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“WE ARE GOING TO WATCH A VIDEO...”: LESSONS LEARNT DURING THE ESP CLASSROOM

„Vom urmări un videoclip...”: Lecții învățate în timpul clasei ESP

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“WE ARE GOING TO WATCH A VIDEO...”: LESSONS LEARNT DURING THE ESP CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic which forced the transfer of education from the physical to the virtual environment led to the exploitation of various materials and resources for teaching English for specific purposes. The use of videos in online lessons was investigated in a study conducted on four mixed-ability groups of students exposed to various educational videos to varying extents. The videos intended to improve the acquisition of vocabulary for English for specific purposes, namely for engineering and medicine. The students were divided into four groups, two engineering groups, and two medicine ones. All students were in their second undergraduate year and all had two lectures of English per week. One engineering group and one medicine group were exposed to at least two videos per course, whereas the other groups to one or no videos per course. Vocabulary acquisition was assessed using MCQs, word formation, and gap filling exercises, whereas speaking activities were conducted in smaller groups in virtual rooms. Following the 10-week period, not only the students' vocabulary improved, but also their speaking abilities especially in the groups that used at least two videos per lesson, while the other groups showed only modest improvement of vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills.

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Keywords: English for specific purposes, speaking skills, video, vocabulary acquisition.

Rezumat

Pandemia de COVID-19 care a forțat transferul educației din mediul fizic în cel virtual a dus la exploatarea diverselor materiale și resurse pentru predarea limbii engleze în scopuri specifice. Utilizarea videoclipurilor în lecțiile online a fost examinată într-un studiu realizat pe patru grupuri de studenți cu abilități mixte expuse la diferite videoclipuri educaționale în proporții diferite. Videoclipurile au avut drept obiectiv principal îmbunătățirea însușirii vocabularului limbii engleze pentru scopuri specifice, și anume pentru inginerie și medicină. Studenții au fost împărțiți în patru grupuri, două grupuri de inginerie și două de medicină. Toți studenții erau în al doilea an de studii de licență și toți aveau două cursuri de limba engleză pe săptămână. Un grup de inginerie și unul de medicină au urmărit cel puțin două videoclipuri pe curs, în timp ce celelalte grupuri doar unul sau niciun videoclip pe curs. Achiziția de vocabular a fost evaluată folosind întrebări cu alegere multiplă, formare de cuvinte și exerciții de completare a spațiilor, în timp ce activitățile de vorbire au fost desfășurate în grupuri mai mici în săli virtuale. În urma perioadei de 10 săptămâni, nu doar vocabularul studenților s-a îmbunătățit, ci și abilitățile lor de vorbire, în special în grupurile care au urmărit cel puțin două videoclipuri în timpul unui curs, pe când celelalte grupuri au arătat doar o îmbunătățire modestă a dobândirii vocabularului și a abilităților de vorbire.

Cuvinte-cheie: abilități de vorbire, engleza pentru scopuri specifice, însușirea vocabularului, videoclip.

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes, or simply ESP, emerged in the 1960s (Liu & Hu, 2021) to cater for the needs of English language learners to use the language in a particular professional field. Nowadays, ESP covers several subfields such as English for Medical Purposes, English for Hospitality, English for Engineering, to name just a few. Although it is expected that the English language level of all high school leavers is B1, this is rarely the case (Marcu, 2020) and commercially available textbooks may mostly range between A2 and B2 levels (Pop, 2015); thus, when students enroll in undergraduate studies they, or at least quite many of them, may find it difficult to shift to a higher level of ESP. As course lecturers, it is our duty to select and adapt teaching materials that are both motivating and suitable for the learners so that students can acquire the language skills specific to their future field. Moreover, it is not only the materials that have to be suitably adapted, especially in cases of mixed ability groups where some materials may be too difficult for lower level students or too simple for higher level ones (Pop, 2015), but also the assessment of these students needs to be adjusted to be in line with the specificity of the field (Rus, 2019). Ideally, courses should be designed in such a way that they mimic the communicative situations that the students will encounter in their future careers (Pop, 2015). Learning takes place continuously, in a variety of contexts and means supported by technologies that allow any student to easily access internal and external information and to interact in various networks with experts and peers. Mixing methods makes learning more effective, especially in higher education because traditional delivery methods revolve around too much factual knowledge (Förster et al., 2022).

