Village Voices, Global Visions: Digital Video as a Transformative Foreign Language Learning Tool

Jason Goulah

North Tonawanda City Schools
Concordia Language Villages, Concordia College

Abstract: This instrumental case study examines how adolescent high-intermediate Japanese language learners enrolled in a one-month credited abroad program used digital video as a mediational tool for (1) learning foreign language, content, and technology skills, (2) cultivating critical multiliteracies and transformative learning regarding geopolitics and the environment, and (3) augmenting their portfolios (Gee, 2004a). Framed in sociocultural and transformative learning theories, this study also suggests that digital video production engaged students extensively in language-based tasks and cultivated collaboration and creativity. Implications suggest future research applying digital video to various languages, levels, and contexts, particularly those in traditional schools and curricula.

Key words: digital video, new literacies, study abroad, teacher research, transformative second/foreign language learning

Language: Japanese

Introduction

While Blake (1998) argued that multimedia technology offers new possibilities for foreign language learning, Parks, Huot, Hamers, and Lemmonier (2003) noted, “it is now equally incumbent on instructors to help students become proficient in [its] use” (p. 28). Friedman (2005) concurred, arguing that the global shift to a digital media culture, coupled with technological know-how developing in India, China, and Russia (among others), is leveling or “flattening” the world in terms of occupations, technology, and economics, and has implications for U.S. education and adolescents’ competitiveness and job preparedness. Friedman (2005, 2006) further argued that in addition to digital technological skills, U.S. adolescents in today’s fast-changing world also need to develop content knowledge in science, sustainability, and environmental education as a means of economic, social, and geopolitical security. Friedman’s arguments are applicable to foreign language as national standards (National Standards, 1999) include developing technology

Jason Goulah (PhD, University at Buffalo, State University of New York) is Codirector of the Academy of International Studies and a Language Instructor with the North Tonawanda City Schools in North Tonawanda, New York, and Dean of Japan Credit Abroad with Concordia Language Villages, Concordia College, in Moorhead, Minnesota.
and interdisciplinary content knowledge in addition to learning language and culture.

Development of critical inquiry and critical literacy, however, are also included as goals in national standards (National Standards, 1999). Beach and Bruce (2004) argued that cultivation of critical literacy should engage students part and parcel with technology applications, technology skill development, and language learning. Alvermann (2004b) agreed, noting that "new" literacies—like those in digital media—"reflect the sociocultural, economic, and political struggles that come with reading the world, not just the world—in effect, they are the literacies that adolescents need presently as citizens of a fast-changing world. . . ." (p. viii).

As necessary as it may be for language learning to encompass digital technology, content, and critical multiliteracies, Gee (2004c) lamented that such learning unfolds only beyond the margins of traditional school contexts and curricula. Gee further commented that the information age is pushing students to build diversified portfolios of experience and learning that prepare them to "shape-shift" in response to rapidly changing national and international—"flattening" (Friedman, 2005)—trends, such as those from factory-based to those based on information technology (Gee, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). Necessarily operating extracurricularly, shape-shifting portfolio students diversify portfolios by choosing what they believe are the right sort of summer camps and travel that include a wide variety of interpersonal, aesthetic, and technological skills and earn them honors or awards in preparation for admission into elite educational institutions and for professional success later in life (Gee, 2004a, 2004c).

Regardless of location, research has been done in each of the abovementioned areas independently and in partial combination (e.g., Alford, 2001; Alvermann, 2004a; Blake, 1998; Carrier, 2005; deHaan, 2005; Duff, 2001; Gee, 2004c; Goodman, 2003; Jean-Ellis, Debski, & Wigglesworth, 2005; Kasper, 2002; Kern & Schultz, 2005; Kohl, Dressler, & Hoback, 2001; Kubota, 2003; Morgan, 2004; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004; Parks et al., 2003). However, foreign language research examining all aspects of the abovementioned collective goal—language learning, technological use and skill development, critical multiliteracies, and portfolio building—is limited.

Goodman (2003) developed critical literacy skills outside a foreign language context through digital video production, arguing that students must develop a critical literacy to read a broad array of media (e.g., television, radio, movies, videos, magazines, and the Internet), in addition to learning to read and write the printed word. Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) argued a similar point in the context of a second language (L2). Goodman (2003) noted that "among the most efficient strategies for teaching critical literacy is for students to create their own media" (p. 4). Digital video has also been successfully applied to (among other areas) elementary education (Gunter & Kenny, 2004; Leh & Gazda, 1998), science and science literacy (Yerrick & Ross, 2001; Yerrick, Ross, & Molebash, 2003-2004), content-based literacy (Scot & Harding, 2004), and teen perspective meme-ing (Goldman, 2004). In their research on digital video applications in urban settings, Miller and Borowicz (2005, in press) anecdotaly indicated that the use of this technology facilitates foreign language learning in addition to the other aspects of the abovementioned collective goal. However, research explicitly examining digital video applications to the development of adolescents' foreign language acquisition, technological skills, and critical and multiliteracies in a portfolio-building context does not exist. This study aims to fill that gap.

