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Promoting cultural heritage through video

Claudia J. Dold

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Presenter: Claudia J. Dold
Institutional Affiliation: USF Libraries, University of South Florida, Tampa
Mailing address: Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute Research Library
USF Tampa   MHC 1744
13301 Bruce B. Downs Boulevard
Tampa, FL 33612
Email: cdold@usf.edu
Phone number: 01-813-974-7040

Abstract

Cultural heritage is an ephemeral commodity: If it is not preserved, it will disappear. Capturing cultural heritage on video uses current technology that offers exciting opportunities for librarians. They may record, document, and preserve cultural heritage, including the local languages, in their archives.

As a visual, auditory, and texted object, video is an ideal medium for promoting cultural heritage. Videos with subtext also offer an opportunity to improve reading and writing language skills for all audiences, and especially for adults who are beyond the school age where literacy is commonly acquired. Cultural heritage is rich subject for videos, since it is part of the national heritage. Oral histories are particularly appealing as a subject for video archives.

National interests in education and language skills intersect in the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba (BNA), which promotes the national heritage and identity, cultural history, and literacy to all citizens. This paper describes a demonstration at the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba using video to promote language acquisition of aural, reading and writing skills in a multilingual society.

Introduction

The public library often plays a central role in a community: it may be a homework space for students, a story-time place to acquaint preschoolers with the connection between oral and written language, a resource for fiction and nonfiction reading material, a center for learning computer technology, and an archive for community history. Literacy is central to all of these activities.

Literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read and write. When the term is applied in a multilingual society, however, several issues arise. First, the term fails to distinguish the person who is literate in several languages. Second, the term may not measure the literacy of persons who acquired their proficiency after leaving school. Third, oral language fluency or language skills are not recognized in the term "literacy", even though they are very useful in a multilingual society and often are the precursor to written skills.

For these reasons, the "literacy rate" is a slippery measure in a country that has more than one national language. This paper describes a demonstration at the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba using video to promote language acquisition of aural, reading and writing skills in a multilingual society. Discussion follows about the broader applications of cultural and literacy videos in Aruba and beyond.

Literacy and Education

Literacy has traditionally received a lot of attention in terms of national statistics, especially when it is used as a measure of the national level of education. While literacy once was commonly understood to mean proficiency in reading and writing, literacy has been discussed lately in ever-more refined terms, such as computer literacy, numerical literacy (numeracy), health literacy, critical literacy, cultural literacy, and more. Even as the amount of

information that is available grows exponentially in our world of computers and fast connections, the ability to describe, find, understand, and use that information is key to higher learning. Traditional literacy of the reading and writing kind underlies all other literacies.

How does "literacy" correspond to "education level" in functional terms? The two official languages in Aruba are Dutch and, since 2003, Papiamento, a language with roots in African and Amerindian languages, and Dutch, English, Portuguese, and Spanish influences. Both Dutch and Papiamento are taught in primary school, while Dutch is used solely in secondary instruction (Aruba, 2014). The Aruban government is committed to life-long learning; already the literacy rate is 98% for inhabitants ages 10 to 75 (Aruba, 2014). Using data based on a 2010 estimate, the CIA World Fact Book reports that four major languages are spoken in Aruba (Agency, 2013). It further defines the distribution of literacy by language in Aruba as 69.4% Papiamento; 13.7% Spanish; 7.1% English; 6.1% Dutch, 2.2% other; 1.5% Chinese; and 2.1% unspecified or unknown. What we do not know is the percentage of the population that is literate in two, three, and four languages, and what the rate of multiple literacies is by language. We also do not know the distribution of language comprehension without literacy in four, three, or two languages. English is widely spoken, even though the literacy rate in English is below 10% (Agency, 2013). More significant perhaps is the 6.1% literacy rate in Dutch, even though it is the official language of the law and secondary education in Aruba.

