Leveraging the ASSURE Model and YouTube Videos in Online Learning for International Chinese Students

Rozita Ibrahim*[1], Nasruddin Yunos[1], Nasrudin Subhi[2] & Muhammad Nur Amin Suhaimi[1]

[1]School of Liberal Studies (Pusat Pengajian Citra University), University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

[2]Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of online teaching and learning has highlighted the need for effective instructional design, particularly for international students navigating new academic and cultural environments. This study explores the application of the ASSURE Model in designing and delivering an online *Family Issues* course to Chinese undergraduate students in a Malaysian university. The ASSURE Model's six-step framework—assessing student characteristics, setting objectives, selecting and adapting materials, utilizing media, engaging students, and evaluating outcomes—provides a structured, adaptable approach that supports student-centred learning. YouTube videos were integrated as multimedia resources to enhance comprehension, engagement, and reflection, enabling students to interact with course content at their own pace. Feedback from students revealed that the combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods, reflection writing, and culturally relevant video content improved understanding, fostered critical thinking, and encouraged active participation. The findings suggest that thoughtfully designed online instruction, supported by multimedia resources and guided by the ASSURE Model, can help address the challenges faced by Chinese students. These include language barriers, particularly in understanding spoken English, as well as adapting to student-centred learning approaches. This study underscores the potential of integrating instructional design with multimedia tools to promote effective, inclusive, and engaging online learning experiences for international students.

Keywords: ASSURE Model, international students, online learning, student-centred learning, video-based learning

INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education has led to a significant increase in cross-border students' mobility, creating opportunities for academic exchange and collaboration across diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. With the implementation of the "Belt and Road policy" by the Chinese government in 2013, the number of Chinese students studying abroad has grown significantly. According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2019), the figure increased from 60,000 in 2001 to 265,000 in 2010—an expansion of more than 200,000 within a decade. Malaysia has emerged as one of the preferred destinations for these students, largely due to the increasingly frequent exchanges between China and Malaysia, as well as factors such as affordable tuition fees, English-medium instruction, and cultural similarities (Shi & Ek-Iem 2020). This growing mobility has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Emang et al. 2015; Shi & Ek-Iem 2020; Yakin & Totu 2018). However, despite these advantages, Chinese students often encounter challenges when adapting to the Malaysian academic and cultural environment. These difficulties include language barriers, unfamiliarity with student-centred teaching methodologies, and issues of social integration (Wenwen et al. 2023). Such challenges are particularly evident in online and hybrid learning contexts, where students

must navigate not only technological demands but also the complexities of adjusting to a foreign educational culture.

As the demand for online education grows globally, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, educators have been tasked with developing instructional strategies that meet the needs of diverse student populations. This has led to a renewed focus on instructional design models that facilitate effective online learning. One such model

is the ASSURE Model, which provides a systematic framework for planning and implementing instructional strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The ASSURE Model, which stands for (1) *Analyse learners*, (2) *State objectives*, (3) *Select media and materials*, (4) *Utilise media and materials*, (5) *Require learner participation*, and (6) *Evaluate and revise*, is particularly suited for online environments, as it emphasises the integration of multimedia and student-centred teaching approaches (Neneng E. et al. 2024; Sezer B. et al. 2013). In this context, YouTube videos have become a valuable tool in online teaching. The visual and auditory nature of YouTube videos makes them particularly effective in engaging students and presenting complex concepts in an accessible and stimulating manner. Research has shown that video-based learning not only enhances understanding but also increases student motivation and retention of information (Clark, D. 2021).

