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# Teach like a Video Journalist Thinks

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## ABSTRACT

*The author reflects on how video journalist training and education producer methods can inform video as a core driver for teaching excellence. The article draws on personal experience of making radio teaching resources for BBC Education. The author also has recent experience as a video journalist, and suggests that practice not theory, and the craft of making teaching resources is still alive and well today. In particular, the latest techniques used by backpack video journalists may illustrate the way forward in education video. Video is now easier to manage, is a hands-on practical activity, fits the individuality of the lecturer, and provides a personal experience for students. Online systems cannot deliver the learning experience students expect in higher education without good content. Lecturers can create their own video content with the quality to inform, educate, and engage. They will also improve their everyday teaching, because the thinking, planning, and execution are inherently educational. Future research ideas are outlined.*

**Keywords:** *video for learning, online content design, academic writing style.*

## Introduction

Good practical ideas for organization and communication in teaching can be learnt by the lecturer from the way video journalists work. Video journalist must tell their story in minutes, think, write, and focus on the key story, even present it to camera and do all the work on their own. Lecturers know the feeling, though their own aim is to know the

finest detail of their subject, be able to talk for hours, and write at length. Both lecturer and video journalist have audiences that demand to be informed and educated. Both must engage and keep their audiences interested, because once bored they stop paying attention and switch off.

Lecturers general use video in four ways to achieve teaching objectives; to create video learning resources especially for online websites, to teach students online with video, and to cap-

ture live lectures for long-life recordings. There are other applications, such as to record and present research results for papers and personal professional development, and to assess students. The methods and the technologies are important, but only if the video content informs, educates, and entertains the audience. The craft of achieving these three objectives is integral to resources that enhance learning. These principles can be achieved in the hands of lecturers, but that means learning the craft, not the theory. It is hands-on, practical, and physical. It is a whole-body activity.

## Background

**A** lecturer interested in video for internet learning may have an uphill task. There are good reasons why. There are practical problems such as shortage of time to learn new skills. There are also the conflicting priorities of teaching and research. Time spent developing teaching methods can affect research output. To be a main stream media performer can be a hurdle to an academic career. Mainstream media appearances are by the most senior staff with recognized authoritative published standing. Younger enthusiastic popularizers must tread with care. Academic staffs, who work with professional film crews, become aware of the value of recording, and presentation and communication methods that work well in academic life. There is little incentive to share these methods with colleagues. A similar situation in the United States is known as the Sagan Effect; Carl Sagan was the superstar sci-

ence popularizer who lost out on prestigious appointments in the 1960s and 1990s. Martinez-Conde, Powell, and Macknick, (2016) report an unsuspecting high-quality researcher recently received unintentional acclaim in the press and online TED only to find applications for research funding refused and very unfavorable anonymous review of his papers.

There is disinclination to appear in front of a camera. It is not part of serious academic life. These attitudes are changing: there is a determination to use media, but in an individualized way. *We do things differently*: an approach that is logical, because the professional acceptable method to assimilate new teaching ideas is through research. Theory must inform practice. It is a lonely path, for the awards are for individual endeavor. New discoveries come with career rewards for papers and recognition of teaching excellence. The process of creating resources for their own students is a challenge, and an exciting, fulfilling personal learning journey. However, there is also much unnecessary reinventing of the wheel.

Research into new online learning technologies has value. But it is the experience of the author that the principles behind the quality of creative content for the technologies were solved by the BBC Radio and Television education broadcast department staff long ago. For example, PowerPoint and Keynote are only digital versions of the analogue BBC Radiovision Filmstrips which began in 1953 with full screen photos; color graphics; stereo sound on

all subjects, which used a wide range of techniques of script design; and use of drama and storytelling. And for that most discerning and demanding of audiences—children—the library at the Institute of Education, University College, London retains the archive and is keen to publicize its use for research (Howarth, 2015, December 8). The departments were closed in 1992 and a green plaque erected on the wall of 1 Portland Place in 2008.

The recent trend in video journalism is the backpack video journalist. The definition of a backpack journalist is someone who can do the work of the large broadcast production team. In the backpack, fits the video camera, lights, sound recording gear recording and the laptop with the software and transmission logistics to communicate to the broadcaster or social media. Also the ease of use of the equipment allows the journalist to master all the skills of interviewer, producer, lighting, sound crew, and camera person. The author believes backpack journalist is the model for the lecturer who wants to use video for learning. All the skills are concentrated in one person's endeavor, so methods are clearer for the lecturer to experience the process of making the short video productions for news and current affairs. It was possible for one person to create complete education radio broadcasts on location in the 1970s, a specialty developed by the author. Print publications accompanied all broadcasts, so it was possible for children to have in front of them photographs and graphics to illustrate every sound broadcast. The video journalist most surely carries

on these craft skills. Though technology now allows everyone to be a broadcaster, how to use it to advantage is what counts.

