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29. Video-accompanied vs. handout-accompanied assignments: Effects on EFL learners' descriptive paragraphs

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Abstract

This study compared the effects of videos and handouts, accompanied by the paragraph assignments, on the quality of English language learners' written descriptive paragraphs. The study was quasi-experimental and quantitative. It had a pretest-treatment-posttest design. As the treatments, either videos or handouts were accompanied by descriptive paragraph assignments which the participating students were required to write. The purpose of accompanying either videos or handouts was providing the learners with additional guides to help them write appropriate and accurate descriptive paragraphs. The study was conducted during the Covid-19 crisis. The participants were 56 Turkish learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at pre-intermediate level of proficiency. They were receiving virtual education due to school closures because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants were assigned to two groups, each of which included 28 learners. One group was provided with educational videos, relevant to the given assignment. The other group was given similar information via handouts. The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that the group that received videos significantly outperformed the one that received handouts. Consequently, the study highly recommends EFL teachers utilize this technique in their classrooms.

Keywords: video, writing, descriptive paragraphs, assignments, EFL learners

Video destekli ve öğretimsel materyal destekli ödevler: İngilizce öğrenenlerin betimleyici paragrafları üzerindeki etkileri

Öz

Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğrenenlerin yazılı betimleyici paragraflarının kalitesi üzerindeki paragraf atamalarının eşlik ettiği videoların ve öğretimsel materyalin etkilerini karşılaştırdı. Çalışma yarı-deneyssel ve nicel bir çalışmaydı. Ön test-tedavi-son test şeklinde tasarlandı. Uygulamalar olarak, videolar veya öğretimsel materyal için katılımcı öğrencilerin yazmaları gereken betimleyici paragraf ödevleri eşlik etti. Videolara veya Öğretimsel materyal eşlik etmenin amacı, öğrencilere uygun ve doğru betimleyici paragraflar yazmalarına yardımcı olacak ek kılavuzlar sağlamaktır. Çalışma, Covid-19 krizi sırasında yapıldı. Bu çalışmanın katılımcıları alt orta seviye yeterlilik düzeyine sahip yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen 56 Türk öğrencidir. Öğrenciler Covid 19 pandemisi nedeniyle okulları kapanması ile birlikte sanal eğitim alıyorlardı. Katılımcılar, her biri 28 öğrenciden oluşan iki gruba ayrıldı. Bir gruba verilen ödevle ilgili eğitici videolar sağlandı. Diğer gruba da çalışma notları aracılığıyla benzer bilgiler verildi. Bağımsız örneklem t-testinin sonuçları, video alan grubun,

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Çalışma notları alan gruptan önemli ölçüde daha iyi performans gösterdiğini gösterdi. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma ile İngilizce öğretmenlerinin bu tekniği sınıflarında kullanması tavsiye edilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: video, yazı, betimleyici paragraflar, İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler

Introduction

Using videos for teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) is considered to be helpful in developing language skills (Ali, 2016; Chae, 2018; Crews & Wilkinson, 2010; Henderson & Phillips, 2015; Maru et al., 2020; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018). The use of videos increases learners' interest and motivation to learn (Xhemali, 2013) and stimulates skill acquisition; it is also effective for language practices (Maru et al., 2020).

Among the four skills, writing is a really difficult language skill to be learned and taught (Barkaoui, 2007; Klimova, 2014). Writing is a complex process due to the fact that it needs the mastery of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies (Barkaoui, 2007). Other researchers have pointed to the absence of mutual interaction with the audience as well as the competence in rhetorical matters as the reasons for the complexity of acquiring the second language (L2) writing skill (Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Snow, 2014; Deane et al., 2008). As a result, in a lot of cases, EFL learners seem to know abstract grammatical rules but fail to utilize them for a productive purpose, such as writing (Ansarimoghaddam & Tan, 2014).

It is stated that teaching writing of descriptive texts to EFL learners is also problematic and challenging (Maru et al., 2020). To teach a descriptive text in EFL contexts, Rivai et al., (2017) suggested that videos be utilized by the teachers to deliver the lesson in a more attractive way, so the learners remain interested to learn during the lesson. Additionally, by watching the video, students will be able to produce their ideas and get more inspiration for writing.

