

Student Initiative of Producing Their Own Mini Videos for Language Learning

Amily Guenier, Lancaster University, UK*

ABSTRACT

This study explores how students produce their own mini videos using the target language to share experiences and communicate with native speakers. Multimodality is used as a theoretical approach. Class observations and in-depth interviews were used for data collection, which was analysed by theme. The research results indicate that students deem it the agency of their own learning rather than completing the assignments given by the tutor; they gain more from the discussions among their peers and native speakers than from giving the presentations in class only; watching and making comments on their own videos is visually and mentally stimulating, which triggers more thoughts and expressions. Students appreciate the cooperation among themselves, while they also find it challenging to manage their publicity. This research provides empirical evidence on how to encourage students' initiative to improve language skills and enhance intercultural communication competence, which sheds light on reshaping language and intercultural communication education.

KEYWORDS

intercultural communication, mini videos, students' initiative, technology-assisted language practice

INTRODUCTION

The recent requirement for language teaching in higher education is to develop students' language-technology cultural competence to become competent contributors to their workplace cultures, and to prepare language learners for a digitally and culturally complex workplace environment (Dressen-Hammouda & Wigham, 2022). Therefore, language tutors are expected to align their teaching practices with digital affordances (Yu & Zadorozhnyy, 2021). What language learners increasingly expect is the use of technology-enabled learning activities for meaningful communication, rather than to access the learning materials from paper to digital materials online. Consequently, the focus of language teaching needs to move beyond grammar and vocabulary toward workplace-based and academic literacy practices integrating digital information, and visual and multimodal modes, focusing on "a combination of digital, multimodal, communicative and multilingual practices" (Ware, 2017: 267).

Within this context, the digital storytelling (DST) approach is employed and implemented on a multimodality platform in this study to optimize the benefits of the digital learning context and to expose students to the digital methods of language practice. This paper aims to explore whether such a relatively novel design encourages student engagement that can better prepare students for future workplace requirements, and thus contribute to an integrated framework that addresses DST, multimodality, and intercultural communication.

DOI: 10.4018/IJCALLT.317929

*Corresponding Author

This article published as an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the author of the original work and original publication source are properly credited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet Celebrities

With the spread of digital affordance, the mini videos by internet celebrities, also known as social media influencers, web celebrities, microcelebrities, etc., attracted students' attention. In China alone, the number of internet celebrity short videos on social media reached more than 873 million by the end of 2020 (Tan, Han, & Zhong, 2022). One of the factors that contribute to their popularity is the humorous descriptions of certain aspects of their lives that echo the audience's own lives (Delbaere et al., 2021).

Internet celebrities use digital technology and social media to circulate personal stories (Rojek, 2016). As their reputation and their interaction with the audience go up, internet celebrities gradually transform content production into semi-professional production, which in turn provides the impetus for follow-up development. Their specific ability is to make good use of words to attract attention on the internet within the vast ecology of internet users (Xu & Zhang, 2020). The social media influencer value model by Lou and Yuan (2019) suggests that various input components in persuasive communication, such as messenger features (e.g., popularity) and message characteristics (e.g., advertising message value), determine effectiveness. Internet celebrities' videos offer a combination of input modes including auditory (i.e., spoken input) and visual input, and visual input consists of dynamic imagery and can also include written on-screen text. What is in common for internet celebrities is the good use of language – humorous, precise and engaging. Their videos uploaded to popular digital platforms such as YouTube enable them to encounter audiences from a variety of lingua-cultural backgrounds and interact with them through multimodal and multilingual repertoires. During the interaction, there are ample opportunities where people from different cultural backgrounds can make spontaneous communication (Ho, 2022). Internet celebrities' influence has been used for marketing (Tan, Han, & Zhong, 2022), industry (Lu, Xie, Zhang, & Li, 2022), linguistic style (Lee, Liu, and Tseng, 2021), etc., but no studies have been conducted for language skills and intercultural communication, and this gap warrants investigation.

Digital Storytelling (DST)

Digital storytelling (DST) is termed as telling stories by using digital media (Lim et al, 2021). Unlike reading stories with printed books, DST allows people to record, express, and consume stories on digital platforms, which can help make learning more interactive and fun for learners (Lim et al, 2021). It can be a creative approach in educational settings where students present their ideas from a perspective using photos, pictures, videos, and music to enhance active learning, creativity, empowerment, and critical thinking skills to amplify language learning and teaching (Abdel-Aziz, et. al, 2022).

Regarding language learning, Lim et al., (2021) reviewed 58 journal papers in the Scopus database for the four language skills. In terms of listening skills, Tarinkulu's (2021) research found DST was useful in improving learners' listening skills, while Andayani's (2019) did not find it helpful, and thus different results were generated. For speaking skills, Yang et al. (2020) provided quantitative data from proficiency tests and presentations to determine the progress but did not provide the effect size of the experiment. In addition, Oakley et al. (2018) and Batsila and Tsihouridis (2016) agreed that DST enhances reading skills by providing evidence from reading tests. In the writing aspect, Chiang (2020) reported improvements in writing skills through a written test; meanwhile, Azis and Hu (2020) interviewed participants and analyzed their reflections after the experiment before concluding that DST does improve language writing skills. DST has been found to accelerate students' vocabulary development as well, as it connects students by enabling them to learn and share different topics and ideas. Despite the flourishing of DST being a valuable tool to improve language skills in the four aspects, the applications of DST for intercultural communication are still limited. This study is intended to fill in this gap.

Multimodality in Language Learning

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), multimodality is a framework for making meanings at the intersection of modes (e.g., writing, speech, image, design, etc.) and media (e.g., paper, screen, palette, etc.). It is a multimodal approach to orchestrating semiotic resources for communication (Canale & Fasciolo, 2022, Gyogi & Lee, 2022). Several semiotic modes are combined and reinforce each other to express the same meaning in different ways, fulfilling complementary roles (e.g., when pictures complement a story), or being hierarchically ordered (e.g., music in the background).

