

Importance of Video Aids' Usage in Teaching and Learning Process of English Language Classes

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the use of video in English language teaching (ELT) elementary school (grades 8 to 9)... In addition, the thesis aims to find out how videos in English lessons helped to achieve the goals of English curriculum. The main hypothesis was that teaching with video would develop pupils' communicative skills and, therefore, was appropriate for the communicative approach to ELT. The study addressed five research questions regarding the use of videos in English lessons in the case study school: why the teachers used videos in ELT, what kinds of videos were used in English lessons, how and how often videos were used, what was taught and learned through the use of videos and, finally, what the teachers' and pupils' attitudes to lessons with videos were. The research was performed as a case study at an Elbasan elementary school. The data for the research was obtained through the use of mixed methods: qualitative, in the form of interviews with four English teachers and observations of three of the interviewed teachers' lessons with videos, and quantitative, in the form of a pupil questionnaire answered by 105 pupils from two 8th grade and two 9th grade classes.

Key words: video-aids, English language, teachers, pupils, teaching

Introduction

Topic, scope and background of the thesis

The thesis is based on a case study of the use of video in English language teaching (ELT) in An Elbasan elementary school (grades 8 and 9). Videos are defined as texts combining different modalities, such as words, images, sounds, and/or music. Thus, videos are multimodal texts. Videos are represented by feature films, cartoons, YouTube clips, documentaries, commercials, TV shows, sitcoms (situational comedies), and shorts (films that combine both images and sounds and last between thirty seconds and fifteen minutes (Massi and Blazquez 2012:63)).

The research is mixed methods: it is based on interviews with four English teachers from an Elbasan elementary school, observations of three of the interviewed teachers' English lessons with videos, and a questionnaire answered by 105 pupils from two 8th grade and two 9th grade classes. The four classes participating in the questionnaire were taught by the four interviewed English teachers.

The choice of the topic was inspired by my personal interest in how teaching with video fits in with the communicative approach and most importantly, how it is exercised in English classrooms in Elbasan. Albania, as a post-communist country and the transition period has influenced on teaching ways and methods. The use of video in education used to be extremely limited due to a number of reasons, such as the long domination of the grammar-translation method of teaching foreign languages and poor quality teaching resources, equipment and opportunities for teaching with video. On the other hand, in our days it seems to be a country where teaching with video in ELT is being adopted. Therefore, this research was a unique chance for the researcher to explore why and how the method is used in English classrooms.

The life of 21st century pupils in Albania, similar to many other countries, both inside and outside the classroom, is saturated with technology. Therefore, it seems important that contemporary teachers know how to use digital tools in education. One of the media that foreign language teachers are more likely to turn to is videos, because they are such a common feature of pupils' everyday lives.

Lately, Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports revised a general law which represents a strategy for promoting foreign languages in primary and secondary education by including foreign languages as a compulsory exam at the end of each cycle of education, at the end of the 9th grade and 3^d grade to secondary education cycle. Country needs people with good linguistic skills, and hence every effort should be made to reinforce the position of languages in schools and make pupils at all levels become as proficient as possible in English. The Ministry aims to increase their insight into the strategies used when learning languages. Therefore, they are interested in how activities are planned and presented to the pupils and how much the latter learn. This means that language material can be presented electronically and include text, sound and film. Thus, this thesis on the use of video in ELT will provide insight into both how English teaching is organized and practiced in an Albanian (Elbasan) school, and, which is more important, how digital media are introduced and exploited in these Albanian classrooms.

It is also important to take into account the English subject curriculum in the current national curriculum. The English curriculum is divided into three main areas: (1) Language learning, (2) Communication, and (3) Culture, society and literature. Thus, one of the main objectives of the curriculum is to enable pupils to communicate in English. New media play a significant role in achieving the communicative goals in the curriculum by providing learners with linguistic situations that are suitable for training communicative skills.

The English subject curriculum presupposes five basic skills to be developed in English: being able to express oneself in writing and orally, being able to read, numeracy, and being able to use digital tools. According to the authors of the curriculum, using digital tools may help the development of English linguistic competence by promoting the authentic use of the language (The Knowledge Promotion Curriculum) 2006).