Research has shown that, in the learning process, a person memorizes vocabulary much better with the aid of videos than in the presence of audio only because the sole use of audio may imply various difficulties such as the pace of the speakers or their accent (Bal-Gezegin, 2014).

It is certain that teaching in the online environment implies a different set of challenges from traditional teaching (Ho & Tai, 2020), however, the information we teach remains the same, only that we should select interactive teaching methods, because teaching online makes it more difficult to keep

students focused for a longer period of time especially in case of longer conversations that lack visual aids (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016).

With the aid of video resources, the replication of behaviors, procedures, and processes becomes possible in a way similar to real life. Videos can increase interest in testing the applicability or relevance of abstract concepts or generalizations in real-world contexts. By seeking alternative explanations for real-world phenomena, students can visualize these concepts, as well as real-life sequences, generating formative experiences for our students.

2. Brief review of recent literature

Videos can have multiple uses in the English language classroom. Their potential can be exploited to teach vocabulary, grammar issues, cultural aspects of the language, and, as in our particular case, videos provide learners with authentic situations in their future professions. What is maybe of significant importance is the fact that such materials will inevitably improve the pronunciation of the students (Ayu, 2016). Such materials can deliver original output mainly produced for native speakers (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016) in the case of films or television programs, but they are an attractive way of presenting content and illustrating different situations. On the other hand, students can be exposed to various World Englishes (Nasution, 2019). Additionally, YouTube videos, for instance, are a cost-effective way of material use in the classroom (Saed et al., 2021), they can be viewed free of charge and replayed as many times as needed, they can be accessed anywhere and from multiple types of devices at any necessary time. Moreover, students will have a better understanding of words and discourse because these are backed up by visual cues such as actions and images (Oddone, 2011).

Nofrika lists six advantages in improving students' English language skills by exposure to YouTube videos: flexibility, understanding of the topic, entertainment, facilitating the acquisition of vocabulary, facilitating macro practice, and facilitating real-life context interaction (Nofrika, 2019). The use of video materials in the classroom can stimulate the students' autonomy and proactivity and can also aid in the acquisition of cultural background information (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016).

Videos can enhance the acquisition of fixed phrases and expressions. The study by Bal-Gezegin (2014) investigated two groups of Turkish university students, one exposed to video materials along with the textbooks, while the other group was only presented with exactly the same material but in the audio version. The study found that the students who were exposed to audio materials alone did not have the same motivation, willingness, and enthusiasm about the activities when compared to the video exposed group, this latter group not reporting any difficulty in the comprehension of the video materials. A study conducted on 120 community college students found that watching YouTube videos in a literature class proved to be effective and creative and yielded positive results (Khalid & Muhammad, 2012). Research has also explored self-regulated language learning by using YouTube videos outside the classroom, an interview-based study finding that learners turn to such materials mainly for expanding learning resources, enhancing the attraction of learning, and enhancing cultural knowledge (Wang & Chen, 2020). The same study highlighted the fact that self-regulated learning outside the EFL classroom was more flexible, interesting, and beneficial than the use of classroom materials. As far as learning inside and outside the classroom is concerned, classroom learning is fixed and inflexible due to the syllabus that the course has to cover. In contrast, YouTube providers of English-teaching videos, for example, take into account the learners' needs and interests in the production of new videos (Wang & Chen, 2020).

On the other hand, teaching videos that are specifically designed and produced to meet the learning outcomes of students are at the base of distance education and of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) (Harrison, 2020). Students prefer using high quality videos in their learning and opt for those that are inspired from real-life situations, such as interviews with experts and practitioners, and which do not exceed a length of 5 minutes (Harrison, 2020). In terms of the use of corporate storytelling videos, 10-minute length resolves the problem of students' having short attention spans (Mokhtar & Othman, 2022).

