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Teach like a video journalist thinks

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Author note

After an early career as a radio producer for BBC Education and multimedia designer Mike Howarth completed a PhD in digital interface design from analogue broadcast materials, set up a new course in multimedia and then supervised degrees by public works at Middlesex University. There he was then asked to make videos for students and staff. He reports on video learning design in the last five years with academics at University College, London, and with his current BA (Hons) Education students at Middlesex University.

Abstract

The author reflects on his recent video journalist training, and his past education producer methods to explore video as a core driver for teaching excellence. Video is now easier to manage, fits the individuality of the lecturer, and provides a personal experience for students.

The paper explores the proposal that developments in the use of video as a learning tool in Higher Education is restricted by the expectation the new technologies rather than content will deliver a better student learning experience.

The paper suggests a solution: to draw on the craft of making quality resource content used in BBC Education between 1953 & 2008, when broadcasts ceased. The author believes that the craft is alive and well today, from his experience of the practical craft methods of the backpack video journalist.

The author encourages lecturers to use these practical craft methods in their normal teaching, or preferably pick up a camera and create their own video resources. Future research proposals are outlined.

Introduction

Good practical ideas for organisation and communication can be learnt by the lecturer from the video journalists. They 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 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 them interested, because bored audiences will stop paying attention and switch off.

Lecturers use video to achieve their teaching objectives for their student audience in a four broad methods; to create video learning resources specially for online websites, to teach students online with video, and to capture 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 has an uphill task. There are the practical problems for staff; a shortage of time to learn new skills. There is also much reinventing of the wheel. There are good reasons why. There are the conflicting priorities of teaching & research. Time spent developing teaching methods can affect research output. To be a main stream media performer is a hurdle to an academic career. Mainstream media appearances are by the most senior staff with recognised authoritative published standing. Younger enthusiastic popularisers must tread with care. Academic staff, who work with professional film crews, become aware of the value of recording, 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 US is known as the Sagan Effect, (Martinez-Conde, S., Powell, D., Macknick, L. S., 2016).

There is disinclination to appear front of a camera. It is not part of serious academic life. These attitudes are changing: there is a determination to "have a go, but to use the media our 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 endeavour. 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.

Research into online new learning technologies have value. But it is the experience of the author that the principles behind creating the content for the technologies were solved by the BBC Radio and Television education broadcast department staff between between 1953 and 2008, when the departments were closed down. For example, Powerpoint and Keynote are only digital versions of the analogue BBC Radiovision Filmstrips: full screen photos, colour graphics, stereo sound on all subjects which used a wide range of techniques of script design, use of drama and storytelling. Now available for research, (Howarth, 2015, December 8).

The backpack video journalist is a model for the lecturer to emulate. First, because though the methods that might be ephemeral and transcend the technology are forgotten, for everyone can be a broadcaster and publisher now, the video journalist still carries on them on. Second, because in the backpack is now the kit to do the work of the large production team of an education broadcast: interviewer, producer, lighting, sound, camera, is in the laptop with the software and transmission logistics. The deadlines are yesterday and the output is real time - like a lecturer. Finally, because all the skills are concentrated in one person's endeavour, so the craft methods are clearer for the lecturer to experience in process of making the short video productions for news and current affairs.

Context

'Teach like a video journalist thinks' as a idea originated in the making of learning resources from lectures and workshops for colleagues in the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CALT) at University College, London. The consultancy was to film lectures for online teaching resources. There were teaching resources which staff wanted to create to demonstrate specific examples of quality teaching. Also a project using online videos to explain and promote staff involvement teacher accreditation, with the UK Higher Education Academy fellowship program.