## Context

**T***each like a video journalist thinks* as an idea that developed during the making of learning resources from lectures and workshops for colleagues in the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CALT) at University College, London (UCL), between 2011 and 2016. The consultancy was to film lectures for online teaching resources. There were teaching resources that staff wanted to create to demonstrate specific examples of quality teaching as well as a project using online videos to explain and promote staff involvement in teacher accreditation, with the UK Higher Education Academy fellowship program.

## Filming a Workshop

**W**orkshops for teaching staff are an opportunity to record the evidence of good teaching, to draw others into the fold. Short edits of the session videos capture the atmosphere and highlights. The long edits feature main themes, presentation of participants, and summary discussions.

Standard video journalist techniques use a radio mic on the main speaker, and the rifle mic to pick up participants comments. Filming wide, close, very close, and over the shoulder

shots of the activity keeping the camera running all the time provides a wide range of choices to cut together with the computer screen display and the course leader to create a stimulating teaching resource. Participants forget the presence of the camera. The process is exhilarating. To listen to the leader in one ear and the participants in the other, to follow and capture the key educational elements, is very satisfying. It is what video journalists do to create a story with impact.

### **Lecturers Creating Video**

**A** research project was commissioned by the Head of Media to scope requirements for video resource provision. These were to include a dedicated server for staff and student to exchange video resources in a secure environment and is now up and running. Later, real-time face-to-face interaction will be rolled out. The focus is the way lecturers used video with their students. The plan is to integrate the server with various levels of lecturer provision, from easy to use equipment, with good sound, a video recording corner in each department—all that is needed is a corner chair and interesting background for an interview, editing suites, and specialized support for top level documentaries. The base standard facility for a lecturer is to be a computer with webcam, essential editing software and fast access to the server.

The range of evidence made in video case studies revealed how each subject area had its own preference for

video use, based on the subject matter. Geography, for example, used video for learning resources connected with field trips. In general, lecturers who are early adopters are exploring the technology using any equipment to hand, and having a good experience with very positive results. Professional production standards are not expected, but that is not a priority to either the staff or students. In fact it is an advantage: lecturers mentioned they did not want to compete with the professionals, while students were quite happy for the lecturer to be amateurish, if the learning experience is worthwhile.

The research includes advice for filming. These are practical ways to save time and effort, and ideas to increase the educational impact. High production values, documentary approaches, complex schemes and long-term projects are not on the list of priorities. Short, fast, stripped down teaching components, economic storytelling is the overall theme for future developments in video. These suggestions were accompanied with as a series of “How to...” videos as a basic introduction for staff and students. They include advice for lecturers making videos for their students using webcams. The software is called iShowU Instant (Clayton, 2013), which was used to demonstrate techniques such as editing. Editing video is an issue for a lecturer. The software looks complicated and can be time consuming. In fact using software like the MAC iMovie or PC Windows Movie Maker is very easy. There are many Apps for a smart phone that cost very little. Experiments were made, based

on the research, to identify the critical path to enable lecturers to make video work with minimum frustration. Essential messages are to suggest small projects, short in length to achieve just one teaching objective rather than a major scheme for a whole course. The software can be explored while quickly producing a usable product. Association with familiar technologies helps. For example, video editing interfaces are really nothing more than PowerPoint, but with all the various views at once on one screen. As a result, the lecturer can quickly assimilate the flow of input and output of content across the interface. The next task is to understand why and how all database files, original source video and output video should be kept within one folder. This information will resolve many of the initial frustrations and errors. The third principle is that long recordings very quickly take up computer memory and file storage. Either the software or the computer or both grind to a halt. Therefore, long lectures and big projects are to be avoided until higher specifications of resources are available. iShowU with its easy-to-plan-and-execute show and tell method-enabled quick testing of the effectiveness and the reconfiguring of the explanations.

Also the author experimented with a method to quickly create a range of media resources into a video production. Drag into the iShowU Instant recording area, from the screen desktop, prepared drawings, photographs in their own software, PowerPoint slideshows, or play another video input from an external video source such as

an iPhone. In a short time, rough and ready but quite complex presentations can be created with the lecturer voiceover. They might be edited later in a more advanced program such as Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro X. Both of these programs are used to make major movie productions, but are inexpensive to purchase and quick and easy to use. For example, a powerful computer and large amounts of storage are soon needed to load and edit a full 2 hour lecture. The trick is only to load into the editing software just the sections that are needed to get the main messages across.

