WEB-ENHANCED LEARNING WITH *YOUTUBE*

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ABSTRACT

Effectively integrating the Internet into a traditional classroom that does not have individual access to a computer is a challenge to many teachers. However, according to a recent Nielsen Company report (2007), teenagers and people in their twenties in Taiwan, only lag behind South Korea in a global survey of the frequency of internet usage. Obviously, young people love using the Internet, but how can this resource be effectively used in a primarily face-to-face English language learning environment. This study focused on the use of the Internet and in particular the website, *Youtube*, in an EFL classroom taking a constructivist approach to language learning. The students in this research were learning English through the study of rock and roll music. The study investigated whether the students in such a course valued the use of the Internet and small group collaborative discussion in a blended learning, constructivist setting in the classroom. The study further investigated what the students perceived as the best way to organize and integrate internet search activities and group discussion in the classroom. Most of the students reported that they liked using the Internet in the classroom, and that interacting with a website such as *Youtube* and with their classmates was very useful in helping them develop their English language ability, and in gaining general music knowledge. A majority of the students preferred to search on the Internet first and then discuss ideas afterwards for a group project culminating in a multimedia presentation of a particular feature in rock music. Combining internet searches on *Youtube* and other related websites with group collaboration was considered a good use of class time that significantly helped the students organize their multimedia presentations in English.

Key Words: blended learning, collaboration, constructivism, Internet, rock and roll music, *Youtube*, web-enhanced learning

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INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

The research in this study was carried out in an English for Special Purposes (ESP) course where the students were learning English through the study of rock and roll music in its various forms. The primary use of the Internet and the Web in the course was accessing and searching on the website, *Youtube* ("*Youtube*," 2007). This is a video-sharing website where users can view, upload, and share video clips in various categories, including music videos. Little research has been done on the pedagogical applications of using the music videos on *Youtube* in the EFL classroom, so an important aspect of this paper was to investigate the effectiveness of incorporating this non-EFL specific web site into the classroom where a constructivist-learning environment was encouraged.

For teachers trying to provide a constructivist-learning environment for their students, recent studies (Felix, 2002; Fernández, 2007; Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003) have suggested that the integration of the Internet into the classroom can have a positive effect on language learning. Felix (2005) argued that the learning theories of Jean Piaget's cognitive constructivism and Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism are both helpful in understanding how students construct knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) placed an emphasis on social interaction in a socially and culturally situated context as a way to help us understand how people construct knowledge. Lantolf (2000) showed that student peers interaction is thought to be the greatest impetus to knowledge construction with additional assistance coming from interaction with a teacher and other tools such as the Internet. Knowledge construction in this paper is considered more of a shared mediated process of interaction among student peers and consequently owes more to the learning theories of Lev Vygotsky than those of Jean Piaget. The paper illustrates that the use of the Web in the classroom can be an effective platform for constructivist approaches in teaching.

Most universities in Taiwan have internet access in the classroom or some kind of access to a multi-media / computer lab or center (Wu, 2004, p. 659). The students in Taiwan spend a large amount of time on-line and this iGeneration (Oakley, 2005), or internet generation, a term used to describe those who were born in the late 1980s to the early 1990s have spent most of their formative years during the rise of the World Wide Web. These digital natives (Prensky, 2001) present a challenge to language teachers, most of whom are digital immigrants who have

adopted technology later in life. The challenge consists of how to focus students' interest in the Internet to enhance the language learning experience and to help teachers feel comfortable with using this technological tool in the classroom.

The Internet can provide authenticity, interaction, and empowerment (Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000). However, it can also be a chaotic, unstructured place that poses a pedagogical challenge. The success or failure of using the Internet in the classroom usually depends on sound teaching practices (Davis, 2006). This paper includes some group strategies and procedures for effectively integrating the Web into the English Foreign Language classroom in a constructivist-learning environment in which the students are encouraged to construct their own knowledge. The strategies were applied to a student group collaborative project to help utilize the authenticity of the Web, to promote peer student interaction in a way that increases language use and general knowledge construction, and to encourage greater learner autonomy.

The research was student-focused and designed to assist a teacher in understanding the student perspective on using the Web and group collaborative activities in the classroom in a university setting in Taiwan. Feedback from the students on the use of the website *Youtube* and different group organizational strategies, in both quantitative and qualitative form, was collected and analyzed. The paper discusses whether the students in Taiwan value the use of the Internet, especially the website *Youtube*, in the classroom, what the students feel about using group work in the class, and how best to organize this group work.

Language Learning and Technology

The literature on language learning and technology in learning over the past fifteen years has featured a trend away from more static transmission models of knowledge and skill acquisition based on traditional cognitive learning approaches to more interactional approaches that draw upon situated learning and social cognition theories (Felix, 2002, p. 6).

These newer learning approaches are categorized by Felix as constructivist, problem solving, and collaborative learning approaches and look upon the teacher more as a facilitator and guide in the classroom rather than as a repository of knowledge. Constructivist approaches draw strongly from the sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978). His learning theory emphasizes the role of social interaction on learning. In Vygotsky's sociocultural theory it is thought that higher

human mental functions such as rational thought and learning originate in social activity (Johnson, 2004). James P. Lantolf (2000) elaborated on this by stating that:

> Sociocultural theory holds that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with the specific experiences we have with the artifacts produced by our ancestors and by our contemporaries. (p. 79)

These artifacts produced by our ancestors include such simple things as paper and pencils to complex things like computers and especially, language (Lantolf, 2000). A central tenet of sociocultural theory, as described by Lantolf, is that higher mental functions are mediated by learners with symbolic tools such as numbers, music, art, and above all, language through interaction with their social and physical environments. In other words, knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is the result of shared, rather than individual experiences (Simina & Hamel, 2005, p. 219) that is mediated through such cultural artifacts as language, computers, and more recently, the Internet (Lantolf, 2000; Thorne, 2006).

