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TESOL AFTER YOUTUBE: FANSUBBING AND INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development and globalization of social media services such as YouTube has opened up new opportunities for informal learning, which are especially valuable to young English language learners in Asia, where opportunities for face-face-interaction with English-speakers have traditionally been limited. This exploratory study investigated language-related interactions in users' comments on a fansubbed video-clip of the 2008 Olympics song, *Beijing Welcomes You*（北京歡迎你）, from the perspective of informal teaching and learning. The study found evidence of potential teaching and learning episodes related to (a) translation, (b) language usage, (c) relationships between language and culture, and (b) teaching and learning processes, and pointed to several interesting avenues for further research on informal language teaching and learning in globalized online spaces.

Key Words: informal language learning, online language learning, fansubbing, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

Wherever there is relatively free access to the Internet, young people's engagement with language and literacy is changing rapidly. Much of the research in this area comes from the field of the New Literacies Studies and focuses on practices associated with Web 2.0, or the new digital media technologies that have allowed multimedia web sites that rely on user-generated content, such as YouTube, to grow exponentially since the turn of the century (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Davies & Merchant, 2009; Drotner, 2008; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). Drotner (2008, p. 19) notes that new digital media 'impact on social relations in that they serve to widen users' options of creation, communication and

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participation across space, and these option become increasingly globalized'. Digital media have also been associated with new kinds of learning. Summing up the findings of a suite of projects investigating new media use among US youth, Ito et al. (2010) conclude that 'the digital world lowers barriers to self-directed learning'; learning with new media is 'largely self-directed, and the outcome emerges through exploration, in contrast to classroom learning that is oriented toward set, predefined goals' (2). Although their study does not directly address issues of multilingualism, Ito et al. (2010) describe several multilingual digital literacy practices, including 'fansubbing', or amateur subtitling of videos and their distribution through the Internet, which is the topic of this paper.

The distinction between classroom learning and the largely self-directed learning that takes place in the digital world is an important one in the context of TESOL, because so many learners of English are now engaged in online communication using English alongside their first languages. In a study in Finland, for example, where the vast majority of households now have ready access to the Internet, Leppänen, Pitkänen-Huhta, Piirainen-Marsh, Nikula, and Peuronen (2009) found that young people often extend hobbies and interests by using the Internet to access information and make contact with people who share their interests outside Finland. Young people's use of new media, they write, 'forms an integral part of their local, personal, and social lives' and 'is accompanied with a constant flow of English' (1087). In a recent review of uses of the Internet in language teaching and learning, Thorne, Black, and Sykes (2009) separate this kind of online activity from online activities organized by teachers and schools, using the term 'entirely out-of-school noninstitutional realms of freely chosen digital engagement' (p. 802).

Given an assumption that exposure to a foreign language enhances competence, engagement with online English language texts is likely to foster incidental learning, or learning that occurs without the learner intentionally studying the language. Empirical evidence for incidental learning is notoriously difficult to produce, however, and an alternative approach is to seek evidence of explicit teaching and learning processes in online texts. Following a brief review of the literature on language learning in Web 2.0 spaces, this paper will discuss data from a study of online interactions prompted by fansubbed videos posted on YouTube, in which we find evidence of teaching and learning processes of a very different kinds to those we are used to in the foreign language classroom. We conclude by reflecting on some implications of this evidence for

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future research.

GLOBALIZED ONLINE SPACES

The data discussed in this paper are taken from YouTube, which is one of a number of web sites devoted to the sharing and discussion of user-generated texts that have sprung up over the past five years or so. YouTube was founded in California in February 2005 and is currently one of the fastest growing social media services on the web. It now operates from 24 locations around the world (including Taiwan and Hong Kong), using more than 30 different language interfaces, and has an estimated 52 million active users[1]. A survey by Smith (2009, p. 560) survey suggested that Asian users 'lead the way' in the use of new social media services and according to data from the web traffic tracking service Alexa (2010), YouTube is now the fifth most visited web site in Taiwan and the third most visited in Hong Kong. Comparable text-sharing web sites that have attracted interest among language researchers include Flickr, an image sharing site founded in 2004, which claimed to host more than 5 billion images in October 2010. FanFiction.Net, a site devoted to fiction written by fans of various popular culture franchises, was founded in 1998 and claimed 2.2 million users in 2010 (with around 9 per cent located in China). World of Warcraft, an online role play game founded in 2004, claimed 11.5 million users in December 2008.