There seems a great deal that can be done to improve the whole production process for lecturers, from setting up the room for video to begin working on an effective presentation style, by applying the video journalist's tricks in an education context. These ideas were explored in workshops for teaching staff.

## Online Student Video Feedback

A further opportunity occurred to demonstrate video methods that may improve the quality of learning. A new group of students were just beginning their course at Middlesex University with the author. The student tutor group, were 16 B.A. (Hons) Education student teachers starting their final year thesis which is called a dissertation in this particular course.

The problem is to improve academic writing styles. Students have limited experience of academic writing and also most speak several languages besides English, which generates a

separate set of instructional considerations. Support allocation time is limited and travel to meet individual students is complex to organize because of their varied timetables. The normal solution is multiple emails and Word attachments marked up and returned, and time consuming repetition of advice because students find it difficult to understand the comments being made on a marked paper.

The option to use online webcam contact face to face had been rejected due to limited benefit because the text is the focus of attention. But iShowU Instant, the Mac software used to create the “How to ...” videos for advice to lecturers using video in the UCL research project was inexpensive and one of many available similar kinds of software for different platforms. The software was much more flexible that integrated programs inside the university software system. iShowU Instant grabs a portion of the computer screen, which can be pre-selected. The webcam can also capture a separate view of the presenter. This camera can be switched to fill the selected screen area or shrunk to a corner of the screen view, or removed all together. The content of the computer screen is then revealed.

The interesting aspect for the educationalist is that the software can be used to enable students to receive a personal video from their tutor. Students download their personal video from an email link. They see their dissertation drafts edited, just a few lines, with text highlights and circles appearing upon clicking the mouse while hearing the

reason why changes are required. A few lines need to be corrected because the pattern of errors runs through the entire draft. The personal video can be watched again to encourage reflection and positive action to improve writing style. In addition, short video resources on the tutor’s website dealt with aspects of academic writing. Some of the videos use student examples to illustrate problems.

**Student satisfaction survey.** A student satisfaction survey gathered qualitative and quantitative responses presented as a conference poster (Howarth, 2016). Here are two examples from the online student survey:

Q2: Can you describe the experience of watching your writing being edited?

- It was really helpful as Mike would be speaking whilst doing this as if he was showing show I can do it myself for next time cause he would also say why things were being edited so it didn’t feel like my work was being undermined.
- The video enabled me as a student to edit my work to the better, which was a wonderful experience.
- Thought it was very useful.
- It made the changes easier to understand and it was not confusing.
- It was very helpful as I could make notes whilst the video was playing as to what needed to be corrected and what parts were good.

- Very easy to understand. Clear.
- I found it easy but I would prefer the edited [sic] to be done a bit slower.

and ...

Q14: Please give suggestions to your tutor to improve the way video can be used by next year's students?

- More videos and less group sessions.
- The tutor can maybe make a video on all stages of the dissertation chapter such as, chapter 1, 2, and
- Allow the videos to be accessed by other devices.
- Use a different platform to upload videos to.
- Give more variety of video relevant to the topic we focus on.

In general, the students gave very positive feedback. However, they wanted more variety and different methods of delivery. Personal observation suggests that time spent on feedback support toward the end of the year was reduced. The reason may be because students find they can understand instructions and have the ability to rerun the videos. More time can be spent on advice about flow of the argument. The evidence exists in the videos for analysis. The experience of the tutor was not part of the research. However, the video method felt like the tutor's time was saved.

**Online video feedback saves tutor time.** Feedback videos are around 7

minutes long. A complete cycle video production per student—planning review points, making video, and sending to student via file transfer software—can take as little as 15 minutes.

The feedback comments are about formal academic English writing style and the flow of the argument. Students are very accurate about the relevance of their content. The main subject of the tutor feedback is dealing with the effects of the average student who uses informal spoken English that hides the main argument they wish to express. Students write very long sentences. This is because students attempt to complete the argument string; A therefore B, because of C, in one stream of multiple verbs within one sentence. In addition, students generally begin sentences with prepositions. A preposition adds extra complexity and confusion. The reader has to search for the main subject—usually in the middle of a four line sentence. A third aspect of the problem is that a sequence of sentences does not have necessary cohesion: students do not have the range of linking words, which give the flow to an argument. Students are limited in their vocabulary to *moreover*, and *furthermore*. They do not have access to signposts that sequence, illustrate, contrast, or qualify and perhaps that is why they use prepositions.