Moreover, the emergence of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, has also affected the education system because millions of schools and universities experienced lockdown and were faced with difficult challenges in their systems of planning, implementation, and assessment (Toquero, 2020). The crisis reminded the researcher of the present study about the potential of using videos to teach writing descriptive paragraphs. The researcher of the current study hypothesized that considering the promising benefits of video use in the classroom, it may help pre-intermediate EFL learners in Turkey to develop their ability in writing descriptive paragraphs. Consequently, the current research addressed the following research question.

Is there any significant difference between the effect of 'video-accompanied assignment' and 'handout-accompanied assignment' on EFL learners' descriptive paragraph writing?

Methods

Research design and setting

The study was carried out in online classrooms in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic when many educational institutions worldwide adopted emergency online education as the alternative to the face-to-face instruction because of the requirement of social distancing under Corona virus crisis. Therefore,

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the teacher-researcher was running online classes. The study was a pretest-treatment-posttest as well as a comparison-group one. There were two independent variables called video-accompanied assignments and handout-accompanied assignments and quality of descriptive paragraph as a dependent variable. The non-random convenience sampling (i.e. intact classes) was utilized, so the study is quasi-experimental.

Participants

The participants were native speakers of the Turkish language studying English at pre-intermediate level of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). They were in four online classes taught by the teacher-researcher. In the beginning, there were 60 students. After administering the Oxford Placement Test (henceforth, OPT), it was found that the scores of 56 of them ranged between 24 and 30; therefore, those 56 learners (32 females and 24 males), whose ages ranged from 18 to 27 years old and had the necessary criterion – passing the lower-intermediate level, based on Geranpayeh's (2003) guideline, were selected as the participants. Twenty-eight of them received the video-accompanied assignments; the other 28 were provided with handout accompanied assignments. More information on the participants is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participants' information

	Groups					
	Video-accompanied Assignment			Handout-accompanied Assignment		
	Age	Gender		Age	Gender	
		Female	Male		Female	Male
Mean	21.89			22.57		
SD	2.233	.488		2.501	.509	
Frequency		18	10		14	14

Instruments

The teacher-researcher prepared a course plan to instruct descriptive paragraph writing. The plan consisted of necessary information compiled from two books: Longman Academic Writing Series 2 (Hogue, 2013) and Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay (Zemack & Rumisek, 2005). Using these two books, the teacher-researcher both prepared some educational handouts and teacher-made videos to give each group of participants.

In addition, the following tests were utilized in each group: OPT, a pretest, and a posttest of paragraph writing of descriptive type. Moreover, the analytic rating scale, specific for EFL descriptive writing, created by Khatib and Mirzaei (2016) was utilized to score the participants' papers.

Data collection procedure

At the outset, in session 1, the participants in both groups were required to write a paragraph describing a family member. This writing was used as the pretest. Then in session 2, the format and organization of a descriptive paragraph was taught. In sessions 3, 4, and 5, the teacher-researcher provided the participants with an online workshop in which the participants practiced writing a paragraph describing a person, a place, and an experience, respectively. Following sessions 3, 4, and 5, the participants were

required to write a related descriptive paragraph at home. The 'video-accompanied assignment' group was provided with supplementary educational videos, which had already been prepared by the teacher-researcher while the 'handout-accompanied assignment' group were provided the same information via a handout instead of a video clips. To control for the mediating effect of feedback, the teacher-researcher did not provide the learners with any feedback on their written paragraphs; however, the participants' questions were answered by the teacher-researcher. In session 6, the posttest was administered.

Table 2. Sessions and topics in both groups

Week	Session	Topic
1	1 (pretest)	Describe one of your family members.
	2	The organization of a descriptive paragraph was taught.
2	3	Describe one of your friends.
	4	Describe the house in which you grew up.
3	5	Describe your best or your favorite vacation.
	6 (posttest)	Describe one of your childhood memories.

Ultimately, to ensure interrater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005), the teacher-researcher and another experienced teacher, who held a master's degree in Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) evaluated each written paragraph independently, and the final score was the average score of the two raters.

Data analysis and results

Inter-rater reliability

The Cronbach alpha indices, which calculated the inter-rater reliability, were above .9, indicating high inter-rater reliability (Pallant, 2020).

The normality tests

Following Larson-Hall's (2010) recommendation, the normality was assessed using both histograms, and some numerical ways. It was found that the data were normally distributed. Following Phakiti (2010), the values of skewness and kurtosis statistics of the present study were within ± 1 ; additionally, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic showed a non-significant result (Sig. value of more than .05), which indicated normality (Pallant, 2020). Therefore, the parametric t-test was used.

