

# CASE METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO THE USE OF VIDEOS: AN EXAMPLE OF A *BLENDED-LEARNING* EXPERIENCE IN A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME

## AUTOR

Nom: Dolors Masats

Departament: Didàctica de la Llengua, la Literatura i les Ciències Socials

Centre: Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació

E-mail: [dolors.masats@uab.cat](mailto:dolors.masats@uab.cat)

## COAUTOR

Nom: Melinda Dooly

Departament: Didàctica de la Llengua, la Literatura i les Ciències Socials

Centre: Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació

E-mail: [Melindaann.dooly@uab.cat](mailto:Melindaann.dooly@uab.cat)

## RESUM

L'ús del vídeo en la formació de mestres s'ha fet servir a les classes de llengua per proporcionar als alumnes textos genuïns que constituïssin estímul comunicatius reals, en les tutories de pràctiques s'ha emprat com a eina per facilitar als alumnes l'oportunitat de reflexionar sobre la seva actuació a l'aula, i en les classes de didàctica ha estat un mitjà per relacionar la teoria i la pràctica. Amb l'evolució de les noves tecnologies, els usos del vídeo no canvien (veure Masats, Sormunen & Hacklin (2007) per conèixer quin és l'estat de la qüestió entorn l'ús del vídeo en la formació de mestres), però sí que ho fa la manera en què es visualitzen i es reflexiona sobre allò que es mostra en el vídeo, ja que ambdós processos deixen d'estar vinculats a docència exclusivament presencial.

L'objectiu d'aquesta comunicació és el de presentar una experiència d'aula en la que es fa servir la metodologia de l'estudi de casos documentats en vídeo (en format CD o *online*) combinada amb l'ús de les noves tecnologies per tal de presentar als alumnes exemples reals d'aula que els permetin adquirir coneixements teórico-pràctics vinculats a l'ensenyament d'una llengua estrangera a l'aula. Defensarem una metodologia basada en el *blended-learning*, ja que la nostra experiència ens demostra que la comunicació asincrònica (a través de la participació en fòrums creats dins d'una plataforma educativa virtual) i la visualització *online* de fragments de classes contribueix positivament a l'adquisició de nous coneixements per parts dels alumnes, però que al mateix temps, cap dels dos processos es poden deixar de banda en les sessions presencials si veritablement volem formar mestres reflexius.

## ABSTRACT

The use of videos in teacher training programmes has served various purposes: in language courses, videos have provided trainees with authentic texts which serve as stimuli to enhance real communication in a formal setting; in the tutorial sessions linked to the school placement practices, videos have been used as tools to help student-teachers reflect upon their performance in class and in Language Methodology courses, videos establish links between theory and practice. However, with the evolution of the so-called Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) videos have not served new purposes (see Masats, Sormunen

& Hacklin (2007) for a review on how videos have been used in teacher education) but ICT provides a means to change the way videos are visualised and exploited in classrooms, as both processes do not longer need to be related to face-to-face teaching and learning experiences.

The goal of this paper is to present a classroom experience in which case methodology is applied to video-documented cases and combined with the use of ICT as a means to present real examples of classroom products to students. We adopted such an approach in an attempt to help our students acquire theoretical knowledge, grounded in real practice of foreign language teaching in a formal setting. We also took on a *blended-learning* approach to the implementation of case methodology because we believe that in order to train students to become reflective teachers on-line knowledge-enabling tasks (such as viewing a video or taking part in discussion forums about what it was observed) set up in virtual educational platforms should be combined with face-to-face discussions in the actual classroom setting.

## KEY WORDS

Case methodology; video case study; TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign language)

## GENERAL INTEREST OF THE EXPERIENCE

Our work, framed in a European Minerva project (Project 223249-CP-1-2005-1- NL - Minerva- M), may interest educators who would like to know more about blended-learning experiences and how digital video is used in classroom contexts.

## DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Objectives

Our interest in using video cases studies in our classrooms moved us to take part in a European Minerva project (Project 223249-CP-1-2005-1- NL - Minerva- M) whose target goal is to study how digital video is used in teacher training programmes. The project aims at documenting current practices, producing a collection of case studies to identify the benefits and pedagogical approaches to the use of digital video in teacher education and elaborating a set of generic principles of operation which should relate to learning theories.

Our paper accounts for how the European project is being implemented in our pre-service teacher training programmes. As Wasserman (1994) points out, "learning to teach is difficult when students have little time to observe effective teaching in a variety of situations, to practice their own teaching, and to reflect on this experience with others". The design of our cases had a two-fold objective, on the one hand, video cases offered student-teachers the possibility of glimpsing into real classrooms and reflect upon what was going on; and, on the other hand, they acquired new knowledge by carrying out computer mediated tasks (after having viewed a video, trainees were asked to participate in virtual forums or face-to-face discussion with their peers to solve the theoretical-practical problems the video case had put forth). The interest in implementing part of the video case in a virtual platform was sustained upon the belief that only those student-teachers who learn to use technology during their pre-service studies are likely to incorporate technology in their future classes (McKinney, 1998; Goldsby and Fazal, 2000). Since primary and secondary education demands technological skilled professionals, the idea of incorporating a blended-learning methodology in the regular TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) courses seemed to be worth trying.

### 2. Description

As Galvis et al. (2002) argue, "combining video with the case study method creates a highly useful tool for teacher professional development... Video conveys experiences too complex to fully describe in text alone (and a) case study can present problems and issues that evoke intense discussions, greatly enriching the learning experience". The case study method was applied to the video cases in the following courses given at UAB:

- Didàctica de la Llengua Anglesa I. (*TEFL I*)  
Titulació de Mestre Especialitat en Llengua Estrangera.
- Didàctica Específica. (*TEFL*)  
Master de Formació Inicial del Professorat de Secundària: Anglès.

Both were language methodology courses offered within the framework of pre-service teacher training programmes targeted at future English teacher either at primary or secondary schools. For sake of brevity, the present paper will only account for the experience conducted with the group of potential primary teachers, in which the video case was built upon the study of what is known as project-based approach to language learning.

The project-based approach to language learning is beneficial for students as it creates meaningful context for the use of the target. Students learn about a non-linguistic subject matter by doing research work into real-world issues. Such a student-centred methodology fosters peer collaboration and helps students develop cognitive, linguistic and social skills. Many Catalan schools are starting to adopt this approach, and, as a consequence, it is wise to think that pre-service teacher training programmes should offer their student teachers the possibility of becoming acquainted with it early on, so as to guarantee they will know how to plan, implement and evaluate similar projects once they become teachers in service.

### 3. Methodology

In project-based classrooms, learners become language users and work in teams to attain a common goal: the elaboration of a final product to share what they have learned about a given issue. The format of this product may take various forms: a poster, an oral presentation, a song, a magazine, etc. Our case study is based on the assumption that in order for student teachers to learn how to plan a project, they should be able to see the tangible end product of a real class project. Therefore, the starting point of this case is the viewing of a video produced by a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class as their end product of a project, carried out in the English class. (In this particular case the project dealt with how to conserve the environment.) Student teachers are then asked to try to outline the plan the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher of that group had followed so as to help their primary kids produce the video. This task is aimed at generating discussions, which, in turn, should enable student teachers to design their own projects (one of the assignment tasks for their TEFL course).

It is important to emphasise the fact that before asking student teachers to design their own project, they were provided with an example of a real case: that of an authentic primary school environment adopting the project-based methodology and organising learning around environmental issues. In the actual case, the English teacher chose a video as the end project of other related activities: the children presented their adaptation of a story in their textbook in which a superhero helps children save their polluted world. The dramatised story in the video also summarises what pupils have learnt in the English class about protecting our planet (see figure 1).