**Plans for the second year of research.** Online video support developments are beginning right away in the 2016–17 academic year. The first objective is to use the dissertation proposal form to teach standard English right at the beginning

of the year, and put an end to the informal spoken English notes and lists that the form filling encourages. Videos from last year are available on the author's website. These seem to have little effect. Personal videos to each student give much more powerful feedback on first drafts that show how students can write short simple sentences right away. The effect is that a jumble of draft ideas becomes a formal plan of action that is well-ordered and easy to understand. Students take confidence in seeing the comparison videos of their notes and final well-structured written English.

The next task for the student is to write a letter to a school for permission to do their primary research. Students are required to take note of their new writing skills acquired in the proposal form and transfer them to letter writing. Most students have little or no experience in letter writing. The sample letter in the student guide book was ignored by the students in the first year. A typical opening "My name is ... ." and a long sentence giving a string of information, in an outpouring of conversational style writing. This year, students will be required to analyze why the sample letter follows a strict formal structure. The aim will be to demonstrate how a short sentence of a subject verb and object, with one idea per sentence, is all that is needed to create a coherent story. Students experience an example of clean writing before they begin their main dissertation writing.

Another video will explain cohesion. The author will film a brick wall of a house, where the bricks are sen-

tences and the mortar contain the most useful academic linking words to form a strong bond of the argument. These link words will help with visualizing possible phrases. The idea may work as a visual metaphor message to help "fill the remaining gaps" in the student academic toolkit (Howarth, 2014). The students should be far more aware of their new formal writing skills by the time the first real writing task of the literature review begins: skills which they now acquire at the beginning, not the end, of the academic year.

**Video encourages reflection.** A reflective style of video content will bring together and illustrate common student errors and solutions. The aim is to overcome negative attitudes toward writing caused by form filling. Another video will ask students to compare their first and second drafts of their permission letter to identify reasons why the formal letter is now readable.

Other teaching resources structures and fast-track production methods are being trialed, currently using examples of student work such as writing a title, aim, and objective of the proposal form. The method is achieved by compiling clips from the relevant sections of the personal feedback videos to all of the students into a short narrated video.

The clips are loaded into Final Cut Pro X. The text errors and solutions are already highlighted in red, in the video clips and the dark red rings in mouse click focus the eye of the viewer. The audio of the original feedback from

the tutor works as a reminder of the original problem and solution during the edit. The comments can be heard or held back under a narration that summarizes the key teaching point. A mask darkens everything on the page except the relevant line of text, highlighting the phrase for analysis. On-screen text reinforces the key teaching point. Each clip example is separated from the other by angling the text in a different way.

These types of video resources may have a long life and can be built up over several years. Student feedback examples can inform a further round of improved support and advice. The elements of each video can be rearranged later. Once the structure is created in the editing software, the template can be used over and over again. These editing skills take time to acquire, but enable the lecturer to create quality teaching resources other than PowerPoint. Ripping through the material with an imaginary broadcast deadline adds spice to the task just as video journalists do. It is the same process seen every day used to produce the news.

## Mobile Learning

**M**obile learning is an important development, because B.A. Education students are not only engaged in part-time work, but they are also out in local schools working on their primary research. Students report that they can access and download their personal video from the author onto their smartphones. The

phones can handle large video files; but last year it was not an option. The latest ftp download provider used by the tutor also allows students to stream for a number of days for free.

There will be a trial to load up all the resources from the password protected personal website (Howarth, 1996) of the tutor, to a social media platform called Ublend created by Krohn, Nicolini, and Franklin (2016). Students will no longer need to use the complicated drop down menu system of the website, which has the advantage of a shallow menu structure with a quick overview, but is slow to use on a small smartphone screen.

Conversation with their tutor online is already an option using Skype or FaceTime. But text analysis is too difficult because of the image size. Another idea is to record audio of the conversation during the phone call to the tutor with both parties looking at the same dissertation copy. iShowU Instant screen grab software running on the tutor's office computer, will keep a record of both the audio conversation and a clear visual record of the sentence modification suggestions. The video will be loaded on to a locked area of YouTube and made available to stream privately to the student or a group through the Ublend social media software.

The personal video tutorial is a powerful tool. But the technology, as always, is not the solution. It is the way the technology is used: ways of making positive comments that engage and illustrate learning are the stuff of script-writing for educational effectiveness

and the video journalist has the practical techniques at hand. The subject, in the example of this article is academic writing. For the student, it is a learning journey from the spoken word to formal written English. It is also an exploration of brevity and clarity in language. The medium of video delivers that language in a high impact and engaging audio visual form that the student deserves to experience.

## VIDEO JOURNALIST TIPS FOR TEACHING USING VIDEO

The section consists of two parts: (1) tricks of the trade that can be applied to make web page video resources for internet learning; and (2) for webcam video used live online or to send a personal recorded video to an individual student. Here are practical ideas that work on two levels; and both change the way the lecturer teaches and makes video.