Some recent research (Felix, 2001, 2002; Fernández, 2007; Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003) based on constructivist learning approaches have given support to the view that the Internet and the Web can be a motivating and effective tool to help students increase their language knowledge. Felix's (2002, p. 3) studies in Australia suggested that students were receptive to on-line learning, especially as an add-on to face-to-face teaching and especially when the teacher was able to set up fairly authentic learning tasks through the Web in which both the process and the goals were stimulating and engaging. Felix (p. 4), in an extensive survey given to 208 students at tertiary, secondary, and primary level found that the preferred mode of access to web-based learning was within face-to-face teaching in class.

Taylor and Gitsaki (2003) in a study of Japanese learners in an English conversation course, where the students primarily accessed information on the Web outside the classroom to help them complete a task, found that the students considered the Web to be "a valuable learning tool and was effective in helping them learn more about the English culture" (p. 283). Taylor and Gitsaki's study also reported that the students in their web-enhanced course felt that using the web made

their course more interesting, allowed them to access current information, and was a stimulus in helping them to talk to their classmates more. The study further reported that the students liked the fact that they spent more time practicing their English and had more communication with their teacher because of the use of the Web in their conversation course.

Fernández's study (2007) in Spain looked at a hybrid/blended learning approach where teachers and students combined online with face-to-face activities to achieve stated goals. The study, in particular, looked at the use of WebQuests, defined by March (2003) as:

> a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students' investigation of a central, open-ended question, development of individual expertise and participation in a final group process that attempts to transform new acquired information into a more sophisticated understanding. (p. 43)

According to Simina and Hamel (2005), WebQuests fit into a social-constuctivist learning context that "engage learners in authentic tasks that are meaningful to them" and "through collaboration and social interaction, they are exposed to multiple representations and exchange interpretations that enhance second language acquisition" (p. 224).

Fernández's study (p. 5) found that the students enjoyed gathering information from the Web and working with authentic material. The students preferred to work on the Web inside rather than outside the classroom and they felt using WebQuests significantly helped them in learning English. The study further revealed that when the students are largely responsible for constructing their own knowledge in an inquiry-oriented activity with authentic material such as found on the Web, it leads to an emphasis on mutual help and a greater feeling of learning and increase in knowledge.

Collaborative Learning

Collaboration in the classroom, often taking the form of small group oral interaction in the target language, has been shown to be an effective method to achieve successful second language acquisition (Chen, 2004). All of the studies in the preceding section on language learning and technology encouraged collaboration among peers and with the teacher utilizing the Web to achieve a task goal. Collaborative learning,

emphasizing mutual help, is founded upon the ideas of social constructivism (Oxford, 1997). Naughton (2006) pointed out that the "theoretical and empirical justification for small group oral interaction can be found within both traditional second language acquisition research (input, interaction, and output) and sociocultural theory" (p. 169). Little (2007) stated that success in language teaching "is governed by three interacting principles: learner involvement, learner reflection, and target language use" (p. 23). The most important factor in implementing the principle of target language use (using the target language as the medium with which all classroom activities are conducted), according to Little, was the "effective use of group work" (p. 25).

Collaborative learning in small groups can be a useful motivational way to organize an English language class. Dörnyei (1994) showed that there was consistent evidence that cooperative small group interaction in the classroom was more powerful in promoting intrinsic motivation than competitive or individualistic learning because it fosters "less anxiety, greater task involvement, and a more positive emotional tone" (p. 279). Chen (2004, p 264), in a study in Taiwan, said that through small group oral interaction, the language students in the class were able to have positive pressure and encouragement from their peers which motivated the students to solve problems together and successfully complete their project work. Lantolf (2000) reported that research had shown that learners could benefit "from interacting with either more, or less, proficient peers" (p. 84). Lantolf further reported on the role of teachers in collaborative learning. Research cited by Lantolf showed that learners at some point require mediation, which can mostly be provided by peers although "during peer interactions, teacher mediation can be especially effective" (p. 84).

THE STUDY

Rationale of the Study

Some teachers are reluctant to use class time on the Web because of its perceived ineffective educational value (Davis, 2006). This study had the students begin work on a group multimedia project by having them do internet searches on the website *Youtube* and other websites and engage in small group collaborative discussion in the classroom. This researcher was curious to learn the extent the students in Taiwan might

value the use of class time to go on the Web, especially at one of the most popular sites, *Youtube*. This site has millions of short videos, mostly in English, which potentially are a great resource of authentic English language material for learners and teachers of English.

Studies in Australia and Spain, as cited earlier in this paper, (Felix, 2001, 2002; Fernández, 2007) indicated that most of the EFL students thought that going on the Internet during class time was a helpful class activity, but these studies were not focused on the use of *Youtube,* and were in a non-Asian context. There is little in the literature as regards the attitude of students in an Asian context to using class time on the Web. One exception is Wu (2004) who carried out a small-scale study on a comparison of web-enhanced learning environments in Taiwan, but it was not clear in the study what the students were accessing on the Internet. Most students in a Chinese cultural setting regard the teacher as the main repository of knowledge in the classroom and the teacher is looked upon to transmit that knowledge to the students (Hu, 2002). Therefore, this researcher wondered whether the students in Taiwan would consider doing web searches in class to be a good use of class time and not to be an abrogation of the teacher's responsibilities in the classroom.

Another purpose of this paper was to investigate what value the students in Taiwan put on the use of small group collaborative discussion in the classroom to get a clearer Taiwanese student perspective on the use of collaborative learning. Some researchers (Fernández, 2007; Yu, 2001) have shown that a lot of teachers have difficulty adapting from more traditional pedagogical beliefs emphasizing a transmission style of teaching to a more constructivist view of learning in which students take a more active and autonomous role in their own learning, including having students collaborate with their peers. Many teachers, especially in greater China, have been resistant to allowing for more autonomous, group collaborative learning in their language classrooms (Yu, 2001). This is largely because of the traditional hierarchical relationship between the teacher and student in the Chinese education system (Hu, 2002).

