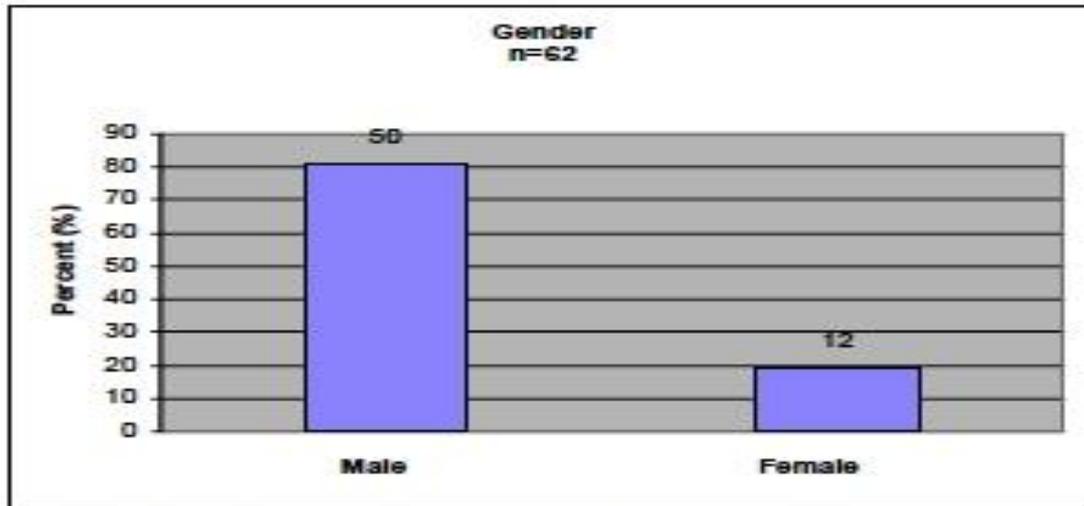


Number of observations posted above columns.
Multiple answers were allowed.

Final Day of Semester Survey:

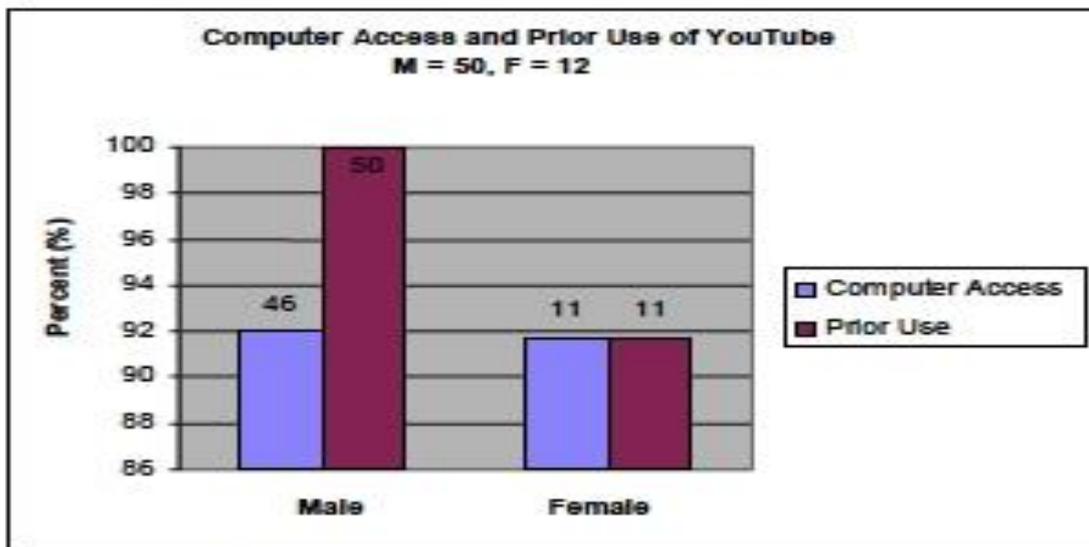
From Chart 5 it can be observed that 62 students completed the survey on the final day of class. Of the students, 50 were male (80.6 percent) and 12 were female (19.4 percent), while 7 students were absent. Chart 6 indicates that computer access was around 92 percent for both males and females, and that, as one would expect, almost all of the students had used YouTube before.