### Making a Video Resource for Students

There are two levels for making the most of these practical ideas. Either you review the ideas and try out those that can enhance your normal teaching practice, or you pick up a video camera, switch on the webcam and apply the methods for real. Personally, I believe picking up the camera is essential as it is a whole-body experience. It is a shift from being in the head to moving into the real world and being with the stu-

dent. And making learning materials is an integral part of good teaching. It is research-based learning and continuing professional development (CPD) rolled into one: a win-win scenario.

Creating an one-way webcam for students results in an unexpected humanizing, closer and enriched contact with students. Students see the lecturer as a human being. They really do experience the lecturer as talking to them personally even in a general resource video. The use of personal feedback sent to an individual student has even greater impact. Why should this be such a surprise, when we watch TV and experience a similar sensation? The answer is: a journalist is taught to use informal speech, specific eye, and body language, and it works. That is why trying professional practice might be so worthwhile if there is an impact on the quality of learning.

**Think video structure.** A good idea is to start using the software you know, but make more of its potential. You might already make video from PowerPoint or Keynote. Set your software frames to 16:9, the normal video screen proportions. The default slide size is 4:3 and slides in that size have to be individually stretched to fill the video frame, which is very time consuming. Export them at 16:9 .png files which is extra sharp; and import into your video software like iMovie. This method gives you more control of your video. Add a soundtrack using your smartphone as a sound recorder. The iPhone is superb if held in the right position close to the

face and to one side.

To plan the more complex layout of slides with video filmed on a webcam, or on a camera at a location away from the desk computer, choose View> Light Table. Watch the original sequence of slides and hear the story run through your mind. Move them around. Try a different approach. Then, put the non-essentials into another PowerPoint for a later video.

**Storyboarding.** An academic PowerPoint lecture tends to have one structure, the academic story: the aims, background, developments, and finally the key message—the results. The logic is sound, but does the story have any impact? It is often assumed that there is one story, one reality, and one timeline. But the actual timeline of your research project as it happened is different from the timeline of your research reflections and insights. The idea that you can mix these timeline structures together in a new way may come as a surprise. Once the scientific research is completed with the required impeccable methodology, try thinking like a video journalist: play around with the structure. *Start with your key discoveries.* Give the key message first. Why not use those insights and flashes of inspiration to make the results interesting using the techniques of the writer and broadcaster?

**Work out the essentials.** Think of three high points in the story, just to raise the level of engagement when the story is flagging. The high point might be a pause for demonstration by the lecturer, or a graphic. The final key message becomes a confirmation remind-

er and a moment of resolution of the opening statement. The moment will be a confirmation, reminder, and recall of the process of the journey to the final big idea. There are only seven story structures according to Booker (2004). These are, Overcoming the Monster, Rags to Riches, The Quest, Voyage and Return, Tragedy, Rebirth and Comedy. Perhaps the latter has a resonance in an academic environment “triumph over adverse circumstance, where the conflict becomes more and more confusing, but is at last made plain in a single clarifying event.” It is also worth looking at the origins of the journey (Campbell, 1988) reputed to be the inspiration for Star Wars.

The usual rule for all broadcast news is that reporters do not use the same words as those used on the screen headlines. A PowerPoint is an opportunity not to read out the same sentences on the screen, but add to those words with extra items of information. Take two bites of the information cherry to hold the attention of the audience like the professionals do. Good practice will be most evident when the video is complete: no-one wants to stare at a screen of text they cannot read. Video screen legibility requires a minimum of 24pt Sans Serif text. Use the absolute essential number of words on the screen, even if you are not making a video.

Finally, export your slides as .png files into editing software such as iMovie, Premiere, or Final Cut Pro X. Use some PowerPoint slides as placeholders and replace them with video recordings from your webcam or re-

cordings from a smartphone in teaching sessions.

**Think about time.** Aim for the video journalist's timeframe of 2–3 minutes. It may be a shock to the system as most may be familiar with half hour or 1 hour lectures, but even 10 seconds is a long time on video. Treat the lecture as a story and assume the story starts as the user clicks. Why bother with music and flashy graphics in a long title sequence? That is outdated. What grabs the viewer first is a relevant key visual image and short title in large type. Run the lecturer's voice underneath with key opening sentences that reflect the title theme. Because it only takes 4 seconds to recognize the first visual, and 10 seconds is the time viewers are reputed to wait before they stop watching, it is worth trying to make every second count.