The idea of increased autonomy for students in the classroom and of using group collaboration has mostly been put forward in a European and North American educational discourse and the applicability of these concepts to a Chinese educational setting has been questioned (Benson, 2001). The viewpoint of Taiwanese students towards activities that encourage group collaboration and autonomy could be insightful to a language teacher in Taiwan when designing an English language course.

A further goal of the research was to find out how the students preferred their groups to be selected and constituted. The research was carried out in a class of students with different majors. This is a common situation with non-English major language classes in Taiwan. Thus, the researcher wanted to know if the students preferred working in groups with the same or with different department majors, preferred working with students they know well or not so well, and if they preferred to select their group members themselves or have the teacher select the group members. This researcher was trying to integrate effectively small group collaborative discussion with individual student searches for information on the Web. Consequently, the researcher was also interested in what preferences the students had in regards to organizing group discussion and web searches.

With the goals of finding out to what degree the students in Taiwan value using the Web during class time, their views on group collaborative learning, and the students' opinions on how to organize groups, this study considered the following research questions.

(1) How much do the students value the use of the Internet in the classroom, especially in relation to the website, *Youtube*?
(2) How much do the students value the use of small group collaborative discussion in the classroom?
(3) How can the groups for the collaborative discussion best be organized?

The answers to these questions could better assist teachers in helping them implement a constructivist-learning environment in Taiwan that emphasizes group collaboration integrated with the Internet.

RESEARCH METHODS

Subjects and Setting

The study consisted of 32 (24 female and 8 male) Taiwanese students enrolled in an elective non-English major university course at National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan entitled *Advanced English Listening in Cultures and Rock Music* in the Spring 2007 term and in their second, third, or fourth year of studies. The students came from different departments including Advertising, Business Administration,

Chinese, Diplomacy, Economics, International Trade, Land Management, Land Resource Planning, Political Science, Public Finance, Risk Management, Sociology, and Turkish. The largest group of students was from the International Trade department. The students were for the most part at an intermediate to low-advanced level of English proficiency with the majority being at an upper-intermediate level. This assessment of English ability was based on a self-assessment of their English ability given on a questionnaire administered in the tenth week of studies, and an assessment by the teacher based on their classroom performance.

The students met for two hours a week over eighteen weeks. The students were taught in a language lab where they each had a set of headphones and the teacher was able to provide audio-visual materials via an audio tape player, a DVD player, a video cassette player and a computer with internet access. Visual material could be displayed on a large screen at the front of the class. The students did not have individual access to a computer in the classroom.

Goals of the Course

The course's main objective was to improve the students' listening and conversational ability in English, primarily through the study of the trends in rock music from the 1950s until the present. Secondary objectives included developing an understanding of the social and cultural developments in rock music and expanding the musical genre recognition of students.

Design of the Course

The course was designed around listening to excerpts from the TV documentary, *The History of Rock and Roll* (Benz, 2004) on DVD, listening to excerpts from movies with good examples of musical genres and performers, and listening to songs on CD or through a computer, which included listening to music videos on websites such as *Youtube*. The students were also assigned readings from the book, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock 'N' Roll* (Szatmary, 2004). Assessment was based on a quiz, final exam, classroom performance, and a group project.

The Group Project

The group project was a multimedia presentation by the students of

between twenty and thirty minutes on different assigned topics. The topics consisted of introducing a year in rock music: 1971, 1981, 1991, or 2001 or introducing a band or performer from the 1960s, 70s, 80s, or 90s. The topics and groups were assigned in the tenth week of class and this class (two hours in length) was dedicated to introducing and beginning the group project. During this class, the students collaborated on developing ideas for the project in their regular language lab and additionally in a computer language lab in which all the students had access to a computer. Most of the data collected for this study was based on the students' feedback on the procedures used to introduce and carry out the group project.

Procedure for Introducing the Group Project in the Class and Integrating Small Group Collaborative Discussion and *Youtube*

The introduction to the group project consisted of the teacher first passing out a group presentation guideline (see Appendix A) to the students. The teacher went through the details in the guideline with the students and displayed some examples of previous student presentations. This phase of the class took thirty minutes. The guideline informed the students that the group presentation should be approximately twenty to thirty minutes long, that each student in the group should have an active role in the presentation, and that the group should prepare a handout to give to the teacher and their classmates that would assist in understanding the presentation. Each group also had to give a detailed written proposal of what the group planned to present in the class two weeks before the presentation. The groups then had to arrange a time to discuss their proposal with the teacher.

The students were divided into eight groups of four students by the teacher with each group consisting of a mixture of different majors. The groups were mostly assigned according to seat number and were given a number to identify their group. Each group was randomly assigned a topic. Four groups (groups 1, 3, 5, and 7) first discussed their group presentation project in their regular classroom language lab, which had only one computer for the teacher's use. The discussion was carried out in English. The groups then went to a lab containing computers for every student. In this computer language lab, the students searched for information online for their presentation through the website *Youtube,* which has the largest amount of available music videos to look at and listen to on the Internet, and additional websites of their choice.

The four other groups (groups 2, 4, 6, and 8) first searched for information online through *Youtube* in the computer language lab*,* and then discussed their group presentation in their regular classroom language lab. The students sat side by side in the computer language lab and worked individually on their web searches. The students would frequently check with each other about the material they had found on the Web and how this could possibly be used for their group presentation. The students spent a total of fifty minutes doing their on-line searches and collaborative discussion. This time was divided approximately into twenty-five minutes in the regular language lab and an equal amount of time searching on-line in the computer lab.

