

**PLAYPOSIT:
USING INTERACTIVE VIDEOS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

(App Review)

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Application Details:

Title: *Playposit* (formerly known as *eduCanon*)

Publisher: Benjamin Levy, Swaroop Raju, Susan Germer

Product type: Web and iOS application

Language(s): Multilingual

Level: Any

Media format: Video/audio/picture/text

Operating systems: Any device with an active connection to the internet and a browser

Hardware requirements: iOS/Internet Connection

Supplementary software: None

Price: Basic Plan: Free; Premium Teacher plan: \$89/year; Blended School plan: \$990/year

1. Introduction

Educational videos are among the most influential and authentic tools in foreign language education (Choi & Johnson, 2007; Erbaggio, Gopalakrishnan, Hobbs, & Liu, 2012; Hafner, 2014; Mackey & Ho, 2008; Mirvan, 2013; Shih, 2010; Wang, 2014). The reason that videos are particularly popular in foreign language education is that they are multimodal, that is, even in their basic form, they provide students with auditory, visual, contextual, verbal, and non-verbal sources of input, which can enhance comprehension (Gernsbacher, 2015; Hoven, 1999; Seo, 2002) by providing comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981, 1985). Moreover, some researchers (e.g. Borrás & Lafayette, 1994; Danan, 2004; Davey & Parkhill, 2012; Hsu, 1994; Hsu, Hwang, Chang, & Chang, 2013; Markham & Peter, 2003; Montero Perez, Peters, Clarebout, & Desmet, 2014; Plass, Chun, Mayer, & Leutner, 1998; Vanderplank, 2016) have

attempted to make videos more educationally purposeful through captions (texts in the original language) and/or subtitles (texts in the target language), supporting listening comprehension and vocabulary development.

However, although captions and subtitles contribute to the comprehensibility of input by adding an extra layer of cognitive processing (Bird & Williams, 2002) to videos, asking comprehension questions both during and after the video is also important. Comprehension questions help students attend to the materials at hand and allow educators to decide if they are progressing effectively through the materials. Not only is asking comprehension questions encouraged in foreign language classes, but also educators are advised to ask effective questions – those engaging higher order thinking skills (HOTS) – so that students develop critical thinking skills (Egbert, 2007, 2009). Accordingly, using instructional videos in the teaching-learning process, augmented with effective comprehension questions, can be where *Playposit* can support learning in language classrooms.

2. Features

Playposit (formerly known as *eduCanon*) is an application used to make interactive videos, known as *bulbs*. The videos can be extracted from one of many resource-sharing websites or from a repository of pre-made bulbs. Having chosen a suitable video, educators can play and edit it based on their educational objectives. Subsequently, the educators can add interactivities (e.g., multiple-choice items) to specific frames of the video, and then share it with the students. As the students are watching the video, they will be prompted to respond to the interactivities as the player slider passes through the linked frames. The teacher can then check the students' responses through the analytics capability of the application. The main features of *Playposit* are:

1. A free basic plan allowing educators to create unlimited bulbs, monitor students' progress, have access to a repository of videos, and the capability to share contents with colleagues.
2. A variety of assessment measures, including *multiple-choice*, *free response*, *reflective pause*, *discussion forum*, *polling survey*, *check all (that apply)*, *fill blank*, *website*, and *web embed*.
3. Easy, intuitive interface.
4. Compatibility with all platforms.

3. Evaluation

Access (clarity, instructions, usability, navigation, safety)

Working with the website is relatively straightforward. Users can easily locate videos online through two sources: *pre-made bulbs* and *video channels*. Having found a suitable video, the educators can easily select and transfer it to their album and start editing it based on their educational goals.

