

# Video Online: What's New?

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As the Internet charges along from fast to very fast (cable and fiber optic broadband), the possibility of viewing video in real time makes the World Wide Web ever more appropriate for media-based lessons. The teacher who already uses video in class will welcome new venues and the new potential to add authentic sights and sounds to class activities without dragging out the TV and VCR or DVD player or to make lessons totally individualized on each computer workstation. Also, the slider-and-mouse interface on the computer (see Figure 1) allows the student to have ultimate control, that is, ultimate autonomy, over plays and re-plays. For the teacher who has only thought about using video, but never gotten around to it, video on the Internet has never been easier.

## Content and Lessons

Let's look first at a few Websites that offer video and lesson plans with just a few clicks. While many of these are commercial sites, they are generally respectful of educators' wishes not to deluge the students with ads. Most of these sites assume that individual students are learning on their own, so they are appropriate for homework or labwork. Most are free, or offer some portion of the content for free. Targeting intermediate English learners in the Asian Pacific region, *English Bites* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation/Asia Pacific: <http://abcasiapacific.com/englishbites/>) provides a wide variety of interesting stories on video, with accompanying text, definitions of idioms, and tips on how to use the stories to build English skills. The clips are related to *Nexus* TV programming in 20 countries across the Asian Pacific region. Students can also join the EB Club to receive an English language newsletter (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. *English Bites*: ABC/Asia Pacific has programming for both beginner (Living English) and intermediate learners (<http://abcasiapacific.com/englishbites/>). Note the simple control tools on the inset video player.

ABC/Asia Pacific also produces the *Living English* TV series for beginners (<http://abcasiapacific.com/livingenglish/>). While there are no lesson plans, *per se*, (and the language of explanations is well above their targeted beginner audience) their Website accompanying the series includes the entire video of each TV show, so that it can be replayed on demand, and lots of information for learners and teachers on how to best use the video for language learning.

Another video-based site for adult beginners or false beginners is *Real English* (<http://www.real-english.com/>), mounted by the Marzio School in Istres, France (see Figure 2). The site features 10 free units with accompanying grammar exercises in a variety of formats. The topics include greetings, numbers, how to introduce oneself, etc. The units were filmed all over the world and include English speakers from many dialect regions, which makes the lessons particularly valuable for international learners or those who will travel overseas. CDs and videos containing many more lessons are available for purchase through the site or may be used online through an annual subscription (the Gold Pass).

**Real English**  
ESL for Everyone

REO FREE

Your ad here!

products/services | about RE | contact | news | REO community

Welcome to Real English, the Web's only online ESL site that teaches English through unique ESL videos of people speaking "real english" and interactive ESL lessons. Designed for individuals learning English, ESL teachers and institutions, Real English offers unique ESL educational services.

## Welcome

"The inclusion of different accents and "real" people also contributes to the authenticity of the program by reflecting the current state of English as an international *lingua franca*.

Indeed, this kind of input is extremely rare in existing ESL materials, granting Real English a unique strength... there is no doubt that Real English has achieved excellence."

*The Language Learning & Technology Review*

more of what people are saying

Real English delivers its unique ESL videos and lessons right over the Web, all designed to effectively meet the ESL needs of individuals, teachers, institutions and industries across the globe.

**Real English ONLINE**  
Free videos and lessons for the individual English learner.  
Learn English FREE!

**Gold Pass**  
All the videos. All the lessons. Learning English made fun.  
It's all here in one subscription! Enjoy all Real English ESL videos and interactive lessons for

**Real English ONLINE** login

**Gold Pass** login

**Gold Pass for teachers** login

**ESL for Everyone.**

**Real People speaking Real English**

Figure 2. **Real English** offers several different video-supported options: traditional VHS, CDs, and online video and exercises (<http://www.real-english.com/>). A teacher support group is offered at **Real English Online** ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real\\_English\\_Online](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real_English_Online)).

Public Broadcasting Corporation's **Video Search** for the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/video/index.html>) allows the user to find topics from this nightly TV show. For example, the keyword "election" brought up recent presidential candidates' speeches, as well as issues relating to the 2004 election year in the USA. A quick search at their **TeacherSource** page for lesson plans returned many (categorized by student age) related to election year issues (<http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/>; see Figure 3).