The Harrison study found that, in the case of distance learning courses, the most watched videos were interviews highlighting the fact that short films of academics talking on a particular subject were perceived as having the most impact on students' learning (Harrison, 2020). Unlike the preference

of the respondents for shorter videos ranging between 1 and 5 minutes in the Harrison study, another investigation found that ideal length of videos should not be over 15 minutes (Pratama, Arifin & Widianingsih, 2020). What is probably the most important finding of the Harrison analysis is that videos present the practical application of theory.

In terms of disadvantages, a setback is the fact that videos are often designed with native speakers in mind and if the language level is too high, students will be less eager to engage in activities (Oddone, 2011).

3. Methods and findings

Our study emerged from the need for a diverse and more attractive way of delivering the online lectures since it was conducted during the lockdowns imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and all teaching and assessment activities were carried out on a teaching platform used by our university. Due to the modular teaching system, every group of students had two English language courses per week. While a teaching module comprises seven weeks, our study was conducted over ten weeks throughout two modules, five in the first and five in the second module of the autumn semester of academic year 2021-2022. Foreign language courses, ESP in our case, are offered during years one and two (for specializations of four years or longer) and are compulsory for all students. Second year courses are based entirely on ESP.

The main purpose of our study was to investigate the extent to which using videos in the teaching of ESP improves the students' vocabulary acquisition and retention, thus we formulated the following research questions:

1. Do videos improve the vocabulary of ESP learners?
2. If videos do improve ESP vocabulary acquisition, is the improvement significant?

For the purpose of our study, we enrolled four groups of students, two engineering and two medicine groups. The grouping did not consider language proficiency levels because the division of a series of students into groups is

done based on alphabetical considerations, as such, for example, the formation of group 1 medicine is the same for all study subjects ranging from anatomy to foreign language. Thus, the participating groups were named E1 and E2, in the case of engineering students, and M1 and M2, in the case of med students.

Groups E1 and M1 were selected as study groups, whereas E2 and M2 were used as control groups. E1 and E2 groups comprised 15 students each, whereas M1 had 24 students, and M2 included 27. The difference in the number of students in groups M1 and M2 derives from the fact that some med students had opted for languages other than English.

The topics covered during the 10-week study were artificial intelligence, material technology, and energy and temperature for groups E1 and E2, and the muscular system, the skeletal system, and the endocrine one for groups M1 and M2. The course syllabus for engineering students includes machine learning, robotics, computer vision, material types, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, material properties, material formats, heat and temperature, forms of energy, work and power, while the one for med students focuses on the types, structures, functions, diseases, and disorders of muscles, bones, and endocrine glands.

Topic-related videos used in E1 group focused on humanoid robots, digital images, common ferrous and non-ferrous engineering metals, polymers, minerals and ceramics, material properties, energy efficiency, changes of temperature and state.

For M1 group, the videos employed presented aspects of the medical profession such as muscular disorders, aging and muscle wasting, bone fractures, reduction of fractures, osteoporosis, endocrine problems, hyper- and hypothyroidism, acromegaly and medication. If the number of videos used during each lecture varied, ranging from one to five shorter ones, but averaging almost three per course, it is due to the fact that the videos used per lecture depended on the topic and the availability of such materials. Most of the videos used were free to access ones on platforms such as YouTube, while some others had been uploaded by producers such as Mayo Clinic or Osmosis. Some videos presented speakers in various communicative situations: doctor-patient interviews, dialogues between professionals, whereas others were more instructional such as the design and operation of machinery. The duration of the videos ranged between 3 and 9

minutes. Table no. 1 presents the number and the total length of videos each group was exposed to during the 10-week study. Following each lecture, the video resources or the links were uploaded to the teaching platform, so students could return to the material if they wished to. Every one of the four groups involved in the study had a separate virtual classroom, so students from E2 group, for example, did not have access to the resources of E1 group.