With textbooks, readers construct meaning in a linear and sequential manner; with videos, readers get information from sounds, images, movements, etc., with multimodality, readers absorb the content from what they read, watch, and listen with linguistic, audio, gestural, and special modalities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2016). The language system deals directly with linguistic input and output (in the form of speech or writing) while at the same time serving a symbolic function with respect to nonverbal behaviours.

In language learning, numerous research has been conducted. By comparing the impact of text and image-based material, video-based material, and animated interactive material on learning performance and the emotional states of verbalizers (learners who think more in words) and visualizers (learners who think more in pictures), Chen and Sun (2012) found that video-based materials were more suitable for verbalizers while dynamic materials containing video and animation were more appropriate for visualizers. In addition, multimedia materials were also found to be better at enhancing learners' retention of concepts than static pictures or texts (Lin & Atkinson, 2011). Language learning can benefit from multimodality in that language learners can rely on a multimodal array of resources to construct meaning. In a similar vein, by measuring students' reading comprehension of a documentary with a test that consisted of questions based on the audio, the images, and audio + images, Durbahn et al. (2020) found that comprehension increases as learners' lexical coverage increases, suggesting that imagery can be used to enhance comprehension and that lower levels of lexical coverage are needed in audio-visual input in which there is an important audio-imagery correlation.

Using Walma van der Molen's (2010) four-category coding system, Cross (2011) analyzed the audio-visual correspondence in news video texts and found that visuals were coded as talking head (i.e., no imagery beyond the person talking), direct (i.e., audio and visuals provide the same meaning), indirect (i.e., audio and visuals are not directly related), and divergent (i.e., audio and visuals are not related or there is a mismatch). The results indicated that talking heads were the main type, followed by indirect or divergent visuals. Images that were directly supportive of the audio were rare in the videos analyzed. The images in documentaries were also found to co-occur (i.e., within a time frame of 5 seconds before or after) with the aural word form in 72% of the selected target words, which may promote information processing and learning. These findings suggest that supportive imagery can lower the vocabulary demands of audio-visual input and that may help learners in their meaning-making process, which makes the audio-image link an important criterium to consider when selecting audio-visual materials for L2 learning (Perez, 2022).

With a systematic review of 70 studies, Smith et. al. (2021) points out that with expanded opportunities to share ideas through multiple modes, students bridge transnational identities, (re) present themselves, and communicate in empowering ways. The integration of digital multimodal projects can reshape classrooms by challenging language ideologies and expanding temporal and spatial boundaries as students compose for multiple audiences. Regarding digital multimodal composing (DMC), Jiang and Ren (2021) exposed different ideologies between language tutors (focusing on the linguistic form) and students (focusing on digital skills and the natural use of the language). They developed a framework to analyze how contrasting ideologies affect students' learning at micro and macro levels and suggested that "it would be more productive if teachers could reorganize language teaching around multimodality, leading students to be not only critical consumers of digital resources for their language learning but also producers and collaborators" (Jiang & Ren, 2021, p. 15). Also on DMC, Wang and Li's (2022) case study analysed the exploration of multiliteracies and multimodal approaches and showed that a successful DMC project requires more than multimodal texts and digital

tools, it requires language tutors to adopt a trans-sanitizing approach to see text more entangled with other semiotics in meaning-making. By making the text an open system, learners can apply their own imaginations and creativity to the language.

To summarize multimodality used for language learning, students find it most interesting and engaging (Martinez, Gimenes, & Lambert, 2022). The video production tasks increased students' motivation to learn the subject, enhanced their understanding of the content, and facilitated the construction of professional identity (Koc, 2011; Orús et al., 2016). The students in Azer, Alkhawajah, & Alshamlan's (2022) study reflected that the videos changed their daily learning routines in a positive way, providing a useful resource to share experiences. Thus, YouTube videos are more interactive than books and of great help for language practice.

While the literature has shown how multimodality has improved language skills in most cases, different voices are also heard: using on-screen text with video might lead to extraneous processing in the visual channel that needs to process both the captions and the imagery, which could lead to a split-attention effect in the visual/pictorial channel because redundancy operates differently in language learning contexts. Mayer et al. (2020) therefore propose that redundant information in the form of on-screen text may be helpful for comprehension in language learning contexts where language learners might have word identification problems. There has been an increased interest in multimodality in language pedagogy, as multimodality platforms have helped improve language skills in most cases.

Despite the work conducted on language practice in multimodality platforms, there is a need to explore in greater depth how students' own videos achieve cultural positioning by strategically orchestrating multilingual and multimodal repertoires which go beyond language only and one modality. It is worthwhile exploring whether students can use the multimodality platform for DST to enhance their intercultural communication competence. To explore students' experiences in constructing multimodal resources on course topics and the video project's influences on students' development of intercultural communication competence. Accordingly, two research questions are proposed to drive this research: RQ1: What impact can the internet celebrity's DST have on students' language learning? RQ2: What effects can students' own DST videos have on students' intercultural communication?

METHODOLOGY

Internet Celebrity Video Selection

Popularity cues of internet celebrities can be defined by the number of followers on social media (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019), or the number of likes or dislikes that the internet celebrities generate (Filieri et al., 2021).

In assessing the videos to be included in the study, YouTube Video Assessment Criteria by Azer, Alkhawajah and Alshamlan (2022) was employed, as the three Vs of communication -verbal, vocal, and visual are the main characteristics in the instrument, which covers parameters comprising accuracy of content, clarity of the message, pedagogy for language teaching, and technical considerations. To fit in the context of this research, the more detailed criteria are: (1) the language used is appropriate for students to learn, (2) the content is interesting for students to digest, (3) the style is humorous for students to enjoy, and (4) the viewers are more than 100,000 to justify 'celebrity'. Videos were excluded if they (1) were an advertisement, (2) news with strong political views, (3) language and culture were not the focus, and (4) videos in languages other than Chinese. Two researchers listed items and ranked them on a scale from 1 to 10. Based on the selection criteria, the following videos are selected, including the name of the internet celebrities, the number of viewers, the number of likes and dislikes, the URL, the duration of the video the number of comments posted by viewers, days on YouTube, and the characteristics of the video.