The screenshot shows the PBS TeacherSource website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'SITE TOUR', 'SITE GUIDE', 'TV FOR TEACHERS', 'TECHNOLOGY & TEACHING', 'EMAIL NEWSLETTER', 'GET LOCAL', and 'MY PROFILE'. Below this, a search bar is visible. The main content area is titled 'Featured Lessons and Activities' and lists several items: 'By the People: Analyzing Political Ads', 'PBS Kids History Detectives', 'Scientific American Frontiers: The Dark Side of the Universe', and 'Reading Rainbow: Summer'. On the right, there's a 'Personalize TeacherSource' section with a login form and a 'CONCEPTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM' section for June 2004, highlighting 'Volunteerism'.

Figure 3. PBS's *TeacherSource* can be browsed by age and subject matter (<http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/>).

The Discovery Channel's *Discovery School* (<http://school.discovery.com/>) provides hundreds of short video previews of their TV programs. Targeted at middle and high school classes, the TV programs and videos have free lesson plans online in an enormous range of subjects and include links to many interesting Websites, though most of them are commercial. The teacher will have to prepare lessons appropriate to an ESOL audience, but the site also offers *Teaching Tools* (<http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>) that include free lesson plans, worksheet templates, quiz and puzzle makers, and a clip art gallery. These tools might also be used with Discovery's newly developing *Global Education Partnership* pages (<http://www.discoveryglobaled.org/>), which have videos about their partner countries, for example, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Peru. These videos would be excellent for older students and for culture exploration.

Many public institutions in Australia, Europe, and the United States (e.g., museums of art, natural history, and ethnography) offer video-based content and lesson plans that will fit your curriculum and language teaching needs, although most are not oriented specifically to ESL/EFL learners. For example, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the USA government has numerous educational sites, including the *M2K4: Mars 2004* (<http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/m2k4/frameset.html>; see Figure 4), where students can see short films about various aspects of the red planet (see the "multimedia" tab), and even simulate driving the Rover across Mars' surface. The related *Mars*

**Exploration Program** (<http://mars.jpl.nasa.gov/>) has opportunities for students to imagine Mars in literature and art, image it (literally take pictures by remote camera), find quick facts for a report, or join a team collecting data with a Rover. There are even professional development workshops for teachers at the *Mars for Educators* page (<http://mars.jpl.nasa.gov/classroom/>). Classroom activities are geared to the native speaker student, and are not appropriate for beginners, but the materials are incredibly rich and technologically sophisticated. The site also links to a counterpart in Spanish, *NASA en Español* ([http://www.nasa.gov/about/highlights/En\\_Espanol.html](http://www.nasa.gov/about/highlights/En_Espanol.html)).



Figure 4. NASA's *M2K4 Mars 2004* exploration site has many hands-on video-driven activities for students of all ages, with accompanying lesson plans and activity ideas (<http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/m2k4/frameset.html>).

At the other end of the spectrum from the heavy weight content of public institutions like NASA are the frivolous movie trailers, short snippets of a movie which are used to advertise a coming attraction. Since most trailers are very short, they make a nice break from serious reading. *English-Trailers* (<http://www.english-trailers.com/>) has collected a number of trailers and plugged them into an easy to use ESOL interface with a summary, a cloze passage, vocabulary notes, the full script, and a quiz for each. According to the informative front page, which helps users download *the QuickTime* (<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>) software needed for viewing, more trailers are added regularly, and there is also a link to hundreds more trailers at Apple's *Movie Trailers* site (<http://www.apple.com/trailers/>); these do not yet have exercises. Additionally, the *Real Guide* (<http://www.realguide.com/>) has dozens of short videos ranging from hit movie trailers and pop music concerts to top stories in the news. Again, the teacher will need to do the work of sorting out the good from the bad and the ugly, as well as creating the educational value. While visiting the site, be sure to download the free *RealOne Player*; the Gold Player with enhanced sound quality is only \$19.95

(<http://www.real.com/>). Although most trailers are edited for general audiences, the teacher should, of course, preview any film clip to be sure the content is appropriate.

## Content-Rich Video Sites

Content sites make up the majority of excellent video available online, but teachers will often have to plan their own lessons. Some sites make this process fairly easy. For example, BBC's *Video Nation* (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/>) has "Today's Video," in 56K dial-up or broadband mode, and a place for students to add their own thoughts on the news content. A teacher might require a certain number of posts as free-writing in preparation for a paper on that topic. The "Archive" section is organized by topics, such as "health," "sport," "values," etc. Many of the other major news organizations in the USA and Europe also have a ready supply of video online. For literacy level, CNN San Francisco has an educational Website at *Learning Resources*, based on news stories, audio, and video (<http://www.literacynet.org/cnnsf/>). While lessons are not ESOL-oriented, and the stories are often very local in focus, many of the archived topics are of general interest, and the literacy lessons include word selection, sequencing, vocabulary, and composition topics, which may be readily adapted to intermediate level learners.