The Study

This study examines the use of digital video in Concordia Language Villages' Japan Credit Abroad program. The purpose is to examine how digital video projects foster technology-based language learning, technology use, technological skill devel-
opment, content learning, and the type of new or multiliteracies and critical inquiry that Gee (2004a, 2004b, 2004c), Friedman (2005), and Alvermann (2004b) argued students need.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is couched in two theoretical disciplines: sociocultural theory (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978, 1997) and transformative learning theory (O'Sullivan, 1999, 2002a). I used a sociocultural perspective in terms of participants' dialogic interaction toward meaning making; Alvermann (2004b), Goodman (2003), Jean-Ellis et al. (2005), Kasper (2002), King and O'Brien (2004), Miller and Borowicz (in press), and Parks et al. (2003) (among others) also showed that in terms of digital technology, language learning, and literacy, the forum of student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and student-computer interaction (directly or as a mediational tool for the previous two) is best understood from a sociocultural perspective. Within the context of teenagers and digital technology, Alvermann (2004b) argued that a sociocultural view is warranted given adolescent developmental and age-driven factors.

I used transformative learning in two respects: (1) student learning and (2) the type of lesson content to facilitate student learning. In terms of student learning, transformative learning involves experiencing a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, 2002b, p. 3)

O'Sullivan envisioned and espoused such learning based on the argument that it is explicitly not happening in schools. Influenced by but transcending critical pedagogy, O'Sullivan viewed transformative learning as different from critical pedagogy in that the latter provides a means for awareness of social issues, while the former transcends awareness to facilitate realization of holistic interconnectedness with social issues so as to transform learner tendencies, attitudes, and actions contributing to them. Such learning not only addresses concerns in critical pedagogy, critical applied linguistics, and transformative learning; it also addresses national foreign language standards-based cultural elements (National Standards, 1999). While critical literacy is necessary, transformative learning is desirable.

To cultivate transformative learning in a foreign language context—what Goula (2005, 2006, in press) termed transformative second and foreign language learning—O'Sullivan's (1999, 2002a) transformative learning must also be considered, according to Goula (2005, in press), as a set of curricular objectives. That is, with regard to adolescent learning, interlocking structures of power, class, race, environment, and so forth must be explicitly discussed as content and critically analyzed to facilitate transformative learning described in the first approach to transformative learning, above. The dual meaning of transformative learning used herein seeks not only the accretion of knowledge, but also a resultant change in thought and behavior through sociodialogic interaction.

**Research Questions**

Guiding research questions were: How does content-based digital video production (1) affect the quality of students' foreign language learning, (2) facilitate content-based learning, critical multiliteracy development, and transformative learning, and (3) affect students' subject-based participation and attitudes?
Method
I conducted this study using the teacher-researcher method (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, 1999; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Mackey & Gass, 2005) in which I simultaneously cotought classes and took ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980). Within a teacher-researcher framework, I used an instrumental case study model (Creswell, 1997; Mackey & Gass, 2005), in which the case was one class. Mackey and Gass (2005) argued that the teacher-researcher method can be difficult and problematic but can nevertheless "provide valuable insights both to individual teachers and to the field of second language learning" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 219). I mitigated potential problems of the teacher-researcher method by triangulating data sources (Mackey & Gass, 2005), coteaching classes (allowing time for observations and extensive ethnographic field notes), and making a conscious effort not to let my role as researcher compromise my role as teacher, and vice versa (Ely et al., 1991).

I chose teacher-researcher method for a combination of reasons. First, Blake (1998) noted that "we need teachers to tell us what works, and how it works, in the new electronic classroom" (p. 210). As a teacher-researcher, my work in this study is an attempt, in part, to answer Blake's call. Similarly, O'Sullivan (1999) called on educators to define transformative learning in their own fields; however, transformative learning has not been widely applied to foreign language learning. Extant literature remains largely theoretical (Goulah, 2006), so teachers interested in making such applications must lead the field in designing and reporting on applications in their own teaching. Moreover, within a transformative learning approach to qualitative research methodologies, Yorks and Kasl (2006) argued that "researchers engaged in human inquiry cannot position themselves as disconnected from the experience into which they are inquiring" (p. 50). Finally, as a full-time, year-round secondary-level teacher interested in examining transformative learning applications to adolescent foreign language learning, it is difficult to conduct research outside my own classes given my position and normal hours for classroom-based learning.

Data Collection
I collected data during the month that the program was under way. Primary sources included my ethnographic field journal, open-ended questionnaires and evaluations, and two student-produced digital video "uncommercials," a genre of film that uses the commercial format to sell an idea or concept (Miller & Borowicz, 2005, in press). I wrote observational field notes during every class, reflecting further before and after each day's lessons on student interaction, language use (oral and written), participation, and gestures, as well as my own personal impressions and questions (Emerson et al., 1995). Additionally, students wrote assignment-based journals, which I corrected and reflected on in real time in my field journal. Secondary sources included oral and written feedback from the cooperating teacher, periodic semistructured interviews with students, and photographs of student engagement. Multiple and varied primary and secondary data sources provided rigor and triangulation; I reached trustworthiness through member-checking.