Research questions and expectations

This thesis thus aims to shed light on ELT through videos by discovering how the process of teaching with video is practiced by English teachers in an Albanian school.

The thesis addresses the following research questions:

- Why do the teachers use videos in ELT?
- What kinds of videos are used in English lessons?
- How and how often are videos used?
- What is taught and learned through the use of videos?
- What are the teachers' and pupils' attitudes to lessons with videos?

One of the main expectations is that teaching with video aims at the development of the pupils' communicative skills and, therefore, fits in well with the communicative approach to language teaching. Consequently, it will be seek to find out whether teaching with video is primarily a meaning-based or form-based approach to ELT in the case study school. Another hypothesis is that the teachers from the case study school prefer short videos to long videos due to lack of class time, namely forty-five-minute lessons in comparison with two-hour-long feature films, as well as the limited number of teaching hours of English (two to three hours a week).

In addition, it is aimed to find out how the teachers and their pupils perceive the results, benefits and drawbacks of lessons with videos, as well as the pupils' attitudes to such lessons. It may be expected that, on the whole, the pupils regard such lessons as entertaining and have positive experiences. On the other hand, it would also be interesting to discover if this assumption reflects the reality and if some pupils may have negative experiences. If so, it is important to find out what makes such lessons unattractive to them. The teachers' attitudes will also be explored, as well as the issues that may prevent them from using videos in class, such as if teaching with video is extremely time-consuming and it costs.

METHODOLOGY

The research was based on a case study of the use of video in ELT in an Elbasan school "Ptoleme Xhuvani" (grades 8 to 9). The case study school was located in an urban area and had 3 parallel classes in each year, 38 teachers and approximately 320 pupils. The main research questions were why the English teachers in the case study school used

videos in ELT, what kinds of videos were used, how and how often videos were used, what was taught and learned through the use of videos and, finally, what the teachers' and pupils' attitudes to lessons with videos were.

In order to answer the above questions, mixed methods research was used. Thus, it was employed qualitative methods of data collection, namely teacher interviews and lesson observations, and a quantitative method, namely a pupil questionnaire. Different methods of data collection increased the validity of the research. According to Dörnyei (2007:124), qualitative inquiry is very different from quantitative: while the latter can be easily divided into two distinct phases – data collection and data analysis – because they usually follow each other linearly, qualitative data collection and analysis, in their turn, are often circular and frequently overlap. Moreover, it is sometimes problematic to decide whether a particular qualitative method refers primarily to data collection or data analysis (Dörnyei 2007:124). Besides, Dörnyei (2007:125) accentuates the two main characteristics of a typical qualitative dataset: first, the tendency of qualitative data to become increasingly long and, second, its unfocused and heterogeneous nature. Nevertheless, because of its heterogeneity, qualitative inquiry can provide the researcher with rich, various and multiple data on the topic and hence with valuable results. Quantitative research, in its turn, can contribute to the study by providing proof of a greater accuracy and eliminating bias by the researcher.

Since the present research combines three different research methods – interviews, a questionnaire and lesson observation – it is relevant to comment on each of them before discussing them in detail.

Case study

A case study is defined as 'a detailed examination of a single subject or group or phenomenon' (Borg and Gall 1989:402). Thus, the current case study involved an investigation of why and how the English teachers from the particular Norwegian elementary school used videos in their teaching, as well as how their pupils reacted to and learned from such teaching. Borg and Gall (1989:403) differentiate between several types of case studies, such as historical case studies of organizations, observational case studies, oral histories, situational analysis, and clinical case study. The present case study can be distinguished as observational, because it focuses on English classrooms as a part of an organization (a elementary school) and the focus of the study is a group of individuals (the teachers and pupils).

Borg and Gall (1989:402) believe that: 'A case study requires the collection of very extensive data in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied.' Therefore, the researcher employed the three aforementioned methods of data collection. The researcher believed that these three methods would provide detailed information and a deep vision of the topic, since multiple methods increase the validity of the study and provide versatile results.