***Planning is therefore essential.***

It may appear that everything on professional TV happens with such ease and has no relevance in an education context. But the process of fitting key information into a short time is a great discipline and the lecturer can achieve a great deal for students as a result of sharpening these skills. Just click on anything on YouTube to realize that off-the-cuff gabbling is so wasteful of time. Print out those blank six frames per page sheets in PowerPoint as a storyboard and plan your video. Time is saved, while quality and precision rule.

Instead of having one long half hour video, create five short ones, each on a specific teaching point. Video output can be achieved quickly. The learn-

ing curve will be easier and corrections can be made in the soundtrack in less time. Mix and match elements from video content in different combinations as required each year. Build up banks of videos for future use. Students win because information arrives on their computer screen in manageable chunks. Clever students will whizz through, but to help those who have more difficulty is the real prize.

The discipline does require a different way of thinking and a change of attitude as the preparation and excitement of making slides with great ideas minutes before a teaching session ends. Now those great ideas will have more impact and appeal to a wider range of student abilities, because each point has been thought through, split up and different ways found to visually make the points clear and simple to understand.

**Think visually.** Show; do not tell. The objective of using PowerPoint is to plan your visual message too. A picture is worth a thousand words and thinking of ways to put an idea across with some humor or a quirky theme that will stay in the memory is a satisfying challenge. Put your lecture keyword into Google images for an illuminating visual approach to any idea you have in mind.

Being a video journalist is a craft, and not a theoretical or an intellectual activity. It involves making a visual and aural product that communicates ideas effectively. The process is much the same as plumbing. Metaphors are useful in video journalism. The plumbing example, as a visual aid for presenta-

tions, is to bring out a plastic down pipe tube from a sink, the U-bend. The three sections of down pipe, U-bend, and horizontal waste outlet explain the essence of all filming. Despite all the wonderful variety of our movie experience, every sequence is really only a variation of one a simple structure: introduce the idea, show the idea, and reinforce the idea seen with supporting material.

*Video is easy.* The serious message to educators is that a teaching video illustrates a point quickly, easily and, can be filmed in minutes.

**Think the spoken word.** Brevity is clarity. It is possible to make a point clearly with fewer words. Write short sentences: one idea per sentence. Use active verbs and keep it simple. It might come as a shock, but except for discussions and interviews with the public known as Vox Pops in the United Kingdom or SOVs in the United States, the spoken word on radio or TV is all written down beforehand in spoken English. Interviews can take hours in preparation and all via paper or autocue. There are practical, well-understood methods for presenting a piece to camera. Every news journalist starts thinking about his or her piece for camera several hours before going on air; but writes and reads out loud and rewrites over and over again on a phone or tablet to get the message just right. The structure is typically: the introduction, one key idea, examples comments, and a closing statement. Think about delivering this to students in the first 30 seconds and then start the long body of your story.

Repeat points at the end. What is the educational impact of these processes? A research project might reveal valuable new data; but meanwhile, tricolon, the repetition of three phrases, worked for Greeks and is still used regularly in modern media.

**Think like a presenter.** Presenters should always talk to one person; perhaps someone you know well. Be informal; smile; and use hand movements in moderation. Be aware of unfortunate mannerisms. Make sure you are in the frame and lean forward just a little as the effect is startling. Avoid being too low in the frame (i.e. *dropping out of the picture*); or too high (i.e. leave enough space at the top of the picture called *head room*). Take the center of screen position of the newsreader to deliver the serious important message. Take a kinder more informal position to one side of the screen, used in interviews and conversations. This position takes advantage of the *golden mean*, with an offset center, and is pleasing to the eye. But make sure you have a relevant background, or *thinking space*. All of these suggestions for good media presentation are examples of embodied metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Watch and re-watch your performance, which is the normal task of a professional, however painful.

## Long-life a Lecture

**W**hen a great deal of work has gone into a session presentation plan, including creat-

ing a set of a lecture slides with every possible aspect covered to the very last detail, pause for thought, and apply the following ideas.

First, use *the title slide template*, but add it at the natural section breaks of your presentation. These will be the points to pause and look directly at the audience and say several sentences without looking back at the screen. These moments will allow the speaker or technical support to split the presentation into sections in a professional manner and help to avoid the online audience getting acquainted with the back of the speaker's head. This format usually taking place while constantly making the most important points of a talk tends to be the default student experience of university video.

Next, remember that *standing still while speaking is an advantage*. Most speakers in full flow are unaware of their personal patterns of movement and speech, and the author is no exception. The journey from mouse to screen punctuated by the click of a new slide is very noticeable in the editing and even helps the placing of the slides in the software. However, a side-on-walk while revealing a key teaching point should be avoided on video. It is better to look at the audience, pause, start the sentence announcing the next slide, and then press the button and walk on to the stage to engage the audience.