Table 1

Name	No of viewers	Background	Characteristics	YouTube links
Li, Xueqin	4,467,212	Beijing Uni	Hot topics	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYRo_ZzhsuY&t=18
SiTu Jianguo	100,000	Oxford Uni	Westerner	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkdEs6X6DYM
Dai Susie	245,119	Leeds Uni	Deep thought	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZbvTHj6GFk
Zhang, Cailing	449,091	London Uni	Cultural differences	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sagKuEe-0M

Participants

Thirty-four English-speaking undergraduate students (F=28; M=6) at a university in the UK participated in this study. All participants were Year 3 and Year 4 Chinese-majored degree students with ages ranging from 21 to 24, and their Chinese language levels were between HSK4 and HSK5. They were aware that internet celebrities' YouTube videos would be used as part of the learning materials, and they would produce their own videos for presentation as part of language and intercultural communication practice. While students were watching the internet celebrities' videos and the videos produced themselves, students were encouraged to make comments either in the classroom or online, as the classes were conducted in hybrid mode. Among the volunteers who would like to participate in the interviews for the research at the end of the semester, six students were selected (2 high-level, 2 intermediate-level, and 2 low-level students in terms of language proficiency). This is to allow different voices to be heard, as the perceptions from different levels of students would be comparatively more objective. For anonymity purposes, all the participants in the interview are labelled as S1-S6.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Classes were recorded by the university as podcasts for those students who had to miss classes and permission was given by the university to use them for research purposes. These objective recordings were coupled with the language instructor's class observation notes, which adds humanistic and subjective elements. Students' comments on both internet celebrities' YouTube videos and students' own videos were collected and categorized into four themes, which were further explored via an in-depth focus-group interview at the end of the semester. The triangulated data derived a broader understanding of the phenomenon and eliminate the drawbacks of a relatively small data sample that might be achieved by combining several data collection methods. This research method provides detailed descriptions of the participants' perceptions and thoughts, as well as researchers' reflections on the study, which provides insight into the impact of the internet celebrity's DST on students' language learning, and the effects of students' own DST videos on students' intercultural communication.

THE STUDY

The study was conducted in a 12-week elective course in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The teaching mode was hybrid, with some students on campus in the classroom, while some others online via zoom. Students were required to watch the selected internet celebrities' videos before class and bring their questions or opinions to the class for discussion, with one episode per week for the first four weeks. From week 5, students started to present their own video in class with each video two minutes long, and explain the rationale for the video, why they chose this topic, the challenges they encountered, and the gains from completing it. Students both in class and online

can comment on what worked well and give suggestions on how it could be improved. After having revised the videos based on the students' feedback, students would put the videos on YouTube for a wider audience. During the semester, all students were required to submit their video links to the blackboard (an official platform at the university) before class so that other students can prepare comments to be discussed in class. Students can choose their own topics connected with what was covered in class during the semester.

Students' Response to the Internet Celebrities' DSTs from Class Observation

Cailing Zhang's DST was about her husband (who is Canadian) sending her white and yellow chrysanthemums for romance, but these flowers are mostly used in funerals in China. The mismatch between the connotation of the colors, and the discrepancy reinforced multimodally by the sound effect on the stage of a live show when she was telling the story aroused heated discussion in class. It was observed that students burst into laughter when they realized the misunderstanding of the connotations of colors and the sound effect stimulated students' understanding of the discrepancy. As students are of different nationalities and come from different cultural backgrounds, they continued discussing the symbolic meanings in their own countries. Students also noticed that there was a contrast between the audience getting one surprise after another and the calmness of the speaker. The fact that the interlocutor wearing a mask of calmness makes it even more enjoyable for the audience to make sense of the perceived discrepancy between language and cultural discrepancy, thus adding a layer of uncertainty that reinforces her surprises. This reveals how the multimodal affordances of the medium of video make certain aspects of the interaction relevant, thus stimulating students' intercultural awareness.

Xueqin Li revealed in her DST that she graduated from Beijing University, the second-best university in China. When asked by the audience if her family was rich, she answered 'yes, my dad sells wind'. Students immediately connected the spontaneous answer with those who are admitted to world-class top universities such as Yale because of their strong family background or their parents' sponsorship of the universities. Students admired the clever use of sarcasm, especially 'wind' indicating 'wealth from wind-generated energy'.

The above two internet celebrities are Chinese native speakers, but the next internet celebrity Jianguo SiTu is an Englishman who graduated from Oxford University and has been working in China for more than 10 years. Students looked astonished at his fluency in Chinese and started murmuring aloud "I wish my Chinese can be as good". "Wow can be as good as that". Students kept nodding their heads as Jianguo was introducing China from a westerner's perspective. He seemed to have set a good example for students in both learning the Chinese language and developing intercultural communication competence.