Data Analysis
I transcribed the digital video uncommercials and, following general qualitative data analysis procedures (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 1997; Ely et al., 1991; Emerson et al., 1995; Glesne, 1999), first read all data, annotating my initial impressions and insights. I then began content and thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 1997; Ely et al., 1991; Emerson et al., 1995), using a recursive three-stage process beginning with consideration of data content. Then I analyzed inductively (Boyatzis, 1998), noting repeated patterns and emerging themes. In the third stage I analyzed considering
emerging themes and research questions, then coded and further analyzed data in light of research questions, emerging themes (Ely et al., 1991), and pertinent research for a deductive analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). In the third stage, I also systematically used differently colored ink and multiple-colored highlighting to develop codes on a separate sheet of paper for each participant, which created a visual model of emergent themes (Creswell, 1997). Considering overlap and developing answers to my research questions, I condensed themes across participants. These themes developed into a narrative (Emerson et al., 1995) that illustrated answers to research questions in terms of students' socially constructed meaning making, digital video production/interaction, critical literacy, and transformative and language learning. This narrative presents a "holistic cultural portrait of the social group that incorporates both the views of the actors in the group (emic) and the researcher's interpretation" (Creswell, 1997, p. 60) of those views (etic).

Participants and Sites
Seven upper-middle-class Caucasian students from seven U.S. states and one upper-middle-class Puerto Rican-Caucasian student from an eighth state constituted the high intermediate class (based on pre-trip telephone interviews and postarrival placement tests). Representing California, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee, there were four males and four females, all between 16 and 18 years old. One student was home schooled, and the extent of prior Japanese education ranged from high school instruction to university-level courses. All but one student had participated previously in Concordia Language Villages' stateside programs; one student had participated in the Japan Credit Abroad program the previous year (in which digital video was not used) and was the only student in the study who had been to Japan. The 8 participants were part of a 24-student group with three proficiency levels. The high intermediate class was the highest level among the group and the only one in which digital video was used. The study took place in three locations: a ryokan [inn] in Kyoto, a high school classroom in Fukuoka, and a Hiroshima hotel lobby.

The Program
Students, who are called villagers while enrolled at Concordia Language Villages, experience traditional American summer camp immersed in one of 14 foreign languages. In addition, Concordia Language Villages' one-month credited abroad programs offer adolescents with at least two years of foreign language proficiency immersion-based intensive language study while they tour the target country. In the program, students clock 180 hours of language instruction through classroom learning, historical and cultural site visits, home stays, and authentic daily interaction with native speakers, native and nonnative teachers, and peers. Participants who successfully meet the program's academic requirements also earn one year of transferable high school foreign language credit. While Concordia Language Villages' stateside programs cultivate primarily aural and oral development, its credited abroad programs address all skill areas and seek to meet national standards (National Standards, 1999) through embodied activities (Gee, 2004c). Thus, offering students prestige; international travel; special (language), interactional, and aesthetic skills; and honors/awards, coupled with opportunities for development in digital technology through a foreign language, Concordia Language Villages' Japan Credit Abroad program is the type of summer camp Gee (2004a, 2004c) suggested students attend to build portfolios.

High Intermediate Lessons
Two topic units were examined for this article: (1) Japanese politics in a geopolitical context and (2) environment, featuring a one-day poetry lesson selected because poem topics linked the politics and environment units. Runte (1996) argued that poetry pro-
vides strong academic ties between foreign language learning and content learning in areas such as geography, environment, social sciences, and economics, all of which were present in the politics and environment units we studied. Program visits to the Diet (Japan's parliament) and the World Expo in Aichi Prefecture, as well as consideration of the Kyoto Protocol and suggestions in current research (e.g., Carrier, 2005; Friedman, 2005, 2006; Goulah, 2006; O'Sullivan, 1999, 2002a) were in part impetuses for the units selected.

With regard to environmental education, O'Sullivan (1999, 2002a) included it with transformative learning, calling it "ecological selfhood." Ecological selfhood as envisioned by O'Sullivan is twofold: On one hand, as Morgan (2004) noted in applying environmental education to second language learning, it is education toward a renewed interest in and understanding of our environment. On the other hand, as Morgan (2004) did not explicitly articulate, it is environmental education that fosters a sense of our own ecological interconnectedness with that environment, other people and cultures, the planet, and the universe. As we understand ourselves in this second context, we realize the necessity of understanding the importance of the first. Ecological selfhood cultivates a sense of oneness with the planet and a consequent desire and (self-)interest in protecting it.

Thirty hours of instruction and homework divided among four days were allotted to each of the two units (a total of 60 hours over eight days). Chapter 13 of Nihon wo hanasou: Aspects of Japanese Society (Nippon Steel Human Resources Development Co., 1994) and unit 7 of Obentoo 3 (Fisher, Fukunaga, & Brown, 2000) were used as foreign language bases for discussions on politics and environment, respectively. Students also read related articles from the CNN.com Web site, Asahi Daily News, Daily Yomiuri, and Expo brochures. Poems included "Bento" (Karmen, 1994), "Japan," and "Bonsai" (Collins, 2001); Genki II (Banno, Ohno, Sakane, Shinagawa, & Tokashiki, 1999) was the grammar text.

Students began units by reading textbook chapters and ancillaries, and answering teacher-led questions. They received topic-specific vocabulary, kanji (Chinese characters), and grammar constructions (e.g., "must," "should," passive, causative-passive) for both units, and were encouraged to inquire about unfamiliar grammatical structures used by teachers or peers. Teachers explained grammar inquires in the foreign language and instructed students to consult Genki II (Banno et al., 1999). Through teacher-led communicative activities, students discussed what they understood, knew beforehand, and opined during and after reading the texts and articles. During these discussions, teachers checked speaking, listening, reading comprehension, and cultural awareness (National Standards, 1999), and handled grammatical points, vocabulary questions, orthographical (kanji) instruction, and topic clarification in the foreign language.