The rapid expansion of these online services has been accompanied by a process of globalization, which involves both the use of English and the interplay of English with other languages in collabaratively composed, multilingual texts. For this reason we have used the term 'globalized online spaces' to refer to sites such as YouTube (Benson & Chik, in press). Language is implicated in the use of these globalized online spaces in two main ways: first in the languages of the texts that are posted by users (videos, images and stories in the case of YouTube, Flickr and FanFiction.Net; the ongoing game 'text' in World of Warcraft) and, second, in comments that are made on these texts, either in bulletin board-type spaces on the pages that hold them or, in the case of online games, in chat rooms displayed on screen as users play. The significance of the rapid growth of these globalized online spaces for TESOL lies in the ease with which English language learners can now use English to communicate with people beyond their classrooms and localities, either by posting texts of their own or by commenting on texts posted by others.

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Although there has been relatively little research on these kinds of activities to date, a number of interesting studies have begun to appear. Studies by Lam (2000; 2004; 2006; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009) have focused on young Asian migrants to the United States, whose English literacy experiences were mediated through creation and management of web sites and participation in multilingual chat rooms. Black's (2005, 2006, 2008) research on fan fiction has shown how English language learners use comments on their stories as a resource for improving their English writing ability. More recently, Thorne has discussed language learning in World of Warcraft chat sessions in several papers, although a full report of the project has not yet been published (Thorne, 2008; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009). Lee and Barton (2009) have investigated multilingual literacy practices among Chinese and Spanish users of Flickr. For the most part, research in this area has been based on individual case studies in which the participants report experiences of language learning. Benson and Chik (in press), for example, include two language learning histories, in which university students from Hong Kong describe how using FanFiction.Net and World of Warcraft helped them to improve their English. Our current work differs from this approach in seeking evidence of language teaching and learning within online texts themselves – in this study, texts consisting of fansubbed videos posted on YouTube and the comments that accompany them.

FANSUBBING

The data discussed in this paper are related to the practice of 'fansubbing', a new literacy practice that has been subject of some research (Hatcher, 2005; Ito et al., 2010; Rush, 2009), although not yet in the field of foreign language learning. Fansubbing refers to the production of subtitled video recordings ('fansubs') and their distribution via the Internet by amateurs or fans ('fansubbers'). Fansubbers often work in well-organized international groups, who collaborate using media such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC), with individual 'staff' members playing particular roles in the translation, production and distribution process. The better organized groups have brand names and logos, and set up websites to provide fans with news and links to their work (Rush, 2009). Groups whose websites can be easily located include SARS Fansub (Korean and Japanese drama), DoReMi Fansubs (Chinese drama), and Central Anime (Japanese anime); JMusic World Fansubs produces English and German

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subtitles for Japanese music videos; Hello! Fansub subtitles music videos and TV shows of the Japanese pop group, Hello! Project.

Fansubbing involves language work and many fansubbers no doubt engage in the activity in order to improve their translation and foreign language skills. However, fansubbers themselves are a relatively small group in comparison to the much larger number of fans who watch their productions. Our interest in this study is, therefore, mainly in the discussions that take place in the texts that surround the activity of fansubbing, either in discussion forums organised by groups or in comments on fansubs posted on video sharing sites such as YouTube. YouTube fansubs are of interest here because comments can be written and read at the same time as the user is watching the video. In fansub discussion forums, there is a great deal of debate over what constitutes quality work, and fansub web sites make detailed comparisons of the quality of translation, encoding, editing, and typesetting among rival groups (Ito et al., 2010, p. 276), but there is relatively little discussion of language issues in specific fansubs. Comments on YouTube fansubs, however, are often directly related to aspects of the subtitling or the linguistic and cultural content of the video clip. In this respect, they are a potentially rich source of data on language teaching and learning.