Another English internet celebrity is Susie Dai, who compared Chinese and western thought patterns, philosophies, and their effects on people's lives, and articulated that Chinese is a receiver-oriented language while English is a transmitter-oriented language, and thus it is considered the responsibility of the speaker to communicate ideas clearly and unambiguously. In the western cultural context, if there is confusion in understanding, it is the fault of the speaker; while Chinese culture is receiver oriented, and it is up to the listener to make sense of what is being said. This transmitter-receiver orientation is also reflected in writing. When Susie reads something not well relevant and not logically connected, she tends to say 'It sounds vague or unclear' but the Chinese writer would say it is so obvious that it is not worth spelling out. Susie thinks it needs to make meanings as clear as possible, even not to miss the steps in your thinking because you do not want to leave any room for misinterpretations. Western logic helps readers follow through step by step. In Chinese, the rules are less defined. It is not necessary that there is a topic in each paragraph, introducing the point of the paragraph, and in that paragraph, it is not necessary that all the points are relevant. The writing can be more poetic, especially in the introduction. One can talk about the big picture for longer. Western logic is more detailed and eastern writing is more concerned with the big picture. Students looked

very focused with heads leaning forward or nodding “eh, it makes sense”, “I see”, or “I should have thought of that”. Students seemed to have found the roots which explain the cultural differences at the surface level with facts or phenomena.

Students could echo their own knowledge and share their own experiences triggered by internet celebrities’ DST. Students focused on DST and connected DST with themselves. However, the objective observation is only one side of the story that needs to be rectified with qualitative data from the interviews where students’ own voices can be heard.

Students’ Own DST

Inspired by the internet celebrities’ DST, students started to make their own mini videos to share with their peers and with a wider audience. Table 2 is a sample of students’ work on YouTube.

Table 2. Students’ work

 <p>追梦有你 DREAM WITH YOU</p> <p>帮你处理 +44 7307106375 dreammu@gmail.com</p> <p>追梦有你 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsYja0JtFPU</p>	 <p>沟通 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rysmvfBS2H0</p>
---	--

In the first DST, the student accounted that there are 143,820 Chinese students in the UK in 2020-21 (Education, 2022). On their journey to study from China to the UK, from entry application to graduation, there are countless anecdotes to show that Chinese students use their Chinese thought patterns in the UK higher education (HE) context (as illustrated in Susie’s DST). At the end of each story, he summarizes the thought pattern differences and introduces the rules and regulations in the UK. Because it is in a storytelling form from a student’s perspective and because the stories are told on a digital form of YouTube which is accessible to a wide audience, it has been helpful for Chinese students (and for their parents or families) to better prepare themselves to accommodate in the UK HE context.

The second DST is about communication with pets. There are more than 190 million pets in China in 2020 (mainly cats and dogs) and the number is still growing (Statista, 2022). Most Chinese pet owners buy luxurious facilities for pets’ food and drink and beautiful clothes for pets to wear, but not so much for communication with the pets. In each episode of the DST, the student showed how to tell the pets to go to bed, to go out, etc., in Chinese, and she felt proud to be able to use Chinese to communicate with Chinese pet owners.

An In-Depth Focused Group Interview

A focused group interview with six participants was conducted at the end of the semester on the green grass of the campus. It was an informal venue where students could feel relaxed and free to reflect on the experience and express their thoughts. This instrument was chosen because, in a group rather than individually, the interviewees could trigger their ideas and complement each other to avoid being stuck on a certain point.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings are categorized with the following themes: 1) Presentation via DST with Multimodality; 2) Co-construct Knowledge and Experiences; 3) Interaction with the Audience for Intercultural Communication.

Presentation via DST with Multimodality

The most conspicuous advantage of presentation in this study seems to be the multimodality mode on the digital platform compared with PPT or oral report only. Below are the extracts from the interview. As students illustrated “It is so much fun to choose Chinese music as the background of my story. After I presented it in class, and my peers said that my sentences were too long and the music was too vibrating, I summarized my story more briefly with light music and put it on YouTube. The immediate response from the audience was positive and it makes me proud” (S1). “My family and friends enjoy my videos and forward my videos to their friends via Facebook and Instagram etc. They like my condensed words and the suing music which suits my story” (S2). “At first, I was not sure if I could do it well, but after doing the videos together with my mates for several episodes, it becomes quite simple and easy to make. I can add pictures and photos and edit myself”.

Multimodality promoted flexibility and diversity in presentation style, which is also revealed in Yu and Zadorozhnyy’s (2021) research which claimed that the application of digital technologies provides students with new ways of presenting their ideas and thoughts. The integration of in-class presentations and technological affordances enabled students to create a presentation by building on the strengths of the utilized digital affordances and to demonstrate their speaking skills in the best light. Multimodality is reckoned as a useful tool for both language skills and intercultural competence. It offers a combination of input modes including auditory and visual input and output. Apart from dynamic imagery input and output, on-screen texts can also play a part in comprehension.

Another advantage of DST on digital platforms compared with PPT or oral presentation in class is that students can revise and edit before completion. Because students are aware that their DST on YouTube can reach a larger audience, they put more effort into producing their videos. S5 commented, “I record several times for each DST and I can see my progress. At first, I had to stop after a few sentences to correct my mistakes in pronunciation and in word choices, etc. Later, I could say more sentences and paragraphs without stopping until I am happy with the tones, intonations, vocabulary, and sentence structures. It is a learning process, and I can see my progress by watching the videos again and again”. S6 pointed out that “the digital form of presentation allows us to re-record the presentation several times until we are satisfied with what we produced”. S4 supported this position by stating that although she is confident in front of the class, she still made a lot of effort by revising it again and again before she submitted it on YouTube because she wanted it to be perfect. This marked difference between the two presentation modalities that students worked more deliberately on their presentations, and, therefore, they had more opportunities to practice their language skills. Further comparative analysis between the DST and the drafted PPT presentations in class revealed that DST on digital platforms was more consistent and concise in its explanations, produced fewer grammatical mistakes, and sounded more confident.

It was also noted that the students, who pre-recorded their videos, demonstrated more skills in regulating their voice volume, intonation, and the rhythm of speech. One of the obvious gains in language improvement is that students can use web popular words such as 网友 网红 网民 粉丝 涨粉 which won applaud from the Chinese students. Language is but one of the resources to make meaning of, considering different non-verbal signs that contribute to the construction of the meanings of the text. Students nowadays no longer just use one mode without understanding the effect of all modes of communication that are co-present in any text. Students use culturally available semiotic resources in each situation. Each resource offers different potentials for meaning making, and when making signs, a person brings together and connects available resources that are most appropriate to express the meanings they wish to create.