Filming a lecture

One task was to film the induction lecture of a thousand overseas students, their first taste of university life. The project was to record the event but also turn the material into a teaching resource. The college film crew are usually set up at the back. Video journalist training is that the place for the camera to be is at the front, with the action, catching the key visual material in this case the lecturer, perhaps talking to the students as they come in. But crucially to be behind the

speaker's call to order. Already the opening of the video has impact, drawing the viewer in. The audience is in the frame. The over the lecturer's shoulder shot is vital as a 'cutaway' to link together edited highlights of the lecture. The speaker was to pause deliberately as the crowd quietened down to allow me to get half way down the auditorium isle, just to ensure he filled the frame and also to be ready to come forward again for the action highlight.

Meetings to plan the event and organise the action highlights led to the inspiration of the giant red foam hand with a pointing finger for crowd control, and bright props for his three illustrations of attitudes to learning: the spinning ball catching exercise - "keep your eye on the ball". Draw your neighbour without looking at the paper - "ways to look at all details of a subject". And the surprise of recognition of patterns - "be ready to see the unexpected". Short pieces to camera before the main event set the scene and explained their significance. Judge the result at, (Walker, 2012, November 7). A video journalist uses the same methods, but might be in the building for only a brief period, and finish his report on a high note, perhaps the first roar of approval from the students.

Thereafter a structure emerged to capture lectures for CALT website resources. The end product had be easy to use and retain that sense of immediate impact, but with less production effort. A strategy is needed simply because lighting in a lecture theatre is often poor, and the lecturer can be in semi darkness, because contrast between the bright screen and the poor lighting at the lecture cannot be accommodated even by the best camera technology. The method to deal with the problem is to film a lecture from the third row or as near as possible to the front. Then a 2-3 minute summary interview of highlights, with the presenter to camera, before or after the event.

The teaching resource is created in stages: first a long video version is compiled in the editing software from the slides from Powerpoint output as still images and the video of the lecturer. The lecturer video is on the lower track and the slides on the track above. The trick is catch the key moments of the lecturer's message appear to the viewer in head and shoulders close-up, and speaking direct to camera. These moments are interspersed with a full-frame of the PowerPoint slides that illustrate those same key words or images on the slide. The result enhances the message and engages the audience with more impact, more than in the usual general view of the whole lecture scene. Automatic lecture capture software or the camera set at the back of the room might do for day to day events but key lectures need the treatment.

The second stage is to edit the whole lecture into four or five separate short video sections for the following reasons. (a) Videos are almost exclusive for web site teaching resources. (b) Long videos are slow to stream on a student computer. (c) It is easier to spool though to find relevant information. (d) The webpage is designed to be integrated in a structure so the student can acquire information quickly. Heading, subheading, short explanatory text mean the video learning objectives flow. A method developed for effective educational book design. The summary interview at the top of the page sets the scene and introduces the subject. Each section video theme is titled and summarised on the web page. Text is brief, with main points at the beginning of a short sentence, to break up the message and be easy to read. Good planning will ensure that the lecturer's summary match the themes of the section headings. Screen text can be difficult to read on video, few words on a lecture slide is always a good policy. Now there is a reason when creating lecture slides to use key phrases not sentences and the largest text size possible.

Questions from the floor during or after a lecture are a problem without a two person camera team. The best hope is to get to the front on cue, or ask students to pause before asking their question so the rifle mic on the camera is on target. Also if the camera can be there as students come up to ask questions choice teach points maybe be collected.

A lecture theatre sound system can be adequate. Video has no use in an education setting without top quality sound. The lecturer must be linked to the camera by a quality radio mic. There is

evidence from lecture video capture software stats that students spool though a lecture using the session timer code to find sections that are difficult to understand. Here the audio explanation is crucial to the student.

Filming a workshop

Workshops 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 using 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 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 specialised 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, the lecturer is 'having a go', using any equipment to hand, and having a good experience with very positive results. Standards are not professional, but that is not a priority to either the staff or student. In fact it is an advantage as 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 were used to demonstrate techniques such as editing.

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, preprepared 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 Final Cut Pro X. There seems a great deal that can be done to improve the whole production process, from setting up the room for video to begin working on an effective presentation style, by

apply some video journalists methods 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 sixteen BA (Hons) Education student teachers starting their final year dissertation.