THE STUDY

The data discussed in this paper are drawn from comments on several English fansubbed versions of the music video for the song *Beijing Welcomes You*（北京歡迎你）posted on You Tube. *Beijing Welcomes You* was produced for the 100-day countdown to the 2008 Olympic Games and featured 100 well-known artists and entertainers from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and South Korea singing in Mandarin Chinese. Fansubbed versions of the song have proved popular, with several obtaining more than 100,000 views, including versions on channels belonging to *frenchprojectstokes* (attributed to Michael Xue, 808,794 views, 2,566 comments), *AntiCnnVedio* (attributed to ltbriar, 407,536 views, 1,809 comments), and *WeiFanggg* (attributed to Wei Fang, 120,347 views, 325 comments). Although *WeiFanggg*'s version received fewer comments, it is of interest because it includes a *pinyin* transliteration of the original Mandarin Chinese lyrics, as well as the names of the artists in Chinese, English and *pinyin* as they appear in the video (Figure 1), whereas the two more popular versions have English

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subtitles only.

Although there is now also an emerging body of research on YouTube (Burgess & Green, 2009; Lange, 2008; Snickers & Vonderau, 2009), research studies addressing issues of teaching or learning are yet to appear. There is also a view that YouTube lacks educational potential, because of the poor quality of popular YouTube videos (Juhasz, 2009). This assumption is belied by the large quantity of explicitly educational video material available on YouTube. In this study, however, we are more concerned with evidence of the informal teaching and learning that occurs when video clips do not have a transparently educational purpose. Although teaching may not be the intention of those who post them, the aim of this study is to seek evidence in comments that users do, in fact, learn something from these video clips, as well as further evidence of teaching and learning in interactions within the comments that may be indirectly related to the video clip.

The basic unit on YouTube is a web page built around a video clip, which includes viewers' comments, buttons to 'favourite' or rate the clip and individual comments, statistical information on viewers, tools for manipulating the video clip and comments, links to video responses and related clips, and advertisements. Figure 1, a screenshot of the page on which *WeiFanggg*'s fansub appears, shows that the video-clip itself occupies a relatively small portion of the screen. Several sections of the screen are also expandable, including the video clip and the comments box on the bottom left hand corner, which can be opened to display all the comments posted. Our perspective on YouTube, therefore, is to view it not simply as a location for storing and viewing video clips (although these are clearly its most important functions), but as a complex, multimodal and collaboratively authored text.

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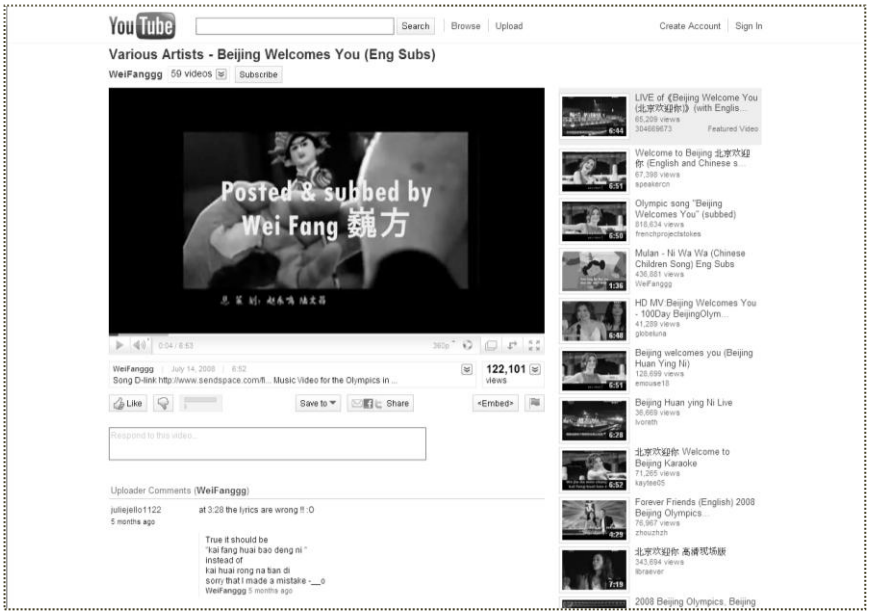