Rehearsals, revisions, and corrections are examples of learning procedures that students went through, and the usefulness of the process was noticed by students to a greater extent. Some students stressed the number of repetitions and rehearsals in which they were involved during the preparation and video production stages but felt worthwhile when they see their final production. In Amgott's (2020) study, students' reflections also showed how the video on digital platforms helped students to leverage multiple modes to express their linguistic, cultural, and emotional experiences. Students' engagement in producing their own videos had a positive impact on their language improvement.

Also, students' motivation in producing their videos seemed to be stronger than that in PPT or oral presentation only. As S1 commented, "Last semester, what I learned was from textbooks, which means formal Chinese, but after watching internet celebrities' DST, and after making my own videos, I see language learning can be fun". S2 echoed "Learning has never been so much fun. The internet celebrities' jokes make me laugh, and afterward, when I think about it, I can tell that there is something behind the story that is worth digesting. Misunderstanding not only happens with colors, but also in other areas such as modesty and showing off". "I think what I am doing is as good as the internet celebrities if not better because I have friends who can make a better effect with background pictures, suitable music, and use artifacts". These comments reflect the digital affordance among the young generation, who can make good use of digital media for better effects which motivates them to do more and better.

Motivation as a multidimensional construct needs to be accounted for in every learning environment to ensure learner achievement (Toste et al., 2020). Motivation in learning has an essential role in the learning process. If the interest in learning is low, it can affect student learning success. Videos as a medium can increase student interest in learning Chinese. The integration of multimodality increases learning motivation and engagement on the part of learners.

Even though multimodality has improved students' presentation skills in terms of a digital platform, revision, and motivation, different voices are also heard, e.g., "When I was focusing on my audience in the classroom, suddenly some bullet-screen comments appear, or a critical comment comes from the zoom. This can be embarrassing because some criticisms are sharp, and I cannot give an immediate response" (S6). This is because the teaching mode was hybrid this year. This reminds us that we need to train students to prepare for potential questions from different aspects because in the workplace after they graduate, they should have the skill to think from all aspects of their presentation to be able to deal with unprepared situations.

In educational settings, students using different modes grants unlimited opportunities to practice their 21st-century skills by managing multimodality resources (Hafner, 2014). Among possible options to integrate multiple modes as a foundation for developing students' language skills, the conjunction of modalities can be fully emphasized, as multimodality has reached a 'qualitatively new level, as reflected in students' videos, e.g., contextual information, visuals (e.g., face expressions), intonation, and so forth are all used to extract and build meaning, which echoes Bateman's (2022) call that multimodality should become an increasingly effective form of engagement with signifying practices.

Co-Construct Knowledge and Experiences

In this study, students performed strong teamwork in making their own videos for sharing new knowledge and experience in promoting perceived individual student and group engagement and how these interact with group functioning. It contributes to understanding by incorporating the concept of collective, or collaborative engagement. Students' videos provide an avenue for language and intercultural learning, both through the content of the videos and through the co-construction of knowledge in the act of commenting.

Students' own videos in this study illustrate that one of the attractive ways to facilitate idea communication is DST, through which students improve their critical thinking skills by contemplating how to optimize diverse materials (digital images, texts, and audio narration) for better audience engagement (Stork, 2020). Co-constructing knowledge when students are engaged in challenging

tasks requires greater involvement and cooperation, including creatively producing their videos in digital format. In this study, each student contributing with a specific skill is credited with higher engagement in interactive and mixed-reality learning tasks perceived by the students, suggesting the importance of perseverance and engagement in accomplishing the video-making tasks. Such a concrete experience was embodied by the students' purposeful image selecting, storyline drafting, and narration recording. During the DST presentation in class, students could comment on the preparation, making, and presentation processes, specifically contemplating whether their presentation effectively communicated the meaning of their stories to peer classmates. Peer students gave spontaneous and constructive feedback such as some images could be replaced by real photos, story plots could be a bit more suspending for curiosity, and pronunciation as well as intonation while narrating the story needed to be more accurate. During the process of presenting their videos and explaining them to the whole class, they could pause, rewind and refer to the point and make it clear and convincing for the presenter and for other students as well.

Initially, some students expressed anxiety because they were scared and afraid of not being skillful in technology or feel embarrassed if not good enough. But students were friendly and constructive, as some suggested making the DST more impressive by 'paying more attention to the volume of sound and brightness in color, and together they discussed the wording and editing. After the teamwork where students contribute different skills in producing the videos, they feel that their friendship strengthened. "We benefit a lot from our teamwork, e.g., in my team, a friend is good at photography. He can pick up the best angle for a picture and then we use it as background, and the audience can get indications from the picture. One friend is good at wording. We brainstorm ideas and he can finalize the most precise and suitable words. We bring in different kinds of skills to make the product better than anyone else who does it alone". Teamwork and effective communication are 21st-century skills that graduates must master and they will use them in the workplace after they graduate. This learning experience consolidates Kolb's (2015) notion that "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p 49).

Being part of a learning community provided students with a highly social, personalized learning experience. When individuals share a community, they often go beyond their given course space to interact through social media and with other communication tools to become colleagues as they build their careers (Shearer et al, 2020). Social interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and the construction of new knowledge are the fundamental activities of language learning. In this community, students can bring their language and cultural perspectives, experience, and knowledge to each other and form bonds around a shared learning community. Learner support plays a critical role. Student retention, motivation, academic achievement, satisfaction, engagement, and success all hinge on learners knowing that they are supported. Ideally learning communities include voices of diverse learners with different expertise and different experiences. Learners with diverse levels of competence learn from one another. Each learner has unique knowledge, needs, experiences, culture, and expectations that, when shared, can broaden others' perspectives and knowledge bases while they themselves reciprocally benefit from others. A learning community of students can provide a venue for students' sociocultural learning by exposing them to a broad population of other learners.