Know that *the podium does not help the speaker*. To be trapped behind the podium is often unavoidable, but it stresses a stark division between audience and speaker. The podium furniture

is frequently in the way of a clear line of sight for the camera too. Raked seating leaves the camera high up at the back filming the top of the speaker's head. Avoid the tattered out-of-date posters in the back wall or the fire warning messages which, unnoticed by the live audience, always tend to stick out of the speaker's ear in the video.

*Consider that an imaginary diagonal line* from the speaker's position to the opposite corner gives a good camera position with a natural sense of the lecturer talking into the frame and engaging the audience. In a theatre with raked seating, the third row at the head height of the speaker is often the best camera position. More lecture theatres are being designed to meet the camera's needs.

*Be aware of walking in front of the screen*. The effect on the camera sensor is dramatic and technically very difficult to correct. That key point directed at the audience at the moment of delivery of important information can be completely lost to the video audience, because the error will have to be covered by the full frame slide.

*Seasoned practitioners have one trick up their sleeve*. Middlesex University hosted a Business Peer Awards conference in 2011. An education consultant apologized for being late at the conference and at that moment his eyes just glanced toward my camera position. In the camera viewfinder, the effect was profound as he apologized directly to me. This highly professional method—of glancing in the direction of the camera while speaking to a live

audience gives long-life impact to the long-life video.

Note *a word about level of performance*. On a theatre or lecture stage an actor needs to communicate with the audience and hold attention. An inspirational presenter knows that expansive hand gestures, strong facial expressions, and sweeping head movements are essential tools of the trade. However, the camera, framing the individual in a close up, cannot cope with these movements. The result is the performer appears to be greatly over-acting. The camera lens must stay back, instead of being close in to the action. The reason is that a wider angle distance shot is required to stop the speaker from disappearing out of the picture. Unnoticed to the enthralled live audience, this can be a shock to the live feed viewer as it is a big distraction to the flow of argument, and captured for all time in the online video. The camera likes a minimum of expression, the merest raise of eyebrow, little foot movement, with hand gestures close to the body. The stress on a key word; a lean forward; a quiet word, delivered after a pause; have greater effect. Anything else appears “over the top”. Understanding level of performance is a skill of the trade.

There are some speakers who can hold the attention of a large audience within these constraints. For normal mortals something between the two extremes will suffice. Lecturers may not be aware that it is possible to work with both a live audience as well as the video camera. These tricks of the trade might make a real change to the student learn-

ing experience in the lecture theatre, for MOOCs and for use as a long-life video resource.

## Talking to Students in Online Video

All of the above pointers about presentation style apply to talking to students generally, and specifically in giving personal video feedback about their work. The feedback is only provided on a few sentence examples for analysis. This is because students invariably repeat the errors in style over and over again, hiding perfectly good ideas and arguments. The structure of the feedback session includes a routine of first providing a full frame camera view welcome for the student, and then a list of the items to be examined before switching the full frame camera view off to reveal the student’s writing on screen. The iShowU Instant software highlights the drag of the mouse and puts mouse clicks in a circle on the screen with color. Text of course can be reordered and more suitable sentence constructions can be created. The sequence ends with the full frame camera again along with a summary and cheery goodbye. Set parameters for a video duration of 3–7 minutes. Make a strict rule to confine comments on camera to the academic tasks and only use positive and constructive language. Any other student issues are dealt with through the usual channels.

## Office vlogging Setup

**A** Vlog or video blog is a form of web television. Instead of uploading just text and still images to a website, videos are used. The lecturer is now going to be visible and seen by the student, though informality is expected and even desirable, care is needed in terms of the technical requirements of the set up and the soft skills used by the presenter to engage effectively with the student. The objectives of the ideas in this section are to raise awareness, avoid potential mistakes, and give a sense of the standards that are normally expected of professional communicators, which can be achieved with a little effort.

A light on the face (even a desk lamp: especially with a daylight bulb) helps to ensure the highlight is on the main subject in any video—in this case the lecturer—and separates the subject from the background. The presenter needs to be aware of the effect of the viewer not looking directly at the camera. To address the student with eye contact is essential. Set your web camera at eye level: too high and the presenter appears to look down on the viewer. Too low and the presenter give the impression of being rather small and inadequate. Needless to say some attention to general appearance is essential.

Make sure to *stand up*. Breathing is easier when standing. Presenters stand in the radio studio, as do the actors. In addition to breathing being easier, it gives presence in front of the

microphone. It is better to be offset to one side of the computer screen. The background, or *thinking space*, becomes the area for looking when thinking about the subject matter of the presenter's message. If the presenter is against a plain wall, the message may be uninspiring and less engaging.