Interviews

Four English teachers from the case study school were interviewed. Two of them taught English in the 8th grade, whilst the other two in the 10th grade. The researcher got in contact with one of the teachers via her university lecturer. The contacted teacher became a 'gatekeeper' for the researcher and helped her to contact the other three English teachers. The four teachers were all interviewed individually for approximately 45 minutes each.

The interview as a research method involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. The interview has the advantage of immediate feedback as contrasted with the questionnaire. Besides, the questionnaire is often criticized for being too shallow to provide a true picture of opinions (Borg and Gall 1989:446). On the other hand, the

It is conducted a semi-structured interviews for verbal data collection. This kind of interview can provide, on the one hand, with a certain amount of precision and accuracy, as opposed to unstructured interviews, and, on the other hand, with some level of flexibility, as opposed to structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses an interview guide with specific questions that are organized by topic but are not necessarily asked in a specified order (Bailey 2007:100). According to Borg and Gall (1989:452), semi-structured interviews have the advantage of being reasonably objective and deep because they provide the interviewer with the opportunity to ask open-ended questions in order to obtain more complete data.

While interviewing, the focus was on listening to the interviewees more and speaking less by only asking the questions from the interview guide and the questions that arose during the interview. The researcher's aim was not to probe, dispute or judge the teachers' answers about their experiences; therefore, she tried to explore the latter with as objective as possible an attitude by asking more open-ended questions and following up without interruptions.

In order to keep the received data confidential for satisfying the ethical requirements of the research, it was transcribed parts and summarized the rest of the interviews herself.

Questionnaire

In total, 105 pupils from two 8th and two 9th grades were asked to answer a questionnaire. The questionnaire was originally written in English (see Appendix 2) and then translated into Albanian (see Appendix 3) so that there was less risk of the pupils misunderstanding the items, thus increasing the reliability of the research. Specifically, 50 pupils from two 8th grade classes and 55 pupils from two 9th grade classes participated. Brown (2001), cited in Dömyei (2008:6), and gives the following definition of questionnaires: 'Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers.' The pupils were asked to answer a questionnaire, ticking off 25 statements on a scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' ('strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree', and 'strongly agree'). The questionnaire included statements concerning the pupils' attitudes to lessons with videos, as well as the effect of videos on the development of oral, reading and writing skills, vocabulary growth, promoting cultural awareness, and the use of subtitles. Thus, the questionnaire contained, for example, statements, such as: 'Videos in English lessons provide me with topics to communicate with other classmates' or 'Videos in English lessons inspire me to read books that I may have previously had little interest in or that I did not know about before'.

The questionnaire as a method of data collection was chosen because of the following advantages: time and effort. Firstly, it took the pupils only about 20-25 minutes to answer the questionnaire, which is beneficial when collecting information from teenagers who may find the research procedure long, boring, or unnecessary to spend much time on it. Secondly, since 105 pupils participated in the project, it would not have been possible for the researcher to interview so many of them. However, the disadvantage of questionnaires is that they give general data without extensive information on the personal feelings and opinions of the participants. That is why the researcher included an open question in the questionnaire to learn whether the pupils had positive or negative attitudes and experiences of lessons with the use of video: 'What was your favorite English lesson with video? Why?' In order to keep the received data confidential, the questionnaires were anonymous.

Observation

Lesson observation took place in four lessons with video taught by three of the interviewed teachers from the case study school. Observation as a method of data collection in a case study implies the thorough examination of the characteristics of the phenomena being studied. The main advantage of observation is that it provides direct access to the phenomena under examination. Instead of relying on collecting information from other people, the researcher has the opportunity to observe the case him or herself. As opposed to observation, interviews as well as questionnaires may not always provide accurate or complete information because the respondents might answer in the way that corresponds, as they may think, to what is desirable. However, interviews and questionnaires are still an important basis of research data and they should by no means be ignored. Observation as the third method in mixed methods research can simply complement the first two methods more effectively and efficiently by providing the researcher with more unbiased and objective data.