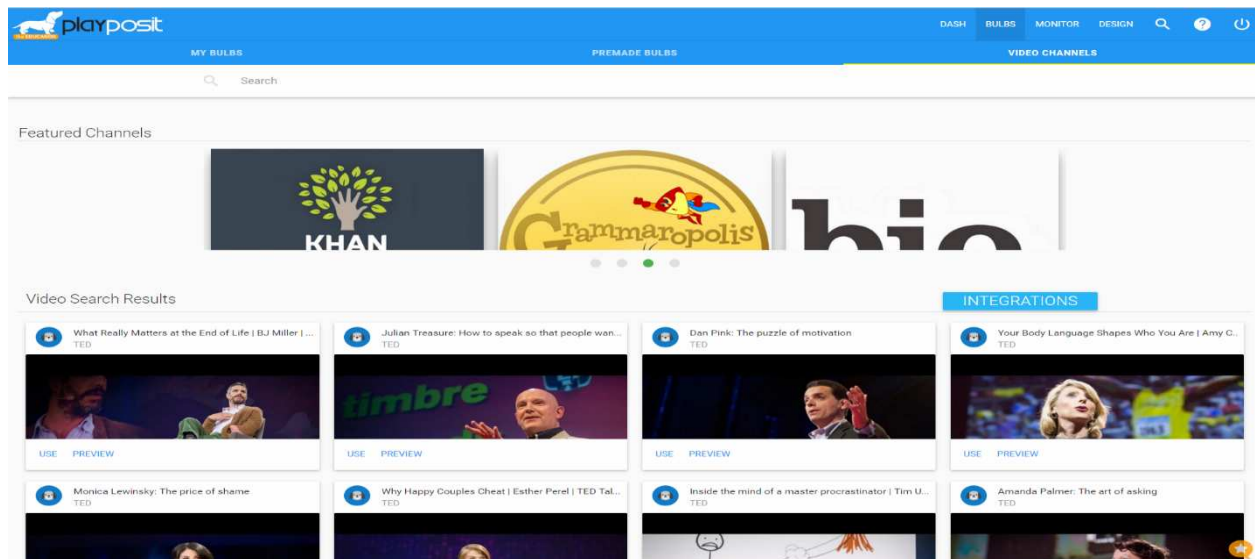
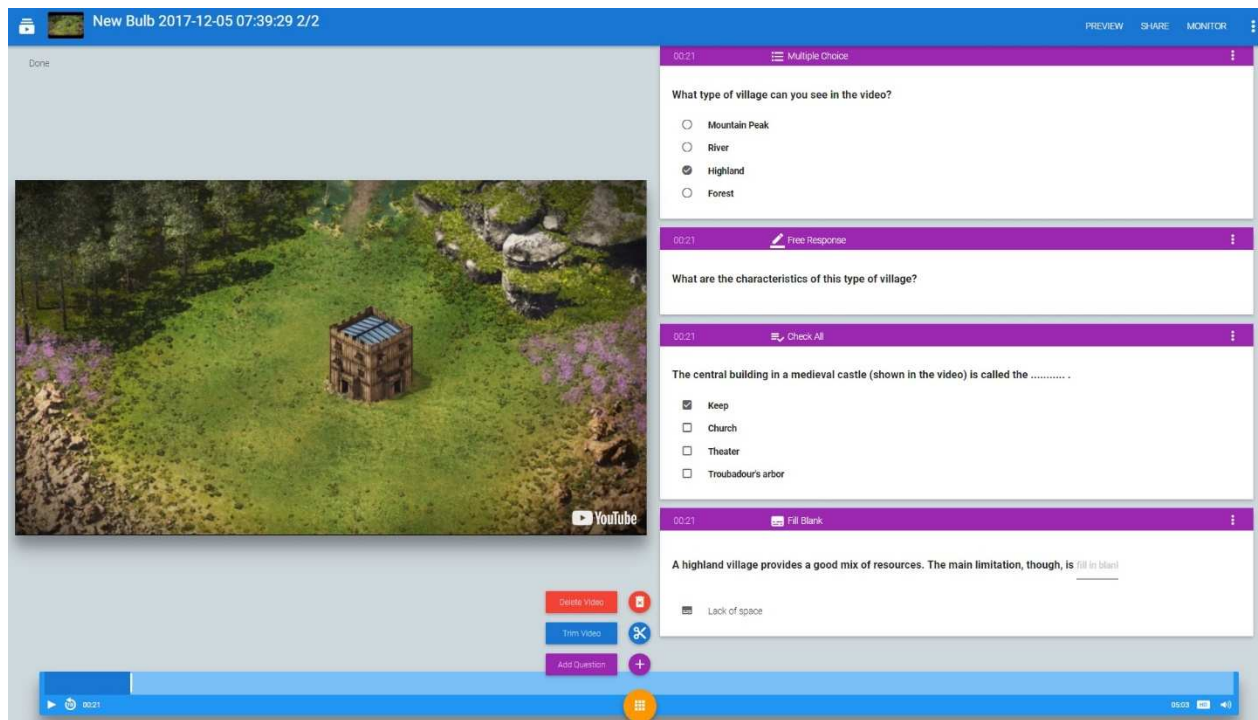


Figure 1. Video channels

The intuitive video playback and editing tools create an even greater ease of access for users. Users can play the video via the simple built-in interface, and attempt to edit, and add questions to it wherever necessary. As can be seen in Figure 2, a series of interactivities, that is, questions (multiple-choice, free response, checking the correct answer, and filling in the blanks) have been attached to the twenty-first second of the sample video.



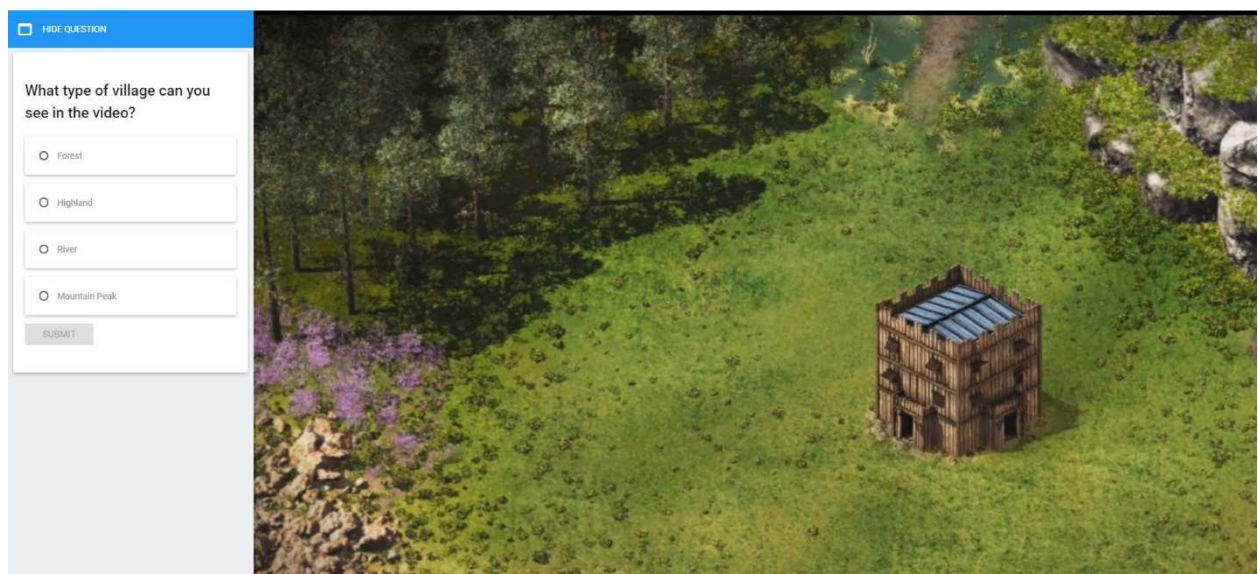
The screenshot shows a video player interface for a video titled "New Bulb 2017-12-05 07:39:29 2/2". The video is paused, showing a medieval-style wooden building in a lush, green landscape. The interface is divided into two main sections: a video player on the left and a question panel on the right. The question panel contains three questions:

- Multiple Choice:** "What type of village can you see in the video?" with options: Mountain Peak, River, Highland (selected), and Forest.
- Free Response:** "What are the characteristics of this type of village?"
- Check All:** "The central building in a medieval castle (shown in the video) is called the". Options: Keep (checked), Church, Theater, and Troubadour's arbor.
- Fill Blank:** "A highland village provides a good mix of resources. The main limitation, though, is fill in blank". Option: Lack of space.

At the bottom of the interface, there are controls for the video player, including a play/pause button, a progress slider, and buttons for "Delete Video", "Trim Video", and "Add Question".

Figure 2. Editing the video and adding questions

Likewise, the student view is unobtrusive, that is, the technology does not interfere in the learning process, or, simply said, it does not get in the way. When the video slider reaches the position of keyframe (the starting frame of the interactivity), the application divides the screen into two halves, one containing the interactivity, and the other containing the paused video. After the students respond to the prompt, the video playback will resume.



The screenshot shows the student view of the application. The interface is split into two main areas: a question panel on the left and a video player on the right. The question panel contains the following text and options:

HIDE QUESTION

What type of village can you see in the video?

- Forest
- Highland
- River
- Mountain Peak

SUBMIT

The video player on the right shows the same medieval-style wooden building in a lush, green landscape, which is the same video as in Figure 2.

Figure 3. Student view

As can be seen in Figure 3, the slider has reached the keyframe and, hence, the video has stopped and the students have been prompted with the first question (multiple-choice) in the series (see Figure 2). Once the students answer the question, the video will resume and they will be prompted with subsequent questions (free response, checking the correct answer, and filling in the blanks).

Additionally, *Playposit* conforms to the norms of TESOL Technology Standards Framework (2008) in observing the learners' safety while browsing the Internet. Although, according to Standard 3, learners should generally exercise caution while working online, the application does not pose a threat to their safety by presenting them with unwanted pop-ups or redirections to third-party websites and applications.

A variety of interactivity types

Playposit provides users with eight interactivity types to be added to the videos. These (see Figure 4) include the following:

1. **Multiple-choice:** Traditional multiple-choice questions consist of a problem, a set of alternatives, and one correct response.
2. **Free response:** Essay questions help assess the learners' opinions about a particular topic and, hence, encourage their higher-order thinking.
3. **Reflective pause:** Pre-organizers and/or guided instruction allow the learners to reflect upon key ideas before or while watching the video.
4. **Discussion forum:** As the name suggests, this interactivity allows the educators to create a discussion forum for students to engage in dialogues and debates based on what they watched, encouraging their critical thinking, peer-feedback, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
5. **Polling survey:** Through this item, the educators solicit students' ideas about a topic related to the video.
6. **Check all:** These items help assess the students' breadth of knowledge by having them choose more than one correct answer among a set of alternatives.
7. **Fill blank:** Auto-graded fill-in-the-blank items allow the educators to examine the students on their knowledge of the topic, vocabulary, grammar, etc. by having them provide the missing words which have been intentionally left out in a phrase, sentence, paragraph, and/or text.
8. **Web embed:** This interactivity allows the incorporation of other third-party media in the form of a web address.



Figure 4. Interactivity types

These measures allow the teacher to pose questions, provide resources, create discussions, and elicit opinions while the students are engaged in watching the video. These assessment tools can potentially address diversity by targeting skill levels, providing a more realistic picture of the students' progress. For instance, a free-response writing task can more appropriately be used to tap into an advanced student's writing skill, while a multiple-choice item may be used for lower-proficiency levels, as the psycholinguistic processes and micro/macro writing skills involved in tackling a multiple-choice item are comparatively more limited (Brown, 2004; Farhady, Jafarpur, & Birjandi, 1994). Therefore, these measures, if used effectively, can provide a more realistic picture of the students' skills, encouraging the development of HOTS (Egbert, 2007, 2009). Finally, the teacher can access the detailed reports of the students' performance and provide them with feedback if/when necessary.

Feedback

The application offers simple yet informative analytics on the students' interaction with the videos. These statistics can be viewed by hovering the mouse pointer over the *analytics* section of the interface accessible to the educators. This feature grants the educators access to the students' answers. Based on the analytics, the educators can provide students with feedback on their performance.

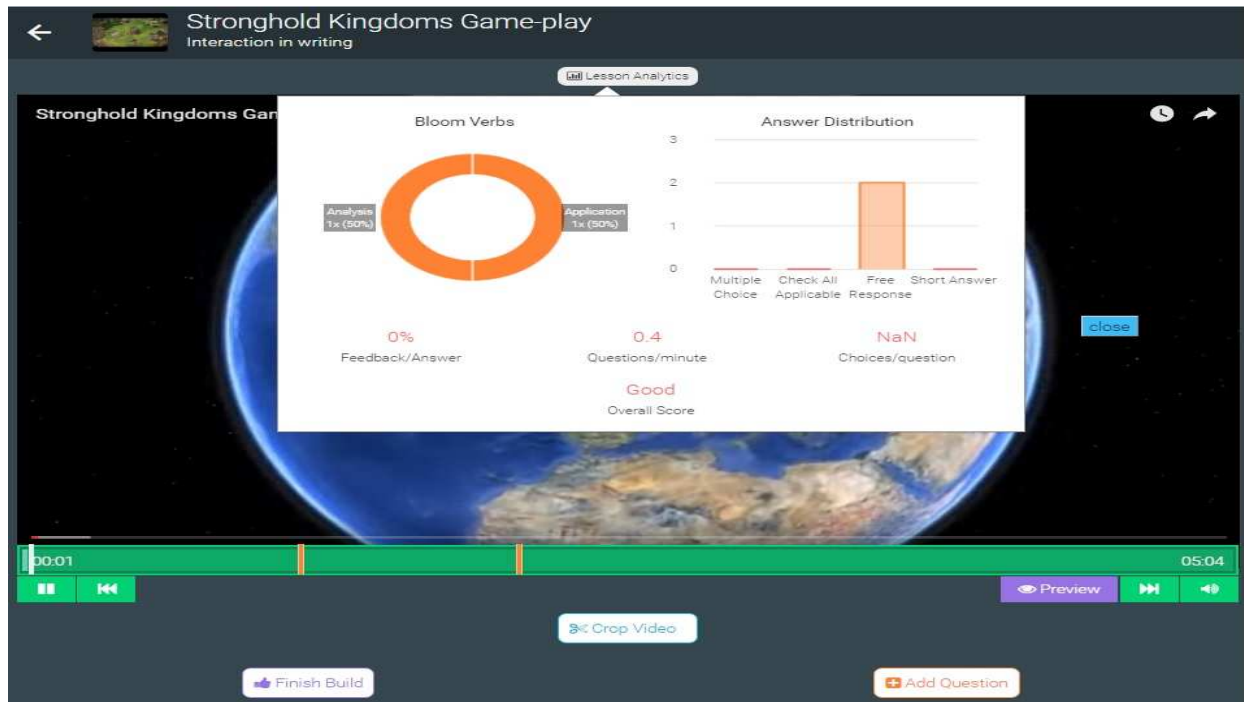


Figure 5. Analytics

Engagement

Engagement is usually defined as “absorption in an activity and implies motivation to do the activity” (Egbert, 2007, p. 4). An engaging task has the following features:

1. **Authenticity:** It is authentic to students, that is, the students feel that they can learn from it.
2. **Connections/interest:** It is interesting to students because it is connected to their lives, making the students feel that performing it can have an important effect on their lives both in and out of the class.
3. **Social interaction:** It provides students with opportunities to interact with each other throughout the learning process. Researchers (e.g., Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985) have found that social interaction is a key to learning, as it leads to a deeper sense of attention and focus on task.
4. **Feedback:** It provides students with sufficient feedback which is given right when the students need it rather than later.
5. **Challenge/skills balance.** It has a good balance of challenge and skill for students to solve it. Research (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Egbert, 2004) suggests that when a task is too challenging, the students feel frustrated and demotivated to tackle it. Furthermore, when a task is too easy, it leads to boredom. Therefore, an engaging task needs a balance of challenge and skill.