Video is a rich source for exploring other cultures. For example, a search for "culture" + "video" found a Fulbright conference, *Women in the Global Community*, containing videotaped interviews with "exceptional Muslim women" (<http://www.loc.gov/locvideo/fulbright/>). Another rich culture source is the *Japanese Institute of Global Communications* (<http://www.glocom.org/videoindex.html>), a multimedia magazine that features English interviews with Japanese leaders and experts on Japan. The video and audio files are supported by a short text description, and the content is especially appropriate for business English. For a political slant, the Council of Europe records all of its activities at *Video Online - Archives* ([http://www.coe.int/t/e/multimedia/archives\\_video/default.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/multimedia/archives_video/default.asp)). While viewing the parliamentary deliberations can be akin to watching paint dry, the richness of the videos for teaching the major European languages makes this an invaluable resource for those with the patience to edit the videos and create lessons for more advanced learners (see Figure 5).

The screenshot shows the Council of Europe website's video archives. The page title is 'Council of Europe www.coe.int'. The main heading is 'VIDEO ON LINE - ARCHIVES'. The page lists several video entries from 2003:

| Video | Description   | Reference       | Created date | Time     |
|-------|---|-----------------|--------------|----------|
|       | Title: <a href="#">Debate on the war in Irak (1st part)</a><br>Caption:<br>Version: International                               |                 | 04/04/2003   |          |
|       | Title: <a href="#">Accession of Serbia-Montenegro to the Council of Europe</a><br>Caption:<br>Version: International            | 030403_r01_w.rm | 03/04/2003   | 00:37:07 |
|       | Title: <a href="#">Intervention by the President of the Assembly of Serbia-Montenegro</a><br>Caption:<br>Version: International | 030403_r03_w.rm | 03/04/2003   | 00:09:24 |
|       | Title: <a href="#">Follow-up debate on Chechnya</a><br>Caption:<br>Version: International                                       | 030402_r04_w.rm | 03/04/2003   | 01:24:29 |

On the right side of the page, there is a 'PHOTO-LIBRARY' section with a login form (Username, Password) and a 'VIDEO-KIT' section.

Figure 5. The Council of Europe deliberations include all the major languages of the region, in a variety of authentic regional accents by both native and non-native speakers ([http://www.coe.int/t/e/multimedia/archives\\_video/default.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/multimedia/archives_video/default.asp)).

One additional source of video content, though without sound, are Webcams, which are often set up at interesting strategic locations to record ongoing events. For example, I have viewed baby owls in a nest, snowfalls at a tract in the Sierra, a llama giving birth, and my son on a dive trip in Bonaire. An extensive content unit could be created using data observed through a stationary Webcam in a remote location. Such a teaching unit could have great authentic validity: A recent report on CNN indicated that Webcams of rare game are helping to promote conservation of African wildlife. While an unfocused search of Webcams online will produce a number of pornographic sites, if the teacher begins with a reputable site, such as *Webcam Central* (<http://www.camcentral.com/>) or *Camvista.com* (<http://www.camvista.com/>), searches can be made by geographic region or subject matter. If you don't have time for a lengthy unit with daily or weekly observations, use a virtual tour, in effect, a simulated Webcam, such as the *London Video Bus Tours* ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/panoramics/bus\\_tour.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/panoramics/bus_tour.shtml)). Ask students to report on what they see, how people look, and so on. Then have them do the research.

### ***Hot Potatoes***

Pre-packaged lessons (or no lessons at all) may not always be appropriate to a specific class. However, even if a teacher doesn't have programming skills, it is easy to incorporate video clips into language exercises with the authoring software *Hot Potatoes* (<http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/>; cross-platform)

by Stewart Arneil and Martin Holmes, two instructors at the University of Victoria. Free under certain conditions, and very modestly priced otherwise, *HotPot* offers an excellent solution for teachers who wish to quickly create their own quizzes and practice activities. *HotPot* provides dynamic templates for six kinds of activities: matching/ordering, multiple-choice questions, crossword puzzles, jumbled sentences, short answer tests, and cloze. A reading text, HTML page, video, or audio file may readily be incorporated into the activities, and many examples and templates (and free help) are offered. Teachers pour in their own content, right and wrong answers, hints, timing and display of questions, colors, etc. The output is an HTML page that can then be mounted onto a Website.