The discussion of the group presentation guideline and the integration of small group discussion with on-line web searches were used to help the students get a good start to their group presentation project and allow them to work efficiently and independently. The researcher wanted the students to construct their own knowledge through using the Internet and through interacting with their peers in groups with minimal teacher input. The groups presented their multimedia projects in weeks fourteen and seventeen of this eighteen-week course.

METHODOLOGY

A self-reported questionnaire and two self-reported open-ended questions (see Appendix B) were given to thirty-two students. The questionnaire was written by the researcher consisting of twenty statements designed to elicit quantitative data from the students in relation to the three research questions posed for this paper. The researcher was aware of the shortcomings of self-reported questionnaires in which there is an inherent social desirability bias. Students may be tempted to answer in a way they think the researcher desires or in a way that describes their behavior in a more favorable way. The questionnaire and first self-reported question were administered anonymously to diminish this social desirability bias.

The questionnaire was given to two other teachers to provide feedback and suggestions and revisions were made. A pilot study was not carried out with the questionnaire. Each of the statements in the questionnaire was rated 1-5 on a Likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows was used to tabulate the means

and standard deviations for the statements.

The two self-reported open-ended questions, written by the researcher, were given to the students to elicit qualitative data on the research questions posed. The researcher wanted to allow the students an opportunity to elaborate on their answers given in the questionnaire. This could provide material of relevance to the research which had not been considered by the researcher and not included in the design of the questionnaire.

Research Instruments and Procedures

A self-reported questionnaire consisting of twenty statements was given to thirty-two students in the tenth week of an eighteen-week course. This was after the teacher had briefly explained the format and content of the questionnaire and clarified the meaning of some of the terms used. The students had already had a small group discussion and visited *Youtube* and other websites in the class to begin their project. The questionnaire was used to elicit their views on this discussion and internet usage in the class. Because the students were studying English through rock and roll music, the researcher included some questions in regards to how the students felt about learning English through the study of music and what they had learned about music in the course. The questionnaire was completed anonymously in the last fifteen minutes of the class and collected at the end of the class period.

Each group had been assigned a group number and each student was asked to write her or his group number on the questionnaire. This was to allow the researcher to categorize the results based on whether the students had discussed first and then gone on the Internet or had gone on the Internet first and then had a group discussion. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each of the twenty statements in this questionnaire. There were some additional short answer questions included on the self-reported questionnaire (i.e. what is your major? how would you rate your English ability now?) to elicit some background information on the students.

The statements in the questionnaire were generally ordered in relation to the research questions posed, although some questions were similarly phrased and put in different areas of the questionnaire to increase validity. The statements have been slightly reordered in the tables found in the results section of this paper. This was done so that all of the statements related to a particular area of the research in this paper

were grouped together.

The tenth week was chosen to begin the student projects because the researcher wanted the class members to become more familiar with each other in the preceding nine weeks. This could help develop a good level of group cohesion that is often associated with increased student motivation (Dörnyei, 2001a). The tenth week was also chosen because it allowed sufficient time for the groups to prepare for their multimedia presentation project that was to be presented in the class in the fourteenth or seventeenth week.

The second research instrument was an open-ended question given to thirty-two students at the end of the class in the tenth week of the course. The single question was phrased as follows:

> *How was this group experience different from other group activities that you have taken part in?*

This question was not part of the questionnaire, but was given as homework on a separate lined piece of paper to be submitted in the next class. The purpose of this question was to collect qualitative exploratory data on the overall experience of integrating Web searches on *Youtube* and other websites with group work in the classroom. In addition, this question was used to identify any issues of relevance to this research not covered in the questionnaire. The students could answer in either English or Chinese. The Chinese responses were translated for the researcher by a student assistant. The students answered anonymously and all thirty-two students submitted their answers within two weeks.

The third research instrument was an open-ended question given to thirty-two students on the final day of the course in the eighteenth week. The single question was phrased as follows:

> *In an effort to make this course better, I would like you to make any comments or suggestions you have for possible ways to improve upon this course, especially in regards to the class presentations in the course, and the use of the computer lab and the website, Youtube. Any other comments and suggestions on any other aspect of the course are appreciated.*

This open-ended question was administered by including it at the end of the final exam. The responses could be written in English or Chinese.

The responses to the second open-ended question were not anonymous. There were twenty-six responses to this question.

The main purpose of this question was to elicit qualitative data from the students in regards to their overall attitude to the use of *Youtube* and group work in the classroom. This was after the students had completed their group project assignment. The researcher, in particular, wanted to know whether the students felt their in-class *Youtube* search experience and group work helped them to accomplish successfully their multi-media presentations delivered in weeks fourteen and seventeen.

RESULTS

Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Internet and the Website, *Youtube*

This section includes the results from the questionnaire, the first open-ended question, and the second open-ended question. Table 1 shows the eight statements in the questionnaire related to using the Internet and *Youtube* in the classroom. The statements in Table 1 and in the following Tables 2 and 3 were answered on a five-point Likert scale, with the high scores of 5 and 4 representing a positive response to the statement (strongly agree and agree) and the low scores of 1 and 2 representing a negative response to the statement (strongly disagree and disagree). The tables show the positive and negative responses to each of the twenty statements in the questionnaire. The neutral responses, at the mid-point 3, were left out of the tables. The statements eliciting a large neutral response are looked at in more detail in the discussion section. A complete summary of the responses for each statement, including the mean and standard deviation for each statement, is shown in Appendix B.

The results in Table 1 show the statements (one to five) taken from the questionnaire designed to elicit from the students whether they found it a good use of class time to go on the Web, in particular, the website *Youtube*. In Statement one, most of the students agreed (93.8%) that using *Youtube* and other websites in the classroom was an interesting and useful way to utilize class time. A majority (67.7%) of the students thought that interacting with a website like *Youtube* helped them develop their English ability. The students (84.4%) liked the way that the music videos were organized on *Youtube*. A high percentage of the students (90.6%) of the students thought that going on to the Internet in conjunction with a small group discussion helped their group get a good

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start on their presentation project. All of the students thought using the Internet was a good way to improve their English.