Discussions in the foreign language progressed from comprehension questions to more difficult questions soliciting opinion clarification and fostering critical literacy (Nussbaum, 2002). Whereas comprehension questions are straightforward, critical literacy was cultivated by asking students why questions not present in the textbook chapters or articles. Some examples included: Why did the United States sign but not ratify the Kyoto Protocol? Why does Japan recycle more than the United States, or does it? To cultivate critical literacy, teachers asked students to consider connections between topics. Some of the questions included: What role do you/government(s) play in environmental laws and conditions? Are these topics important to consider together or separately or at all, particularly at the expense of other topics? Given such questions, students did not just read textbook chapters for comprehension; they also engaged in critical analysis, reflection, and discussion about the content and their/peoples' roles within that content as
suggested by Kern and Schultz (2005; see also Carrier, 2005).

**Digital Video Projects**

The digital video projects, which I call Village Voices, Global Visions based on Miller & Borowicz's (2005, in press) City Voices, City Visions projects, were collaboratively created, unit-based, one-minute un commercials that digitally represented the texts, themes, and unit discussions in the form of personally meaningful short films with a message. Students first watched Japanese commercials for ideas of cultural norms and differences in media, then developed essential questions that reflected their understanding of global practices and perspectives after studying the units in class. Then students brainstormed and storyboarded ideas for answering the essential question, using sketches and descriptors in complete foreign language sentences. Thereafter, they presented, defended, and discussed their storyboard ideas with mediation from the teacher(s). Students negotiated and agreed on an idea and assigned roles (director, script writer(s), movie and music editors, camera person, staging, actors, and so forth), all in the foreign language.

Students worked collaboratively and individually, moving in an out of small groups and solitary spaces to discuss ideas with classmates. They began shooting on the second day of each unit, sharing a digital camera and one Macintosh iBook computer, which made the digital video project particularly appropriate for learning. Macs allow all operating language to be changed easily and quickly, so students interfaced with all programs (including iMovie, iTunes, and word processing) only in Japanese. Moreover, none of the students had experience using Macs, so interfacing was more consciously engaged rather than habitual or experiential. Therefore, as students captured video footage, edited, and saved their un commercials entirely in Japanese, they were engaged in authentic, multimodal, and multiliteracy foreign language activities. Teachers assessed un commercials using the rubric of City Voices, City Visions (Your UnCommercial Assignment, 2005), which I revised to add linguistic and cultural accuracy.

**Politics Unit**

The first uncommercial begins with the essential question *risouteki na kuni ha nani wo suru beki desuka* [What should ideal countries do?] raining down a black screen. It then shows a male student as a weak and thirsty country in a convenience store (a mix of the inn's kitchen and a real convenience store) trying to buy a soft drink. The store clerk, another male student, makes an X gesture with his arms and then makes the Japanese gesture for money (the OK gesture used in America turned upside down). The thirsty student/country gestures with shrugged shoulders and arms spread outward from the body, palms up to indicate that he has no money. Then a female student/country/customer, coughing and standing behind the weak student/customer, buys him the drink, placing yen on the counter. The poor student/country thanks her and drinks the beverage as the girl coughs more pronouncedly and asks the clerk for medicine. But the clerk again makes an X with his arms. The camera flashes to the poor, thirsty country's pocket, in which he has a cup labeled *kusuri* [medicine]. The poor student/country gives the wealthy but sick student/country the medicine. She drinks it and they smile, both refreshed, and leave. As they leave, the camera flashes to another female student/country walking. She trips and falls to the ground and the two customers/countries rush to save her like superheroes. Then the answer to the essential question showers down a black screen: *risouteki na kuni ha mazushii kuni wo tetsudau beki desu* [Ideal countries should help poor countries].

In this uncommercial, music plays in the background, but there are no audible voices. Except for the essential question, its answer, and *kusuri* [medicine] written on the cup, there is no text. The mes-
sage is clear. The uncommercial questions how strong and rich and weak and poor countries should act on a globally interconnected stage. It answers that ideal countries should help those less fortunate by depicting students as countries helping each other to satiate thirst, cure the infirm, and lift up the fallen. Moreover, in making their video, the students included one of the grammar points under discussion (dictionary form of verb + beki [should]).

Environment Unit
The second uncommercial, conceived in Kyoto, shot in Fukuoka, and edited in Fukuoka and Hiroshima, is dramatically different from the first. Since the director was different, the idea for executing the essential question—doushite risaikuru shite jikan wo muda ni tsukauka? [Why do we waste our time recycling?]—was envisioned differently. In this case, the assignment outlined in unit 7 of Obentoo 3 (Fisher et al., 2000) was to “prepare a presentation (visual and/or oral) in Japanese for a primary class on a topic related to recycling or the environment” (p. 125).

The second uncommercial included voices and music, but no people (other than a hand for a brief moment). Students agreed to use only handmade puppets and backgrounds. The uncommercial begins with the essential question handwritten on cream-colored paper taped to a green background with pink zigzag lines running through it. Concurrently, a menacing anime-like voice asks the essential question. Although the question is phrased in unnatural Japanese, its meaning was clear when the clip was viewed.