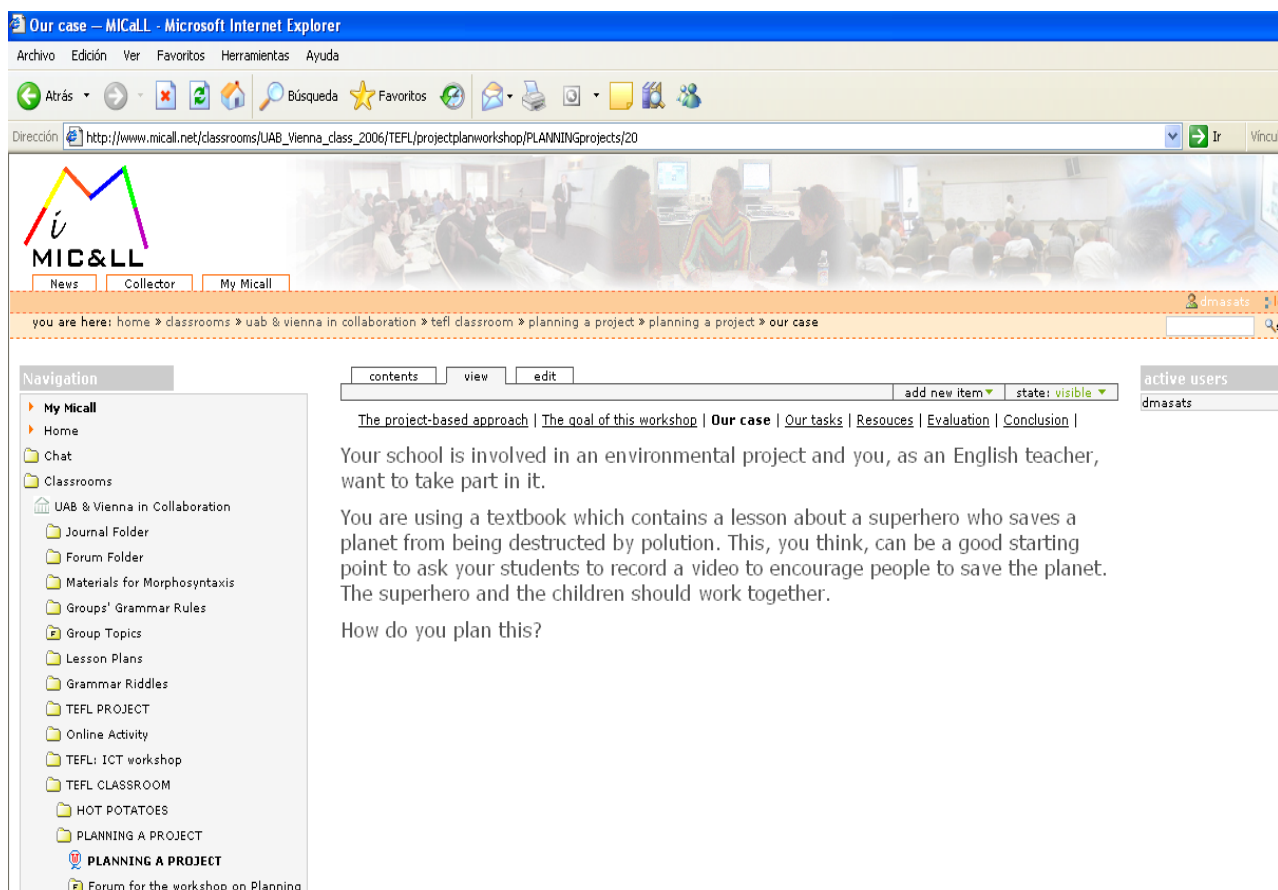


Figure 1. Presentation of the case

As we stated earlier, our case study is based upon the assumption that the task of planning a project becomes easier if teachers are able to imagine the kind of end product their class will produce and start planning backwards (if this is what I want to obtain, what is the last thing I had to do? And before that?). Consequently, after presenting the real case to the student-teachers, they were asked to carry out three tasks (see figure 2): 1) Viewing the final product produced by a real class of 5<sup>th</sup> graders; 2) Listing the possible contents, subproducts and activities the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class teacher had in mind when she embarked in the environmental project with her students and 3) Sketch how she possibly planned the project. The first task was done in class with the whole group, but students could view the video again if they needed to, as it was uploaded in a virtual learning environment.

in collaboration » tefl classroom » planning a project » planning a project » our tasks

contents view edit add new item state: visible

The project-based approach | The goal of this workshop | Our case | **Our tasks** | Resources | Evaluation | Conclusion |

**Task one:**  
Go to resources and view the video "Find a bin and put it in."

**Task two:**  
Divide into groups of four and choose one task. Post your contribution in the corresponding Forum in this classroom.