Table 1.   Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Internet and the Website, *Youtube* in an ESP Classroom Focusing on Rock and Roll Music

Statements	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1. I found that using *Youtube* and other websites in the class was an interesting and useful activity.	93.80	0
2. I think that interacting with a website like *Youtube* helps me develop my English ability.	67.70	0
3. I like the way that the music videos are organized on *Youtube*.	84.40	0
4. I found that doing this activity in the class helped our group get a good start on our group presentation project.	90.60	3.12
5. I think using the Internet is a good way to improve my English.	100	0
6. I enjoy learning English through the study of music.	100	0
7. I learned some things about music and musicians in this activity that I did not know before.	100	0
8. I think that this group presentation project is a good way to learn more about the history of rock music and musicians.	96.80	0

Note. Agree (Positive Response) = Strongly Agree and Agree; Disagree (Negative Response) = Strongly Disagree and Disagree

Table 1 also includes statements six to eight. These statements focus on the students' attitude towards using the study of rock and roll music as a way to learn English and general music knowledge, and of the use of a group presentation project to learn English and gain musical knowledge. All of the students reported that they enjoyed learning English through the study of music. The students also all felt that they learned some things about music and musicians that they did not know before by using

Youtube and discussing with their group mates. Most of the students (96.8%) thought that the group presentation project, which included going on to the website *Youtube* in the classroom, was a good way to gain knowledge of the history of rock music and musicians.

In the responses to the first open-ended question, several students stated their general satisfaction with using the Internet and *Youtube* in the class. The students found it interesting to search on *Youtube* in the class, and thought that it was an efficient use of class time because it allowed them to have exact goals and save time. Some of the student comments, related to the use of internet search in the class, were:

> "No teachers let us use the internet searching informations in class before, so it's cool."

> "By browsing the internet, we could have a clearer image of our work. Then we could discuss our presentation faster and better."

> "Instead of going home and finding out several singers or bands to discuss with our group members, we searched information our group members are interested in and discussed with them at the same time. It saves time."

> "Because we have to search information during class time, no one will be lazy."

There were a small number of students who felt the time to search on the Internet was not sufficient (25 to 30 minutes). In addition, a couple of students wrote that it was necessary to check other websites besides *Youtube* to get a better understanding of the bands and musicians being investigated for the assigned group project. The issues of time allotment and of using other websites were not addressed in the questionnaire. Some responses to the open-ended question related to these issues were:

> "I was impressed by the opportunity to take advantage of the computer lab, which gave us a chance to get acquainted with some details of the presentation. However, it turned out to be simply an increase in pleasure and not so effective because the time was limited. On the other hand, the discussion afterwards was a wonderful experience because it was the first time we talked about everything in English. For a person who is not good at communicating in English, this has been both a splendid and challenging experience."

(translated from the Chinese)

"Although there was not enough time for us, using websites in the class helped us have some ideas."

"This group experience offers us a direction which is to make good use of *Youtube*. We can quickly have a better understanding of the singers or bands which we are unfamiliar with. However, we still have to use other websites to have clear descriptions of further data such as the background of the singers, the background of the 1980's music, etc."

In the second open-ended question, many students noted that they enjoyed using the Internet and *Youtube* in the class. Dörnyei (2001a) stated that an important motivational strategy in the language classroom is to make the learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of the task. The following comments from the students' responses to the second open-ended question suggest that they found using *Youtube* in the classroom to be both an interesting and useful way to learn English.

"I think using the website *Youtube* is really a good idea because, for me, watching a live music show is very attractive."

"Recommend students take more research on *Youtube*."

"Combined technology and class is a good way to help us learn and study."

Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion

This section includes the results from the questionnaire, the first open-ended question, and the second open-ended question. The results in Table 2 show the statements (one to five) from the questionnaire designed to elicit from the students their attitude toward using small group collaborative discussion in the classroom. Peer group interaction is considered one of the best ways to encourage knowledge construction in a classroom taking a social constructivist view of learning (Lantolf, 2000). A major focus in the *Advanced English Listening in Cultures and Rock Music* course was to introduce activities that encouraged the students to speak and listen to English and one way to do this was to use group work.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion

Statements	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1. I usually prefer working alone on a project rather than working with others.	12.50	37.50
2. I think that working together with my classmates rather than working alone is a good way to complete this project.	84.40	3.12
3. I enjoyed working together with my classmates in this activity.	81.20	3.12
4. I would like to do more of this type of activity in the classroom.	62.50	6.25
5. I used more English in this activity than I normally do.	84.40	3.12

Note. Agree (Positive Response) = Strongly Agree and Agree; Disagree (Negative Response) = Strongly Disagree and Disagree

Statements one to four in Table 2 refer specifically to the use of group work in this group presentation preparatory activity. Only 12.5% of the students indicated that they preferred to work alone on a class project. In contrast, 84.4% of the students thought that working together with their classmates was a good way to complete the assigned class project and 81.2% said they enjoyed working together with their classmates in this activity. More than half of the students (62.5%) said they would like to do more of this type of activity in the classroom.

Little (2007) stated that one of the major determinants of successful language learning in the classroom is to have extensive target language use. A large majority of the students (84.4%) indicated in statement five of Table 2 that they had used more English in this activity than they normally do. While the students were doing their web searches, there was minimal oral interaction with their group mates, so this statement refers primarily to the students' group interaction.