Figure 1. Fansubbed video on a YouTube page

Our main focus in this paper is on viewers' comments, which are of various kinds. Most comments are direct responses to the video clip and receive no follow up from other users. Comments appear in reverse chronological order, with the most recent comments appearing at the top. When other users follow up on a comment, they either post a new comment (which appears above the original) or post a 'response' (which appears below it in the style of a bulletin board threaded discussion). This allows us to identify interactionally related groups of comments, for which we use the term 'episodes' here. Many comments are simple evaluations of the video clip, but others are more informative in that they provide information or opinion that adds to the collaboratively authored text. Informative comments of these kinds often furnish evidence of teaching or learning. There is also often evidence of teaching and, occasionally, uptake of learning in interactionally related episodes.

The study that we report here was essentially exploratory and conducted mainly in order to evaluate whether there was something to be discovered about language teaching and learning in comments on YouTube fansubs. The research approach also drew on the emerging field

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of 'online' or 'virtual' ethnography' (Crichton & Kinash, 2003; Garcia et al., 2009; Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2000), which is comparable to 'real world' ethnography in that involves detached study of pre-existing 'sites' that the researchers visit as 'outsiders' (Garcia et al., 2009, p. 54). Observation is a characteristic method of online ethnography, which can be conducted either in real time or, as in this study, through examination of historical records of observable interactions.

The focal video-clips used as data sources, were initially identified during a search for fansubs on YouTube and selected for further investigation because of the large number of views and comments they had received. All of the comments on the three selected clips were downloaded and read carefully. Comments that had no evident relationship to language teaching and learning were then discarded, following Kozinets's (2002) observation that due to the 'casual' nature of social media interactions, researchers should 'save their most intense analytical efforts for the primarily informational and on-topic messages' (p. 64). The data set that remained consisted of language teaching and learning-related episodes consisting either of single, isolated comments or groups of three to four interactionally related comments. One point to note about YouTube videos and comments is that their sources are indicated by usernames, which can be tracked back to user profiles. These profiles may include personal information, although many do not and in those that do, the information may be deliberately misleading. We are, therefore, unable to comment on the identities of participants beyond what can be inferred from the comments themselves. YouTube pages include a map which indicates the geographical distribution of viewers, which in the case of the *Beijing Welcomes You* videos shows that they are concentrated in China and Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent in North America, Europe and Australasia. Our impression is that those who leave language-related comments are globally distributed and, primarily, Chinese speakers of English or English-speaking learners of Chinese, although this is no more than an impression based on the content of the comments.

In total, 125 language teaching and learning-related episodes were identified (made up of 239 separate comments). These episodes were then reread and discussed by the researchers, who identified four categories related to (i) Chinese-English translation (43 episodes, 66 comments), (ii) English or Chinese language usage (8 episodes, 23 comments), (3) relationships between language and culture (21 episodes, 59 comments), and (4) language learning and teaching (53 episodes, 91 comments).

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Below we present a selection of these episodes to exemplify each category.

FINDINGS

Discussing Translation

One of the two most frequently occurring categories of language-related episodes concerned the quality and specific features of the translations provided in the subtitles. These included a large number of comments either praising or criticising the translation as a whole. Other comments focused on specific features. Extract 1 begins with a general criticism from *blusnow*, which is followed up by a critical comment from *yesman3465* offering alternative translations for two lines of the song. The comment in Extract 2 frames an alternative translation within a more positive evaluation of the translation as a whole.

Extract 1: Accurate or poetic?

blusnow: does any1 think the translation on this thing is neither accurate nor poetic or whatever?
i mean, the translations is not literal or by meanin....what is up w/ that?

yesman3465: no some of the translation is wrong sorry to say but when its “miracles for thoses daring to try” it should be with courage there will be miracles and “under the sky everyone be our guest so just be at home” it should be skys big the earths big filled with friends please don't hold back to enjoy your selfs

Extract 2: ‘Flow’ or ‘dynamism’?

zacjay89: Hey! Thanks for posting this. :)
Great work with the subs. Chinese to English translations are not easy! :x There’s this part in the chorus - 流动中的魅力... where 流动中 is translated to ‘flow’. I was just wondering whether ‘dynamism’ would be a better translation? The beauty of dynamism or something. This is so awesome. I love the Chinese language. This has also introduced me to some really cool Chinese singers! I'll have to look into them : D

Extract 3 is one of a number of exchanges concerning the translation

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of the title of the song as 'Welcome to Beijing', rather than 'Beijing Welcomes You'. The first comment asks whether this is a grammatical error, while the second responds by making a distinction between 'literal' and 'free' translations.