**GROUP A:** List the possible *linguistic contents* students need to learn to be able to produce such a video.

**GROUP B:** List the possible *non-linguistic contents* students need to learn to be able to produce such a video.

**GROUP C:** List the possible *subproducts* students need to create before producing the video.

**GROUP D:** List the possible *activities* students need to carry out before producing such a video.

**Task three:**  
Form new groups. Each group should contain one member of the groups formed to carry out task two.

Each new group should fill in a grid (find the template in resources) to sketch the rationale of this project and post it in this classroom.

Figure 2. Tasks students had to carry out to solve the case

The discussions for the latter two tasks were done synchronically on a virtual forum. The idea of carrying out the task in the computer room had two main objectives: a) students discussions were recorded and therefore could be used to discuss face-to-face with the whole class-group the results of the third task (the various rationales students had produced for this project): b) all students were "kindly" forced to participate in the discussions. The discussions were designed so as to follow the "group of experts" technique, which, by definition, also encourages the participation of all students as they need to collect information for their new group. This helped in the case of shy students, who often feel uncomfortable talking in front of their peers but feel more confident when they write a text (a forum entry).

The various planning grids (the outcomes of task 3) were posted in the virtual classroom and were then discussed, face-to-face, with the whole TEFL group and her teacher. This activity served as a model for the design of a new project, which would serve as an assessment task for the TEFL course.

#### 4. Results

Karppinen (2005) suggests that "the learning outcomes depend largely on the way videos are used as part of the overall learning environment, e.g. how viewing or producing videos is integrated into other learning resources and tasks". The fact that both the target student-teachers and her teacher were not used to being exposed to a methodology based on blended-learning could explain why the forum discussions did not bring out as much debate as anticipated (see figure 3).

• Re: GROUP D2

quote reply edit delete Posted by Alba at 2007-05-21 08:56 PM

Alba  
Member  
Posts: 1

Hello!

I think ,that first of all, teacher should provide students, information about recycling. As you mentioned before, it could be a good idea to watch a video related to the topic, they are going to work with. After that, students should do some activities related to recycling.

Once they are familiar with the topic, students could start reviewing the grammar structures and the useful vocabulary, they will need to do the dialogues.

Moreover, I think that they should do other activities before carrying out this project, such as:

- Elaborate the dialogues
- Prepare the drawings, and the murals.
- Rehearse the dialogues.

Have you got more ideas?

• Re: GROUP D2

quote reply edit delete Posted by Maria at 2007-06-05 12:22 AM

Maria  
Member  
Posts: 7

Hi!

I think you're right! It's a very good idea to watch a documental about recycling so they will learn more things related with it. Moreover, watching a video would be an interesting way of improving their oral skills. To start with, they can watch this video or documental and then work with exercises which promote communication so they would be able to talk and, consequently, they would improve their pronunciation.

Of course they have to carry out a lot of activities to prepare that video but before doing these activities, they should also do some exercises to acquire more vocabulary and assimilate the sentence structures. In that point, they could work with Hot potato exercises so they would be even more motivated with the task. Don't you think so?




Figure 3. Extracts of the students' forums for task two

The students could talk about the task without having fully interpreted the complexity of planning projects. Their evaluation of the workshop in which the case study was presented (see figure 4) also reveals that student-teachers valued the viewing of the case as a positive experience that allowed them to see what primary pupils do in their English lessons. Yet, they perceived that technical problems (Ariadna's extract in figure 4) and their inability to engage in real discussions did not allow them to critically reflect upon what planning projects entail.