On one hand, literacy in Papiamento is a wonderful preservation and perpetuation tool for the Aruban culture. It is the predominant language on the island. On the other hand, the impact of Papiamento on the national interests in global trade and prosperity is dubious. Since tourism and trade are such important elements in Aruba, increasing the rate of literacy and functional

language skills in languages other than Papiamento, is relevant to the national economy and government. Educational reform in Aruba has been initiated (Ministry of Education, 2007), recognizing that "we live in a digital era and our times demand that we prepare our children for an increasingly complex, interconnected, and expanding world" (p.48). In order to produce global citizens (p. 51), recommendations to the curriculum included proficiency in four languages (Papiamento, English, Dutch and Spanish [p. 53]), familiarity with the internet as a pathway for self-directed learning and researching (p. 54), and learning enhancement for all citizens, regardless of age (p. 57).

Video as Communication

Video offers a contemporary means of communication: it can combine pictures, narration, and text in order to convey a message. Over the last twenty-five years, advances in technology, data storage, computing, and software have made video programs available on a desktop computer. In particular, digital technology and broadband have increased the speed, clarity, and quality of transmissions (Vanderplank, 2010). WIFI is now freely available in public libraries in Aruba and the USA, enhancing access to digital media. Digital cameras and phones now capture still and motion pictures. The price of computers hardware and software has dropped dramatically, and a generation of programmers has grown up who understand that the public wants not just code, but user-friendly applications. In short, technology has undergone significant advances that make video accessible today for broad applications.

From the user's point of view, video is widely available around the clock through any of today's computers and internet-accessible electronic devices. For learners, one may work and review at one's own pace, in one's own space, on one's own schedule, and revisit material as

needed. Video serves multiple purposes, including education and demonstration. A well-constructed video is planned as purposefully as a book, with a script for the text and for the images, and it has a clearly defined message (Dold, 2011). While a live lecture offers the opportunity for serendipitous detours, an instructional video may be crafted so the learning material is presented logically, in the planned order, in its entirety, and in a manner designed to appeal to the viewing audience. Every viewer will see the same content in the initial and subsequent sessions. For educational purposes, redundancy is an important feature in learning unfamiliar subject matter.

From the creator's point of view, video is a Technicolor, techno-complicated, techno-wonderful playground for serious educators and creative minds. Albert Einstein observed, "Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration". Given those odds, librarians are the perfect population to take on the challenge of creating videos. As a whole, librarians are well-educated in diverse fields of knowledge, including languages. Their professional lives are devoted to communication, from solving puzzles of the categorization kind to negotiating the path between unknown and known, demonstrated every day when they help patrons refine a research question or teach them to use of the library resources.

Literacy Education

There is considerable literature to support the use of video in language education, often referred to as "computer assisted language learning" or CALL. While a lengthy review of the research into language learning is beyond the scope of this paper, CALL is a significant development that deserves attention. One aspect of the published literature centers on the use of captioned videos as opposed to uncaptioned videos. Results indicate that captions are useful for

listening comprehension and learning vocabulary (Perez, Van den Noortgate, & Desmet, 2013). Gass, Sydorenko, and Winke (2010) identify improvements in attention associated with subtexted videos. Other researchers note the usefulness of captions for language learners in parsing the spoken language into distinguishable sound units (Yang & Chang, 2014) and in reducing anxiety (Chen, 2011).

Hulstijn (2003) describes the experience of novice second language learners this way: "What reached their ears was a wave of sounds without borderlines" (p. 413). He argues that one must learn to recognize words and sentences before one can work with meaning and content. To enhance the parsing process for early stage learners, he recommends recording a text of about 400 words in the target language, being careful to include vocabulary with which the learner is familiar. Then the text is transcribed and synchronized to the narration and images are chosen for the video. Actual situations are recommended, since they use quotidian language. This is also one of the strategies recommended for learning English as a second language (Verdugo & Flores, 2007), and it is the process applied in Aruba. Cultural history was chosen as the subject matter on the grounds that the topic was visually engaging with broad appeal.

The basic unit in the computer assisted language learning set, as demonstrated in Aruba, is a short video comprised of images, narration, and text. To that end, a one-minute demonstration video was created that highlighted the work of Mr. van Rooijen, an Aruban painter. An exhibition of his work was scheduled in the BNA in April, 2014, and the demonstration video doubled as an advertisement when posted on the BNA webpage. The text of the narration was written in colloquial English (L1), from which subtitles were derived. The narration was recorded, and the video was populated with pictures of Mr. van Rooijen and his work. The subtitles were fitted and synchronized to the accompanying narration in the video

software. To complete the work, an introduction and a credits page were added, and the final version was rendered by the software into a viewable file.