In the first open-ended question, collaborating with other classmates was described by some students as something that helped them to organize more clearly their ideas, to focus more seriously, and to learn many things, primarily about music, from their fellow students. Some students also thought an advantage of having a discussion in the classroom was the ability to check immediately with the teacher on

questions of English usage or music. Several students wrote about enjoying the group activity because they could make friends. However, some of the drawbacks cited by the students were their limited communication abilities in English and the difficulties in trying to use a specific English musical term. In the second open-ended question, a few students wrote in their responses that by working together in the classroom they did not have to spend as much time outside the class preparing for their project. A selection of student comments from the first open-ended question referring to some of the advantages and disadvantages of in-class discussion follows:

> "Being with partners, really is a good way helping us to find some individual thoughts which we couldn't learn before."

> "I think there are advantages for students to discuss in the class. If students have any questions, we can ask teacher immediately. Besides, I think students discuss more seriously in class."

> "By the project I can learn more other style of music and by the way, it makes me launch into the work without unwillingness."

> "My personal shortcomings in language communication skills make it hard for me to communicate effectively and to come out with clear ideas, although I might have many ideas in my mind. I had some awkward moments during the discussion in the class." (translation from the Chinese)

Students' Ideas on How In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion Could Best be Organized

This section includes the results from the questionnaire, the first open-ended question, and the second open-ended question. The statements in Table 3 (one to seven) are from the questionnaire and refer to the students' preferences for how groups could be selected, for how groups could be constituted, and for how group work could be integrated with internet searches. In the first statement in Table 3, 31.2% of the students said they prefer to be able to select their own partners for pair or group work. A small percentage of students (12.5%) indicated a preference for the teacher selecting the students' partners. In regards to how the groups should be constituted, a majority of the students (64.5%) preferred to work in groups consisting of different majors and 23%

preferred to work in groups consisting of the same majors. Just over half of the students (51.6%) preferred to work in groups in which they knew the other group members well. For the integration of group work and internet searches, 64.5% of the students thought it would be better to do web searches first on *Youtube* and other websites and then discuss their project while 41.9% thought it would be better to discuss their project first and then do web searches.

Table 3. Students' Ideas on how In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion Could Best be Organized

Statements	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1. I am more comfortable working with classmates when I can select the partner or group with whom I will be working.	31.20	3.25
2. I usually prefer that the teacher select the partner or the group of classmates with whom I will be working.	12.50	12.50
3. I prefer working in groups where there is a mixture of students with different majors.	64.50	0
4. I prefer working in groups where the group members have the same majors.	23.30	26.60
5. I prefer working in groups in which I know the other group members well.	51.60	3.23
6. I think it is better to use *Youtube* (Internet) first and then discuss our project.	64.50	12.90
7. I think it is better to discuss our project first and then use *Youtube* (Internet).	41.90	22.60

Note. Agree (Positive Response) = Strongly Agree and Agree; Disagree (Negative Response) = Strongly Disagree and Disagree

The students elaborated on their views towards the selection and constitution of groups in the first and second open-ended questions. For the discussion activity described in this paper, the teacher selected the students for the groups. All the groups consisted of a mixture of different majors. The following quotes indicate some of the things the students liked and did not like about this procedure.

"Most of the group presentation in other classes we can choose the

group member, while in this class, members are assigned. However, I believe it is less troublesome."

"The members of this group were choosed by teacher, so I think it was a little abrupt at the first time we need to discuss. However, it seemed not a big problem in our group."

"I barely had any chances to work with students of other majors before. But this time we get to know many people of different background. We have generally a great time, though it is somewhat inconvenient to contact the other majors off campus. In all, it is pretty interesting to brainstorm together."

DISCUSSION

Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Internet and the Website, *Youtube*

The first goal of this research was to find out how much the students in Taiwan value the use of the Internet in the classroom, especially in relation to the website, *Youtube*. The students used the Internet in this research for on-line searches, primarily on *Youtube*, for information that could help them with their group project. Most of the students reported in the questionnaire that this use of the Internet was interesting and useful. In addition, many students commented in the open-ended responses that they liked having the opportunity to access the Web in the classroom. The students in this study in Taiwan were clearly receptive to the use of the Internet in the EFL classroom, which is in agreement with many studies outside Taiwan (Felix, 2001, 2002; Fernández, 2007; Taylor & Gitsaki, 2003), and a study in Taiwan by Wu (2004) that showed EFL students regard the Web as a valuable learning tool.

A majority of students felt the use of the website, *Youtube,* combined with small group discussion could help them to develop their English ability. All the students indicated in the questionnaire that using the Internet was a good way to improve their English. Furthermore, searching on *Youtube* was perceived by the students as helpful for learning more about music and musicians from the English-speaking world, and for getting a good start on their group presentation project.

The students in their open-ended responses explained that they thought using *Youtube* and other websites was a valuable use of class time because it gave them a clearer idea of their presentation topic and it

helped them use their time efficiently. Some students reported that because they had to search for information during the class time and collaborate with their group members, they felt peer pressure encouraged everyone to work hard on their project. Although the students primarily used the web in the class for retrieval of information only, the results here imply that the students valued the use of the Internet as a springboard to effective interactive communication in English and as a resource to help them successfully achieve a task. Some students felt that there was insufficient time for their web searches and so a teacher should be aware of allowing enough time for the students to do web searches in the classroom and for discussion. The students had a total of fifty minutes for their web searches and discussion. It may be necessary to allow for more time for such an activity.

The success of Internet usage in the classroom is related to what you ask the students to do with it (Davis, 2006). Several students mentioned in the open-ended responses that the topic for their group presentation project was more fun and interesting than other topics they have had to work on in their university classes. The students had to present on either a band or singer of their choice from a particular decade (sixties, seventies, etc.) or the important musical styles and events in a particular year (1971, 1981, etc.). The students felt the topic helped motivate them to put a lot of effort into preparing for their multimedia presentation. Many researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 1994, 2001b; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) have pointed out that motivation, and in particular, intrinsic motivation, is one of the major determinants of successful language achievement. Finding a project that draws on the intrinsic motivation of the students is an important way to help students make gains in learning English. All of the students indicated in the questionnaire that they enjoyed learning English through music and this project was focused on utilizing this intrinsic interest. Most importantly, the in-class searches on *Youtube*, which has the largest collection of music videos on the Internet, were a very useful tool to help them prepare for their presentation.

Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion

The second major area of research in this paper was to find out how much the students in Taiwan value the use of small group collaborative discussion in the classroom. As cited earlier in this paper, many

researchers (Chen, 2004; Dörnyei, 1994; Lantolf, 2000; Little, 2007; Naughton, 2006) have pointed out the benefits of collaborative learning for language acquisition and motivation in the classroom, but some teachers in Asia (Yu, 2001) are still reluctant to give their students the more autonomy inherent in collaborative learning. A teacher in Taiwan would find it useful to know what Taiwan students think about collaborative learning and could make informed decisions based on this.

Most of the students in the questionnaire reported that they enjoyed working together with their classmates and preferred to collaborate with their classmates rather than work alone to complete a project. Obviously, Taiwanese students value the use of small group collaborative discussion in the classroom. The students stated in their open-ended question comments that group work helped them to organize their ideas more clearly, and they were able to receive information from their classmates, mostly in relation to rock and roll music that they had not known before. A few students felt they lacked sufficient communicative skills or the necessary vocabulary in English to participate fully in small group collaborative discussion and a teacher could assist with this.

One student noted that an advantage of discussing their project in the class was being able to ask the teacher immediately any questions they had. Some students in this study said there were some musical terms they did not know in English that caused some miscommunication in their groups. A knowledgeable teacher could be a good resource at times like that. Lantolf (2000, p. 83) discussed a study showing that for many language activities peer mediation was very effective, but interaction with an 'expert' may be necessary for more specialized or academic language.

A few students commented that by doing collaborative work they could get to know each other better and make friends. It would appear that small group activities in the classroom play a strong socializing role that help people get along better with each other. Many students also thought that their classmates took a more serious attitude toward group goals when they were in the classroom.

Students' Ideas on how In-Class Small Group Collaborative Discussion Could Best be Organized

A third area of investigation in this research was to find out how the students prefer to be organized into groups. This information could help a teacher who wanted to integrate extensive group work into the

classroom. There was a slight preference shown by the students, in the questionnaire, to being able to choose their own group members rather than the teacher assigning the group members. In a couple of the open-ended responses, the students commented that they could choose their own group members in most of their classes while another student thought it would be less troublesome if the teacher assigned the group members. Many students, in the questionnaire, gave a neutral response to the statements related to how group members were selected. It would appear that the students do not have a strong preference one way or the other and the selection of students into groups could be left up the teacher's discretion depending on the objectives and the context of the group work.

The students showed a preference for being in groups in which they knew the other group members well and in groups that consisted of different majors. A teacher might want to consider providing lots of activities in the classroom that allow the students to come into contact frequently with other class members such as ice-breaking activities towards the beginning of the course and pair and group activities throughout the course. Dörnyei (2001a) pointed out that groups with higher levels of cohesion tend to have higher levels of motivation in the classroom and one way to promote greater cohesion in a class is to provide more opportunities for the students to get to know each other well. A teacher may also find it useful to consider the majors of the students when organizing group work. The students in this study had a strong preference for working in a group with a mixture of different majors.

A majority of the students in this study showed a preference for doing web searches first on *Youtube* and other websites and then discussing their results afterwards. However, there were also many students who preferred to discuss first and then do web searches on *Youtube*. Some students indicated in their open-ended responses that the reason they preferred to do a web search first was that they did not know very much about their rock and roll topic when it was assigned to them. By searching online first, they could be better informed on the topic and have a more productive discussion. One student mentioned that it might be better to allow the students to decide how to organize the available time for being on the Internet and in discussion. This could be a reasonable approach to take and would provide more autonomy to the students.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated Taiwan students' attitudes towards the use in the classroom of the Internet, in particular, internet searches on the website, *Youtube*. The study also investigated the students' views on the use of collaborative group discussion, its organization in the classroom, and ways to integrate collaborative group discussion and internet search activities. The research was motivated by the desire to draw upon the students' natural interest in using the Internet to help make their language learning experience more enjoyable and beneficial to their English language development.

The Internet was used in this research as a tool that could help the students, in a constructivist-learning environment, gather information and gain knowledge more autonomously of the teacher, and then be able to share this information with their classmates. Sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000; Thorne, 2006) proposes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is mediated through language and such cultural artifacts as the Internet. Through web searches on *Youtube*, and in small group collaborative discussion, the students perceived an increase in both their general knowledge, in this case rock and roll music and its cultural milieu, and their English language knowledge.

The Taiwan students in this study had a positive attitude toward using the Internet in the classroom. They thought that doing web searches on *Youtube* was an interesting and beneficial use of class time. Through using *Youtube*, the students felt they could develop their English ability, learn some things about rock and roll music, and be able to have a successful start to their group projects. The students also enjoyed working together in small group discussions. They showed a preference for working in mixed major groups and with group members that they knew well. The majority of students thought it would generally be best to search on the Internet first and then have a group collaborative discussion. They could then use what they had found on *Youtube* and other sites as a further source of information for their discussion.

The students in this study were able to independently collect information from the Internet, share the information with their group members, and eventually develop an expertise in an area of rock music that they presented in English to their classmates in a multimedia presentation. Teacher assistance in the classroom was primarily for clarification of musical terms in English and for providing some additional context to the rock and roll music information that the

students had found on the Internet. The use of the Internet and of group discussion promoted autonomy for the students in the classroom. The students enjoyed this autonomy and felt that they benefited from it.

The Internet and collaborative activities in the classroom have an important role to play in language education in the third millennium (Felix, 2005, p 87). Felix described learning things from many sources and defining success on how well learners work together as part of the reality of learning in the twenty-first century. Web-enhanced language learning promotes knowledge construction from multiple sources found on the Internet and from other learners. This is within a collaborative group setting in which learners work together as part of a team.