Accordingly, as videos are authentic, multimodal, and potentially interesting and connected to the students' lives, they can be considered engaging materials (if chosen properly). *Playposit* uses these potentially engaging materials and adds various interactivities (see Figure 4) to them, allowing for HOTS, social interaction, and feedback. The responsibility of realizing the final requirement of an engaging task, that is, a balance between challenge and skill level, is upon the teacher to create for the model to work. Therefore, *Playposit* can be considered a potentially engaging tool which can support students' learning.

User plans

Playposit is offered under three plans: *basic*, *premium teacher*, and *blended school*. The basic plan is fairly limited, but it provides users with basic affordances they need to create educational activities. For instance, they can create unlimited bulbs and see analytics on unlimited students' performances. With other plans; however, the educators have access to all interactivity types (see Figure 4). In addition, the educators can grant students privileges to create their own bulbs and use a more advanced interface to edit videos. Under the *blended school* plan, the application has all the other previously mentioned features along with professional development capabilities, providing educators with training.

The screenshot displays the Playposit website's pricing page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Playposit logo and links for DASH, BULBS, MONITOR, DESIGN, a search icon, a help icon, and a power icon. Below the navigation bar, three pricing plans are presented in vertical cards:

- BASIC:** Priced at \$0/year. Features include "No Payments, No Surprises", "Create Unlimited Bulbs", "Monitor Unlimited Students", "Public Copy/Edit Limited", and "Share with Colleagues". A "GET STARTED" button is at the bottom.
- PREMIUM TEACHER:** Priced at \$89/year. Features include "Auto-renewed Annually", "Auto-graded Fill-in-the-Blank", "Web & Check-All Q Types", "Advanced Video Crop", "Copy/Edit 200K+ Public Bulbs", "Students Can Create Bulbs", and "Print Worksheets & Export Grades". A "Pay with Card" button is at the bottom.
- BLENDED SCHOOL:** Priced at \$990/year*. Features include "Administrator View", "Professional Development", "On-going Training", and "LTI Integration". A contact number "443-821-7776" is provided. A "GET A DEMO" button is at the bottom.

Figure 6. User plans

4. Conclusions

Allowing educators to integrate videos as authentic materials in the teaching-learning process, *Playposit* is an application with many useful capabilities. Firstly, the software allows users to

easily locate, edit, and share educationally appropriate videos in a safe environment. The educators can search video-sharing websites, download an appropriate video, trim it based on the teaching-learning objectives, and share it with students. Likewise, the students' access to the video occurs in the same safe environment where the materials are provided unobtrusively. Furthermore, as the application requires only an active Internet connection to operate, it can run on all system platforms.

Secondly, through a variety of interactivity types, the educators can manage the learning process more effectively, assessing the students on their comprehension of the materials and, at the same time, providing them with constructive feedback. For instance, an educator can start a *Playposit* task with a reflective pause interactivity to let the students set goals and understand what the purpose of the task is, and, on a broader sense, how it can connect to their lives. Then, as the video rolls, the educator can engage the students' HOTS by asking effective questions – those asking the students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate (Bloom, 1956; Egbert, 2009) – and have them interact with their peers through the discussion forum. The combination of appropriate videos, effective questions, and interactivity types can potentially result in the development of students' creative and critical thinking skills, and an engaging learning experience. Besides, the educators can monitor the students' progress and provide them with feedback using the analytics feature of the application.

Finally, even under a basic plan, the educators would still have access to useful tools to create an engaging learning task for the students. These tools, *multiple-choice*, *free response*, and *reflective pause*, along with other characteristics of this plan (see above) can be used effectively to support the teaching-learning process with technology. However, the social aspect of the application, which is available to premium and blended-school users, is locked for basic-plan users, with the teaching-learning dynamics following a one-on-one educator-student pattern. Therefore, depending on the users' goals and budget, *Playposit* can be employed in each capacity to support the teaching-learning process.

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