Chart 5



Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 6

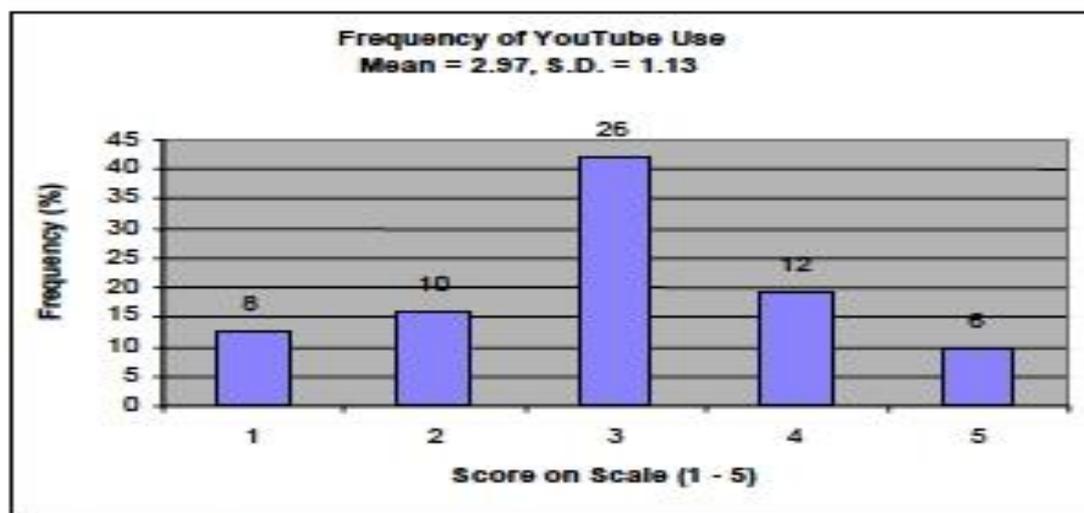


Number of observations posted above columns.

The results in Chart 7 report the mean and standard deviation regarding students' frequency of use of YouTube. Comparing Charts 3 and 7 reveals that students' YouTube use frequency increased considerably over the semester, with 71.0 percent of respondents registering that they used YouTube moderately or above. This was to be expected as the

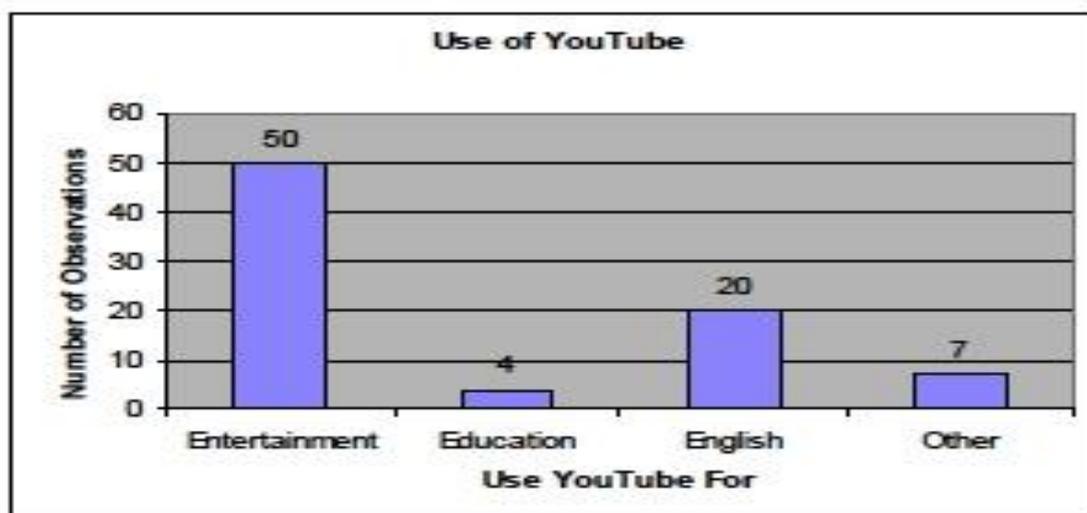
students were introduced to YouTube and exposed weekly, while also being encouraged to preview, review, and explore the website outside of class. Responses to YouTube use habits are displayed in Chart 8.