This article explores the application of the ASSURE Model in teaching Chinese university students in a Malaysian university, focusing on the use of YouTube videos in a liberal study course titled *Family Issues*. The use of videos, especially in subjects like *Family Issues*, allows students to connect theoretical concepts to real-world examples, fostering a deeper understanding of the material. By incorporating YouTube videos into the teaching of *Family Issues*, instructors can provide students with diverse perspectives and real-life scenarios that resonate with their cultural experiences. By applying the ASSURE Model, the study aims to create an instructional design that addresses the unique challenges faced by Chinese students while enhancing their engagement and understanding of the course material. Feedback from students will also be examined to assess the effectiveness of this approach in fulfilling the learning outcomes of the course.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional Design

Instructional design is the systematic process of planning, developing, and delivering educational experiences to improve learning outcomes. Its primary goal is to create engaging environments that meet the needs of diverse learners, whether in face-to-face or online contexts (Heinich, Molenda, & Russell 2002). Effective instructional design aligns teaching methods, materials, and assessments with learning objectives while accommodating different learning styles. In online settings, it plays a critical role in addressing challenges such as limited interaction, technological difficulties, and student isolation by integrating multimedia, interactive activities, and opportunities for active learning.

A key principle of instructional design is adopting a structured approach to content delivery. Morrison, Ross, & Kemp (2007) highlight that this involves analysing learners' needs, defining objectives, developing strategies, and evaluating effectiveness. Among various models, the ADDIE model—Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate—is widely applied for its flexible framework in guiding instructional planning (Dick, Carey, & Carey 2014). Similarly, the ASSURE Model focuses on media selection and learner participation through six steps: analyse learners, state objectives, select media, utilise media, require learner participation, and evaluate/revise (İşman 2011; Kim & Downey, 2016; Heinich, Molenda, & Russell 2002; Smith & Ragan 2005). This model is particularly suitable for online education as it emphasises multimedia use and interactive learning processes.

Instructional design also supports student-centred learning, which positions the learner at the core of the educational process. In this approach, instructors facilitate learning by engaging students in solving real-world problems, applying knowledge, and receiving feedback (Merrill 2002). Such practices are especially relevant online, where learners are expected to be self-directed. The integration of multimedia, including YouTube

videos, enhances motivation and retention by presenting complex concepts in accessible and engaging ways, catering to visual and auditory learners (Clark, D. 2021; Snelson, C. 2011).

YouTube in Teaching and Learning

The integration of YouTube videos into teaching and learning has become increasingly popular, offering a dynamic and engaging method for educators to present content and engage students. As a widely accessible platform, YouTube provides diverse multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles, making it a

valuable tool in education. Clark, D. (2021) emphasizes that multimedia learning, such as YouTube videos, improves retention and understanding by presenting information in more accessible ways compared to traditional text-based formats. In language learning, YouTube provides an opportunity for students to listen to native speakers and familiarize themselves with different accents and speech patterns, enhancing their listening and speaking skills. Videos can help explain abstract concepts through animations, demonstrations, and real-world examples, making the material more relatable and engaging for students. For instance, complex scientific phenomena can be demonstrated using animations, while humanities students can benefit from video documentaries that offer historical context (Brame 2016). Another key benefit of YouTube in education is its ability to support differentiated learning. Students have varied learning preferences, such as visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic learning styles. YouTube offers a diverse range of video content, including tutorials, lectures, and animated clips, which cater to these different learning styles, enabling students to engage with the material in a way that suits their needs (Liu C. 2017).

YouTube videos provide students the flexibility to learn at their own pace. They can pause, rewind, and rewatch content to revisit difficult concepts before moving on. Students may also create and share their own educational videos, reinforcing understanding through collaborative learning. YouTube fosters active learning by presenting real-world scenarios that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving. Instructors can integrate videos into case studies or discussions, prompting peer collaboration and enhancing learning (Shih, Chuang, & Hwang, 2013). YouTube is also widely used in the flipped classroom model, where students view video content outside of class, freeing in-class time for interactive activities. This approach has been shown to improve engagement and understanding (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Despite these benefits, YouTube poses challenges. A key concern is quality control, as open access means not all videos are accurate or reliable. Instructors must carefully curate content to align with course objectives (Snelson, 2011). The platform's entertainment focus also risks distracting students, who may be diverted by unrelated content or advertisements (Yang, 2013). Furthermore, technological constraints, such as unstable internet connections or lack of suitable devices, can limit effective use and negatively affect participation in online learning (Huang & Li, 2020).

The Chinese Students Contexts

Chinese students studying abroad face challenges shaped by technological, linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical factors. A key difficulty is English proficiency—while many excel in reading and writing, speaking and listening often lag behind, making it harder to follow lectures and engage in discussions. In online settings, the absence of face-to-face interaction worsens communication barriers and feelings of isolation, while anxiety about speaking English further limits participation (Zhang & Wang, 2021; Cheng & Wang, 2018). Cultural differences also complicate adaptation. Western pedagogy emphasizes critical thinking and student participation, contrasting with China's teacher-centred, memorization-based approach. This gap leaves some Chinese students uncomfortable with active participation in discussions and group work (Xiao & Carless, 2020). Emotional challenges, including loneliness and stress, are common, with online learning intensifying feelings of disconnection and contributing to higher levels of anxiety and depression (Zhou & Lee, 2021). Technological barriers add further strain. Despite China's strong infrastructure, students abroad often face unstable internet, limited access to devices, and difficulties navigating unfamiliar platforms, which hinder participation (Huang & Li, 2020; Cheng & Wang, 2018). Pedagogical mismatches also play a role, as traditional lecture-based approaches may not translate effectively into online formats. To address these issues,

educators should design inclusive online courses that incorporate multimedia, collaborative tasks, and interactive elements to support engagement and reduce isolation (Liu Y., 2020).

METHOD

The aim of this section is to explain the application of the ASSURE Model into teaching and learning of a liberal course titled *Family Issues*. The ASSURE Model aims to provide guidance for the planning and delivery of teaching by using technology, media and teaching materials effectively. This model involves a six-step process (Kim & Downey, 2016; Neneng et al. 2024; Sami Hameed et al. 2019, as illustrated in Figure 1.
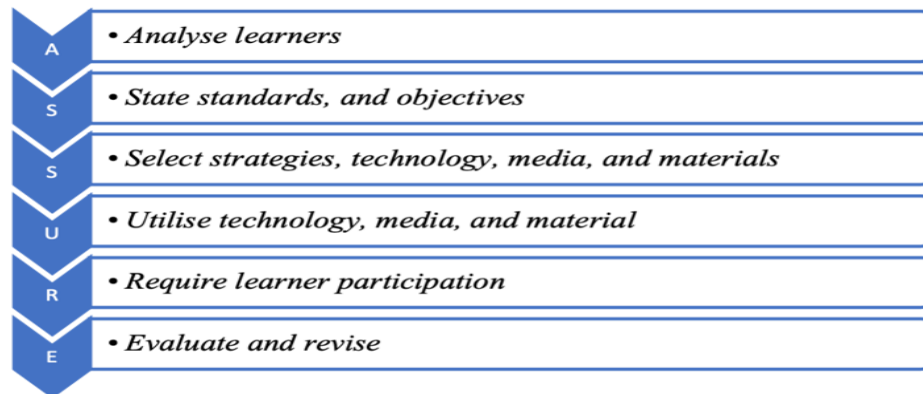

- A • *Analyse learners*
- S • *State standards, and objectives*
- S • *Select strategies, technology, media, and materials*
- U • *Utilise technology, media, and material*
- R • *Require learner participation*
- E • *Evaluate and revise*

Figure 1: The ASSURE Model

The application of the ASSURE Model in the *Family Issues* course is summarised in Table 1. Each step is explained briefly and mapped to the teaching and learning activities carried out. YouTube videos, including documentaries on family issues and recorded lectures on family theories and concepts, were uploaded to the university's learning management system. Using a flipped classroom approach, students were required to watch the videos and submit short reflection papers summarising the main points and relating them to their own experiences and cultural backgrounds (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Snelson, 2011). Subsequently, synchronous sessions were conducted via Zoom, where students participated in whole-class discussions with the lecturer as well as small-group interactions using breakout room features. Breakout rooms were used to encourage students to interact freely with their peers, including the option to communicate in their mother tongue. This approach helped reduce feelings of isolation and anxiety, particularly among students who were shy or less confident in speaking English. By creating a more comfortable environment for discussion, breakout rooms supported students in gradually adapting to student-centred teaching methods and developing confidence in participating in online learning (Zhou & Lee, 2021; Cheng & Wang, 2018). These activities encouraged collaboration, peer learning, and active participation, in line with the principles of student-centred and technology-enhanced learning (Brame, 2016; Huang & Li, 2020).

Table 1: Application of the ASSURE Model in Family Issues course

STEP 1 TO STEP 6 ASSURE MODEL	APPLICATION TO THE FAMILY ISSUES COURSE
Analyses student characteristics	Use of Padlet and synchronous Zoom meeting for self-introduction in class ice-breaking session. This gives an idea of the student's level of English proficiency.
Setting standards and objectives to be achieved	Introductory sessions and synchronous course briefings on Zoom. Students are explained about the objectives and learning outcomes of the *Family Issues* course.
Selection of strategies, technologies, media and materials	Lecturers search and collect existing materials from YouTube and select suitable videos. In addition to videos, other related activities are also provided such as reflection writing guides as well as important topics of discussion in synchronous

	classes on Zoom.
Use of technology, media and materials	Use of existing videos in YouTube. Two types of videos were selected, namely videos in the form of theoretical and concept lessons; and documentary videos on current family issues from different cultures and countries. This selection was made to inject an element of global and multicultural awareness to suit the diversity of students as well as the desire of 21st century skills and the learning outcomes of liberal education at the university.
Getting student engagement and feedback	Students respond from the video in the reflection writing which contains three things which are (i) the essential content of the video, (ii) the association with the definition, theory and concept of kinship, and (iii) the association with the student's experience and knowledge.
Evaluation and improvement	Student understanding assessment is reinforced through discussions with lecturers and friends during synchronous sessions at Zoom either on a large class basis or *breakout rooms*.

At the end of the semester, a total of 110 students completed a survey to provide feedback on the course. The survey questions focused on students' perceptions of the course content, the effectiveness of YouTube videos as a learning tool, and their satisfaction with both asynchronous and synchronous teaching modes. In addition to the structured survey items, students were also asked open-ended questions to share what they liked most about the course, what they did not like, and their suggestions for improvement. This combination of quantitative and qualitative feedback offers valuable insights into the strengths of the course as well as areas that could be enhanced to better support student learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative feedback provided by students on the course. The survey results highlight overall trends in student satisfaction with the course content, teaching methods, and use of multimedia, while the open-ended responses provide deeper insights into their learning experiences, preferences, and challenges. By integrating these two sources of evidence, the analysis not only demonstrates the strengths of the course design but also identifies specific areas where improvements can be made. The discussion that follows interprets these findings in light of student-centred learning principles and the broader context of online and blended learning.

Table 2: End of semester feedback from the students

No.	Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree (Number of students / %)	Disagree (Number of students / %)	Agree (Number of students / %)	Strongly Agree (Number of students / %)
1.	The course content provided interesting issues related to the family	0 (0 %)	0 (0%)	25 (22.73%)	85 (77.27%)
2.	The YouTube videos chosen for the class are very informative	0 (0%)	1 (0.91%)	20 (18.18%)	89 (80.91%)

3.	I feel satisfied with the asynchronous classes – watching YouTube video and writing short reflection	1 (0.91%)	5 (4.55%)	19 (17.27%)	85 (77.27%)
4.	I feel satisfied with the synchronous classes – discussion in Zoom meetings	0 (0%)	3 (2.73%)	25 (22.73%)	82 (74.55%)

Feedback from the open-ended questions was analysed to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions of the course design and delivery, with particular focus on the use of YouTube videos and subsequent class discussions and reflection writings. The responses were categorised into three main themes:

Content of the Selected Videos

Students appreciated the emphasis on family and cultural diversity in the selected videos. They valued the focus on contemporary issues, which broadened their perspectives on family matters outside their own culture. For instance, one student shared, "The course enables me to learn more about families and customs in different cultures around the world." Another remarked, "In this course, the lecturer provided a video about the lives of Koreans under high mortgage pressure. The interviewees and information presented were all based on local South Koreans. I think it is very realistic and helps me understand the culture of different countries."