The problem is to improve academic writing styles. Students have limited experience of academic writing and most have English as a second language. Support allocation time is limited and travel to meet individual students difficult, because of their varied timetables. An opportunity to improve a too familiar pattern of writing problems, and many repetitive and lengthy emails.

Can an online webcam tackle the problem? Why not use iShowU Instant, the Mac software used to create the 'How to…' videos for advice to lecturers using video in the UCL research project? It is cheap and one of many available similar kinds of software for different platforms. The software 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 be 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. They see their dissertation drafts edited, just a few lines, with text highlights and circles appearing on mouse click while hearing the reason why changes are required. A few lines need be corrected because the pattern of errors run though the whole draft. The personal video can be watched again to encourage reflection and positive action to improve their writing style. Students download their personal video from an email link. In addition, short video resources on the website, dealt with aspect of academic writing handle the basics, some videos use student examples to illustrate problems.

Student satisfaction survey

A student satisfaction survey gathered qualitative and quantitive responses presented as a conference poster (Howarth, 2016). Here are two examples of 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 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.

Online video feedback saves tutor time

The experience of the tutor was not part of the research, the evidence exists in the videos for analysis, but anecdotal evidence is that time spent on feedback support towards the end of the year is 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. Feedback videos are around 7 minutes long and a complete cycle of review, record. A cycle can take as little as 15 minutes.

The feedback comments are about 'Clean English' writing 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 using informal spoken English that hides the main argument they wish to express. The sentences they write are long. This is because student attempts to complete the argument string A therefore B because of C in one stream of multiple verbs within the one sentence. The complexity and confusion in the writing on the page is compounded by students beginning the sentence with a preposition. A third aspect of the problem seems to be that a sequence of sentences do not have the necessary cohesion: 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.

Plans for the second year of research

Online video support developments are beginning right away in the 2016-17 academic year; to use the dissertation proposal form to teach "Clean English" right at the beginning of the year, and end the informal spoken English notes and lists that the form filling encourages. Videos from last year are available on the website. These seem to have little effect. Personal videos to each student give a 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 become 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 of 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 analyse why the sample letter follows a strict formal structure, demonstrating how the short sentence, one idea per sentence, a coherent story as an example of clean writing.

Another video will explain cohesion. The author will film a brick wall of a house: the bricks are sentences, the mortar the most useful academic link words to join them to form a strong bond of the argument. These link words will appear to visualise 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 attitudes to 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 trialled, currently using examples of student work such as writing a title, an aim, and an objective of the proposal form. The method is achieved by compiling clips from the relevant sections of the personal feedback videos to the all the students into a short narrated video. This section explains the production sequence.

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 work as a reminder of the original problem and solution during the edit. The comments can be hear or held back under an narration that summarises 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 kind 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 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 journalist do. It is the process seen everyday on the news.

Mobile learning

Mobile learning is an important development, because BA Education students are not only in part - time work but also out in schools working on their primary research. Students report they can access and download their personal video from the author onto their smart phones. The phones can handle large video files. 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, 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 in to the student or to a group through the Ublend social media software.

The personal over-the-shoulder 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 scriptwriting for educational effectiveness and the video journalist has the practical techniques to hand. The subject, in the example in this paper 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 is in two parts. First tricks of the trade that can be applied to make web page video resources for internet learning. Second, make webcam video for individual students live online or for to send a personal recorded video to an individual student. What are the practical ideas that can change the way the lecturer works? Here is a summary.

Make a video resource for students
There are two levels to making the most of these practical ideas. Either you review just the ideas and try out those that can enhance your normal teaching practice, or you pick up a video camera, or switch on the webcam and apply the methods for real. Personally, picking up the camera is essential. 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 student. And making learning materials is an integral part of good teaching. It is research-based learning and continuing professional development (CPD) rolled into one, win-win scenario.