Ensuring the homogeneity of the groups

An independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the mean scores of the 'video-accompanied assignment' and 'handout-accompanied assignment' groups in the OPT. There was no significant difference in the scores for the 'video-accompanied assignment' group ($M = 26.89$, $SD = 1.833$, $N = 28$) and 'handout-accompanied assignment' group ($M = 27.18$, $SD = 1.744$, $N = 28$); $t(55) = -.598$, $p = .553$.

Then another independent-samples t-test was done to compare the mean scores of the 'video-accompanied assignment' and 'handout-accompanied assignment' groups in the pretest of descriptive paragraph. There was no significant difference in scores for the 'video-accompanied assignment' group

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($M = 50.50$, $SD = 1.649$, $N = 28$) and 'handout-accompanied assignment' group ($M = 49.92$, $SD = 1.642$, $N = 28$); $t(54) = 1.299$, $p = .200$.

Finding of the research question

The research question investigated whether there was any significant difference between the writing performance of the group that experienced 'video-accompanied assignment' and the group that experienced 'handout-accompanied assignment'. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the 'video-accompanied assignment' and 'handout-accompanied assignment' groups in posttest of descriptive writing. There was a significant difference in scores for the 'video-accompanied assignment' group ($M = 71.92$, $SD = 1.819$, $N = 28$) and 'handout-accompanied assignment' group ($M = 58.94$, $SD = 1.812$, $N = 28$); $t(54) = 26.753$, $p = .000 < .05$. The magnitude of the differences in means (mean difference = 12.982, 95% CI: 12.009 to 13.955) was large (Cohen's $d = 7.14$) based on Cohen (1988).

Discussion and conclusion

This study compared the effects of videos and handouts, either of which was accompanied by the descriptive paragraph assignments which the Turkish EFL learners were required to write. The purpose of accompanying either videos or handouts was to provide the learners with additional guides to help them write appropriate and accurate descriptive paragraphs. The participants, who were at pre-intermediate level of proficiency, were receiving virtual education due to school closures because of the Covid-19 crisis. The results indicated that the group that received videos significantly outperformed the one that received handouts.

The result of this study is in line with the previous ones which proved that using video material in EFL classes facilitates the development of EFL learners' language skills (Maru et al., 2020; Rivai et al., 2017; Wang, 2015). In other words, using video in EFL learning establishes essential components for learners' development of language competence and skills (Maru et al., 2020).

The use of videos was in line with what Goodyear and Steeples (1998) believed in, stating that video files can be a good source for the learners to watch clear descriptions of the information, which thus help them understand the points requiring more elaboration and description. Moreover, the results of this study confirm what Felder and Henriques (1995, p. 24) stated; they said, "most people extract and retain more information from visual presentations than from written or spoken prose." It was found that videos gave students additional help in learning how to write descriptive paragraphs.

Furthermore, it can be argued that videos provide learners with exposure to the native and natural use of language. The language use in the video is within a social context and the video can have a communicative function (Canning-Wilson, 2000; Memarzadeh & Shariati, 2015). Therefore, to teach descriptive text, videos used in this study not only contained information and could draw students' attention to the taught points regarding descriptive paragraphs but also provided students with instances of language use for describing something and, also, for communicative purposes. By watching the videos, students might critically discover the descriptive clues of a text and write a text in the same format more comfortably.

In conclusion, this research indicated that overall the use of videos contributed to the improvement of students' ability to write a descriptive paragraph. Like Maru et al., (2020), this study can conclude that

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despite the detrimental effect of the pandemic on education, the use of videos is still applicable and effective for teaching. It is true that the change from face-to-face instruction to online learning has changed the format of the intervention implementation but students still benefit from watching educational videos. Although further detailed studies must be done, it can be suggested that the learners could overcome the challenges of motivation and interest to write, find ideas, and deal with grammatical aspects as well as vocabulary limitation via the use of videos.

Recommendations

The researcher of the present study investigated the short-term effect of accompanying either videos or handouts by the descriptive paragraph assignments and found positive results. It is suggested that future researchers explore the long-term effect of the mentioned intervention to find out whether the found positive effects will remain after a long-term interval.

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