Table no. 1. *Number of videos per group*

Group	E1	E2	M1	M2
Number of videos	31	7	34	7
Total runtime of videos (minutes)	98	29	117	36

While there are many concerns regarding the use of videos for teaching purposes ranging from the use of captions to the type of video, from their length to the language that they use, implementing videos in the foreign language classroom has to undergo certain steps. The three major stages to be considered are pre-watching, watching, and post-watching (Oddone, 2011). Although the use of captions has been proven to be beneficial (Teng, 2022), no captions were used for any of the videos in our study.

Specific terminology was delivered to our groups via matching, word formation, and gap filling exercises in all four study groups. Following the general presentation of the topics and post-teaching of vocabulary, all four groups were subjected to a pre-test which assessed the acquisition of specific terminology using the above-mentioned types of exercises.

Pre-tests were administered to all four groups. Types of exercises included MCQ, word building, open cloze, matching terms with their definitions, choosing the suitable word from a box to fill in a gapped fragment, etc. The correct answers of the types of exercises included in the pre-test were scored differently: more points were awarded to word building ones, lower scores for sentence completion with a range of given words. All questions were randomized to reduce the likelihood of cheating. The same type of scoring was used for the post-test as well. A 10-point starting score was included in all tests, the maximum score being 100 points.

The teaching platform that our university used at the time of our study allowed for the randomization of questions and answers. However, randomization of questions is not possible in the case of a test that comprises sentence or paragraph completion exercises with given words along with multiple choice questions, as such, every test was made of two subtests: one that contained multiple choice questions and word formation exercises, and another subtest that included open cloze type questions, all this in order to reduce the likelihood of students exchanging messages on other means of communication, such as Facebook Messenger™, WhatsApp™, emailing, or even private chats within the platform. Without randomization, it would have been fairly easy for a student to send the correct answers over to another one or, for that matter, to the whole group in the pattern of, for example: 1. A, 2. B, 3. C, 4. fracture, etc. All tests were timed. At the end of the study period, all four groups had a post-test which was designed in a similar manner to the pre-test and included MCQ, open cloze exercises, word formation instances, etc. Figures no. 1 and 2 are examples of a word building instance and an MCQ, both are in teacher view where the correct answer is given.

Make a new word from the one in brackets that fits in the gap:
Muscles contribute to posture, produce body heat, and act as a ... **[Blank 1]** (PROTECT) covering for internal organs.

Blank 1 protective

Responses must match exactly

Figure no. 1. Example of a word formation question

Question 14

1 points ...



Choose the best answer:

A(n) fracture occurs when the bone is broken and one end is wedged into the interior of another bone.

Choose at least one correct answer

(A) impacted

Correct answer

(B) jammed

(C) lodged

(D) wedged

Figure no. 2. Example of an MCQ

Test scores were collected in a Microsoft Excel™ sheet and were processed for statistical analysis. Means were calculated and a two-tailed Student t-test was used to see whether there is any statistically significant difference between the groups that were taught with the aid of videos versus the groups that watched a maximum of one video per lecture. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Table no. 2 shows the pre- and post-test scores of the four groups, the means of the scores, the range of points achieved by the groups, the standard deviation, and the Student t-test results.

Table no. 2. Data of the four groups

Group	E1		E2		M1		M2	
Testing	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
N	15		15		24		27	
Range	66-90	78-92	69-90	75-90	72-92	82-97	69-95	78-90
Mean	77.8	86.6	79.93	80.40	84.04	89.5	82.44	82.59
SD	6.73	11.03	6.15	10.73	4.61	3.55	7.61	3.06
Student t-test	0.00020		0.81		0.000003		0.92	
p	$p < 0.0001$		NS		$p < 0.0001$		NS	

N – sample size, SD – standard deviation, p – significance threshold

After watching the videos, questions about the presented procedures or topics were formulated and discussed first in smaller groups, since the teaching platform had the feature of breaking the class up, and then in the whole group of participants. All discussions ended by formulating a take-home message.