Several students noted that the realistic portrayal of family issues increased their awareness of personal and future family experiences. One student reflected, "This class discusses family issues, which I like the most because it is closely related to our lives. I have learned a lot, and it also encourages me to care more about my own family." Another stated, "You can learn a lot about families in this course, such as different family structures, possible living arrangements, and the wellbeing of children. The data and materials come from around the world, not just one country, which makes it very useful for people our age. Through these materials, I can better understand family life and it will be helpful in the future."

Advantages of Multimodal Learning Methods

Students reported that the combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods provided flexibility in managing their time, enabling them to complete assigned tasks and reduce stress. For example, one student stated, "The asynchronous mode allows for more flexible timing." Another noted, "I liked how the classes were conducted both asynchronously and synchronously, as it made me feel less stressed and gave me more time to complete the tasks assigned."

Students also highlighted that the combination of reflection writing assignments and YouTube videos enhanced their understanding of course content. One student commented, "I learned a lot from the very informative videos provided by the lecturer, and by writing my reflections, I understood the issues discussed better." Students reported that writing reflections allowed them to think more deeply and express their opinions effectively. One student commented, "Watching related videos and writing review reflections is very helpful and beneficial." Another stated, "There are various types of videos in the asynchronous classes, and writing reactions helps me understand the content more deeply." Others highlighted that the videos prompted critical thinking: "I like the video-watching part because it gives me a different perspective on family issues. I never thought of these issues in this way in my daily life."

Furthermore, synchronous discussions with lecturers and peers facilitated a deeper understanding of the topics. One student noted, "Each lesson provides interesting information from the videos given by the teacher. Completing the assignments allows me to engage in effective study and develop my own understanding of each lesson." Another shared, "The teacher guides students to learn more about life knowledge, understand potential future situations, and recognize preventive measures."

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The open-ended responses highlighted several challenges in online learning and suggested areas for improvement in using YouTube as a teaching and learning tool. The main challenge was the difficulty in following English videos, especially when subtitles were not provided. Students reported struggling with the English accent and the fast pace of speech, both in videos and in class. There were also concerns about technical issues, particularly related to devices and poor internet connections. Some students mentioned the heavy workload caused by the requirement to write feedback after every video. Others raised concerns about unequal participation in group assignments. In addition, several students expressed dissatisfaction with class scheduling—specifically late afternoon or 5 p.m. sessions—as they often felt tired, and online learning made it easier to lose focus or feel sleepy. These findings suggest that while the overall design and delivery of the course were successful, further enhancements could be made. Providing more opportunities for interaction, moderating the workload, providing subtitled videos, and improving online facilitation could strengthen student satisfaction and lead to better learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the potential of applying the ASSURE Model as an instructional design framework to enhance online teaching for international students, with a focus on Chinese undergraduates in Malaysia. By systematically integrating YouTube videos into the *Family Issues* course, the approach addressed key challenges such as language barriers, adaptation to student-centred pedagogy, and engagement in online learning environments. The use of multimedia resources not only improved comprehension and critical thinking but also encouraged active participation and reflection, offering a more inclusive and flexible learning experience.

The findings highlight that thoughtfully designed online instruction, guided by established instructional design models, can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps while supporting meaningful learning for diverse student populations. Combining synchronous and asynchronous strategies with culturally relevant content further enables students to feel connected, confident, and engaged in their learning. While valuable, the study is limited by its focus on a single course and student group. Future research could extend these findings across disciplines, institutions, and cultural contexts to deepen our understanding of how instructional design can support the broader internationalisation of higher education in the digital era.

For educators, this study underscores the importance of tailoring online learning to the needs of international students. The ASSURE Model offers a practical framework for integrating multimedia tools such as YouTube to improve comprehension, motivation, and participation. Instructors are encouraged to blend synchronous and asynchronous activities, use culturally relevant materials, and foster active participation to reduce language and cultural barriers.

In conclusion, the integration of the ASSURE Model with video-based learning holds significant promise for improving the quality and inclusivity of online education. By aligning instructional strategies with the needs of international learners, educators can create more engaging, effective, and culturally responsive learning environments that enhance both student satisfaction and academic outcomes. Beyond the classroom, these insights can also inform institutional policies on internationalisation, helping universities design curricula and support systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of global student populations.

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