Chart 7



Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 8



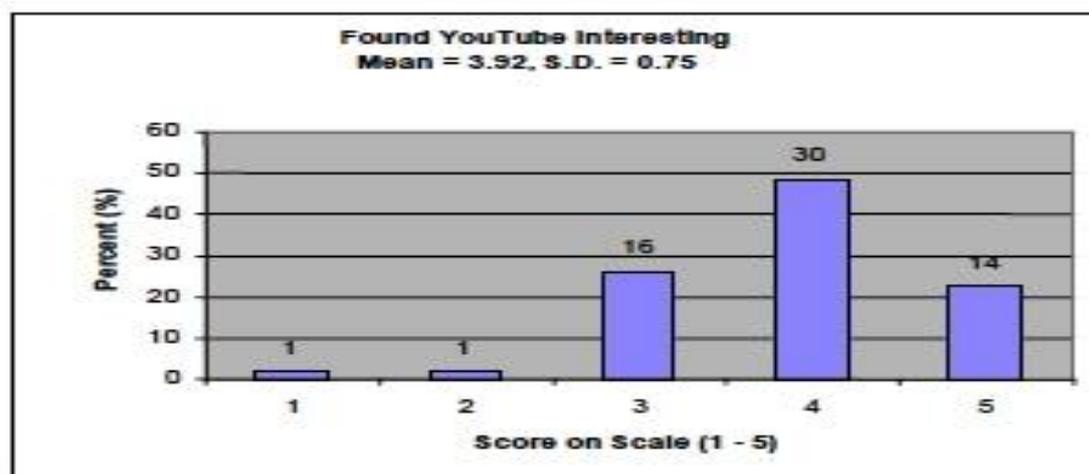
Number of observations posted above columns.
Multiple answers were allowed.

Charts 9 - 13 show the results broken down into the number of participants who chose each value on the scale from one to five in absolute and percentage terms. An overwhelming number (96.8 percent rated it neutral or higher, mean 3.92) of students considered using YouTube in class to be interesting. This result is more than likely related to the excitement factor derived from visual stimulus as compared to regular teaching

materials such as textbooks. Furthermore, the participants could probably relate to the authentic pop culture nature of the material and readily identify with this. Similarly, a great majority perceived the YouTube material as being relevant to class (82.2 percent rated it neutral or higher, mean 3.15). This is probably due to the instructor consciously selecting material related to what was covered in class and explaining the relationship. In a similar vein, students found the YouTube material beneficial (93.6 percent rated it neutral or higher, mean 3.82) in their efforts to study English. Plausible reasons for this are the exposure to natural English and addition of authentic comprehensible input to the class.

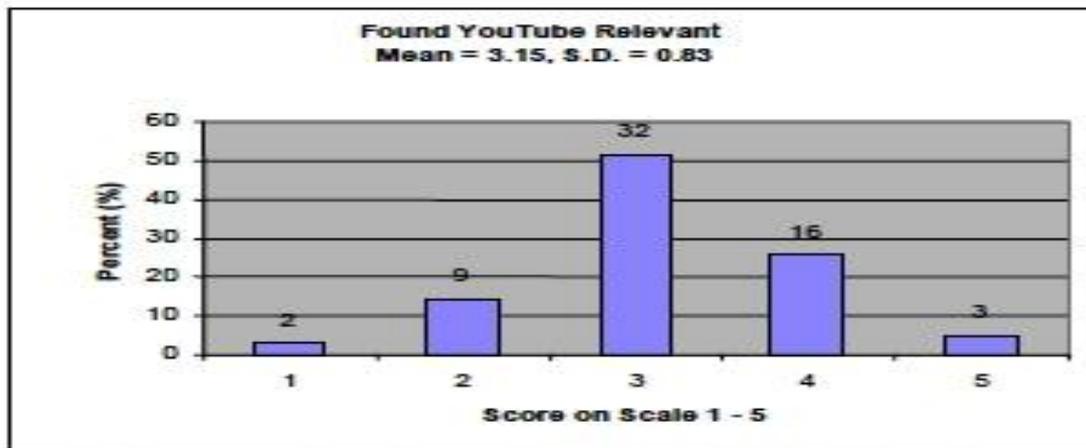
The number of students who registered that using YouTube in class motivated them was considerably lower (62.9 percent rated it neutral or higher, mean of 2.95). While this figure points to a reasonable degree of motivation in class, the fact that it lags so far behind those for the preceding variables leads to the conjecture that students are willing to watch YouTube as a stimulus in class, but are less inclined to view it as anything other than entertainment. Following this trend, less than half the students found using YouTube in class motivated them to use it outside of class to study English (46.7 percent rated it neutral or higher, mean of 2.53). In other words, 53.3 percent of the students considered it less than neutral in motivating them to learn English outside of the classroom. This may reflect that in the absence of a teacher and structured activities, many students are unaware of how to, or perhaps unwilling to, use YouTube for anything other than entertainment. The statistics presented in Chart 8 add further weight to this claim, as less than one-third of the respondents (32.25%) indicated that they used YouTube to study English, while well over three quarters (80.64%) used it for entertainment.

