

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDINGS ON ORAL PERFORMANCE OF EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study reports the results of an action-based study conducted in an EFL class to examine whether digital video recordings would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners' oral fluency skills. It also investigates the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. 10 Turkish EFL learners participated in this study. To determine the impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, the speaking module of IELTS was modified as pre- and post-test. In addition to the analysis of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale, an analysis of learners' discourse in pre- and post-test was undertaken to determine whether measures of fluency in learners' output differ as a result of the video recording. The results suggest that the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes improved the learners' overall speaking proficiency; however, it did not lead to a significant improvement in learners' oral fluency. Yet, the analysis of the qualitative data showed that the utilization of digital video recordings may not only bolster the learners' self-confidence, but also encourage them to take risks with the target language.

Keywords: speaking, digital video, assessment, perception, language teaching

1. Introduction

With the increasing importance attached to speaking as part of one's language competence within the Communicative Language Teaching paradigm, the teaching of speaking skills in second language learning has become a burgeoning area of research over the past two decades. Speaking is a vital, yet difficult, skill to be acquired in a language class as it poses a great number of challenges to second language learners for a few reasons (Luoma, 2004; Bozatlı, 2003; Feng, 2007). First, it encompasses a complex cognitive processing task that is difficult for L2 learners to accomplish (Bygate, 2006, 2009; Saint-Leger, 2009). As such, it requires learners to employ linguistic, non-linguistic, and contextual parameters such as body language, mimics, and gestures in an effective way to construct meaning by producing

utterances. Second, there are some psychological factors that come into play during L2 learners' oral performance such as anxiety and self-confidence (Aydın, 2001; Cheng, 2005; Wilson, 2006). As there is an inverse relationship between anxiety and self-confidence, it is of paramount importance for practitioners to employ speaking tasks that can reduce learners' anxiety levels and foster a sense of achievement, which, in turn, increases their self-confidence (Saint-Léger, 2009; Graham, 2004). In addition to the cognitive demand and other psychological factors, another challenge with speaking is that in the context where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), learners have a limited number of opportunities to use the language outside of the class, if not any at all. Thus, language educators need to find ways to extend the speaking practice out of class to expose their learners to the target language more, rather than merely rely on in-class activities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Although several studies have explored the utilization of digital video recordings in foreign language speaking classes as a way of increasing learners' exposure to the target language, the majority of these studies either only focused on learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes, or were conducted in an ESL context, where learners might have had many other opportunities to practice the target language. Besides, few attempts, if any at all, have been taken to research the relative contribution of digital video recordings to learners' oral performance, in particular fluency, in an EFL speaking class.

On the grounds of these reasons, the present study seeks to examine the effectiveness of digital video recordings on EFL learners' oral performance, in particular, on fluency. The study will offer insights into the implementation of digital video recordings in EFL speaking classes.

2. Background to the study

In order to increase the amount of extensive practice of speaking skills out of class, to foster self-reflection, and to enhance learners' oral language skills, a number of multimedia technologies have been recently employed in language classes (Lynch, 2001, 2007; Hsu, Wang & Comac, 2008; Christianson, Hoskins, & Watanabe, 2009). Out of these, digital audio and video recordings have received considerable attention from educators and researchers, in particular those interested in promoting learner self-reflection (Pop, Tomuletiu, & David, 2011; Mennim, 2003, 2012; Cooke, 2013). Hence, digital recordings have been used not only in teaching, but also the assessment of speaking skills as a component of oral speaking portfolios (Brooks, 1999; Cheng & Chau, 2009).