Observations suggest creating one-way webcam for students results in an unexpected humanising, closer and enriched contact with students. Students see the lecturer as a human being. They 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: a journalist is taught to use informal speech, specific eye and body language, and it works. That is why trying professional ideas and cutting through to 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 with which you are familiar. but make more of its potential. Your might already output video from PowerPoint or Keynote. Why not output video with your soundtrack recorded on a superior quality smart phone mic, iPhone is superb if held it in the right position. Export slides as images into the timeline of video editing software, then add the smart phone soundtrack. Choose View> Light Table to plan the more complex layout of slides with video filmed on webcam, or on a camera at a location away from the desk computer. Hear the story run through your mind in different forms, and just put the non-essentials into another Powerpoint for another special episode in the future. When you plan your future more complex video use the blank frames of a PowerPoint print as a storyboard.

Set your software frames to 16:9, the normal video screen proportions. The default is 4:3 and slides exported to video software as .png files in that size have to be individually stretched to fill the video frame which is very time consuming.

Storyboarding
An academic PowerPoint lecture tends to have one structure, the academic story; The aims, the background, the developments, and finally the key message, the results. The logic is sound, but does the story have impact? Try thinking like a video journalist: play around with the structure.

Start with your key discoveries. Give the key message first. It is often assumed that there is

one story, one reality, 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 way that everyone else come as a surprise. Once the scientific research is completed with the required impeccable methodology, why not use those insights and flashes of inspiration to make the results interesting using the techniques of the writer and broadcaster.

Work out what are the essentials. A menu list is an option, a method used in magazine programmes, but the problem is that the audience sees the task of listening ahead and feel the urgent need to fall asleep now. Think of three high points in the story, just to raise the blood pressure 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 reminder, and this time it will not be a shock wake up surprise, but a moment of resolution. The moment will be a confirmation, a reminder, a recall of the process on the journey to the final big idea. The "journey" metaphor may have fallen out of favour, you might prefer "shovel ready". There are only six story structures (Booker, 2004) and it is also worth looking at the origins of the "journey" (Campbell, 1988).

The usual rule for all broadcast news is that reported 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 looking over the shoulder at the screen, but to take two bites at the information cherry to hold the attention of the audience like the professionals. Good practice will be most evidence when the video is complete, no-one wants to stare at a screen of text they cannot read. Video screen legibility require a minimum of 24pt text and sans serif. Use the absolute essential number words on the screen, even if you are not making a video.

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 office webcam, or recordings from a smart phone in teaching sessions.

Think about time

Aim for the video journalist's 2-3 minutes. It may be a shock to the system familiar with half hour, or one hour lectures, but even 10 seconds is a long time on video. Treat the lecture as a story. Assume the story starts as the user clicks. Assume the viewer will watch for 10 seconds before they click to switch off. This is the reality. Why bother with music and flashy graphics? That is old school. What grabs them first? The first visual is recognised in 4 seconds and the first word has to make impact in 10. Make them count.

Planning is therefore essential. When you plan your future more complex video, use the blank frames to a page as storyboard printouts. It may appear that everything on professional TV happens with such ease, but you just need to click on anything on YouTube, to realise that off-the-cuff gabbling does not work. The process of fitting the key elements into a short time is a great discipline and the lecturer can achieve a great deal as a result of sharpening up their act for students. Instead of having one long half our video, make five short ones, each on a specific teaching point.

Video output can be achieved quickly. The learning curve will be easier. Corrections can be made more in the soundtrack in less time. Mix and match elements from video content in different orders each new year as required. Build up bank of videos for future use. Students win because information arrives in manageable chunks. Clever students will whizz though, 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. The last minute preparation, the excitement of making slides with great ideas minutes before a teaching session, has to end. Now those great ideas work will have more impact and for 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 not tell. The objective of using PowerPoint is to plan your visual message too. A picture tells a thousand words and thinking of ways to put an idea across with some humour 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, not a theoretical or an intellectual activity. It evolves making a visual and aural product that communicates ideas effectively. The process is much the same as plumbing. Metaphors come in useful in video journalism. The plumbing example, worked up as a visual aid for presentations is to bring out a plastic down pipe tube from a sink, the U-bend. Three sections down pipe, U-bend and horizontal waste outlet that explain that the core of all filming. Every sequence is variations on a simple structure: introduce the idea, show the idea, reinforce the idea seen with supporting material.