Chart 9



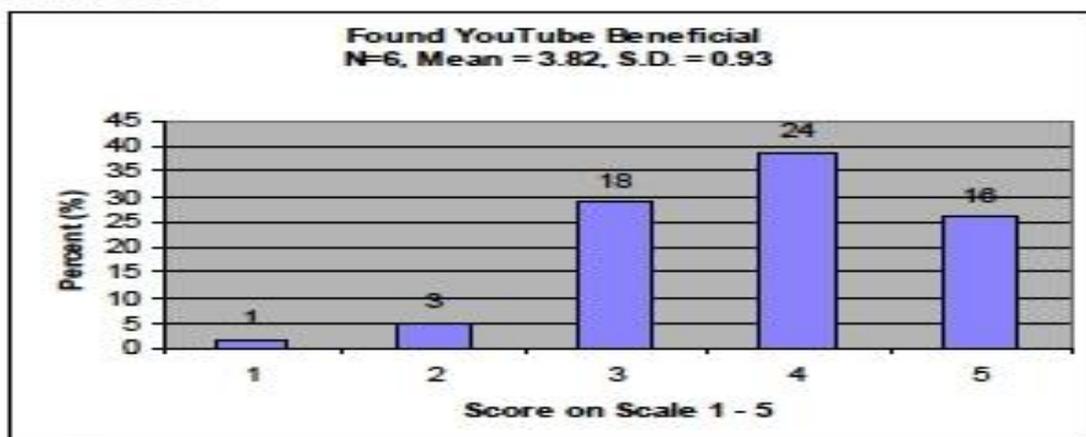
Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 10



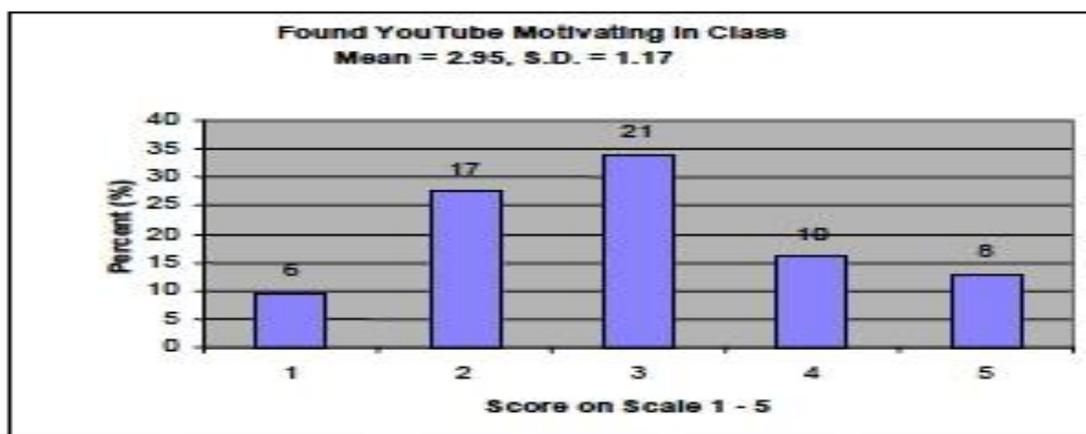
Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 11