Though informative, the research on the inclusion of digital recordings in speaking classes has yielded inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness of digital recordings on the improvement of oral language proficiency (Danny Huang & Alan Hung, 2010; Akef & Nossratpour, 2010; Sun, 2009, 2012). To illustrate that, Danny Huang and Alan Hung (2010) conducted a study to explore the EFL learners' perceptions towards the use of e-portfolios as an alternative way of assessing their oral proficiency at a university in Taiwan. In the study, fifty-one EFL learners were asked to upload an audio file in which they conveyed their ideas and thoughts on the topic discussed in the class to their e-portfolios on a bi-weekly basis. Moreover, the learners were required to give feedback to their classmates' audios each week. The analysis of the data the obtained from e-portfolios, attitude questionnaires and interviews revealed that EFL learners generally favored the implementation of e-portfolios as they provide them with an opportunity to identify their weaknesses in speaking, to practice speaking out of class, and to reduce their speaking anxiety. However, the learners also reported that they had doubts about the effectiveness of the audio recordings in e-portfolios in cultivating their oral skills due to the absence of face-to-face interaction feature and the presence of rehearsal opportunities, which mask their true oral language proficiency. On the grounds of those findings, the researchers proposed the employment of audios as a supplementary oral assessment measure that would be used to keep track of the learners' learning progress to capture a more accurate picture of the learner's oral proficiency.

On the other hand, Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011) investigated the effect of self-evaluation through video portfolios on Spanish oral performance of nine undergraduate learners in an intermediate speaking class. The learners were asked to submit multiple drafts of digital video recordings on a given topic and to reflect on their individual speaking performances using a retrospective self-evaluation form. Based on the emerged common themes in the self-evaluation forms, a training intervention was administered to the learners. The findings drawn from the self-evaluations and the questionnaires indicated that the use of video portfolio could improve the learners' perceived speaking abilities and their motivation.

Cheng and Chau (2009) also explored the potentials of digital video for fostering self-reflection in an e-portfolio mediated learning environment. The results showed that learners found creating digital video for reflection relevant to their learning needs, particularly for cultivating their listening and speaking skills. As such, they participated in video-based reflection willingly over a 14-week semester though it did not contribute to their grades in the course.

Similarly, Sun (2009) conducted an exploratory study on the use of voice blogs as extensive speaking practice in two oral communication classes as a part of a large-scale study. Forty-six college learners were required to upload 30 voice blog entries and 10 voice responses to their classmates' blog entries by the end of the term. A survey of students' attitudes toward the use of voice blogs and retrospective interviews with students were used as data collection tools. The findings suggested that voice blogging enhanced student learning, self-representation, information exchange and social networking. In addition, the learners reported that they perceived an improvement in their speaking skills, in particular in fluency, rather than accuracy. The researcher suggested that this might be due to the authentic nature of blogging since it promotes purposeful language use, with form playing a secondary role (Skehan, 1996).

With the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of extensive speaking practice via voice blogs on EFL learners' speaking performance and learners' perceived gains in extensive speaking practice through voice blogs, in Sun's (2012) study, the participants' first three and last three voice blog entries were evaluated by two raters. In addition, learners' perceived gains in speaking skills were collected through questionnaires. Although no significant difference was found between students' first three and last three blog entries in terms of accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and complexity of language based on the scores assigned to the learners' performances by two raters, learners reported that they generally perceived gains in their overall speaking proficiency. As indicated in Sun's (2009) study, these results might result from the authentic nature of blogging, which may have led the learners to focus on content, rather than accuracy or language complexity. Furthermore, the learners' flagging interest in blogging and increasing demands of other coursework towards the end of the semester might have caused them to invest less time in blogging, which, in turn, affected the quality and quantity of the postings. Thus, one of the limitations of this study appears to be the lack of a speaking test which would be administered to the learners both prior to their experiences of voice blogging and at the end of the semester to measure the impact of voice blogging on their true oral proficiency since the comparison of the learners' first three and last three blog entries does not seem to give an accurate picture of the learners' oral proficiency.

Though several studies have been conducted on the utilization of digital video recording in foreign language speaking classes, the majority of these studies, albeit explanatory, have focused not on the actual improvement of oral proficiency as a result of the digital video recording, but the learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes. Furthermore, few attempts have been taken on researching

the impact of digital video recordings on learners' oral performance, in particular fluency, in an EFL speaking class. In light of these reasons, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of digital video recordings on EFL learners' oral performance, specifically fluency. By relying on in-depth analyses of the actual performance discourse and scores assigned to the learners' performances through analytic rating, this study will offer implications for the use of digital video recordings in EFL speaking classes.

3. The study

The following research questions guided the present inquiry:

1. To what extent does digital video recording affect Turkish adult EFL learners' fluency in oral performance?
2. What are the learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes as an extensive speaking practice?