> Extract 3: Welcome to Beijing?
>
> Veneon18: is the subtittles rite? :S Seems abit ackward.. beijing huan ying ni.. doesnt it meant Beijing Welcomes u? but the subtittle says, welcome to Beijing. Isnt is a grammar error? Correct me if I'm wrong.
>
> yangkangshi: Both "Beijing welcomes you" and "Welcome to Beijing" are correct. The former one is literal translation, the latter is free translation.
>
> Veneon18: good point dere. XD Thx

Comments of this kind may well serve as an occasion for learning for the fansubbers themselves. In this sense, they are analogous to the kinds of comments that writers of fan fiction receive on their work (Black, 2005, 2006, 2008), although the style of criticism on YouTube often appears to be harsher than that of fan fiction communities, as Extract 1 illustrates. We also note that, whereas *Zacjay89*'s comment in Extract 2 is directly addressed to the fansubber who posted the video clip, those in Extracts 1 and 3 are not, which suggests that the comments sections on YouTube pages may function as an open area for discussion and learning centred on the posted video-clip.

Discussing Usage

Extracts 4 and 5 are among several in which a linguistic point raised by one viewer is taken up others so that discussion moves beyond translation to language usage more generally. In Extract 4 four different commenters join a discussion on Chinese and English pronunciation, prompted by *PullSomeTuber*'s observation that, unlike Americans, the singers in the video pronounce the *j* in the word *Beijing* 'correctly'. The second commenter suggests that the 'french j' may just be the American pronunciation. The third and fourth, take up the question of how best to describe the Chinese pronunciation of *j*, suggesting that it is like the *j* in *jingle* but 'without the act of pouting' or 'with a somewhat hard e sound'.

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Extract 4: Pronouncing Beijing

PullSomeTuber: sounds like these Chinese folk are pronouncing Beijing correctly. Why do all the Americans here pronounce the j like a french j. It's jing like jingle bells, right?

ForceUniverse: It's just our own dialect.
Or, whoever pronounced the name first here in America probably said it wrong, and everyone started saying it like he/she did... :P

VivifishYoung: not very accurately. jingle is pronounced as 'dg' for 'j', but in chinese it is pronounced without the act of pouting.

flyhighfir: it doesn't seem to be jing as in jingle bells. i think it's more like jing with a somewhat hard e sound....? i dunno hard to explain. you can hear it if you listen carefully

Extract 5, which appears to be an exchange between a native and a non-native speaker of English arises from a misunderstanding. The comments that open the exchange are rather typical of YouTube comments on music videos. While many comments praise the video, the singer or the song, a smaller number criticize it and are in turn criticized for 'hating' by other users. In this case, *310796* evidently misinterprets *Brokenxstitches* 'this song is the shit' as hating and comes back with a typical response, '[if you don't like the song], 'then why are u listening?'. *Brokenxstitches* responds with a forceful explanation of the difference between 'the shit' and 'shit', framed by 'unless you don't know English' and 'don't accuse people when its actually you who misunderstood'. *310796* responds with an apology ('kk' being an onomatopoeia used in Japanese manga and anime to represent an embarrassed laugh). *Brokenxstitches* then thanks *310796* for his apology and adds his own apology 'for being so mean'. *310796* concludes by writing that he 'didn't take it from the heart'.

Extract 5: 'This song is the shit'

Brokenxstitches: this song is the shit.:)

310796: then why are u listening?

Brokenxstitches: um...unless you dont know english..

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> i said "this song is the shit"
> the shit means its really good -.- not this song is shit.
> dont accuse people when its actually you who misunderstood
>
> 310796: kk sorry im the wrong one!!!!
>
> Brokenxstitches: yes sorry for being so mean to you in the earlier post. LOL ok :) thanks for noticing your "wrong" :P haha peace.
>
> 310796: its fine i didnt take it from the heart

A point worth noting about Extracts 4 and 5 concerns the way that language learning episodes can be prompted by incidents in the video that are unrelated to the subtitling or comments from other users. Again the video clip seems to create a context for wider discussion of language issues.

