

Promotional Video Production in a Foreign Language Course

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Abstract: *Multimedia equipment enables second language (L2) instructors to explore innovative course approaches, but such technologies are sometimes adapted with few pedagogical considerations. For optimal results, it is important to adapt multimedia technologies in a task-based activity whereby the resulting product delivers meaningful L2 content of practical value in the real world. This article describes a course project in which a group of intermediate Japanese language learners at the University of Arkansas produced the university's promotional video in the target language. Students wrote and narrated a script that described features of the university's popular colleges and facilities, videotaped the scenes on campus, and edited the recordings into a three-minute Japanese promotional video with English subtitles. The complete promotional video was later uploaded for viewing on the WorldWide Web. By employing user-friendly computer software, the students produced a promotional video of substantial real-life value and of near-professional audiovisual quality. Pedagogically, this video serves not only as a showcase of the learners' L2 skills but as a motivational tool for students with limited opportunities to use their target language.*

Introduction

Although commercially available multimedia technologies increase the potential for innovative instruction in foreign/second language instruction, these applications are mainly directed to receptive (as opposed to interpretive) skills. To maximize pedagogical benefits, the appropriate use of multimedia equipment as a medium for the learners' active L2 production should be explored. Additionally, producing a work of practical value would not only challenge the participating students as L2 learners but also reward them as contributors to the real world.

This study discusses a technology-based project as a requirement for a traditional intermediate Japanese course at the University of Arkansas. In this project, the students worked in a small group to produce the university's promotional video in the target language, thus enhancing their Japanese language skills and promoting the university and Japanese language program to the public. Video recordings with their L2 narration were digitally edited with a computer application into a complete presentation. This promotional video was subtitled in English with the same computer application so that it could be presented to the English-speaking audience.

This article first reviews studies that are relevant to the pedagogical rationale of this course project. After these reviews, the article describes the procedures and equipment used in the process and evaluates the results and their pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Background

Project-based Curriculum

Defined as a "theme and task-centred mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants" (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 160), project work in L2 courses has been drawing considerable attention from numerous researchers.

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