4. Discussion

The results of our study prove that the use of videos in the ESP classroom is beneficial in the acquisition of specialized terminology. Analyses of the pre- and post-test scores highlight a statistically significant increase in the results of the students who were taught with the aid of videos compared to those with a low exposure to instructional videos. Pre- and post-test scores in both study groups E1 and M1 show a substantial increase which translates into a high statistical significance. This is even more relevant because the chosen statistical method was a paired t-test, thus, each subject was their own control and the measured difference, as a result of video exposure, reflects the inter- and intra-individual changes.

On the other hand, the pre- and post-test scores of students in E2 and M2 did not improve significantly, as such, being exposed to fewer videos does not contribute to higher levels of vocabulary acquisition. An underlying reason may be the fact that current generations of students are constantly exposed to various ways of teaching and learning, consequently, failure to integrate them is likely to result in insufficient levels of improvement. Moreso, in the case of ESP, videos should be a constant integral part of the teaching process. Our findings are similar to the Chien study (Chien, Huang & Huang, 2020) which measured a significant increase in the listening comprehension and retention of the study group as a result of watching YouTube videos in the EFL classroom or to the results of the Trang study (2022). The Heriyanto study found that watching YouTube videos had beneficial effects regarding the acquisition of vocabulary (Heriyanto, 2018) while Polat & Eri'ti (2019) proved that the use of authentic videos improves the development of listening skills, whereas a language-rich environment contributes to the communicative competence of the learners (Ho, 2020).

What needs to be added is the fact that we also noted a higher involvement in group discussions in the case of E1 and M1 students following the exposure to videos. Such discussions were loaded with carefully observed details of the procedures or interviews presented in the videos, the students exhibited greater interest in the topics, and managed to better summarize and formulate take-home messages at the end of the lectures. We believe that learner autonomy and activation of learner agency improved considerably in the two study groups.

Although our hypotheses were confirmed and the results of our study proved a statistically significant improvement of specialized vocabulary acquisition and retention in the experimental groups which were exposed to more videos than the control ones, future studies could also investigate the extent to which watching videos also improves speaking skills and fluency of the learners in the target language. This is something we noticed in our study groups, but we did not record any data to measure its extent. We have to bear in mind that the future professionals will be faced with real-life communication situations in their jobs, whether as physicians in doctor-patient communication, lectures or conference presentations, or as engineers and colleagues in job-related discussions and projects. There have been studies

conducted on the use of open educational resource videos to measure the students' use of communicative strategies (Lin & Wang, 2018), but, given the online method of teaching during our investigation, we did not focus on this problem because measuring fluency and speaking skills in a group discussion taking place in a virtual environment would have been difficult to achieve. Watching instructional videos has also proven to increase language-learning autonomy (Trang, 2022), but such an investigation was beyond the purpose of our study.

5. Conclusion

Our study aimed to assess the benefits of learning specialized vocabulary and terminology with the aid of videos. It was carried out involving 4 groups of undergraduate students, 2 engineering groups and 2 medical ones. Following the 10-week period, groups that were exposed to more videos during each lecture showed a significant improvement in specialized vocabulary acquisition compared to groups that had a lower exposure to videos. While it remains unclear how many minutes of video materials are needed to improve vocabulary learning, we found a statistically significant increase in the post-test scores of the study groups. As such, instructional videos based on authentic language and topics during ESP lectures have a great pedagogical value in enhancing the knowledge of specialized terminology of future professionals, apart from improving speaking skills and language fluency.

6. Limitations

Our study does have some limitations. Although the students' cameras were on during the pre- and post-testing, this does not mean that we can exclude cheating of all types since the tests were not delivered via a browser lock system. During the tests, the students' microphones were muted in order that background noises would not disrupt the work of their peers. As such, in case there may have been occurrences of cheating via instant messaging, these tones could not be heard. Moreover, the control and study groups were not very large, a larger sample may have yielded different results. Another limitation may be the fact that our groups were mixed-ability in

terms of English language proficiency and we did not compare individual progress of each student, we only analyzed the results of the group as a whole.

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