Discussing Language and Culture

A further movement beyond discussion of translations in the subtitles involves broad discussions of language and culture that are triggered off either by some element in the video-clip or simply the fact that it is located in the domain of Chinese-English translation. In Extract 6, the trigger is a moment in the video in which one of the singers places a red paper with the Chinese character 福, meaning 'good fortune', on a door (Figure 2). This represents a traditional Chinese New Year custom and, following tradition, the character is placed upside down, so that the good fortune will flow through the door. A number of commenters, however, suggested that this must have been a mistake, prompting the kind of explanation that appears in Extract 6, in which *ciaolyre* teaches *thansksnubby* both the name and meaning of the character and the name and meaning of the cultural practice. As the comment is, in fact, directed to anyone who cares to read it, it can be seen as a complement to the fansubbed video, which functions as a kind of footnote to the video itself.

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Figure 2. Placing the character 福 'upside down'

Extract 6: Upside down?

thanksnubby: lol he put it upside down 3:44

Ciaolyre: It's done by purpose
the word is fu, which means good fortune /hapiness
when we put it upside down, we say it's
fudao
and dao=upside down
but there is a homonym dao(another dao that sounds the same, though not written the same way and has a different meaning), that means to happen/to come
so fudao=fu upside down= fu to happen, to come
so the meaning of put it upside down is actually to want the good fortune to come into the house (we usually put the upside down fu on the main door)

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Extracts 7 and 8 are much more loosely related to the video and appear to be triggered simply by the fact that it mediates an experience of bilingualism for viewers. Extract 7 takes the form of a chain of comments by different users, which leads from *suiyutlong*'s comment that he/she would like to know Mandarin Chinese as well as Cantonese to a discussion of the relative size of the gap between Mandarin/Cantonese and Spanish/English and concludes with a comment on the typology of European languages.

Extract 7: Mandarin/Cantonese: Spanish/English

siuyutlong: I hate the fact that I only know Cantonese, I want to know Mando aswell!

KSH2006: @siuyutlong
It shouldn't be too hard. Considering how Cantonese and Mandarin is similar to each other. :P

Nejjidragon: That's like saying it shouldn't be too hard to lean Spanish because Spanish and English are both romantic languages. They have similarities, but in the end, they are two totally different dialects

KSH2006: You're right, but I only said they are similar. Nothing more nothing less.

Brashne01: A little thing wrong with your statement.
English is a Germanic Language, not Romance. It IS in fact highly influenced by the romantic language that it's often mistaken as one. ;)

The comments in Extract 8 also focus on differences between languages and the relative difficulty of learning them in a more general way.

Extract 8: Learning English and Chinese

Asdjfh55: English as a language is suitable to make regulations, laws. Since It's clear, simple, with various tenses. Chines language, on the other hand, been used for thousands of years is graceful and poetic. Best for literature

DonDragonheart: @asdjfh55

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> Agreed!
> If one lives in a English-speaking country for 30 yrs, he can understand every single English sentence; if one lives in China for 20yrs though, he can still be puzzled by countless Chinese expressions. The morale is: English is a very simple language ideal 4 communications at world stage,while Chinese (written form) is a highly refined "high-tech" product of 5000 yrs history, thus it's majestic,extremely flexible(complicated but also can be simple when needed) and cultured.
>
> iTouchin: If i had to compare chinese to any english related language id say it would amount to latin or greek as these are some of the languages that the english language stems from and of course chinese as a whole is hard to master or impossible really for a single person to do there are cantonese and mandarin and then there are different dialects that are also very important for example the word play in mandarin or cantonese is wan while in another dialect its saa and theres even more so yes its hard

Arguably, there is no evidence of language teaching or learning in Extracts 7 and 8. However, there is some evidence of a possible enhancement of language awareness, or the broader context of knowledge of language and culture in which language learning takes place. These two extracts are also somewhat unusual in the data in two respects: first, the length of the comments and, second, the distance from the video they are commenting on. This suggests that some YouTube users, at least, see comments as a site for relatively deep discussion of cultural issues that surround video-clips.