Video is easy. The serious message to educationalists 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. 'Keep it Simple Silly'. It might come as a shock, but except for discussions and interviews with the public known as Vox Pops in the UK or SOVs in the US, the spoken word on radio or TV is all written down beforehand in spoken English. Interviews can be hours in the preparation, and all on paper or on autocue. There are rules to the writing a piece to camera. Think about every news journalist who starts thinking about their piece to camera several hours before going on air. Written on a phone or tablet, read out over and over again. The introduction, one key idea, examples comments, closing statement. Think delivering this to students in the first 30 seconds and then start the long body of your story. Repeat the points at the end. What is the educational impact of these processes? A research project might reveal some interesting data, but tricolon, the repetition of three phrases, worked for Greeks and used regularly in modern media .

Think like a presenter

Presenters always talk to one person. Someone you know well. Be informal. Smile. Use hand movements in moderation. Be aware of unfortunate mannerisms. Make sure you are "in the frame". lean forward just a little. The effect is startling. But not too low in the frame - "dropping out of the picture". Nor too high - leave enough space at the top of the picture called "head room". Take the dominant newsreader centre position or a kinder conversational interview position at the centre of the "golden mean" to one side. Make sure you have a relevant background or "thinking space". All these suggestions for good media presentation are examples of embodied metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Watch and re-watch your performance, an essential professional task.

Long-life a lecture

When a great deal of work has gone into a session presentation plan and a lecturer has created a set of a lecture slides, with every possible aspect covered to the very last detail. Pause for thought, and try these ideas:

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 at the screen behind. These moments will allow the speaker or technical support to split the presentation into sections in a professional manner: avoid the screen audience to avoid getting acquainted with the back of the speaker's head making the most important points of a talk - the default university video student experience.

Standing still while speaking is an advantage. Most speakers, and the author is no different, in full flow are unaware of their personal patterns of movement and speech. The journey from mouse to screen punctuated by the click of a new slide is very noticeable in the edit and even helps the placing of the slides in the software. However, the back the head or a side on walk is the usual visual feature to a change of a slide and the reveal of another teaching point. Best to look at the audience, pause, start the sentence announcing the next slide, then press the button and walk in to the stage to engage the audience.

The podium does not help the speaker. To be trapped behind it is often unavoidable, is to stress 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. A warning about the tattered out of date posters in the back wall or the fire warning messages which always happen to stick out of the ear of the speaker.

An imaginary diagonal line from the speakers 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. Third row is the best camera position in a theatre with raked seating. More lecture theatres are being designed to be lit and backgrounds arranged with a heightened awareness of what the camera needs.

Be aware of walking in front of the screen. The effect on the camera sensor is dramatic and impossible to correct. At the moment of delivery of important information, because the error will have to be covered by the full frame slide, that key point directed at the audience is lost.

Seasoned practitioners have one trick up their sleeve. Middlesex University hosted a Business Peer Awards conference in 2011. An education consultant apologised for being late at the conference and at that moment his eyes just glanced towards the camera. In the camera viewfinder, the effect was profound. He was apologising directly to the cameraman personally. A glance of the eyes in the direction of the camera while speaking to a live audience and an online video gives long life impact to that long-life video. He explained he had just come from a meeting at No 10 Downing Street.

