EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter introduces a case study on the use of video summaries in a university setting. It presents a practical insight into a simple, yet complex and versatile activity that aims at improving the language and communication skills of students in authentic intercultural academic situations. This activity has been developed, implemented and used in language courses at Masaryk University (MU), Brno, Czech Republic, and Universidad Nacional del Sur (UNS), Bahía Blanca, Argentina, since February 2014. Students undertaking language courses at MU and UNS write texts and record video summaries outside of class. They then reflect and discuss linguistic, cultural and organisational topics in class or online discussion forums. The activity consists of a set of interconnected tasks that improve students’ understanding of similarities and differences between written and spoken styles, encourage their learning autonomy and enhance the authenticity of their language development.

INTRODUCTION

Interactive audio-visual multimedia and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have changed our societies considerably. New professions, forms of behaviour and perceptions of private and public space have brought the
necessity to adapt educational practices to the growing demands of the knowledge and communication society today.

This chapter presents a case study on the implementation of video summaries of academic texts in university language courses. It shows theories and methodologies that can support an effective use of audio-visual media in university courses, describes a series of practical steps thanks to which it is possible to achieve higher authenticity and autonomy in language learning, and shares experience with shifts in roles teachers and learners may experience in the process of the implementation of new teaching and learning styles.

**ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND**

Individual sectors of Higher Education reflect current developments in society in diverse ways. Different universities across the world adopt innovative pedagogies, methodologies and educational styles. Some apply the latest results of psychological and linguistic research (Lehtonen, Vaattovaara, & Manner-Kivipuro, 2015; Verspoor, 2011), while others focus on audio-visual media and use them for a wide range of purposes. Such media can provide contact with the target languages, motivate students to learn autonomously, illustrate particular linguistic features and enhance learners’ understanding, or they can provide tools for authentic language use (Helm, 2015).

In agreement with the belief that audio-visual media play an important role in foreign language learning, that their introduction to language classes and corresponding shifts in roles of teachers and learners such introductions bring are not only necessary but also positive, academics from the Language Centres of Masaryk University (MU), Czech Republic, and Universidad Nacional del Sur (UNS), Argentina, have launched a collaborative project designed to develop, test, and implement effective forms of audio-visual media use in the academic environment.

Before the project could take place, both universities recognised the necessity to identify similarities in the Higher Education systems of the Czech Republic and Argentina, a common framework within which joint activities could take place, but unsurprisingly, it was contrasts that were noticed first. The differences in geographical, social and cultural aspects of MU and UNS are enormous and obvious. Masaryk University, located in the Central European city of Brno, is the second largest university and leading institution in HE technology use in the Czech Republic, focusing on non-technical fields above all. It has nine faculties, provides education for more than 35,000 students and offers over 70 undergraduate and similar numbers of graduate and postgraduate programmes. Universidad Nacional del Sur, located in the city of Bahía Blanca on the Atlantic coast of Argentina, is an engineering oriented university well known for flexibility and the interdisciplinarity
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