While it takes a little time and experimentation, the *HotPot* software is easy to learn to use and the results can be of professional quality. For example, students might listen to a short video clip, and then fill in a cloze passage or answer questions of various types. An excellent example of a teacher's work with *HotPot* and the *Lord of the Rings* movie trailer is to be found at Sara Martin's Website, *El Rebumbio* (<http://www.elrebumbio.org/lord/lord.htm>; see Figure 6). This Webpage was created as an experiment to see how long it would take to learn to use the authoring program. (Sara reports it was pretty fast, but it helps to know a little about HTML.)



Figure 6. Sara Martin's experiment with *Hot Potatoes* (<http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/>) resulted in a captivating exercise based on the *Lord of the Rings* trailer (<http://www.elrebumbio.org/lord/lord.htm>).

## Real English Online - Video Webheads

Teachers may be excited about the potential to use real voices and realistic action in a multi-sensory experience for their students but are simply not able to devote the time to develop their own video-based lessons. The solution: join **Real English Online (REO)**, the community of practice that shares resources, lesson plans, *HotPot* tips, and the "moral" support to take that next step into multimedia. *REO* is a free *Yahoo! Group* moderated by Mike Marzio and me for users of audio and video online ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real\\_English\\_Online](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real_English_Online); see Figure 7). Our discussion board has considered questions as technical as optimal compression-decompression ratios and as simple as how to upload a photo. Group members have contributed an extensive list of resources, including WebQuests (see Bernie Dodge's *WebQuest Page* at <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/> for a searchable list of examples), and good free software. Members also can meet regularly to help each other by chatting in real time online Sundays at noon GMT with our sister group, *Webheads in Action*.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Group page for "Real English Online". The page is titled "Real English Online" and includes a "Group Owner" link. The main content area is divided into sections: "Description", "Membership", and "Group Info".

**Description:** Welcomes members and provides instructions on how to join, access files, and use the message board. It mentions a 6-week mini-course and a meeting with the sister group "Webheads in Action".

**Membership:** Shows that the user is a moderator of the group. It lists "0 Members" and "0 Messages".

**Group Info:** Lists "Members: 655", "Founded: Feb 28, 2003", and "Language: English".

**Group Settings:** Lists various settings such as "Not listed in directory", "Restricted membership", "Unmoderated", "All members may post", "Archives for members only", and "Email attachments are not permitted".

Figure 7. **Real English Online** is a free group for teachers and advanced students who use video and other media online; it offers help with *HotPot*, HTML, WebQuests, and so on, for lessons and activities ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real\\_English\\_Online](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Real_English_Online); click on "Join This Group").

The social aspects of *REO* are especially important to teachers who may be the only ones in their school

to use video. *REO* is looking forward to a time when we can regularly bring students to our chat locations in order to hold interactive Webcam and voice conferencing, the ultimate multimedia experience. We also expect *REO* to become a locus of classroom collaborations, where teachers and students can share their work.

In the meantime, with digital video cameras becoming cheaper by the moment, make sure students have the chance to create their own movies. Presentation software, such as *HyperStudio* (my preferred recommendation for student projects; <http://www.hyperstudio.com>) or *Microsoft™ PowerPoint*, readily accepts movie files, and newer computer operating systems usually come loaded with simple-to-use movie editing software: One of the best is *iMovie* for Apple; PCs may come with *MovierMaker* installed or you can download it at the Microsoft site (<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/updates/moviemaker2.msp>). Students can create their own lessons, culture grams, or research projects with all the slickness the digital world can offer. They can mine some of the sites above, or shoot their own content. To display student work, if a school doesn't own a computer projection system, drag out the TV on a stand to use as a monitor. Even better, archive those productions online as Web pages, either on the school server or at one of the free Web servers, such as *Geocities* (<http://www.geocities.com>). You can see a number of student video projects at the *iMovie Examples* page, mounted by a school district in Springfield, IL (<http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/movie/>). The page also includes step-by-step directions for creating similar projects. (If students use videos from the Web, be sure to help them understand fair use, attribution, and other copyright issues.)

Whether one is still using dialup on a phone line (the World Wide Wait) or has the fastest Internet on the planet, videos bring language and culture to life. Online video is easy, and it stirs the creative juices. Take advantage of this amazing resource and see the improvement in students' attitude and motivation.

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