<p>✓ <b>Re: EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP</b>        quote reply edit delete Posted by Ariana at 2007-05-19 08:41 PM</p> <p>I can only speak from my experience, so I think that the workshop was useful but in the case of my group it would have been more interesting if more people could have posted their comments. 🖱️</p>	<p>Ariana Member Posts: 17</p>
<p>• <b>Re: EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP</b>        quote reply edit delete Posted by Inmaculada at 2007-05-22 09:37 AM</p> <p>The idea of viewing a video which is a real Primary material has been very useful and interesting but I am not quite sure about the workshop... From what I have seen, we have agreed in the most of points, what does not favour a fluent and rich conversation. 🗣️</p>	<p>Inmaculada Member Posts: 19</p>
<p>• <b>Re: EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP</b>        quote reply edit delete Posted by EvaMaria at 2007-05-22 09:48 AM</p> <p>I have enjoyed a lot the video, and I think it could be a good idea for us to do in the futur... I think we have to do some tasks after viewing the video, but probably the workshop does not allow us to work deeply with the video. I prefer face-to-face communication, I think it is much more "natural" and it allows to express better and to work deeper.</p>	<p>EvaMaria Member Posts: 6</p>
<p>😞 <b>Re: EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP</b>        quote reply edit delete Posted by Susana at 2007-05-24 03:56 PM</p> <p>I agree with you Eva. First of all, I'd like to highlight that I think the job these students did is amazing. Moreover, I believe watching their video was a fantastic idea. However, as you say, Eva, the workshop has not allowed us to work deeply with the video. I mean, as Imma says, we all agree and then there was no discussion. However, and as I said before, I think watching this final product was a good idea.</p>	<p>Susana Member Posts: 34</p>

Figure 4. Extracts of students' feedback on the work done

Most of the learning occurred after the completion of the virtual activities, when students, in class and at home, started designing their own projects, for which received feedback from their teacher throughout the process. As teachers, we need to reflect upon why the video case study only acted as a springboard for learning. Ball (1994) argues that "what people learn from video case studies is influenced both by what they bring to the experience and by how they are engaged while viewing the case." In this case, the university teacher did not take part in the students' forums nor did she prepare any tasks to help her learners view the video critically, which might have encouraged more discussion and saved problems in the stage in which students were asked to design their own projects. This implies that as teachers we still need to come to the terms with the complexity of adopting a blended-learning methodology. So a lesson is learnt.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our paper has presented an experience in which case methodology was used in a TEFL course to help students learn how to design projects. Student-teachers viewed a video (the end product of a primary school project) and in groups of four they had to reflect upon how the primary teacher had planned the project (linguistic contents, non-linguistic contents, outcomes, activities). Then new groups of four were formed (groups of experts), each containing one member of each previous group, and together they had to fill in a planning grid to sketch the possible teaching plan to obtain such an end product (the video). The first discussion was done online, through a forum on a virtual classroom in which the students could also access the video file, whereas the outcomes of such task were later discussed, face-to-face, with the whole TEFL group and her teacher. Both activities served as a model for the design of a new project, an assessment task for the TEFL course.

The analysis of the texts posted in the forum reveal that although student-teachers feel the task of viewing a video generated learning, they were not able to produce much discussion on

the actual planning of videos. Relevant issues had to be dealt with in class when the teacher trainer monitored their trainees' process of designing their own projects. Talley (2002) claims that "although the content of these online video cases is important, even more important perhaps are some ways that these cases are actually used in pre-service instruction." In this case, the students might have engaged in deeper lines of thought if they had been guided towards viewing the video from a critical positioning.

Parallel to this, we have to conclude that, as Cannings & Talley (2002) suggests, "the video is a tool to promote Reflection-in-action but it must be accompanied by face-to-face or online chat discussions. The ideal Triad: (a) class lecture, video case study, online communication with students."

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## USEFUL LINKS

As can be seen by the screenshots, the cases were given a virtual site for discussion and reflection in another European project (MICaLL: Moderating Intercultural Communication and Language Learning 118762-NL-2004-1-NL-Comenius-C2.1).