*Angle the screen away from the back wall*, to create a perspective view that gives depth to the image. Lines will disappear at interesting angles, and that gives the presenter the embodied metaphor of *depth* and acquires the tone of a serious messenger. However, the new depth depends on what is in the background. Shambolic shelves do not give a confident message. The objective is to have a background relevant to the subject matter. The author uses photographs, and a stack of video equipment.

Finally, *use the software as an autocue*. In iShowU, when the full screen camera option is chosen by the presenter, the viewer cannot see the text of a script hidden behind the camera on the computer screen on the finished video. The software becomes an autocue. The quality of feedback can be improved substantially if the presenter can keep direct eye contact with the student, and read notes of those important teaching points while still looking directly to the web camera. However, eye contact can only be maintained with a minimum time without looking away to the controls. In conversation with the iShowU Instant team, a control panel has been added. The software coded determines that the floating panel is horizontal. The best location for the panel on the screen

is still to be decided. The flexibility of iShowU Instant makes it a useful tool for an individual lecturer to investigate how video journalist methods can be applied to learning, but allows for the development of his or her own style—in keeping informality, adding a little humor, and tailoring the best educational experience for a student's needs.

## Conclusion

Lecturers who have access to the principles of thinking planning and execution in the educational process of producing quality learning video become less dependent on technical staff. When lecturers also have the camera in their hands, they have the tools to communicate their subject with greater precision. The lead comes from the video journalist who shows that practice not theory, hands-on craft of making are the way forward in education.

In summary, this article proposes that:

1. Video helps students acquire a deeper sense of how they are acquiring new knowledge.
2. Video production processes demonstrate from real-life examples the differences between spoken and written English.
3. Through video, students experience a sense of their own dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work and develop skills for life to communicate their new knowledge.

4. The process of conversation between staff and student through video encourages confidence in the student's future potential.
5. Personal contact with a tutor is enhanced and not diminished by distance online learning.
6. Video feedback is scalable and relevant to different applications of video across subject areas in higher education.
7. Methods are achievable in similar PC versions of software and uploadable into Content Management Systems (CMS) or Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Kaltura.

Craft endures: TED video lectures have their 18 minute rule. The length of a BBC School Radio broadcast was 19'50", including opening and closing announcements.

## General Sources of Advice

The suggestions in this article come from learning on the job and through practical experience from producers scriptwriters and presenters at BBC School Radio; also from the late Denis Kemp, Kodak Education Officer and climber; John Morris experienced BBC cameraman and staff trainer; and Dr. Paul Walker (retired), at UCL Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching; Dr. Dilly Fung, Professor of Higher Education Development and Academic Director of CALT; Dr. Fiona Strawbridge, Digital Education Manager,

Clive Young Digital Education Lead; and Tony Slade, Head of Creative Media Services and Teaching, UCL.

### **Relevant Sources from Practitioners of the Craft in the Field of Film and Video Journalism in Print**

Carroll, M. (2012) has excellent insights into transferrable methods of collecting, editing and presenting information, which is at the core of good practice to create good teaching materials and a pertinent tone of the humanity in meeting and recording people.

Charny, D. (2011). This work allows a view of video making as a craft rather than an art and stresses the value of hands-on activity as a valuable element in learning. Charny argues for the reinstatement of craft values in society and corrects myths about the origin of divisions that occurred in the past.

Collins, P. (2012). The way a lecturer speaks is informed by rhetoric traditions and scientific formal argument. The author takes the reader through a sequence that ensures what is said in front of an audience is thoroughly prepared. Many of the ideas are applicable to working in front of the camera. Crucial is his reminder that speaking is grounded in traditional rhetoric. *Preparation time is always in short supply* is key and a reminder that even the experts do not find it easy. The author was also Tony Blair's scriptwriter, which some people consider unforgivable. He is now a Times columnist.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Authors explore metaphors and their function in the embodied learning of camera work in the form of terms such as; *depth*, *head room*, *falling out of the screen*, and *thinking space*. These terms are examples of the physical nature of language in learning which are often only considered figures of speech.

Ondaatje, M. (2002). Conversations with Walter Murch give a broad picture of the film editing process. He has a keen interest in education and many insights in good communications that can be used in an educational context. Academics might find possibilities of editing and manipulating visual messages for clarity and impact that have implications for resource creation in an education context. Murch has a background in radio. He brings to mind the normal experience of editing in the suites at BBC Broadcasting House, particularly the visceral impact of edited stereo location recordings, facing the sound from speakers at eye level and looking out over central London.

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