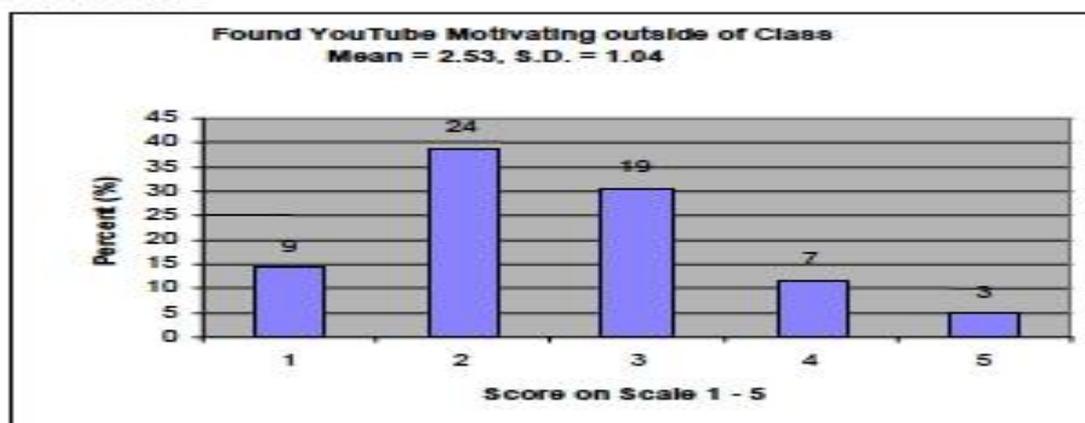


Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 12



Number of observations posted above columns.

Chart 13

Number of observations posted above columns.

Within the context of other studies conducted in Taiwan, Chuo and Kung (2002) also find positive results from college student surveys regarding their use of Internet resources to study English. However, in their follow up study they found that few students had returned to use the websites used in class outside of class. This study also found that considerably fewer students revisited the websites introduced in class to study English in their own time. Here it may be worthy to note that engagement does not necessarily equate to motivation, such that while these students found YouTube engaging in class, there was little spillover leading to motivation to study English via YouTube video clips outside of class.

Another argument could follow that Taiwanese students are less intrinsically motivated and thus unlikely to perform class-related tasks without external stimulus in the form of rewards or punishments. Indeed, Chang (2003: 919) states that "Taiwanese EFL learners at technology colleges tended to be more extrinsically motivated in learning English." As in this study, with the absence of tests to be passed or penalties to pay, the participants may have been less likely to perform learning tasks relating to YouTube video material out of personal curiosity, interest or enjoyment alone.

Student Comments

Most comments were supportive of using YouTube as supplementary material in the classroom and ranged from: "I love it" to "It's wonderful". Others responded with comments such as: "I can learn more natural English", "It lets English be more interesting" and "It's funny to see something out of book". However, several students wrote less positive feedback relating to the use of YouTube outside of the classroom: "I don't know how to use it" and "I don't know what to find". Thus, even with regard to teaching the i-generation, instructors need to be aware that they cannot assume all students know how to navigate their way around web sites such as YouTube, nor will they easily be able to discern which materials are beneficial and which are not.

Conclusions and Implications for EFL Teachers

This article looks at using YouTube as supplementary material in an EFL setting in Taiwan. It is hypothesized that YouTube can be used as authentic material input and as a motivational tool. The results from questionnaires given on the first and last days of the class show that generally speaking, students found the experience of using YouTube to be interesting, relevant, beneficial, and somewhat motivating in class. As a result, it may be suggested that both teachers and students can be involved in creative ways to incorporate YouTube in a variety of classroom activities to enhance learning outcomes and provide a positive classroom environment. However, using YouTube in class to motivate students to use this website as a medium to study English outside of class and develop some degree of learner autonomy remains less clear. While teacher guidance is recommended, it is important to allow students the freedom to explore on their own and take the first steps toward a journey of learning English through YouTube.

Limitations and Future Study

The first limitation of the study is that the questionnaires were only written in English. However, the instructor was present to help explain any problems the students might have had. Second, the self-reported nature of the survey may have led to students overstating their answers as the course teacher administered the questionnaires. To counter this, the questionnaires were anonymous and the students were informed that the results of the survey were to be aggregated and would in no way affect the way the instructor assessed their final grades. Another shortcoming is the relatively small sample size, especially in terms of the female students. Thus, it is difficult to make gender comparisons. Finally, the fact that all of the participants came from the same department means that the results cannot be extrapolated to the general student population.

Regarding future research, it is recommended that studies using larger sample size and students from various departments be conducted. Furthermore, studies making comparisons between curricula with and without YouTube used as supplementary material could help to assess the impact of such technology on students' language proficiency and aid educators in developing EFL teaching strategies.

Notes

1. As an out-of-class activity, students were encouraged to find out which nominees were selected as 'The New Seven Wonders of the World.' It was made known that this could be found at http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=fv_TBQfj_hg&feature=related and would be shown in the next class. As an extension to this lesson, each group was asked to select a historical site from among those on the video clip, research it on the Internet, and prepare to present their findings to their classmates in the next class.
2. In addition to part 2, the students were made aware of the existence of The Art of Life: Dan Eldon in Africa - Part 1 prior to class and encouraged to preview this on their own to gain background information and bring any questions they may have to ask the instructor. The video is available at <http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxxgetWUi1o&feature=related>.

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Appendices

Appendix A

First Day of Class Survey Results

Table 1:
Demographic Data

Gender	Male	Female
Participants n=69	56(81.2)	13(18.8)
Computer access	52(92.9)	11(84.6)
Prior YouTube use	50(89.3)	10(76.9)

Values in parentheses are percentages.

Table 2:
Use of YouTube

n=69	Mean			Standard Deviation	
Frequency of YouTube use	2.62			1.11	
Score on scale	1	2	3	4	5
Number of observations	10(14.5)	20(29.0)	27(39.1)	8(11.6)	4(5.8)
Use YouTube for	Entertainment	Education	English	Other	
Number of observations (multiple observations allowed)	54	3	1	6	

Values in parentheses are percentages.

Final Day of Class Survey Results

Table 3:
Demographic Data

Gender	Male	Female
Participants n=62	50(80.6)	12(19.4)
Computer access	46(92.0)	11(91.7)
Prior YouTube use	50(100)	11(91.7)

Values in parentheses are percentages.

Table 4:
YouTube Questionnaire Data (Means and Standard Deviations)

n=62	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Frequency of YouTube use	2.97	1.13		
Interesting	3.92	0.75		
Relevant	3.15	0.83		
Benefit	3.82	0.93		
Motivating in class	2.95	1.17		
Motivating out of class	2.53	1.04		
Use YouTube for	Entertainment	Education	English	Other
Number of observations (multiple observations allowed)	50	4	20	7

Table 5:
YouTube Questionnaire Data (Number of observations)

n=62 Score on scale	Number of observations				
	1	2	3	4	5
Frequency of YouTube use	8(12.9)	10(16.1)	26(41.9)	12(19.4)	6(9.7)
Interesting	1(1.6)	1(1.6)	16(25.8)	30(48.4)	14(22.6)
Relevant	2(3.2)	9(14.5)	32(51.6)	16(25.8)	3(4.8)
Benefit	1(1.6)	3(4.8)	18(29.0)	24(38.7)	16(25.8)
Motivating in class	6(9.7)	17(27.4)	21(33.9)	10(16.1)	8(12.9)
Motivating out of class	9(14.5)	24(38.7)	19(30.6)	7(11.3)	3(4.8)

Values in parentheses are percentages.

Appendix B

YouTube Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for research purposes only. All data will be aggregated and will not be used to evaluate you, your grade, or your teacher.

1. Male Female Age: _____

2. Do you have access to a computer with a high-speed connection outside of class?

Yes No

3. Have you used YouTube before?

Yes No

4. How often do you use YouTube outside of class?

Not at all 2 3 4 Very often
 1 5

5. When you use YouTube on your own, what do you usually use it for? (You may choose more than one answer)

Entertainment Education Studying English Other (please specify)

6. Using YouTube material made class more interesting.

Strongly disagree 2 3 4 Strongly agree
 1 5

Please state why or why not.

7. The YouTube material used was relevant to what was studied in class.

Strongly disagree 2 3 4 Strongly agree
 1 5

Please state why or why not.

8. Using YouTube in class has been beneficial to your English.

Strongly disagree 2 3 4 Strongly agree
 1 5

Please state why or why not.

9. Using YouTube in class motivated you to study English.

Strongly disagree 2 3 4 Strongly agree
 1 5

Please state why or why not.

10. Using YouTube in class motivated you to use it yourself to study English outside of class?

Strongly disagree 2 3 4 Strongly agree
 1 5

Please state why or why not.

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey.