USING ONLINE VIDEOS TO IMPROVE
SPEAKING ABILITIES OF EFL LEARNERS[i]

Ceyhun Yükselir[1],
Şevki Kömür[2]
[1]Faculty of Arts and Sciences,
Department of English Language and Literature,
Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Turkey
[2]Faculty of Education,
Department of English Language Teaching,
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Turkey

Abstract:

There is a growing tendency among the researchers about how to assess and improve the ability of speaking. In spite of its complex nature, speaking is generally considered to be the most essential skill to acquire. With the onset of communicative language teaching, this inclination has encouraged researchers to carry out research and make recommendations and implications. This study aims to improve the speaking abilities of EFL students at prep school by using online videos at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. The study was carried out with 20 low level students in 5 classes in an English Language prep class at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University in Turkey. Of 20 students ten were chosen for the treatment group. These students were selected in accordance with the results of the first speaking exam administered in the 2015-2016 academic year. The materials used were five videos available online. The researchers asked the students to watch five videos respectively within the period of five weeks. These online videos were taken from YouTube, BBC, VOA and TED. The data were analyzed by using t-test in terms of the results of second speaking exam and gender. Results show that those who watched videos improved their speaking ability and scored high than those who didn't, and in view of gender, the girls were more successful than the boys. Thus, it can be concluded that using online videos in classes can be of vital importance and effective in improving EFL learners' speaking ability.

Keywords: speaking abilities, productive language skills, online videos, EFL learners

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1. Introduction

The issue of how to assess and improve speaking skill has been a growing research interest among researchers. This is due to the fact that nowadays, speaking skill is a milestone in English Language Teaching (ELT) since many people want to acquire it for various purposes primarily for communication purposes. Taking into consideration the increasing level of globalization and technology, distances have been shortened and communication among different cultures has become essential. As a result, interaction with a major language, which is English in this case, has become a must. With the proliferation of communicative language learning, technology-based adaptations have become widespread. Since the digital millennia, learner needs and strategy uses have undergone a significant change. These digital learners have an urge to become more and more autonomous as time passes. In this age, they can easily be online and get the information which may be seen impossible once.

With the increase of communicative language teaching theories all over the world, the use of online videos, technology-based materials have drawn researchers' and scholars' interest especially in the last decade. By keeping these leading changes and advances in mind, it is not surprising that there has been a great tendency towards the use of technology and its integration into the curriculum in recent years. Using video is one of the most valued tools in language teaching and learning among them. The increasing emphasis on communicative techniques and the use of video as an audio-visual material in foreign language teaching classrooms have gained attention in an academic environment, and it is clear that the use of video is a great helper and facilitator for foreign language teachers in learning the target language. Thus, the impetus of this study lies especially in the studies related to communicative language teaching theories about speaking ability in language teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking Assessment

One of the goals of language teaching is to enable learners to communicate, so speaking ability within the scope of productive skills comes to the fore in this sense. Learners can experience and practice many instances of communication in language teaching. As it is known, Halliday's systemic functional theory suggests that speaking is a perceived need to communicate something to someone.

The significance of assessment cannot be undervalued in language learning process. In teaching and learning environment, it can be claimed that speaking ability can improve language learning process, provide new opportunities for four skills and supports the personal traits of the learners. When learners realize the importance of their effort to this process, outcomes can be more affective and visible even in assessing

such a challenging productive skill. Canagarajah (2006) claimed that to be influential while assessing learners, teachers need to change our emphases from language as a system to language as social practice, from grammar to pragmatics, from competence to performance. He also stated that defining language use as performative involves placing an emphasis on the second construct in each pair and considering how language diversity is actively negotiated in acts of communication under changing contextual conditions. In this context, the need of interactive and collaborative formats for assessing and testing learners' proficiencies in contextual situations has emerged in an educational environment.

In today's language teaching environment, a realistic assessment of one's ability to communicate in English involves a wide range of proficiencies. These proficiencies can be dealt with many kinds of tests. These tests involve multiple tasks: an extended monologue by the candidate, a dialogue with the other paired candidate, a dialogue with a rater, and a conversation that involves all three. This arrangement enables the teachers to assess the learners' ability to perform in different language skills. A student who can deliver prepared monologues on a given subject may not necessarily be adept in conversational skills or other genres of talk.

These multitasks provide many positive characteristics as Norton (2005) argued that the pairing of the candidates can elicit different language data and different levels of performance. There are interpersonal dynamics between two paired candidates that can have implications for their performance. On the scope of these different implementations to the process of assessment productive skills, it is clear that we need to develop instruments with imagination and creativity to assess proficiency in the complex communicative needs of English learners today. According to Brown & Hudson (1998), these instruments as alternative assessment may require those characteristics below:

- Requiring students to perform, create, produce or do something;
- Using real-world contexts or situations;
- Allowing students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day;
- Using tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
- Focusing on processes as well as products;
- Taping into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills;
- Providing information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students;
- Ensuring that people, not the machines, do the scoring, using human judgment;
- Encouraging open disclosure of standards and rating criteria;
- Calling upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles (p. 654).

Taking into these features of alternative assessment means that learners' speaking ability can be evaluated through the process of learning which can bring new

perspectives into how teachers look through this process. These processes of assessment may broaden and open new horizons into this field of teaching.

2.2. Online Videos in ELT

Using online videos to convey message in an audio-visual environment is of vital importance. Asensio & Young (2002) states that the moving image has been used quite a long time for educational purposes, starting from the magic lanterns over a century ago to the latest web streaming technologies. With the opportunities which World Wide Web brings into today's teaching and learning environment, students now have a chance to access the most current material and latest examples, whether to supplement classroom discussion or to highlight new developments in the field. Sherer & Shea (2011) show that many Web-based channels where people with similar interests (e.g., comparative management) have been developed to create repositories of relevant materials. In this way, a number of instructors and students in the given field share this responsibility a lot.

Cakir (2006) reveals that by illustrating relationships in a way that is not possible with words, videos make meaning coherent and more comprehensible. Two minutes of video can enable students an hour of classroom work, or it can be used to introduce a wide range of activities for five minutes. He also states that a ten-minute programme can be useful for more advanced students, so less advanced students may wish something much shorter because their limited commands of the language also lessens their attention span.

Boyle (1997) states that digital and online videos are often embedded in a multimedia or hypermedia environment, and some educators prefer talking about multimedia or hypermedia learning. Likewise, Wagener (2006) showed that short on-line video clips can provide a uniquely rich resource for the digital language laboratory which when incorporated into a structured self-access programme offer a sound model for intensive language work. Her study emphasizes that the benefits of encouraging regular independent listening practice via short video clips can be quite considerable and that these benefits are also widely perceived amongst the students themselves.

On the other hand, in their intercontinental project Jauregi & Bañados (2008) have found that using interactive computer videoconferencing tools bring people together for academic purposes. The use of video-web technology enabled teachers and learners to create an attractive virtual environment for learning a language collaboratively, together with features of its culture. Students liked it and this contributed to increasing their motivation to communicate and learn the language, the culture and pragmatic issues in a real sociocultural context. Audio-graphic conferencing offers more than that by including a whole range of tools for graphics (pictures, drawing), writing, audio and possibly video. It allows us to move away from the emphasis on writing, thereby encompassing the visual and the acoustic as well. Kress &

van Leeuwen (2001, p. 92) states that "*The new technologies' emphasis on multimodality, three dimensionality and interactivity can be seen as a return of many of the things that were lost in the transition from 'orality' to 'literacy'*".

Jensen et al. (2011) revealed that as a way of including videos to language learning process, video projects provide several opportunities for learners by creating more dynamic and interactive classrooms together with promoting positive confidence and individual dependence. In addition, these projects foster learner autonomy and enable learners to practice the target language in a collaborative, enjoyable, and motivating atmosphere. Nikitina (2009) stated that the convergence of technology and pedagogy has a great potential in making teaching and learning experiences rich, memorable, motivating and enjoyable for both the learners and their teachers.

2.3 Research Questions

This study was concerned with the productive skills of the prep-class learners within the context of speaking ability. In this sense, prep-class students' speaking ability was evaluated by means of using online videos. Each participant watched online videos except for the class hours and they were observed whether videos can affect the speaking abilities of the students positively. In brief, the study seeks answers to the following research questions below:

1. How do online videos affect the speaking abilities of EFL learners?
2. Is there any difference in speaking performances of male and female students who watched online videos?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The study was conducted at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, School of Foreign Languages in the first term of academic year 2015-2016. 20 low level students were chosen for the study and all participants were English prep-class students who were from the faculty of engineering and economics and administrative sciences. It should be noted that students in the sample group were voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Out of these 20 students, 10 of them were chosen for the treatment group. They were asked to watch five online videos in five weeks period respectively. Half of the participants were male and half of them were female. After they watched videos, they were required to complete the exercises about the videos.