The learning process was fun and interesting, as videos are an interesting tool to provide students with opportunities to develop their language skills when producing them. The mini video experience in adapting professional technologies for the purposes of language learning facilitates the generation of several pedagogical implications for further studies.

"In today's internet-connected environment, to be influential, I need to find a way to promote knowledge, competence, and abilities in my chosen interest". Students' co-construct knowledge was more beneficial than doing their own PPT mode which is in line with Lee and Drajati's (2019) that both affective variables and productive digital learning facilitate language learners' willingness to communicate. The language improvement in this study is in line with Engwall and Lopes (2020),

who have shown positive effects on language learning as learners are engaged in concrete experiences related to authentic language applications.

Interaction with the Audience for Intercultural Communication

Students put their own videos on YouTube enabling them to encounter audiences from a variety of lingua-cultural backgrounds, interacting with them using multimodal and multilingual repertoires. Students interacting with audiences across cultures and borders is a way to prepare them to compete in careers both in the international and global environment. Therefore, educating learners to become intercultural speakers who can face the complexities of language and culture and take part in multicultural situations is one of the ultimate goals of language learning programs. Moreover, intercultural communication influences making learners become intercultural speakers who have intercultural communicative competence.

Students feel motivated and engaged when they saw the live comments just a few minutes after they put their videos in YouTube. Students are more likely to be engaged when in an authentic learning context, especially if with a similar learning experience. Students moved around in their surrounding contexts and created meaningful sentences by recording their own videos with their mobile devices.

“Before when we were doing presentations in class, we could see students’ facial expressions to get an idea of what they think, but now we are facing the real world, which means anyone can make comments and we must be prepared to answer”. Interacting with the audience facilitates frequent and meaningful idea exchanges, providing more authentic and engaging learning experiences, as intercultural communication deals with understanding others’ language and cultural backgrounds to create appropriate and effective communication.

The dynamics of learner engagement and language practices with the audience reinforced Benson’s (2015) suggestion that YouTube videos, a product of media globalization, act as a trigger for language and intercultural learning in comments’ (p. 89). Benson highlighted the importance of YouTube videos attracting multilingual language users globally and creating a space for them to comment on issues related to language and culture. Bhatia (2020) suggests that the comments on YouTube enable ‘the emergence of a creative, semiotic, and virtual space (p19). Videos on YouTube provide an avenue for language and intercultural learning, both through the content of the videos and through the co-construction of knowledge in the act of commenting.

YouTube videos afford the use of multimodal resources that goes beyond the use of language. In the process of making their own videos, students draw on a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources to perform multicultural activities, aligning with and distancing themselves from various cultural positions to perform different actions.

The findings in this study highlight the benefits and challenges in using internet celebrities’ DST as stimuli to encourage students to make their own DST on the digital platform for language practice and intercultural communication. As the results show, students explicitly commented on the enjoyment of learning in this mode, indicating that videos played a role in encouraging students to reflect on intercultural communication aspects. Students’ initiative of making videos is welcomed and can be applied to different contexts. Further, while previous studies report some teachers’ resistance to multimodal practices (Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016), internet celebrity videos can be used for multimodality. Due to the visual and entertaining nature of comics, it is an appropriate classroom material source to use for exploring multimodal aspects from both the student and teacher perspectives.

To answer RQ1: What impact can the internet celebrity’s short videos have on students’ language learning? Students were fully inspired to the degree that they produced their own videos for language practice and intercultural communication. To answer RQ2: What effects can students’ own DST videos have on intercultural communication competence? The answer is that students interacted directly with the audience from different cultural backgrounds, including Chinese native speakers, for real intercultural communication.

CONCLUSION

Students making their own videos shows promise as an inherently social and interactive learning task to provide authentic language practice. In turn, these attributes provide a stimulating vehicle for student engagement that can promote learning and satisfaction.

This study contributes to an understanding of how students' initiatives of making videos featured integrated language learning and intercultural communication, which is constructed not only discursively by the interaction among peers in the classroom but more importantly multimodally with the real audience on digital platforms. Drawing on multimodality and DST as methodological approaches, this paper firstly contributes to an interdisciplinary, integrated framework that addresses the multimodal and multicultural aspects of the digital world. Secondly, it contributes to the literature that students' language production relies on multimodality systems: a verbal system based on language and a visual system based on images and sound effects. Third, this research also offers practical implications for language teaching practitioners and students looking for actionable insight on how to improve their language practice for intercultural communication. The insights gained from this study can benefit other similar programs and other language teaching contexts. Future studies could compare language use in informal and formal presentations. Future research could consider other digital platforms and social media such as TikTok and WeChat which provide a different range of affordances for individuals to practice language for intercultural communication.

Despite the benefits of making their own DST in multimodality, a few concerns need to be taken into consideration for future research. The first is that the students in this study are final-year degree students who are comparatively strong in terms of language skills, and skillful in digital technology, and other methods may be needed for the population of lower levels such as beginners or lower-intermediate level language learners. Future studies could include participants learning other languages to validate the findings of the current study. Furthermore, more platforms for DST could be included to strengthen learning experiences. By engaging students in their own initiated video production, students could eventually be empowered to be creative and committed in their future workplace.

Language educators are advised to build on the digital affordances available in specific contexts. The experience of this project might be also aligned with the constraints that educators experience around the world. The findings of this project do not suggest that video presentations might completely displace in-class presentations, although they portray how the implementation of advanced technological means might help in adapting and rethinking teaching practices and assignments in alignment with online mode realities and through using everyday devices.