Discussing Language Learning and Teaching

The fourth, and most frequent, category of language-related comments, consists of those that refer explicitly to experiences of language learning or teaching. In addition to writing comments on videos and discussing issues surrounding them, YouTube commenters often leave comments that connect the video in some way to their personal experiences, and the *Beijing Welcomes You* fansubs appear to invoke language teaching and learning as especially relevant domains of personal experience. The three separate comments in Extract 9 relate to *WeiFanggg's* version of the video which includes pinyin transliteration of the Mandarin lyrics and the names

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of the singers, in addition to English subtitles. The first comment thanks *WeiFanggg* for the pinyin subtitles, pointing out that they will be appreciated by people who want to sing the song, but do not read Chinese. The second, without referring to the pinyin, explains that he/she had actually learned the song for a Mandarin class, while the third, a teacher, again thanks *WeiFanggg* for the pinyin and explains that she uses the video in her classes.

Extract 9: Thank you for the pinyin.

bsantoso111: thank you to Wen Fang for both the english and ping ying translation with singer name on top..keep up the fab work...much appreciated for those who wish to sing them but cannot read chinese.

heavenly14: this is a beautiful song. I have to learn it for a Mandirin class and i love it! The language is so cool and so is the country. I thought the olympics was amazing. This song is great and i like the meaning of it, i mean all the countries coming together. Thats what we do a the olympics. we all come together in competion and enjoy ourselves. ^^ anyways thanks for uploading 5/5 -faves-

Chunxia62: Thank you for the English translations and the PINYIN. I use this video to teach my students in NY.

The chain of comments in Extract 10 works somewhat differently, in that it develops from *oxTwilightxo100*'s comment that he/she is learning Chinese at school to a Chinese 'mini-lesson' on the meaning and usage of the Chinese greeting *ni hao*.

Extract 10: A Chinese lesson

oxTwilightxo100: ni hao`..that means hello in chinese im takn chinese in school

fredastairefan: Me too!!! ... Hi hao ma? Wo hen hao!

francis2383: hmmm hi HI must be Ni

diaryanjo: uh!! noo!! Ni hao translated actually means you good? Ni means you.....Hao means good!!! but it is mostly used to regard a person saying hello.....any more questions?? concerns?? i'm not chinese but i am still half!! ish..

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Although comments referring to language learning and teaching are relatively few, they are significant because they provide us with some evidence that fansubs are used as resource for language learning, and even language teaching. Fansubbers do not necessarily create and post fansubs for these purposes, which emerge only in the process of viewing and commenting on them.

DISCUSSION

The study that we have reported had the limited aim of investigating whether there is anything of relevance to language teaching and learning to be discovered in comments on a fansubbed video posted on YouTube. On the evidence of the comments that we found, our answer would be 'yes'. The significant feature of the *Beijing Welcomes You* fansubs, in this respect, seems to be that they place language, language learning and language teaching 'on the agenda' as topics that can legitimately be raised in comments. The language work that goes into the subtitling of the video appears to bring out its counterpart in the language work that goes into comments. This is an interesting point, because there can be no prior assumptions about the kinds of comments that can be made on YouTube videos, which are conditioned both by the content of the video and by the ongoing text of the comments themselves. What we have observed in the case of the *Beijing Welcomes You* fansubs are comments that are directly related to the language content of the video, but also a broader range of comments on issues of language usage, language and culture, and language teaching and learning that appear to be prompted by the language and cultural content of the video and the language of the subtitles. Whether or not the same categories of comments would be found for other videos is a moot point. We believe that videos involving multilingual language work are liable to prompt language-related comments in a general sense, but that the specific types of comments are likely to be conditioned by the specific content of the video that sets the context for them.