3.2 Data Collection

Five online videos in five weeks period were applied to the participants by the researchers except for the class hours. The participants were required to watch videos taken from YouTube, BBC, VOA and TED with subtitles or texts. It should be stated

that these online videos were chosen by the researchers themselves before the treatment. After the students watched the videos, the researchers encouraged them by using the supplementary materials such as worksheets regarding the films. In addition, they do not have enough motivation to be successful in speaking. These students were chosen in accordance with the first speaking exam results and they were all low level students in terms of speaking. The speaking exam questions were prepared by the testing office of the School of Foreign Languages, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. It should also be noted that the aim of the speaking exam applied by School of Foreign Languages is to observe the capacity of EFL learners in speaking, in this sense, the students are asked to answer the questions chosen from the box by the students themselves and so there is almost no difference between the first and second speaking exam questions. In order to exemplify the speaking exam process, some questions below are directed:

1. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Give examples.
   - You shouldn't believe what you read on the internet.
   - Everybody in the world should have a computer.
   - Technology made the world a better place.
   - Answer the question: "*If you were a millionaire, what would you do?*"
2. You are the manager of a hospital in Osmaniye. You have to choose a new nurse. Look at the three people below. Talk about each person. Finally, tell us who you have chosen and why?

"I'm Merve. I can speak two languages, English and Turkish. I'm still studying at Çukurova University but I'm a very successfull student. I'm very polite and friendly and I love helping people."	*"My name's Alexis and I'm from Barcelona. My Turkish is quite good but I can also speak English and Spanish. So, I can help foreign patients, too. I have 3 years of experience at a children's hospital."*	*"I'm Mehmet and I'm 40 years old. I have 20 years of experience and I love working. I'm very clever, fit and healthy. I work hard and I'm good at my job."*

1. The idea map shows which countries prefer which colors in restaurants. Talk about the effects of colors in some countries. What do they mean?
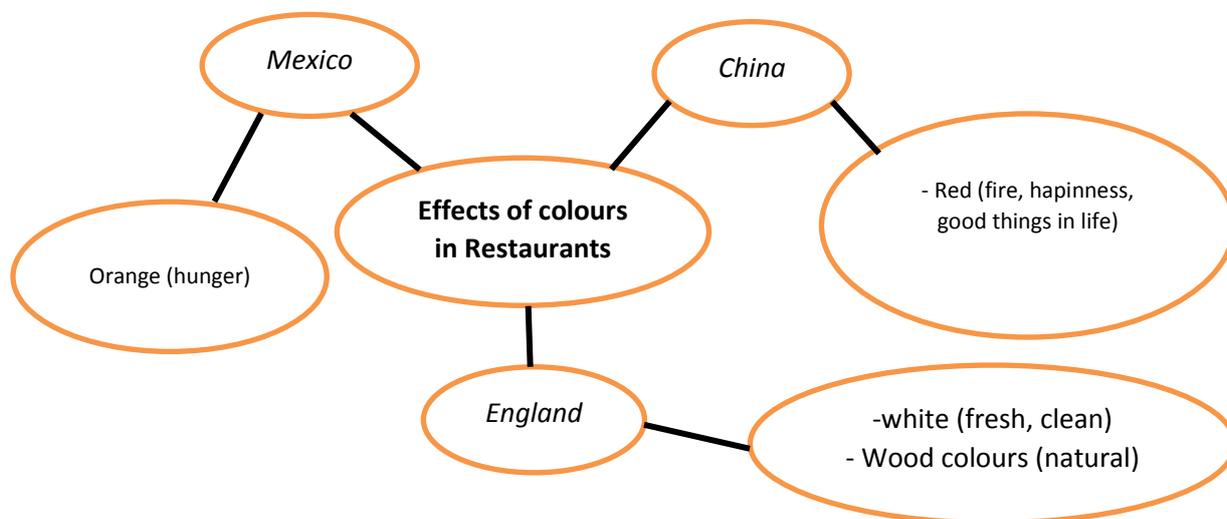
Figure 1: Idea Map

At the beginning of the first online video, they had difficulty in understanding even following the sentences properly, however, this case changed after a period of time. Subsequent to 5 weeks period, they took the second speaking exam towards the end of the term and the difference between the first and second speaking exam results were analyzed by using t-test and regression analysis. The following part deals with data analysis and findings.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

This study was administered to the participants at the first term of 2015-2016 academic year. In order to analyze data, t-test and regression analysis, which is related to the students' speaking exam grades, were carried out. The regression analysis was performed to identify the students' grades. The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS 18 software.