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 expansive hand gestures, strong face expressions and sweeping head movements are essential tools of the trade. The camera, framing the individual in close up, cannot cope with these movements and the result is the performers appears to be greatly over acting. The camera must keep back, instead of being in the action. The reason is that that a wider angle distance shot is required to stop the speaker disappearing out of the picture. Unnoticed to the enthralled live audience, the shock to both the live feed viewer, and kept for all to see for years to come, is a big distraction to the flow of argument. The camera likes a minimum of expression, the merest raise of eyebrow, little foot movement, hand gestures close to the body. The stress on a key word, a lean forward, a quiet word, delivered after a pause, has greater effect. Anything else appears "over the top". 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 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 learning experience in the lecture theatre, for MOOCs and for use as a long-life video resource.

Talking to students in online video

All the pointers about presentation style above apply talking to students generally, and specifically in giving personal video feedback on their work. Structure the session in a routine of, first a full frame welcome for the student, then list the items to be examined before switching the camera off to reveal the student's writing on screen. The iShowU Instant software highlights in colour and mouse clicks put a circle on the screen yo focus attention on the few sentence examples for analysis. The sequence ends with full frame camera again the summary and a cheery goodbye. Try for a video duration of 3-5 minutes. The author makes a strict personal rule of making positive, constructive comments on camera confined to the academic task. Any other student issues are dealt with through the usual channels.

Your office vlogging setup

A light on the face, even a daylight bulb in a desk lamp, 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 on the viewer of 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.

Stand up. Breathing is easier. Presenters stand in the radio studio, so do the actors, breathing is easier, and gives "presence" in front of the microphone.

Better to be offset to one side of the screen. The background or "thinking space" becomes the space for looking when considering the subject matter of the presenter's message. If the presenter is against a plain wall, the message may be "I am a poor sad soul with my back to the wall, the boring blank wall of my existence".

Angle the screen away from the back wall, so perspective is created and lines disappear at interesting angles, and that gives the presenter the embodied metaphor, "depth". They acquire 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. Very tidy shelves may suggest another the background being relevant to the subject matter. The author uses photographs, and a stack of video equipment.

Use the software as an autocue. When the full 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. If the presenter can keep direct eye contact with the student, read notes of teaching point while still looking directly to the web camera, and using the methods outlined above, the quality of feedback can be improved substantially. However, eye contact can only be maintained with a minimum time 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 for the panel on the screen is still be decided. The flexibility of iShowU Instant makes it a useful tool to investigate how video journalist methods can be applied to learning.

Conclusion

Lecturers who have access to the principles behind the educational process of producing quality learning video are independent of technical staff. When they also have the camera in their hands, a lecturer has the tools to communicate their subject with greater precision. The lead comes from the video journalist who shows that practice not theory, craft making and hand-ons physical activity are the way forward in education.

This paper proposes that:

1. Video helps student acquire a deeper sense of how they are acquiring new knowledge in any subject.
2. Video production processes demonstrate the differences between spoken and written English from real life examples.
3. Students develop 'skills for life' to communicate their new knowledge.
4. Student experience through video a sense of their own dedication, enthusiasm and hard work.
5. The process of conversation between staff and student through video encourages confidence in the student's future potential.
6. Personal contact with a tutor is enhanced not diminished by distance online learning.
7. Video feedback is scaleable, and relevant to different applications of video across subject areas in Higher Education.
8. These methods are achievable in similar PC versions of software and uploaded into CMS platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard and Kaltura.

Perhaps some of the old ways are worthwhile: a TED video lecture is the just about the length of the old BBC School Radio broadcast, at around 19 minutes.

General sources of advice

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

Relevant sources from practitioners of the craft in the field of film and video journalism in print are:

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.

Koppelman, C. (2005). Walter Murch gives 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 editing suites at BBC Broadcasting House. The sense of the visceral impact of edited stereo location recordings, facing the sound from speakers at eye level and looking out over central London.

Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors and their function in embodied learning in 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 a figure of speech.

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 say 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.

Charny, D. (2011). To view video making as a craft rather than an art 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.

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