The screen fades to white, then a black and gray sock puppet, complete with arms, white hands, and white button eyes, appears beside a lawnmower. The puppet and mower are in front of two houses and three smoke stacks pumping thick, black smoke into a blue sky. The lawnmower is a two-dimensional puppet glued to a breakable chopstick colored green to match the lawn in the background, which students made from colored construction paper. The lawnmower character is grinning slyly with a cigar in between his gnashed teeth, a student’s buzzing lips supply its sound, and J-pop (Japanese pop music) plays as background music.

The sock character encourages viewers to use more oil and natural resources as an image of the lawnmower multiplies exponentially on screen. Then, as the sock character tells viewers to shop and spend money, it begins raining and lightening (a mix of handmade backgrounds and iMovie special effects); the houses and stacks are now crooked and shaking and the sky opens to reveal a human hand painted black. The hand grabs the sock and pulls it unwillingly into the sky.

In the aftermath, a puppet called Recycle Man appears; he is made from a bottle of the Japanese soft drink CC Lemon, with leaves for arms and a moveable face made from construction paper. Speaking in a high-pitched anime-type voice, Recycle Man again asks the essential question, then answers it by saying: naze nara risaikuru shinai to ozon no ana ga okiku matte kimi wo taberu yo. Dakara risaikuru shite hoshii [If we do not recycle, the hole in the ozone layer will get bigger and eat you! So I want you to recycle!].

Using handmade puppets and backgrounds, culturally appropriate music, anime-like voices, taught grammar constructions (e.g., te form of verb + hoshii [to want somebody to do something!]), and an appropriately phrased message for primary students, the students created a digital video uncommercial that successfully met all assignment instructions.

Findings
How Does Content-Based Digital Video Production Affect the Quality of Foreign Language Learning?
Content-based digital video production affected students’ foreign language development in two ways: (1) content, grammar, and vocabulary learning necessary to conceptualize and realize un commercials and (2) making and performing in uncom-
mercials. Field notes reflect that unit-related content, grammar, and vocabulary discussion was neither easy nor fast. Some students had limited content knowledge prior to lessons and all students were required to stay in the foreign language. Thus, much time was spent searching dictionaries (paper and electronic) for words and phrases, gathering thoughts, and feeling our way toward meaning making. Field notes indicate, for example, that teachers took much time to present environmental information in the passive tense. Teachers provided words, then taught differences between indicative and passive using gestures and common examples unrelated to politics or the environment. Thereafter, teachers transferred examples to related topics, then moved to critical literacy issues and questions. Kasper (2002) argued that such critical reflection requires the learner to move beyond acquisition, but that instructors must be sure to support the foreign language learners as they engage in activities that demand critical reflection. Teachers in this study were consciously aware of such conditions. As students expressed and attempted to express critical reflection, teachers corrected grammar, provided vocabulary, confirmed or taught kanji, and fostered meaning making. Such foreign language sociodialogic interaction was frustrating and at times difficult for students, but they transcended the frustration toward development (Robbins, 2003) because they and their teachers were engaged in foreign language critical literacy focused around specific domains of knowledge (Kasper, 2002). Although it was difficult and frustrating, use of foreign language for discussion of content, grammar, and vocabulary carried over into digital video production, even when students struggled to express themselves. Such findings differ from those of Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005), whose participants code switched from the second language (L2) to the first language (L1) when faced with difficult tasks, especially ones concerning technological and computer uncertainties. Perhaps participants in this study stayed in the foreign language even when struggling with deep, critical reflection and computer interfacing because the program was 24-hour immersion-based and occurred in the target country.

Making digital videos explicitly facilitated authentic foreign language reading, writing, and speaking in terms of interfacing and computer operations. Students read and deciphered computer prompts to capture, edit, add text and music to, and save their digital video commercials. Such results are similar to Kasper’s (2002), who reported that computer-based projects led not only to operational computer literacy but also language learning. Students also used the computer to type foreign language text into their videos. Moreover, students discussed the above processes with each other, causing them to engage in authentic foreign language dialogue related to digital video production. Such dialogue is similar to that seen in the design of Web pages, as addressed by Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005). More implicitly, making digital videos facilitated language use in terms of storyboarding, digital video-related journaling, shooting, and gesturing. Below I examine interfacing, shooting, and gesturing more closely.

Interfacing
An example of digital video’s influence on the quality of language learning is evident in students’ computer interfacing to navigate commands, capture footage, and edit the commercials’ movies and music. One student wrote in her questionnaire, “I was forced to learn the kanji for ‘redos,’ ‘caption’ and ‘play over/back.’” Another wrote that in navigating instruction bubbles, “I learned the kanji for song.” Similar computer-mediated vocabulary acquisition was recorded by deHaan (2005), who examined students’ foreign language-based interfacing with a Japanese video game.

Particularly noteworthy, according to field notes, were the two students who were chosen to add culturally and contextually appropriate music to the commercials. Both sought to add music from their own iPods rather than the music
saved in the iBook's iTunes, stating such application is possible on a personal computer. Unbeknownst to them, it is impossible on a Mac. While both searched—in the foreign language—unsuccessfully, the student working on the first digital video labored for hours to execute his plan for music. He methodically navigated screen commands using his electronic dictionary to look up unknown kanji and terms in an attempt to locate "hidden files." Such findings are similar to those reported by Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005), who found that students "resolve[d] the meaning of an item on the menu bar by clicking on the bar and checking its function. Computer activity thus provided a link between an unknown L2 language item and its function to illuminate meaning" (p. 141).

On the second digital video project, the first music editor became the more capable peer and assisted the next music editor. Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005) labeled such assistance "triadic scaffolding" or "triadic interaction." Engaging in click and discover foreign language-medium, computer-assisted foreign language learning facilitated a sociocultural (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003) atmosphere for learning, whether interaction was student to student or students interacting with the screen. Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005) found that in both instances, as in this study, one student assumed the role of the more capable peer.

In the process of computer-mediated vocabulary and kanji appropriation, students also developed new digital video technology skills (through the foreign language), as Alvermann (2004a), Friedman (2005), and Gee (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) argued students need. Those developing foreign language-mediated technological skills facilitated students' media creation, which not only showed a means of visual literacy (Kohl et al., 2001) but also, as Goodman (2003) argued, developed their critical literacy, which I discuss later. Next, however, I examine students' foreign language use while shooting the videos.

Shooting

When shooting their videos, students told one another where to stand, when to start, how to deliver lines, and where to shoot, among other instructions. During the production of the first video, the director instructed the cast and crew: shizukani shite kudasai. Yoi sttaato. Hai stoppu. Jya mou ichi do shimashyou. Konkai, kou shite kudasai. Mina-san, wakarimasuka [Please be quiet. Okay, start (Action!)]. Okay, stop (Cut!). Okay, let's do it one more time. This time, do this, please. Everyone, do you understand?]. Students responded, Hai, wakarimashita [yes, I/we understand] and proceeded accordingly. While this is just one example, it illustrates project-centered oral interaction similar to that found by Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005), who reported that more productive oral interaction occurred among students when that interaction was centered around completing a project such as building a Web page. In this study, the project was shooting a digital video.

In another example, chronicled in the field notes, a different student director asked classmates to create backgrounds [haikei]. He neither knew the Japanese word for background nor consulted a dictionary, but repeatedly used a transliterated version of the English: bakuguraundo. Each time, teachers corrected him, saying, bakuguraundo jya nakute, haikei desuyo [Not bakuguraundo, it's haikei]. He repeated haikei, but used bakuguraundo the next time. This pattern repeated itself during nearly all of the preproduction period. When another student showed the student director her completed background and stated proudly, Haikei dekimashita! [(my) background's completed!], it showed that she had heard and registered the teacher's repeated corrections of haikei for bakuguraundo. Interviews with the student indicated that she did not know the word prior to this episode. When asked how she knew it, she responded, sensei ga itta kara [because teacher(s) said it].

Evidence that the boy had acquired the vocabulary occurred two days later when we were leaving the inn. The boy rushed
into the inn for the backgrounds he had forgotten and which I was gathering. When he saw they had not been discarded, he sighed and said, Hai, haikei desu. Arigato, sensei [Yes, the backgrounds. Thank you, teacher], using the correct term for background. The student continued using the correct term once production of the uncommercial resumed in Fukuoka.

On his final evaluation, this student wrote: The projects were actually very awesome. The learning process for language feels a lot like getting deeper and deeper in an ocean, but the dawning of proficiency is a bit like coming out the other side. Doing something unrelated while using the language feels a lot like that.

This student's words explain his (and others') language progression toward learning and using the word haikei (among others) while shooting their digital videos. Making digital videos also created a means for students to display their understanding of foreign language-appropriate gestures, which I turn to below.

Gesturing
The first uncommercial contained no speaking, so implications on language quality may seem limited; however, it is important to consider students' use of nonverbal communicative gestures (in addition to students' use of the grammatical structure for "should"). Vygotsky (1978, 1997) argued that gestures are an indication of language learning and inner speech leading to external speech. McCafferty and Ahmed (2000) examined this view in terms of L2 learning. Striking examples in the students' first video are the student/convenience store clerk gesturing twice with his arms to indicate dame [no good] and the gesture for money. Field notes indicate that students collectively agreed to the gestures while making their storyboards; the gestures did not happen spontaneously during shooting. During preproduction, students added the X gesture after jokingly imitating one of the native Japanese teachers who often used it naturally in communication. Lantolf (2003) argued that at the core of such imitation, if viewed through a Vygotskian understanding rather than a behaviorist interpretation, is its transformative potential. He argued, "this is a crucial point, because, for one thing, repetition does not in itself imply agency and intentionality, whereas imitation does" (p. 353). Also citing transformative learning or potential, Yorks and Kasl (2006) showed that gestures indicate a powerful and expressive multimodal way of knowing that facilitates personally transformative learning and adds a critical and whole-person dimension in such learning. Nonetheless, further research examining gestures in a transformative foreign language context is necessary.

While the students' use of these gestures indicates cultural and linguistic awareness understood by the class, it does not mean that students applied all such gestures appropriately. For example, when the weak, thirsty shopper/country indicated he had no money, he did not make an appropriate Japanese gesture (a straight arm waving right to left in front of the face). Instead he used an American gesture (hunched shoulders with arms extended from the body, palms up). While there is some research on Japanese and American gestures in foreign language learning (McCafferty, 1998), none examines the gestures discussed in this study. Moreover, McCafferty and Ahmed (2000) argued that there is little research examining whether language learners comprehend and appropriate nonverbal elements. They found that foreign language learners appropriate foreign language cultural gestures more often when they live for at least three years in the target country. Despite being in the target country less than a week, Concordia Language Villages' Japan Credit Abroad students evidenced culturally appropriate gestures in their digital videos. That is, one student evidenced gestures that were incorporated into the storyboard and discussed (in the foreign language) by the group. Perhaps this was because they were added consciously before-
hand, rather than appearing spontaneously during conversation.