4.1 T-test Results

Table 1: The t-test speaking exam results of the EFL students regarding groups and gender factor

Gender and Groups	N	Average	Standard deviation	t	Significance
Female	5	14	1,224	6,765	0,000
Male	5	7,8	1,643		
Experimental Group	10	10,9	3,541	-5,064	0,000
Control Group	10	4,6	1,713		

In Table 1, the gender factor of the EFL students and those watching online videos who were in the experimental group and control group are shown. The difference between the grade point average according to the gender factor of those who were in the treatment, is determined to be meaningful in respect of a statistical viewpoint (p<0,01), so this is statistically significant. In other words, the average grade point of the female students in the experimental group in comparison to male students is higher and it could also be said that they give more importance to speaking skill.

4.2 The Results of the Regression Analysis

Table 2: The regression analysis results which affect the gender and experimental group's speaking exam results

Model		R	R²	Corrected R²	The standard mistake of the estimation
dimension0	1	,854[a]	,730	,698	2,31682
a. Estimators: (Standard), GMD					

In Table 2, the regression results based on the students' speaking exam grades is given. The R² value is identified as 0,73 and according to this, it could be said that 73% of the students' grades can be explained in relation to the students' gender and watching online videos factors.

	Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Average Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	246,500	2	123,250	22,962	,000[a]
	Difference	91,250	17	5,368		
	Total	337,750	19			
a. Estimators: (Standard), GMD						
b. Dependent Variable: YSNO						

As can be seen in the table above, it could be said that the model being established is meaningful (F=22,962; 0,000<0,01) and significant, thus it can be claimed that gender and the watching online videos by the participants affect the speaking results. It should be noted that by using online videos, EFL learners can improve their level of speaking skill.

Model	Unstandardized Value		Standardized Value	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6,150	,897		6,854	,000
Group	6,300	1,036	,767	6,080	,000
Gender	-3,100	1,036	-,377	-2,992	,008
a. Dependent Variable: YSNO					

In the table above, the information based on the regression values of the gender and experimental group's speaking exam grades and the significance level of these values is given. It is identified that the experimental group factor ($\beta = 6{,}3; p = 0{,}000 < 0{,}01$) and the gender factor ($\beta = -3{,}1; p = 0{,}000 < 0{,}01$) is effective on the students' speaking exam grades.

5. Conclusion

It is not surprising that video is one of the best and important materials that enable students to practice what they have learned through various techniques and to promote language learning that is all four skills. Canning-Wilson (2000) defines video, as "*a form of communication and it can be achieved without the help of language, since we often interact by gesture, eye contact and facial expression to convey meaning*".

Thus, it is a fact that a wide range of materials enable learners to complete communicative situations by means of the instant, immediate and reachable combination of audio-visual tools. Thus, these learners can have the chance to contextualize the language they have learned. In other words, they can see and hear the speakers' utterances in dialogues such as their ages, their gender, perhaps their relationship to each other, their way of social life and status, what they are doing and even their feelings and emotions.

In conclusion, knowing a language means clearly performing productive skills effectively. Speaking is one of the most significant skills which learners need to improve. In this sense, this study shows that using online videos in language classes enables student to communicate and interact more appropriately and they can achieve the ability to convey their messages much more easily.

Taking the speaking results into consideration, the students in the experimental group improved their level of speaking via online videos and female students scored higher than male students. So, it can be said that female students are more successful than males in the speaking ability. As online videos become more accessible to the EFL learners it is likely that they will become more familiar to videos and communication tools and they will have more tendencies to use authentic language.

6. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This research was conducted with 20 EFL learners who are studying in the prep-class. Hence, similar studies can be carried out with the high number of students from different kinds of English level in order to have larger perspective about this subject. Moreover, the scope of the study was limited to the experimental and post test results and the data included five online videos in five weeks period. Further research focusing on the speaking that could affect the EFL learners' speaking ability can be researched by

focusing on other assessment tools in terms of speaking. It is relatively evident that much more research is needed to determine the other factors affecting the speaking ability in the context of EFL courses.

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