One of the more problematic issues to arise from this study, however, concerns the sense in which it can reasonably be said that language-related comments imply language teaching and learning. Certainly, there is clear evidence of learning from the subtitled video in the explicit statements in Extract 9. There is also evidence of language teaching in, for example, Extracts 1, 3 and 5. But there is also a sense in which 'teaching' implies

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that someone has been 'taught', which is often difficult to establish without knowing who has actually read the comments. In Extracts 3 and 5, there is some evidence of uptake of teaching in comments acknowledging learning ('good point dere', 'sorry I'm the wrong one'), but this is in fact rare. Extract 1 shows a more typical pattern in which one commenter raises a question and a second responds with relevant information, but there is no third turn to acknowledge the response, or even to tell us whether the first commenter saw it. This perhaps misses the point, however, that learning can be inferred from the presence of episodes that contain the potential for learning. We can infer, for example, that users who leave comments thanking the fansubber for the subtitling are likely to have learned something from it. Teaching and learning episodes are also placed on public display, such that episodes such as those in Extracts 1, 3 and 5 are made available as resources for learning for viewers who read comments but do not comment themselves. Whether we can observe this or not, the comments that we have identified certainly contain a good deal of material for learning.

Future research may, therefore, focus more on detailed analysis of the discourse of comments, using approaches such as Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Baldry & Thibault, 2006), Computer-mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring, 2001), and Conversation Analysis (Seedhouse, 2005). Conversation Analysis techniques have recently been used to examine how language learning is interactionally accomplished through face-to-face talk and Seedhouse (2005) has observed that technology-based interaction is a likely growth area for this research. Ultimately, however, it is difficult to obtain direct and specific evidence of language learning in any naturalistic context, and analysis of on-line texts may serve best as a complement to case study approaches of individuals and the learning they report from their engagement with multimodal texts in globalized online spaces.

This study also suggests avenues of research related to several ways in which language teaching and learning related interactions in globalized online spaces differ from the kinds of interactions we are used to in the classroom. First, the multimodality of YouTube pages appears to be especially relevant to the interactions we have observed, in which a video-clip serves as a focal point for a variety of comments and interactions that are more or less closely related to the linguistic and cultural content of the video. Second, the interactions that we have observed are often driven by a kind of 'language exchange' in which

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English and Chinese speakers help each other to learn each other's language. The bilingualism of the video-clip and multilingualism within comments also seems to be important to this: although most comments were posted in English, Chinese characters and pinyin were also used. The comments also included a request for Spanish subtitles, and a Czech transliteration of the Chinese lyrics of the song. Third, we have observed episodes in which there is direct attention to language forms, but also episodes in which there is relatively deep discussion of issues concerning languages and cultures (e.g., Extracts 7 and 8). Last, language-related interactions have an informal and playful character and are often characterized by a direct style of correction and expressing opinion that may be distinctive to YouTube. Highly informal and playful episodes also often contain a serious teaching/learning point (e.g., in Extract 5, 6 and 10). These are all interesting avenues to pursue both through studies of other types of YouTube video, and in comparison with other social media platforms. The direct style of interaction observed in Extracts 5, 6 and 10, for example, appears to be very different to the more polite and mutually supportive styles observed on Flickr (Lee & Barton, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The evidence that we have presented in this exploratory paper is, no doubt, no more that the tip of an iceberg that will be further revealed through future research. If we are to speculate on its implications, however, we would suggest that the key issues raised concern not only the emergence of new spaces for language teaching and learning, but also the emergence of new configurations of language teaching and learning practices in areas such as Taiwan and other parts of Asia where learners have traditionally lacked opportunities to use the foreign languages they are learning, while they are learning them. Many of our assumptions about English language teaching in Asia, for example, are based on an assumption that the students lack concurrent opportunities to use English outside the classroom are learning English for use later in their lives. In this context, Thorne (2008, p. 307) has suggested that 'within language education, Internet-mediated communication is no longer a proxy activity but is itself the real thing', by which he means that participation in Internet-mediated communication is increasingly becoming a purpose for language learning, in which learners can engage at the same time as they are learning it. If it is indeed the case that concurrent English language

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learning and use are becoming the norm around the world, TESOL practitioners will face important challenges in the coming years, both in relation to what and how we teach in the classroom and in relation to how we articulate students in-class activities with their out-of-class language learning and use.

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NOTES

1. A Google search for <site:www.youtube.com/user> generates a list of YouTube channels, or user accounts that are required in order to upload a video or comment on videos uploaded by others.
2. This study was sponsored by the Centre for Popular Culture and Education at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

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