A constructivist learning approach in the classroom, integrating the Web and collaborative learning, is an effective way to approach language education that appeals to language learners in Taiwan.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Group Presentation Guideline (20 to 30 minutes)
(A Year in Rock Music—1971, 1981, 1991, or 2001)

❑ **Students in groups of 3 to 5 are assigned to report on a year in rock music: 1971, 1981, 1991, or 2001. The presentation should be a multi-media presentation including music and video.**

❑ **The presentation should be around 20 to 30 minutes long. (25 minutes would be ideal)**

❑ **In the multi-media class presentation, different students in the group should:**
  ⇨ Provide information on the music scene that year—bands and performers
  ⇨ Introduce/describe the top song/s for the year
  ⇨ Provide additional cultural information on films, fashion, & other social trends that year
  ⇨ Organize one or two interactive activities (approximately ten minutes) that have all your classmates involved.

  Example Activities:
  1) Questions for comprehension or discussion that students ask each other
  2) Song Activities
      ⇨ Fill in   ⇨ Change the words and rewrite
      ⇨ Reorder   ⇨ Listen and discuss the meaning in pairs/groups
  3) Music Video Activities
      ⇨ Find 3/4/5 things in the video
      ⇨ Watch the video and answer questions

❑ **The group prepares approximately a 2 page handout** to be copied and given to the teacher and all your classmates.

❑ **The handout should contain** (for the year of rock music):
  ⇨ An introduction/ overview of the music scene that year (bands)
  ⇨ A brief description of the top songs that year and the performers singing them
  ⇨ Some brief cultural information on films, fashion, & other social trends in that year
  ⇨ Any other information you think would help in understanding the year in rock music
  ⇨ Web Sites and other sources you used to gather your information

❑ **2 weeks before your presentation**, you should give me a detailed written description (proposal) of what you plan to do in the class (hard copy & e-mail). A representative from the group should arrange to discuss the group's presentation with me that week.
  ⇨ A description of the information for the year in music you will present
  ⇨ Possible activity/activities you might use

❑ **Assessment**: Based on the presentation in the class, and the detailed description and discussion of the presentation 2 weeks before. Classmates will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the presentation and other group members.

Appendix B. Questionnaire for Group Presentation Project, Summary Table of Responses to the Questionnaire, and Open-ended Questions

1. Questionnaire (Given to the students in the class in Week 10)

Could you please take a few moments to reply to the following statements regarding our *History of Rock and Roll* course. Your answers and comments will help me in selecting and organizing activities for future classes. Please check the boxes ☑ following the statements according to the following criteria. **SA**=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **N**=Neutral (Neither agree or disagree), **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree

SA ☐   A ☐   N ☐   D ☐   SD ☐

1. I found that using *Youtube* and other websites in the class was an interesting and useful activity.
2. I used more English in this activity than I normally do.
3. I found that doing this activity in the class helped our group get a good start on our group presentation project.
4. I usually prefer working alone on a project rather than working with others.
5. I enjoyed working together with my classmates in this activity.
6. I think that working together with my classmates rather than working alone is a good way to complete this project.
7. I would like to do more of this type of activity in the classroom.
8. I am more comfortable working with classmates when I can select the partner or group with whom I will be working.
9. I usually prefer that the teacher select the partner or the group of classmates with whom I will be working.
10. I prefer working in groups where there is a mixture of students with different majors.
11. I prefer working in groups where the group members have the same majors.

12. I prefer working in groups in which I know the other group members well.
13. I enjoy learning English through the study of music.
14. I think that interacting with a website like *Youtube* helps me develop my English ability.
15. I like the way that the music videos are organized on *Youtube*.
16. I learned some things about music and musicians in this activity that I did not know before.
17. I think that this group presentation project is a good way to learn more about the history of rock music and musicians.
18. I think it is better to use *Youtube* (Internet) first and then discuss our project.
19. I think it is better to discuss our project first and then use *Youtube* (Internet).
20. I think using the Internet is a good way to improve my English.

2. **Summary Table: Student Responses to the preceding 20 statements including the mean and standard deviation for each statement.**

CON	SA	A	N	D	SD	*M*	*SD*
1.	14	16	2	0	0	4.38	.61
2.	6	21	4	1	0	4.00	.67
3.	16	13	2	1	0	4.38	.75
4.	0	4	16	10	2	2.69	.78
5.	5	21	5	1	0	3.94	.67
6.	10	17	4	1	0	4.12	.75
7.	2	18	10	2	0	3.62	.71
8.	3	7	20	2	0	3.34	.75
9.	0	4	24	4	0	3.00	.51
*10.	10	10	11	0	0	3.97	.84
*11.	0	7	15	7	1	2.93	.78
*12.	1	15	14	1	0	3.52	.63
*13.	16	15	0	0	0	4.52	.51
*14.	4	17	10	0	0	3.81	.65
15.	5	22	5	0	0	4.00	.57
16.	18	14	0	0	0	4.56	.50
*17.	9	21	1	0	0	4.26	.51
*18.	2	18	7	4	0	3.58	.81
*19.	2	11	11	7	0	3.26	.89
20.	8	24	0	0	0	4.25	.44

Note. *Questions containing fewer than 32 responses.

3.   Open-Ended Question (Given to the students in Week 10 as homework)

How was this group experience different from other group activities that you have taken part in? (*Please finish for homework. You can write in either English or Chinese*).

4.   Open-Ended Question (Given to the students in the class in Week 18)

In an effort to make this course better, I would like you to make any comments or suggestions you have for possible ways to improve upon this course, especially in regards to the class presentations in the course, and the use of the computer lab and the website—*Youtube*. Any other comments and suggestions on any other aspect of the course are appreciated. Please write below: