

## *Vlog Virtual Tour: A critical framing perspective*

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### ABSTRACT

The Vlogs on YouTube have been excellent sources to satisfy craving for mystical and enigmatic distant land detached of our immediate surroundings. Despite the benefits of free world tours in high definition videos, many of the vloggers' framing of the distant land and culture for the purpose of crafting interesting and attractive travelling stories has, in fact, intensified misconceptions of those cultures and societies. Using frame analysis and four resources model, this study examines two examples of such vlog productions. This study also suggests critical principles towards vlogging and presenting a lesson sample for raising such criticality in schools.

**Keywords:** *vlog, virtual culture tours, framing analysis, four resources model.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, when international travel was not as popular and affordable as today, traveling shows on television were the main source of satiation for people's craving for enigmatic distant lands. Today, access to high-definition digital video recorders built into cellphones or attached to a drone, together with an easy-to-carry laptop bears the power to render and publish our production for the world to see. Many vloggers take up the "job" of "traveling for others" and get paid for commercial earnings when their videos go viral on YouTube or other social media. The often said "freedom and leisure" of being a vlogger could be deceptively tempting for many young people in today's fiercely competitive job market. However, many studies have found that vlog productions have intensified misconceptions of certain cultures and societies due to the vloggers' insufficient understanding of local culture (Oh & Oh, 2017; Guo & Harlow, 2014; Wall, 2009). The global spread of such YouTube videos and the uncritical consumption of said videos by young people can exacerbate cultural stereotypes. Critical digital literacies entail the skills and practices that can question these stereotypes as they foster the critical analytical orientations and capacity to question digital, multimedia texts for their underlying ideologies (Avila & Pandya, 2012). Using frame analysis (Goffman, 1974/2010) to analyze the common framings of vlog virtual tours on YouTube as well as the keyings used by the commenters on the YouTube vlog page, this study examines the power relationships embedded in such framings and keyings and proposes suggestions for how a critical pedagogy on vlogging can be developed in classroom settings.

### Literature review

The study of YouTube videos related to tourism is not new but has been explored from many different perspectives. Back in 2007, a group of scholars had already identified the uniqueness of the user-content based platform and its ability for mass distribution of videos (Cheng et al., 2007). It was not long before a growing number of research studies emerged focusing on the efficiency of YouTube videos as marketing tools for consumer tourism (Fotis et al., 2011). One study even found that vlogs have become a much more reliable source of information for travel planning (Lodha & Philips, 2013).

Recent studies have examined travelling vlogs more critically and uncovered some taken for granted power relations and stereotypes, which take shape in various topics in travel, such as food. Tambunan (2019) followed the productions of four couple vloggers from "first world" countries introducing the "authentic" culinary experience in Indonesia (p.1). In the analysis, Tambunan pointed out that eating local food ordinary to local Indonesians was presented as adventurous demonstrating vloggers' "openness" to a foreign culture (p.4). The portraying of "Self" as cultural ambassador and exoticization of "Other" seem to have contributed to the popularity of these vlog videos. Another study focused on a group of white expatriates in South Korea making videos about Korean food (Oh & Oh, 2017). In their videos, tasting Korean food is again described as "adventurous activities" (p.696). Oh and Oh (2017) further theorized that these videos demonstrate these expatriates' rejection of the hybrid identity of living in a different culture. The authors argue that to push back on the "White self vs. Others" construction, "it requires conscious agency to exercise antiracist, critical multiculturalism that works against their own social and commercial self-interests" (p.707). There are other similar analyses conducted in a variety of contexts, e.g., Guo and Harlow (2014) offered a comparative, systemic analysis of stereotypes of African Americans, Latinos and Asians in YouTube videos. They concluded that user-generated content on YouTube mostly perpetuates the stereotypes of different ethnicities rather than challenging them. Also, user-generated videos on YouTube seem to be more popular than those from mainstream media because people generally see them as value-free (Guo & Harlow, 2014). It is thus important to help students develop a critical stance towards vlogging rather than seeing them as value-free because the makers of the videos are also influenced by, or subscribed to, the already existing cultural and ethnic stereotypes in society consciously or not.

Previous studies also seldom include a fine-grained sociolinguistic contextual analysis. However, users of YouTube, especially those watching tourism videos, will pay attention to not only verbal utterances but also the contextual aspects like when, how, where, and why these words are said. For example, saying "this is the local food" in a fancy and expensive restaurant is hugely different from saying the same sentence in a roadside diner where the viewers' main concern might be hygiene; "this is local clothing" in a high-end shopping mall is vastly different from saying the same sentence in a local store located in the less affluent areas of the city.

Thus, the perpetuation of stereotypes usually happens during the viewers' interpretive processes with their pre-existing stereotypes and misunderstandings unchallenged. To design a critical pedagogy focusing on vlogging tours, I adopted Goffman's (2010) frame analysis as an analytical framework to conduct a fine-grained contextual analysis of the dynamic process of perception and interpretation, as a means to uncover the important issues beyond a solo focus on language and words. In addition, previous research has mainly looked at vloggers traveling or expatriating from western countries. This study shifts the focus to vloggers from non-western countries so that the critical pedagogy developed based on this study can be useful to teachers and audiences in non-western societies.

### Theoretical framework

The term 'frame' is central to the theoretical framework in this study. Goffman (1974/2010) in his article 'Frame analysis, an essay on the organization of experience', did not offer a very concise or straightforward definition of frame. This, however, has not stopped his ideas from being adopted by social scholars as useful methodological tools to analyze social experiences from micro perspectives (Scheff, 2006). The toolbox in Goffman's theorization has provided ample and handy metalanguage for describing, conceptualizing, and analyzing social interactions. In this paper, several inter-related notions from Goffman will be introduced first. Then, these analytical tools will be applied in the contrastive analysis of two tour videos.

Goffman defined the central term 'frame' in this manner:

And of course, much use will be made of Bateson's use of the term "frame." I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify (Goffman, 1974/2010, pp. 10-11).

To unpack this definition, we can see frame as the "definition of a situation." It is also important to notice that for one situation, multiple frames can exist. For example, in this study, I frame YouTube travel videos as "vlog cultural tours"; however, to the vloggers, filming, editing and sharing of their videos may be framed as just for-profit actions; for the consumers on YouTube, watching these videos may be just another entertainment consumption act. The process through which we

construct our frames to understand social activities around us is called framing (Goffman, 1974/2010).

Goffman also introduced two other useful notions, 'keys' and 'keying':

The key, I refer here to the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else. (Goffman, 1974/2010, pp. 43-44)

A key is defined as "the set of conventions" that transforms the original definition of an activity. For example, in Asian countries, wearing face masks in public places is generally seen as a practice of self-protection for healthy individuals. However, the meaning of this practice is transformed in many western societies: mask-wearing in public spaces is seen as being irresponsible as only seriously sick people need to wear masks and if one is seriously sick one should stay home. So, due to the different conventions (keys) about mask-wearing there are different meanings for a seemingly similar practice. This transformation process is called "keying." Goffman (1974/2010) also conceptualized a perceptive distinction between social and natural events. For example, we tend to perceive that the earth goes around the sun as a natural event, while traveling to another country as a social event. Goffman argued that to perceive some event as natural or social is to apply our primary frames. In this study, the activities of filming, editing, and uploading videos to share are perceived as social events. Specifically, many vloggers post videos on social media to generate profit, and this framing is generally shared among vloggers themselves, as they all enabled advertisements in their videos. However, this framing is not usually shared explicitly with their audience. Instead, vloggers through various keys (e.g., YouTube as a social media platform), the original framing of the for-profit video filming and sharing activity is usually keyed as a natural, exciting, adventurous, and non-instrumental recording of personal traveling. However, the keys made available by the vloggers are not necessarily adopted in the keying process of the viewers. The keying process and the subsequent reframing of the activities in the video will also be a focus of critical analysis because it is usually in the process of keying and reframing that the perpetuation of cultural and ethnic stereotypes is uncovered.

To sum up Goffman's (1974/2010) work in a concise way, a frame is an interpretative framework to contextualize and understand what is happening;

framing is the process of establishing a frame. When a certain frame is communicated to and received well by others, then these people are described as contained by the frame. Otherwise, when they bring additional information to the interpretation and change the frame, this process is called keying.

YouTube video consumption is a temporal process: the user first sees a video appearing on the website with titles and snapshots which show a frame of the video, and then the user must decide whether to play the video. While playing, keying could happen multiple times when new keys are brought by the viewers to understand the video. The comments left by viewers can provide reliable evidence to conceptualize the keying process of the viewers.

Goffman introduced frame analysis in the 1970s, when there was no internet. Thus, useful as it is, it needs some tweaking to analyze YouTube content, so as to cope with the often-asynchronous nature of communication between the vloggers and their viewers through the comment system (except during live streaming), compared with the face-to-face setting from which Goffman theorized and developed his analytical metalanguage. Another important issue pointed out by Pietraß (2009) regarding the use of frame analysis in education and critical digital literacies is the transferability and applicability of theories in actual classroom settings. To address this gap, this paper will outline some principles to develop a critical pedagogy on vlogs and a sample lesson plan. In particular, it will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the ways in which critical awareness (or lack of it) in framing vlog tour stories can counter (or exacerbate) cultural stereotypes?
2. What are some possible ways to raise students' critical awareness while consuming vlog tour stories?

## **METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA**

YouTube recommends new videos to users according to their algorithms, which means that the more videos users consume on YouTube, the more the recommendations will be tailored to the interests of the user. This algorithm takes into account many factors including what videos users choose to watch; how long they stay watching them; whether they leave comments; and whether they subscribe to the channel of the video they watch (Arthurs et al., 2018). For data generation in this study, viewing the videos pushed by the

recommendation algorithm becomes a reasonable route as this simulates the process by which the average viewer gets exposed to different videos. For example, when users demonstrate enough interest in the vlog videos on YouTube, the algorithms will start to recommend similar ones. This way of data generation has been effectively used by researchers analyzing content on YouTube (Airoldi et al., 2016).

In this study, for the purpose of simulating the experience of first-time viewers of YouTube vlog tour videos, several computer techniques have been applied (i.e., use of virtual private servers, and privacy mode of browsing) to “cheat” the algorithm and let it “misrecognize” the researcher’s video searching as from first time users. With these precautions, it is reasonable to assume that the hunt for traveling related vlogs for this study will resemble the experience of first-time consumers of vlog traveling videos.

To find the vlog videos made by non-westerners, I used my native language Chinese to search on YouTube. The search term “旅游” meaning “traveling” returned almost infinite results, and the information (English translation) about the first 5 videos are listed in Table 1 as examples. The ‘title’ refers to the descriptions composed by the vloggers and then indexed by YouTube to facilitate searching. The ‘thumbnail text’ reports the words and phrases in a thumbnail image uploaded as the theme of the video to attract viewers. ‘Description’ is the space beneath the title of the video on the webpage, where vloggers put detailed introductions to their videos. ‘Account type’ indicates the categories I use to differentiate vloggers who claim to be individual YouTube users from accounts held by tourism companies. The last column contains the number of accumulated views at the time of the search.

Because of the abundance of traveling videos, the search results are infinite. Due to space limit, only the information about the first five videos is listed in Table 1, but they can be fair representations of the general content first-time users are expecting. The aim of this study is not to be as exhaustive in terms of data collection as other studies that need huge datasets for content analysis. The aim of this study is to simulate, as closely as possible, the experience of first-time users searching for vlog tour content, as this is the real-life experience of many YouTube users, including students.

From Table 1, three of the videos are shared by vloggers self-disclosed as personal travelers (#2, #4 and #5). #1 is from a tourism company in Taiwan, and #3 is from China’s state media CCTV (China Central Television). For videos from personal accounts, #2 is

from a Chinese couple touring mainly in India, Vietnam and western (usually poorer) parts of China. The vlogger who shared #4 claims to be a Beijing person living in Toronto. Her videos are mainly on touring in western countries like the UK, the United States and Canada. The maker of video #5 called himself a “lonely traveler” from Hong Kong.

The data analysis will not include videos from companies or institutions as they are probably created very differently (i.e., not in a vlog form), which could be the focus of another study. I first examine the channel page of each vlogger and then watch their first few videos three times over a week, to allow time and space to reflect on the watching experience with theoretical lenses. Then in the next few days, I follow the recommendation of the YouTube algorithm to expand my watch list. After analyzing the videos, I have chosen two videos to illustrate two distinctive kinds of framing found in similar videos. I then compare and contrast their similarities and differences in framing as well as the keying of their respective viewers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section begins with demonstrating the analysis of two videos and their respective channels. They are

chosen because their videos can best represent two distinctive types of framing. The similarities between these two representative videos include: both (a) claim to be a narration of travelling, (b) visit a third-world country, (c) show signs of edits, and (d) generate profit by enabling advertisements in the playback. Despite these similarities, the two videos are quite different.

### Vlog tour to an Indian slum

These vloggers’ channel is called “婚前先旅” meaning to travel together before marriage. Their self-description is provided in Table 1, # 2. The couple seem to be in their 20s and claim to be from rural places in China. On the channel page, they state their aim as leading viewers to experience the authentic world. Most of their videos were shot in India, Pakistan, and the rural western part of China. One sentence on the most prominent place of the channel is “You have money and status, while I have a lady and a motorbike.” This sentence frames their vlog stories as from the grassroots, who are proud of their unique lifestyles. The video analyzed is called “印度贫民窟第1次被人打，就因为拍了一头牛” [Got beaten for the first time in a slum of India, just because I videotaped a cow].



Figure 1. Four screenshots of the first video from “婚前先旅” channel

The video begins with the couple walking along a street which they framed as a slum, with Indian children, laughing, walking, and chasing them from behind. The male vlogger is chattier than his girlfriend. While walking along the street of clothes sellers, the male vlogger states that these businesses are there because “this place is a slum”.

Then, he catches sight of a passing Mercedes-Benz car, which is inconsistent with his framing of this place as a slum. According to Goffman (1974/2010), when people are engaging in activities within certain frames, other out-of-frame activities are still going on, which could lead to frame breaking. As the two vloggers staging their performance by framing it as touring the slum, various other locally meaningful activities on site are still going on., such as selling and buying very cheap

clothes are considered in-frame activities as they are consistent with the vloggers’ framing, while the sudden appearance of a luxury vehicle is an out-of-frame event that has its meaning for the locals but can potentially challenge the vloggers’ framing. This out-of-frame activity (the Mercedes-Benz car passing) has caused the vloggers to renegotiate the framing as the boy said “还能出奔驰，牛逼” [A Mercedes-Benz car is coming, awesome]. After being silent for a while the conversation between the female (F) and male (M) vlogger continues:

01:15 M:他们的贫富差距啊可能已经达到了我们没有办法想想的地步 [The gap between the rich and the poor here may be beyond our imagination.] [...]

Table 1. *Information about the first five search results*

<b>N.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Thumbnail text</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Account type</b>	<b>Views</b>
1	Traveling to Europe [Austria, Czech Republic, ep.1] Passing three countries in a day, the most beautiful town Hallstatt.	Fairytale town in Austria and Czech Republic. What to do for a ten-day trip? [A picture of the town]	Come to the fairytale town of Eastern Europe, the first episode of the ten-day trip to know Mozart.	Corporate Account	190K
2	Travel self-media as money making? How much money you make with 400 thousand followers. Listen to our two-year story.	Monthly income of 30,000 RMB [A picture shows vloggers showing their cellphone in their van]	Hello everyone, I am Hongji, experience different cultures and customs, get to know different corners of the world. Follow me to the authentic world. You have money and status, while I have a lady and a motorbike.	Personal Account	120K
3	“Touring China” the first episode, the world is round   CCTV documentary	CCTV [A picture of the forbidden city]	The content of this episode: starting from the historical point when the first travel agency was established, talking about the UK, Spain, France, China and Africa	Institutional Account	55K
4	The Vlog of the UK, Travel with Me   Strategies for London   Where to go for a holiday   London subways  China town  Fish &Chips	Follow me to tour the UK [A picture of the vlogger beside the bank of the river Thames]	Hello, long time no see, RAM issues on my computer prevented me from uploading my videos, and it has finally been solved! The London Vlog will be divided into two episodes, and my recommendations of scenic spots are as follows.	Personal Account	32K
5	Sri Lanka - The best tourism destination of Lonely Planet  Train at the sea  Galle Dutch Fort  Backpacking in Sri Lanka	Backpacking in Sri Lanka Day 01 [A picture of vlogger leaning out of the train]	We offer Chinese subtitles in our channel, if you like please subscribe.	Personal Account	45K

01:43 F: 刚刚那里不是有一辆奔驰开过去吗? 真正的贫民窟的话, 这些车应该不会往这边开。[There was a Mercedes-Benz passing by just now? I thought if this were a real slum, these cars would not come here.]

01:51 M: 这是贫民窟的霸主啊, 这个, 绝对的霸主。[This is the king of the slum, this one, a real king.]

In the dialogue transcribed above, the female vlogger questioned the framing of slum, as she saw the Mercedes-Benz car. The male vlogger, however, continued to sustain his framing, despite the evidence of possible mis-framing on his part. Goffman (1974/2010) called this process “containment”, which means to contain the audience in the existing framing (p.103). Despite describing the Mercedes-Benz car as “awesome,” he still tried to contain the audience in his slum framing by calling the car the king of the slum.

In the 4th screenshot of Figure 1, the wall and metal wires are framed by the male vlogger as the fences that the government set up to block international tourists from seeing the slum on the other side. He then claims that the real slum is behind those fences (as if the Mercedes-Benz car has made the previous slum unreal). However, as they cross the fences, viewers can see what immediately lies beyond are railways, so it is likely that the fences are safety measures rather than what the vloggers claimed as the government’s attempt to hide poverty. It is difficult to know whether framing those fences as measures of hiding poverty comes from their intentional fabrication or their own misrecognition of the fences’ function.

To summarize how the vloggers frame their visit as a tour of the slum, it seems that it is done basically through assigning meanings that are consistent with the slum framing to local things and people regardless of the local meanings on site. They then present the audience with their stories of “what is happening” by using the local things and people as evidence. We theorize this model of framing as “Myself-vs-Local” framing, which involves objectification of local people’s living.

In this framing model, the meanings assigned to the local environment (material or human) by the vloggers are subjected mainly if not only, to their framing (i.e., slum), detached from any local meaning, which further invites the viewers to apply the same framing to make sense of other things in the local environment that the vloggers may not have described. In addition, the vloggers in these videos seem to maintain a distinct boundary between themselves and the local environment, which remarkably resembles the distinctive White and the Other boundary mentioned in many other studies (Guo & Harlow, 2014; Oh & Oh,

2017). It is clear to viewers that they are not, to any degree, part of the local environment. During the whole video, there seem to be no obvious signs of meaningful engagement with the local people, things and happenings which can help to reduce chances of a stereotypical framing.

### Viewers’ comments on the vlog tour of an Indian slum

YouTube generally lists viewers’ comments according to the number of likes and replies received on the comments. The most popular comments are ranked first. The ten most popular comments are listed below:

- #1 你长得像北部印度人 [You look like a northern Indian person.]
- #2 这女的也很惨, 跟错人, 早晚出事。[The woman is miserable, attaching to the wrong person, a tragedy will happen as a matter of time.]
- #3 把女友丢在后面小心给印度强奸犯看到。[Leaving your girlfriend walking behind you, you should be careful she may be targeted by Indian rapists.]
- #4 没强奸犯算很好了。[It is lucky not to come across rapists.]
- #5 大哥, 连我都有想打你的冲动了……[Hi brother, even I have got the impulse to punch you.]
- #6 小心, 在国外也要注意隐私权, 如果别人拿摄像头往你家拍, 你就知道什么感觉了? [Be careful, you should also pay attention to privacy rights in foreign countries, you will know what it feels like when others film in your home with cameras.]
- #7 跑得比女朋友还快, 没卵葩。[Running away faster than your girlfriend, you’ve got no guts.]
- #8 男的去可以, 不可带女友去, 不怕一万, 只怕万一。这种地方安全是没有保障的。[As a male you can go there, take every care just in case, there is no safety guaranteed in a place like this.]
- #9 刚刚说到人特好就被打。[You just mentioned people are kind there, and you got beaten up.]
- #10 印度治安很差, 要小心, 再小心。[Public order is extremely poor in India; you can never be too careful.]

From the comments above, the original framing of the situation as an adventure in a slum in India has turned into something quite different through the keying of the viewers. The keys that viewers drew on have mainly two themes. First, India is a dangerous place (Comments #1, #9 and #10), based on which, some comments criticized the male vlogger for taking his girlfriend there. (Comments #2, #3, and #8). In addition, the other theme of keys is the immediate danger for the female vlogger to become a rape victim (Comments #3, and #4). Thus, the viewers who left the most popular comments reframed the tour video mainly as a record of

the dangerous and irresponsible action of the male vlogger.

From the analysis above, critical framing is much needed to counter uncritical keying of viewers, which exacerbates stereotypes, as Gamson (1992) pointed out that people are generally not cognitively active, and they depend much on (the vloggers' and/ or other viewers') framing to make meaning. Thus, critical framing of the vloggers is essential for the audience to avoid mis-framing due to stereotypes in cross-cultural communication and events.

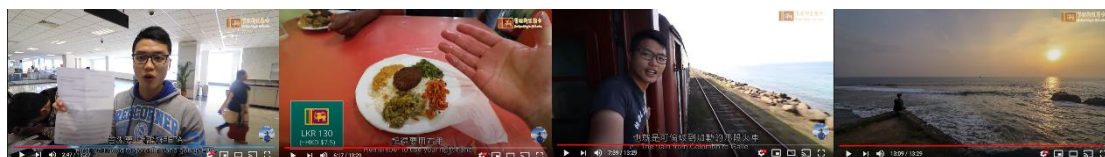


Figure 2. Screenshots of a video from “Manwest 文西”

The first screenshot displays the vlogger showing immigration requirement tips to future visitors which, according to Goffman (1978/2010), can help to prevent mis-framing as more information about a social event is provided. While waiting for his train to his destination, and eating at a local restaurant, he reminds future visitors to eat with the right hand to meet the local cultural expectations. This is yet another piece of information with the potential to prevent viewers' possible mis-framing. He demonstrates genuine excitement on the train and then enjoys some quiet time too at a beach. He explicitly states his framing of the trip at the end of the video:

去一个鲜为人知的国家旅行，就是什么都觉得新鲜惊喜，像小孩子一样。去一趟旅行，让人生重回小时候那样，不是很棒吗？ [Traveling to a less-known country to feel fresh and surprised in everything, like a child, wouldn't it be great to go on a trip and get people back to one's childhood?]

Different from the first video, we theorize the model of his framing as “Myself-in-Local.” In his framing he did not usually assign meaning to local people and things according to his preconceived ideas, but tried to join the local practice with curiosity, thus what is happening around him does not only mean something to him but also affects him.

In this “Myself-in-Local” model of framing, the vlogger and the local environment are increasingly meshed up, as the local environment affects the vlogger and vice versa (i.e., he adapted to the local way of eating). This model is visualized as he becomes part of

## Vlog tour to Sri Lanka

Besides the “Myself-vs-Local,” an alternative kind of vlog is found in the videos of a vlogger from Hong Kong with the channel “Manwest 文西”. His video of Sri Lanka (#5 in Table 1) is a good example. Besides providing some useful tips (i.e., currency exchange, ticket purchasing), he also framed the tour quite differently.

the local scenery in the fourth screenshot in Figure 2. When moving on to the comments from viewers, the following popular comments are found:

- #1 今天竟然有恐怖袭击，希望你一切安好，旅途完成了吗？ [There was a terrorist attack today. I hope you are well. Is the journey completed?]
- #2 好Ming仔好feel 但都好好睇 希望你搵到自己風格 加油。 [Good boy, it feels right, the video is very interesting, I wish that you can find your own style, fight! ]
- #3 背景音乐太大声，几乎盖过配音。 [The background music is too loud, almost louder than your narration]
- #4 介绍得很详细，又有中英文字幕，做的很俾心机的视频。赞！ [Very detailed explanation with Chinese and English subtitles, really put your heart in making this video. Great!]
- #5 12:08之後無左聲既？ [No sound after 12:08?]
- #6 將軍澳人 [You are from Tseung Kwan O]
- #7 Yess!!! Sri Lanka is a really lovely country I love this so much.
- #8 建議配樂可以不用下，不然跟自然音混雜一起會聽不太到你說話~影片拍的很好 我很喜歡:) [I recommend not using background music, because it blends with natural sound there which makes it hard to listen to you talking; I enjoyed the video, well done.]
- #9 好有ming仔feel.....但有水準既！ [Good boy, right feeling, high level]
- #10 加油啊！也來訂閱我的頻道吧！ [Fight, please follow my channel as well]

Comment #1 refers to the terrorist attack that happened in Sri Lanka about a week after the vlogger uploaded this video, so viewers are concerned about his safety. Comments #2 #4 #7 #8 and #9 all expressed appreciation of, or encouragement for the vlogger. Different from keying the video tour into something



quite different as happened in the first video analyzed, the framing of this vlogger seems to be much better received, as most of the comments are about the good quality of the video and their interests in traveling to Sri Lanka, despite similar signs of poverty documented in the video.

### **Critical framing of vlog tour making**

From the analysis above I want to argue that a critical framing of vlog tours has two general principles: A “Myself-in-Local” framing and providing local meaning to prevent mis-framing by the viewers. The first principle guides the vloggers to see themselves as a (potential) part of the local landscape or culture, and to avoid the framing that exoticizes and objectifies the local environment. Also, presenting local meaning (i.e., which hand to use for eating) for the viewers will help future travelers to understand the local environment and to orient themselves more easily in this environment thus preventing misinterpretation (e.g., seeing eating with hands as indicators of uncleanness) due to pre-existing stereotypes.

### **Towards a critical-digital-literacy lesson plan for making vlog tour videos**

What are the pedagogical implications of the analysis above? As discussed in Ávila and Pandya (2012), the goal of critical literacies praxis has the dual purposes of investigating power relations and redesigning texts that serve the interests of the less powerful. According to the two principles theorized, a possible lesson plan to develop critical digital literacies regarding vlogging is outlined in Table 2. The lesson design encompasses the dual purposes of critical literacies. The first part of the lesson aims at presenting the students with an example of vlog videos that have a “Myself-vs-Local” model of framing for co-analysis with the students. The teacher can first present some questions to encourage students to apply a critical lens while watching. Then the teachers can open space for discussion over possible issues and hear students’ keying of the original framing. While leaving the discussion open, teachers can play another video with the “Myself-in-Local” framing and ask students to compare the two videos. After theorizing some principles together with the students for making a good vlog video, teachers can have students create and design their own vlog tour videos while offering students some

possible topics (i.e., introducing their own neighborhood).

## **CONCLUSION**

Since vlog tour videos constitute one of the most popular categories on YouTube, their impact on local cultural and environment should not be ignored. By simulating the experience of a new YouTube user’s experience, the problematic framing of local environment and culture is discovered. Besides, the previously explored issues like exoticization of the Other, vloggers from non-white countries also tend to objectify other cultures and people, especially in developing countries. It is necessary to promote a critical lens among students who are not only consumers of these videos but also are likely to be video makers in the future.

Goffman’s (1974/2010) frame analysis tools are applicable to uncover the issues hidden in vlog tours videos, as they help to show how external meaning is assigned to local people and environment in some videos just to serve the vlogger’s framing.

The lesson plan offered in this paper aims at opening spaces for opportunities and possibilities to promote the use of critical lenses. In this globalized world where many ordinary people are equipped with the power to film and broadcast their framing of the places they visit, and making a profit out of it, it is essential not to forget the possible additional harm it may bring, to the communities that are already suffering from stereotypes. By redesigning the texts with critical lenses, especially applying a “Myself-in-Local” model, students can become more culturally responsive in their future travels.

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Table 2. *Sample lesson design*

Moves	Steps	Teachers	Students	Rationale
Investigation	Introduce the topic of the lesson	Ask questions: <i>Have you ever filmed videos during your traveling?</i> Or, explain the framing and multiple frames using examples in the theoretical framework section.	Students to ask, answer the questions and to share their experience of making or watching travel videos	Connect the topic of the everyday life of the students to make the class topic relevant to students Explain relevant terms
	Raise students' critical awareness towards the framing	Ask questions: <i>What do you think of the framing of the videos, do you think they are good presentations of the places? And why?</i> Use students' sharing and stories from the first step to raise critical awareness	Answer questions Continue the discussions	Invite students to evaluate (rather than merely be entertained by) the videos with analytical tools
	Watch and discuss the videos following "Myself-vs-Local"	Teachers play one or two videos following the "Myself-vs-Local" designs and ask questions: <i>Do you think the framing really reflects the ways local people live their lives? How do you think local people will feel when they see those videos?</i>	Answer the questions Ask the teacher more questions about the videos Discuss the questions with peers	Invite students to stand in the shoes of the local people to evaluate the possible effect of these videos
	Summarize the strategies for making better vlog tour videos	Open discussion of the questions: <i>How to make your videos liked by both the local people and the viewers you reach?</i>	Students to discuss the question with peers and the teacher Students to jot down notes	Engage students in critical discussions and prepare them for redesigning the texts
Redesign	Explore with students the potential choices for redesigning assignment	Invite students to watch a video of "Myself-in-Local" video and then consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making their own videos about their neighborhood, paying attention to the framing</li> <li>• Invite other people to join the critical discussion of vlog tour videos after class</li> <li>• Students' own choice of their assignments in consultation with the teacher.</li> </ul>	Students can make choices about their assignments Students to carry out the assignments/project of their choice	Since not every student has the necessary equipment or interest in filming, the assignment should be more open to the students Stimulate students' critical awareness in framing their own videos
	Invite students to share their videos or their alternative assignments	Invite students to share: <i>Please share your videos and then explain your framing. What is your experience of inviting other people to talk about the vlog videos?</i>	Students to share their product or stories of doing alternative assignments	Having students share their thoughts with peers regarding framing and the keying of their audience
	Reflect on the experience of making videos or discussing this topic	Invite the students to think: <i>Whether it is important to be more careful and mindful in framing vlog tour videos? What are the things you have learned by doing it yourself/after talking about it with others?</i>	Students to share their thoughts and ideas	This step helps students to internalize the learning Encourage critical framing in future vlog making

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