To serve the multilingual society in Aruba, a second video was created from the first. Mr. Ronny Alders translated the text from English (L1) into Papiamento (L2) and recorded the narration in Papiamento. This L2 narration was then parsed into subtext units and synchronized to the images in the original short video. In this way, two parallel videos were created: one in English and one in Papiamento. Both videos addressed the same cultural content, each in a distinct language.

The result of this process was the demonstration of a set of integrated language learning videos. The L1 version of the video is recorded in a neutral American accent, and it presents text in English that is correctly spelled, punctuated, and capitalized. The L2 version is also recorded in a neutral accent, and it presents text in Papiamento that is correctly spelled, punctuated, and capitalized. A viewer of the L1 video may attune the ear to the sound of the English language and at the same time observe the correctly written form. The colloquial translation offers the viewer the opportunity to engage in the L2 video with a focus on spoken, written, and/or reading proficiency in L2. Furthermore, by knowing the content of the text from L1, the viewer may concentrate on the presentation of the language in L2. The two videos could be useful for four audiences: those who want to improve L1, those who want to improve L2, those who already know L1 or L2 and want to improve the second language, and those who are proficient in either L1 or L2 and who want to learn something about Mr. van Rooijen and his artwork.

Immediate Impact

The demonstration occurred in conjunction with Aruba's Biblioteekdag (Library Day) on January 20, 2014, and a workshop held at the BNA later that week conducted in the Centro di Informacion principal room, for enable computer access. On Friday, the Minister of Education and Family Affairs, Mrs. Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar, visited the library to meet with the Director, Mrs. Astrid Britten. The videos in L1 and L2 were demonstrated and discussed as they toured the facilities. The Minister recognized the usefulness of video as a vehicle to promote reading and writing skills, especially as part of the national program of extending lifelong learning. Not only would all audiences benefit from the cultural content of the videos, but language students, and particularly adults, could use the integrated set of videos for the acquisition and enhancement of language skills. By expanding the translations of an initial video, created in Papiamento, into Spanish and Dutch and English, the opportunities for adult literacy education would be limited only by computer access and the capacity of the library to support the program. In a different context, this same concept could be applied in a monolingual culture to create opportunities to learn a second language.

To move from the demonstration set to a fully functional CALL product, additional planning is needed. Someone or some group should determine the content of a learning series and the number of series; the level of language proficiency of the target audience per series; and the scope of the project. Partnering with government resources may lead to assistance from public school curriculum planning experts, language instruction specialists, and technology support. Computer storage must be estimated and provided, and a marketing campaign should be developed so that potential users know about the service. Thought should be given to features that will distinguish one series from another, as well as to distinguish the language in the video.

A combination of logos and color on the introduction page is a simple solution. The naming conventions for the files and the computer storage structure will benefit from these decisions.

As an example, suppose the library targeted Aruban handicrafts as the topic for a series meant for an audience whose language skills included fluent speech and listening skills but lagging written knowledge. The text would be written at a high level of comprehension. Topics could include the construction of island homes before the frame house was introduced, the way to weave a fishing net and cast it, the traditional boat building techniques. When this hypothetical video is produced in four languages, the user audience is global. Another series could focus on the history of fashion in Aruba, citing foreign influences that correlate to changes in foreign governance. Both series address Aruban cultural heritage. The possibilities are endless.

Implications for the Future

The components of video creation are well within the reach of personnel at the BNA. Part of the workshop was to teach Camtasia 8, a video software product by TechSmith, to a group of participants at the BNA at a proficiency level such that participants could create their own videos. The workshop was a success: the video chosen for demonstration of the language learning set was created by one of the participants in the video workshop.

What constitutes proficiency for creating a CALL program at the BNA, as discussed so far in this paper? First, BNA librarians and staff have already expressed ideas for cultural videos. Second, library personnel are well-qualified to write a text for narration and to translate it into one of the three other national languages of Aruba. Third, they have access to cell phones and digital cameras to create images and to capture short video segments from which to create

visual content. Fourth, there are several options available for recording the narration, including the free program, Audacity, which Mr. Alders used to record the narration in Papiamento. Audacity is easy to learn and to use. It lets one record, edit, amplify, remove noise, and save an audio file in a format that Camtasia can use. Fifth, at least one of the participants knows how to post a video online, since the demonstration video was posted in anticipation of Mr. van Rooijen's exhibition.