In terms of sociocultural theory and language learning, McCafferty and Ahmed (2000) argued that language—and second language specifically—"is not just a set of linguistic rules, [but] that it is embodied" (p. 199). Japan Credit Abroad students' conscious use of culturally and communicatively appropriate gestures may be an indication that digital video storyboarding acted as a step in the students' language learning process. Perhaps giving students opportunities to add gestures consciously in digital video (or similar) projects would facilitate later actualization of culturally and communicatively appropriate gestures in real foreign language conversation or interaction. More research in this area is necessary to determine if such a step exists or is effective in foreign language learning.

How Does Content-Based Digital Video Production Facilitate Content-Based Learning, Critical Multiliteracies, and Transformative Learning?

As students discussed the topics, read the materials, and planned and made the videos, their content knowledge and cognitive academic language proficiency grew. For example, one student wrote in her evaluation about learning environmental content: "The Kyoto Protocol—I learned words and I understood what was going on. . . ." Another wrote: "It is amazing to see how accepted conservation of resources and recycling throughout Japan [are]. It's trés different in Mississippi." Regarding politics, one student wrote that it was the "hardest but most interesting" lesson: "I could effectively describe several aspects of American [in relation to Japanese] government to my host family." Yet another student wrote the following:

This class was more in-depth on some more difficult studies. I hadn't done that much before. I thought it was very informative, though. It was tough but I enjoyed it a lot. It was certainly an experience I have never had before but a good one. It helped my studies because I learned new vocab and got to act in new and different roles. We learned LOTS of phrases and vocab. They were tough to memorize but useful. Content was taught well, so I was satisfied. . . .

The above comments are largely anecdotal and based on students' opinions. However, it is possible to examine the extent of students' content-based learning by analyzing the critical literacy and transformative learning in their uncommercials.

O'Sullivan (2002a) argued that transformative learning or a transformative vision "starts with the notion of transformation within a broad cultural context" (p. 2), such as the students' content consideration. O'Sullivan (2002a) further noted that examining cultural tendencies results in two forms of criticism: reform criticism and transformative criticism. Reform criticism "calls a culture to task for its loss of purpose. It is criticism that calls the culture back to its original heritage" (O'Sullivan, 2002a, p. 3). Transformative criticism "calls into question the fundamental myths of the dominant cultural form and indicates that the culture can no longer viably maintain its continuity and vision" (O'Sullivan, 2002a, p. 3). Transformative criticism, by its nature a critical literacy, maintains that the culture is no longer "formatively appropriate . . . In contrast to reformative criticism, transformative criticism suggests a radical restructuring of the dominant culture and a fundamental rupture with the past" (O'Sullivan, 2002a, p. 3). The students' two content-based uncommercials employ transformative criticism in one-minute digitally created visions.

Transformative criticism has three simultaneous moments, which are evident in both of the uncommercials. First, as O'Sullivan (2002a) suggested, is critique of the dominant culture's current practices; second is an alternate vision; and third are concrete ideas about how to effect that vision with an indication of the results or beneficial differences. Students examined environment and politics in relation to Japan, then on a global scale. Thereafter, they developed attitudes regarding each topic, which they realized as uncommer-
cials. Students’ uncommercials critiqued current geopolitical and environmental situations, provided an alternate vision (of cooperation and assistance among countries and of recycling), and provided a sense of how that vision may look (happy countries and citizens in the first uncommercial, environmental stability and human safety in the second).

Within the context of digital media and adolescents, Lankshear and Knobel (2004) called such transformative criticism a new literacy practice of “scenariating” (p. 34), which, they argued,
is a literacy because it is a way of reading and writing the world (of the future). Scenarios are catchy narratives that describe possible futures and alternative paths toward the future, based on plausible hypotheses and assumptions grounded in the present. Scenarios are not predictions. Rather, building scenarios is a way of asking important “what if?” questions: a means of helping groups of people change the way they think about a problem. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 34)

Uncommercials were the printed foreign language texts and related discussion actualized as personally meaningful digital representations and critiques. Had students not comprehended the content, they would not have been able to create transformative criticism scenarios in tidy one-minute digital video films. Writing about adolescents and digital video production as a critical literacy practice, Goodman (2003) also articulated the inherent transformative aspects:

This [digital video] approach to critical literacy links media analysis to production; learning about the world is directly linked to the possibility of changing it. Command of literacy in this sense is not only a matter of performing well on standardized tests; it is a prerequisite for self-representation and autonomous citizenship. (p. 3)

Similarly, Beach and Bruce (2004) noted, “Digital tools can also be used to foster discussion and reflection on issues or topics in ways that encourage critical analysis and exploration of ways to transform a world or system to address an issue or program” (p. 160; see also Kasper, 2002). Digital video facilitated such learning for students in this study.