This study suggests possibilities for introducing appropriate forms of action or intervention into teaching multimodal design projects to better prepare language learners to meet workplace multimodal literacy requirements.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this publication declare there is no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Abdel-Aziz, S., Galal, Y. S., Al Hanafy, S. H., Ghamrawy, M., Shaheen, D. S. M. (2022). Digital storytelling: a video-based approach for engaging university students in health education. *Journal of Medical Sciences*, 10(e), 33-39.
- Amgott, N. (2020). L2 multimodal composing abroad: Remixing languages, cultures, and identities. *Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 12(3), 1–22. doi:10.5070/L20047045
- Andayani, R. (2019). Engaging English student teachers in a digital storytelling project for young learners. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, (pp. 243). IOP Science. doi:10.1088/1755-1315/243/1/012066
- Azer, S. A., Alkhawajah, N. M., & Alshamlan, Y. A. (2022). Critical evaluation of YouTube videos on colostomy and ileostomy: Can these videos be used as learning resources? *Patient Education and Counseling*, 105(1), 383–389. doi:10.1016/j.pec.2021.05.023 PMID:34045092
- Azis, Y. A., and Hu. (2020). Collaborative Digital Storytelling-based Task for EFL Writing Instruction: Outcomes and Perceptions. *The Journal of AsiaTEFL*, 17(2), 562–579.
- Bateman, J. A. (2022). Multimodality, where next? Some meta-methodological considerations. *Multimodality & Society*, 2(1) 41–63. journals.sagepub.com/home/mas10.1177/26349795211073043
- Batsila, M., & Tsihouridis, C. (2016). “Once upon a Time, there was...” A Digital World for Junior High School Learners. [iJET]. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 11(03), 42. doi:10.3991/ijet.v11i03.5370
- Benson, P. (2015). Commenting to learn: Evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on YouTube videos. [Google Scholar]. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(193), 88–105. <http://lt.msu.edu/issues/october2015/benson.pdf>
- Bhatia, A. (2020). Vlogging and the discursive co-construction of ethnicity and beauty. *World Englishes*, 39(1), 7–21. doi:10.1111/weng.12442
- Canale, G., & Fasciolo, M. F. (2022). Multimodality, ethnography and the English language teaching textbook: negotiating Heteronormativity in visual representations. In Xiong, Fen and Hu (eds), *Cultural Knowledge and Values in English Language Teaching Materials: Multimodal Representations and Stakeholders*, 163-181. Springer. doi:10.1007/978-981-19-1935-0_9
- Chen, C.-M., & Sun, Y.-C. (2012). Assessing the effects of different multimedia materials on emotions and learning performance for visual and verbal style learners. *Computers & Education*, 59(4), 1273–1285. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2012.05.006
- Chiang, M. (2020). Exploring the Effects of Digital Storytelling: A Case Study of Adult L2 Writers in Taiwan. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 8(1), 65–82. doi:10.22492/ije.8.1.04
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (2016). *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Learning by Design*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cross, J. (2011). Comprehending news videotexts: The influence of the visual content. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(2), 44–68. 10125/44251
- Delbaere, M., Michael, B., & Phillips, B. J. (2021). Social media influencers: A route to brand engagement for their followers. *Psychology and Marketing*, 38(1), 101–112. doi:10.1002/mar.21419
- Djafarova, E., and Trofimenko, O. (2019). ‘Instafamous’-credibility and self-presentation of *micro-celebrities on social media*. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432–1446.
- Dressen-Hammouda, D., & Wigham, C. (2022). Evaluating multimodal literacy: Academic and professional interactions around student-produced instructional video tutorials. *System*, 105, 1–16. doi:10.1016/j.system.2022.102727
- Durbahn, M., Rodgers, M., & Peters, E. (2020). The relationship between vocabulary and viewing comprehension. *System*, 88, 1–38. doi:10.1016/j.system.2019.102166
- Engwall, O., & Lopes, J. (2020). Interaction and collaboration in robot-assisted language learning for adults. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1–37.
- Filieri, R., Lin, Z., Pino, G., Alguezaui, S., & Inversini, A. (2021). The role of visual cues in eWOM on consumers’ behavioural intention and decisions. *Journal of Business Research*, 135, 663–675. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.06.055

Gyogi, E., & Lee, V. (2022). Multimodality in translation: A look into EFL and JSL classrooms. *Language Awareness*, 31(2), 232–249. doi:10.1080/09658416.2021.2023557

Hafner, C. A. (2014). Embedding digital literacies in English language teaching: Students' digital video projects as multimodal ensembles. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 655–685. doi:10.1002/tesq.138

Ho, W. Y. J. (2022). Coming here you should speak Chinese: The multimodal construction of interculturality in YouTube videos. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(6), 662–680. doi:10.1080/14708477.2022.2056610

INews. (2022). Number of students from China at UK universities rises by 50% over five years. *INews*. <https://inews.co.uk/news/education/number-china-chinese-students-uk-universities-rises-50-five-years-1421737>.

Jiang, L., & Ren, W. (2020). Digital Multimodal Composing in L2 Learning: Ideologies and Impact. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 1–16. doi:10.1080/15348458.2020.1753192

Koc, M. (2011). Let's make a movie: Investigating pre-service teachers' reflections on using video-recorded role-playing cases in Turkey. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 95–106. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.07.006

Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Pearson.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. Arnold.