Video is already used in many libraries to demonstrate a procedure (how to operate the scanning machine), a process (how to find a database), and for general purpose advice (information about library programs and exhibits). Projects specific to the BNA that are suited to video include past and future guest lectures and symposiums, and the much-discussed series that documents Aruban cultural heritage. Papiamento, as it is spoken in Aruba, is itself an object of cultural heritage. Distinguishing Papiamento in Aruba from Papiamentu in Curacao and Bonaire is an excellent topic for video documentation, given the historical roots of the language, its limited geographical distribution, and the particular features of the two languages.

Using video for literacy education in particular also has great potential. The most time-consuming part of video work is transcribing the narration, but doing so opens up the video experience to patrons who want to improve their reading, writing and comprehension skills, as well as to the hearing-impaired, who learn by being engaged and participating (Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010). (Visually-impaired patrons will be able to engage in video content through the narration.) The vital component of the integrated language learning video set is translation. Partnering with government agencies may provide a framework of cultural topics for a language-learning series, expert education advisors, and funds to hire outside professionals for transcription and translation. If adults have easy access to video through computers or other

devices, then there is a good chance of reaching the segment of the adult population that wants to improve its literacy skills. For those people who want to work in one language, the narration and the text will by synchronized to the screen image, so the voice will correlate to the written text. For those people who want to work on acquiring a second language, the careful construction of a text and its colloquial translation will permit the viewer to understand the text in a familiar language and then puzzle through the sound and written form of a different national language on the companion video produced in the second language.

This idea of one text transcribed and subtexted in a variety of languages need not to be kept in Aruba. Libraries in educational institutions across the Caribbean and around the world could share videos with other libraries and learning centers as discrete items on YouTube. For example, cultural videos could appeal to other Caribbean island nations. Consider the opportunities for discussion of a video followed by a videoconference to enhance the meeting of minds across distances. A cultural video translated into Dutch may well appeal to a school or television audience of native speakers in their home country. Video segments may be implanted in webinars as part of a lecture or presentation. For consistency in proficiency testing, using video segments in a videoconference would offer a means of administering those parts of the literacy examination that are conducted face-to-face, when distances are problematic (Kim & Craig, 2012).

The same language videos discussed for an Aruban audience may well have appeal in audiences in other countries with an interest in Papiamento, in the three other languages spoken in Aruba, or in the subject matter. Videos of guest lectures, e.g. on mental health issues, could find an academic and medical audience in universities in Aruba and abroad.   Short videos of symposiums could be used as advertising for future events. By using YouTube as a platform to

house the videos, anyone anywhere in the world may access them, for free, eliminating obstacles to distribution. YouTube analytics automatically track several features, including the number of times the video is accessed and where the viewer is located.   These statistics are useful for measuring the impact of the video.

Given the importance of tourism to Aruba, cultural videos may have commercial appeal to hotel managers, cruise ship operators and tourism promoters, especially since the videos can be made available in four languages (Johnson, 2014). The Ministers of Regional Development and Tourism may be interested partners when videos address historic buildings and manufacture practices, local features and landmarks. Videos with commercial value would require a protected environment to control copyright issues.

Coupling cultural heritage video with multilingual access has additional local possibilities. Families, colleagues, neighbors, and age groups with different language abilities will be equally apprised of a civic event or item and may engage in communal discussions. Imagine a public debate about razing an historic building that had fallen into disrepair in order to create a park, or restoring it as a museum. The video could present the facts and the images; responses could be collected through a free online survey tool, such as SurveyMonkey. Other ideas will surely arise as opportunities for discussion present themselves.

Conclusion

The use of video for the preservation of cultural heritage has immediate and broad application across the population, for visitors and guests, and for the world beyond Aruba. It has great potential to extend education, literacy skills in particular. Producing videos is well within the capabilities of anyone who is proficient in video creation software. Video is a contemporary

tool that demonstrates the vitality and centrality of the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba in promoting

the national heritage and identity, cultural history, and literacy to citizens in Aruba and beyond.

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