What we see in the students’ videos is a clear understanding of the political and environmental information gained via the target language. But perhaps more importantly, the students are evidencing learning beyond accretion of knowledge to a plane of critical literacy and socially engaged transformative criticism using new literacies of digital technology via the foreign language. Just as City Voices, City Visions (Miller & Borowicz, 2003, in press) provided urban adolescents a means to critique and renew their neighborhoods in their voices, the digital video project studied in this study, Village Voices, Global Visions, provided a forum for Concordia Language Villages’ Japan Credit Abroad Villagers to critique global politics and environmental issues, and to create geoculturally transformative visions using their developing foreign language literacy skills to read the world, not just the word (Alvermann, 2004b; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

In so doing, students evidenced a new literacy I term planetary literacy (Goula, 2005, in press). That is, students understood not only information about the state of the planet—whether it be expressed in terms of human-to-human contact or country-to-country interaction or in terms of ecological interconnectedness—but they also “read” that information in a critical way that propelled transformative criticism. Such planetary literacy is different from a world view, which may or may not be existent or static irrespective of the planetary state. Planetary literacy causes the formation of a transformatively critiqued new world view. The students’ uncommercials reveal such planetary literacy in the foreign language in a new digital video literacy.
How Does Content-Based Digital Video Production Affect Subject-Based Participation and Attitudes?

Participation
There are identifiable differences between project-based digital video production and traditional foreign language classrooms. First, the project provided an atmosphere of collaboration rather than competition. All students worked and communicated in the foreign language to reach a single goal. Second, classroom activity was different. As Goodman (2003) noted, digital video production seemed at times chaotic compared to the "lockstep" nature of traditional classrooms, where everyone is doing the same thing at the same time. She called such atmospheres Vygotskian sociocultural zones of proximal development, arguing that the teacher-mentored fluctuation between individual, group, and whole class work centered around multiple tasks lends itself to "every student being called upon at some point to help [peers] solve a problem" (p. 56). In this type of environment, through mediation by more capable peers, or "triadic interaction" (Jeon-Ellis et al., 2005), students act as "cognitive amplifiers and reflectors" (Goodman, 2003, p. 56) for each other.

Attitudes
Questionnaires and interviews reveal that students in this study enjoyed using digital video, particularly as it facilitated creativity and foreign language learning. One girl wrote in her evaluation: "Making the films was a lot of fun." Another student, the previously mentioned one who had participated in the Japan Credit Abroad program the summer before, compared the two programs: "iMovie was significantly more abstract but supplied good means to practice Japanese to actual work, as opposed to simple conversations. I liked that we were free to come up with creative projects." Yet another student wrote: "I liked it because it allowed for creativity. It was very fun. It helped me learn tango [vocabulary] related to movies."

Two students said iMovie not only increased their grammar and vocabulary knowledge, it also allowed them to "see what being a joyau [actress] in Japan might be like," and "act in new and different roles," comments that support Gee's (2004a) view that digital technology (and digital video) facilitates renewed and projective identities.

That said, even though all of the students said they learned a lot of vocabulary and grammar in authentic situations, some also expressed a desire for explicit grammar and kanji instruction. Perhaps this is due to students' language learning experiences in traditional contexts, where grammar- and vocabulary-based drill and practice are the norm. Despite copious vocabulary and grammar forms appearing authentically in daily conversations and digital video production, students may have felt that learning was not happening if grammar and vocabulary were not the foci of memorization, practice, and drill lessons. One student's evaluation supports such analysis:

In past Japanese classes, all the emphasis was on learning grammar and vocab, not discussion and conversation. Though I learned a lot of grammar in this class, I feel I did not get a good chance to practice it as the grammar practice was rarely structured. Had we practiced more using the text I think I would have had it stamped in better and be more prepared to use it in class discussions. I learned a lot of new vocab but I think I may have learned a little too much at one time.

However, linguistic growth, in addition to the learning addressed above, was evident.

Conclusion
The Village Voices, Global Visions project studied herein was multimodal, experiential, and hands-on, involving multiple senses and drawing on multiple intelligences. It bridged traditional and new literacies and fostered foreign language and content learn-
ing, technology skills, and critical thinking with regard to power in interlocking structures of class, language, culture, and environment. In addition to preparation for possible occupational and academic needs, Village Voices, Global Visions facilitated in students a renewed understanding of self-awareness, self-locations, and relationships with other people and with the natural world in a developing, interconnected world—transformative learning. Moreover, it did this via the foreign language, allowing students with roughly two years' proficiency to meet nearly all of the national foreign language standards (National Standards, 1999) and develop their portfolios (Gee, 2004c). That said, the short duration of the Japan Credit Abroad program and this study may raise questions about whether the above results are permanent or sufficiently deep. Furthermore, lack of video- or audio-recorded foreign language interaction was a major limitation. Such data would have facilitated more complete observational and discourse analyses, particularly when students were engaged in different stages of digital video production. Students were constantly moving in and out of the inn, between the inn and convenience store, and in and out of rapidly changing groups. Video recording under such conditions proved challenging. Nonetheless, future studies in this area should include video- or audiotaped student interaction. Village Voices, Global Visions is just one application, but its implications at least suggest the possible benefit of further examinations and possible transferability of similar applications of digital video to different languages, levels, and contexts, especially those in traditional schools and curricula.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Foreign Language Annals editors and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and helpful suggestions.

References


Duff, P. A. (2001). Language, literacy, content, and (pop) culture: Challenges for ESL.


educational theory in cultural context (pp. 349–370). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.