Lee, J. S., & Drajiati, N. A. (2019). Affective variables and informal digital learning of English: Keys to the willingness to communicate in a second language. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(5), 168–182. doi:10.14742/ajet.5177

Lee, P.-J., Liu, Y.-T., & Tseng, W.-T. (2021). One size fits all? In search of the desirable caption display for second language learners with different caption reliance in listening comprehension. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(3), 400–430. doi:10.1177/1362168819856451

Lim, N. Z., Zakaria, A., & Aryadoust, A. (2021). A systematic review of digital storytelling in language learning in adolescents and adults. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(5), 6125–6155. doi:10.1007/s10639-021-10861-0

Lin, L., & Atkinson, R. K. (2011). Using animations and visual cueing to support the learning of scientific concepts and processes. *Computers & Education*, 56(3), 650–658. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.10.007

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 78–73. doi:10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Lu, X., Xie, Y., Zhang, B., & Li, K. (2022). Supply–Demand Docking Joint Decision of Cross-border E-commerce under the Influence of Internet Celebrity. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, 25(1), 54–82. doi:10.1080/1097198X.2021.2020515

Martinez, L., Gimenes, M., & Lambert, E. (2022). Entertainment Video Games for Academic Learning: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 60(5), 1–27. doi:10.1177/07356331211053848

Mayer, R. E., Fiorella, L., & Stull, A. (2020). Five ways to increase the effectiveness of instructional video. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 68(3), 837–852. doi:10.1007/s11423-020-09749-6

Oakley, G., Wildy, H., & Berman, Y. (2018). Multimodal digital text creation using tablets and open-ended creative apps to improve the literacy learning of children in early childhood classrooms. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 20(4), 655–679. doi:10.1177/1468798418779171

Orús, C., Barlés, M. J., Belanche, D., Casaló, L., Fraj, E., & Gurrea, R. (2016). The effects of learner-generated videos for YouTube on learning outcomes and satisfaction. *Computers & Education*, 95, 254–269. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2016.01.007

Perez, M. M. (2022). Second or foreign language learning through watching audio-visual input and the role of on-screen text. *Language Teaching*, 55(2), 163–192. doi:10.1017/S0261444821000501

Rojek, C. (2016) Frontierism: “‘The Frontier thesis”, affect, and the category of achieved celebrity. In: P. D. Marshall and S. Redmond (eds) *A Companion to Celebrity*, 355–370. Wiley Blackwell.

- Shearer, R. L., Aldemir, T., Hitchcock, J., Resig, J., Driver, J., & Kohler, M. (2020). What students want: A vision of a future online learning experience grounded in distance education theory. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 34(1), 36–52. doi:10.1080/08923647.2019.1706019
- Smith, B. E., Pacheco, M. B., & Khorosheva, M. (2021). Emergent Bilingual Students and Digital Multimodal Composition: A Systematic Review of Research in Secondary Classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 33–52. doi:10.1002/rq.298
- Statista (2022). Total number of pets in China from 2016 to 2020 with an estimate for 2021. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1288733/china-pet-population/#:~:text=Number%20of%20pets%20in%20China%202016%2D2021&text=The%20pet%20population%20in%20China,exceed%20200%20million%20in%202021>. Retrieved on 26 July, 2022.
- Stork, M. G. (2020). Supporting twenty-first century competencies using robots and digital storytelling. *Journal of Formative Design in Learning*, 4(1), 1–8.
- Tan, X., Han, S., & Zhong, R. (2022). Evaluating the attractiveness factors of internet celebrity products using survey data. *Cross-Cultural Design: Applications in Business, Communication, Health, Well-being, and Inclusiveness*, 68–81. Springer.
- Tarinkulu, F. (2021). Students' perceptions about the effects of collaborative digital storytelling on writing skills. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1–16. doi:10.1080/09588221.2020.1774611
- Toste, J. R., Didion, L., Peng, P., Filderman, M. J., & McClelland, A. M. (2020). A meta-analytic review of the relations between motivation and reading achievement for K–12 students. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(3), 420–456. doi:10.3102/0034654320919352
- van der M., W. (2010). Assessing Text-Picture Correspondence in Television News: The Development of a New Coding Scheme. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(3), 483–498.
- Wang, D., & Li, D. (2022). Exploring multiliteracies and multimodal pedagogies in Chinese language teaching: A teacher's one-year action learning circle. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Teaching and Learning*, 12(1), 1–19. doi:10.4018/IJCALLT.298704
- Ware, P. (2017). Technology, new literacies, and language learners. In C. A. Chappelle & S. Sauro (Eds.), *The Handbook of Technology and Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 265–277). doi:10.1002/9781118914069.ch18
- Xu, J., & Zhang, G. (2020). The rise and fall of the 'king of hanmai'—MC Tianyou. *Celebrity Studies*, 1–6. doi:10.1080/19392397.2020.1783747
- Yang, Y. C., Chen, Y., & Hung, H. (2020). Digital storytelling as an interdisciplinary project to improve students' English speaking and creative thinking. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(4), 840–862. doi:10.1080/09588221.2020.1750431
- Yi, Y., & Angay-Crowder, T. (2016). Multimodal Pedagogies for Teacher Education in TESO. *TESOL*, 50(4), 988–998. doi:10.1002/tesq.326
- Yu, B., & Zadorozhnyy, A. (2021). Developing students' linguistic and digital literacy skills through the use of multimedia presentations. *ReCALL*, 34(1), 95–109. doi:10.1017/S0958344021000136

Amily Guenier's research interest is in communication, including intercultural communication, business communication, health communication and interpersonal communication in the healthcare and higher education context. She is currently the Chinese lecturer in Lancaster University. She lectured at the London School of Economics and Political Science, teaching intercultural business Chinese communication at executive courses and intercultural communication courses to senior members in ICBC, providing business communication training to Bank of England, BP, EY, HSBC etc. before that she has been teaching undergraduate, postgraduate in the University of Manchester. She has published widely on peer-reviewed journals. Her PhD thesis is on enhancing Chinese philosophy and health practice in the 21 century. Amily has been the student supervisor of Study China programme for 7 years. The Study China Programme is funded by the Government department for Business, Innovation and Skills. From July 2011 to September 2017, Amily Guenier was supervisor of the UK Study China Programme, which was funded by the British government with £2.2 million.