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research on the use of video in ELT carried out in the case study school. As stated in the previous chapter, the research is implemented in the following three research methods in the study: teacher interviews, a pupil questionnaire, and lesson observation.

It is observed English lessons with video taught by the interviewed English teachers except for Anna, because she explained that her class consisted of emotionally vulnerable pupils who might consider an observation lesson as a difficult or unpleasant experience. Therefore, the researcher observed two lessons of Era teaching with a complete film and one lesson of Maria and Lela teaching with a film, in which they showed part of the film during the observed lesson. The two latter observations with part of a film were carried out because the researcher's aim was to observe a typical lesson with video, rather than necessarily all the lessons with the same video from beginning to end. The teachers reassured that the observed lessons were the teachers' typical way of using video in class. During all her observations, I was sitting at a seat at the back of the classroom in order to have the possibility to observe the whole class and take field notes.

Pupil's questionnaire

This subsection presents the findings from the questionnaires answered by the 8th and 9th grade pupils from the case study school, comprising 105 respondents in total. Each of the tables addresses one specific aspect concerning teaching with video. These aspects are the affective aspects of watching videos, the general educational aspects, and the frequency of watching videos in relation to vocabulary growth, the connection between watching videos and the development of oral language skills, the connection between watching videos and the development of other language skills, the cultural and contextual aspects of watching videos, and videos and subtitles.

Table 1 presents an overview of the questionnaire responses on the affective aspects of watching videos.

Table 1: Affective aspects of watching videos

Statement No 105	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
English lessons with videos are fun and entertaining.	69 (65%)	30 (29%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
I do not like English lessons when my teacher uses videos	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	29 (28%)	54 (51%)	13 (12%)
Videos in English lessons help me to gain confidence in speaking to my classmates.	18 (17%)	27 (26%)	24 (23%)	8 (7%)	28 (27%)
Visual cues (for example, face expressions and body language) in videos help me to maintain my interest and concentration while listening	29 (28%)	57 (54%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	11 (10%)

Table 2 provides an overview of how the pupils perceived the educational benefits of lessons with videos.

Statement No 105	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
I learn more English during English lessons with videos.	14 (13%)	41 (39%)	17 (16%)	3 (3%)	30 (29%)
I learn in a more efficient way during English lessons with videos.	19 (18%)	44 (42%)	13 (12%)	5 (5%)	24 (23%)

Table 3 provides an overview of the pupils' responses to the frequency of watching videos in English lessons in relation to vocabulary growth.

Statement No 105	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Just a few lessons with videos do not help me to increase my vocabulary.	8 (7%)	22 (21%)	38 (36%)	10 (10%)	27 (26%)
Regular lessons with videos help me to increase my vocabulary a lot.	30 (29%)	55 (52%)	7 (7%)	2 (2%)	11 (10%)

Table 4: Effects of watching videos on oral language skills

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Statement (N = 105)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Videos in English lessons provide me with topics to communicate in English with other classmates.	11 (10%)	37 (35%)	25 (24%)	6 (6%)	26 (25%)
Videos in English lessons help me to improve my pronunciation and intonation.	41 (39%)	50 (48%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	9 (8%)
Videos in English lessons help me to understand oral English better than just ordinary audio sound recordings (CD, etc.).	34 (32%)	50 (48%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	15 (14%)
Videos in English lessons are a good source to make me familiar with and used to different ways of pronunciation and intonation.	50 (48%)	46 (43%)	3 (3%)	-	6 (6%)

Table 5: Effects of watching videos on reading, writing and vocabulary

Statements (N = 105)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Videos in English lessons inspire me to read books that I may have previously had little interest in or that I did not know about before.	13 (12%)	22 (21%)	35 (34%)	11 (10%)	24 (23%)
Videos in English lessons make me more interested in doing written tasks.	12 (11%)	43 (41%)	25 (24%)	9 (9%)	16 (15%)
Videos in English lessons help me to learn vocabulary.	46 (44%)	46 (44%)	5 (4%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)

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