3.1. Description of the context of the study

This study was carried out in Oral Communication class, which was a one-semester (14 week) elective course offered to the undergraduate learners with intermediate level of English proficiency at Hacettepe University. The class met three hours per week. The course was designed to enhance the learners' English speaking skills by providing them with ample opportunities to practice their speaking skills. In addition, it aimed to help the learners develop confidence in speaking in L2 in a variety of situations, both prepared and impromptu, for everyday and academic purposes. To that end, it included lectures on public speaking skills, video demonstrations of speech delivery, presentations, impromptu speeches on a vast array of topics, in-class discussions and collaborative tasks where learners are required to exchange information with their peers on a particular subject. Recording digital videos as an extensive speaking practice was a required assignment, accounting for %30 of the final grade. Other requirements were regular attendance and participation in the class activities, two speaking exams, the first accounting for the half of the grade in midterm, and the second accounting for the final exam, and a 7-minute oral presentation on one of the current interesting events accounting for the other half of the grade in midterm (Figure-1).

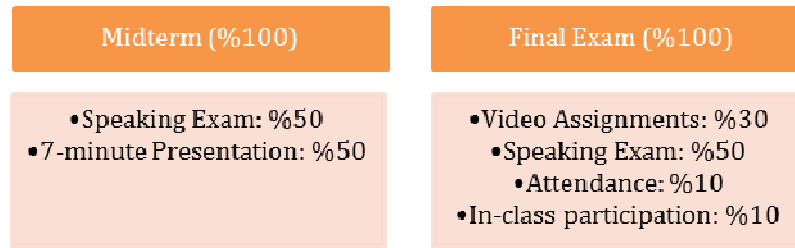


Figure 1. The distribution of the course requirements.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 10 Turkish-speaking adult L2 learners of English attending the Oral Communication course at Hacettepe University. 6 of them were male while 4 of them were female with an age range of 19 to 22. One student was a freshman, 5 were sophomores, and 4 were juniors. They had an intermediate level of proficiency in English. They were enrolled in the departments where the medium of instruction was partially (30%) English. The departments of the learners were Computer, Mining and Electronic Engineering, International Relations, and Business Administration. The numbers of the learners enrolled in the departments of Computer, Mining and Electronic Engineering, International Relations, and Business Administration was respectively 1, 3, 2, 3, and 1. They had similar backgrounds concerning the type of language instruction they had previously received. All of them had been learning English as a foreign language for approximately 8 years and none of them had studied abroad in an English-speaking country.

3.3. Instruments

In order to determine the impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, the speaking module of IELTS was modified as pre- and post-test (Appendix 1). Accordingly, the speaking exam consisted of three parts: an introduction, an individual long turn, and a two-way discussion. In the introduction part, the learners were asked to talk about general topics, while in the second part they were given written task cards as prompt and asked to talk about the task on the card. In the third part, they were required to discuss more abstract issues and concepts which were thematically linked to the topic of the talk in the second part.

To ensure the content validity of the test, a group of expert judges, namely the head of testing unit of the department and two coordinators, were asked to evaluate the speaking test. Thanks to the researcher's and experts' judgments, the content validity of the test was tried to be secured. With regard to the reliability of the test, as Underhill (1987) suggests, "the

classical measures of test reliability have little relevance for oral tests because they are designed for rigid, pre-planned tests consisting of a fixed number of individual questions” (p.106). As such, more useful information could be gathered by comparing each marker’s scores with her/his own scores or with the scores of other markers. Based on this, the inter-rater reliability of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters was examined in this study.

As for the rating scale used for the assessment of learners’ oral performances, the public version of IELTS speaking scale was adapted. As the main focus of the study was to investigate the impact of the digital video recordings on learners’ fluency, the criterion of (a) *Fluency and Coherence* in the IELTS scale was divided into two separate criteria as (a) *Fluency* and (b) *Content Development*. A concise definition of *Content Development* as a criterion was given as follows: “the degree to which the test-taker is conveying relevant and well-elaborated/developed ideas on given topics” (Sato, 2012:226). Besides, brief descriptors for each level were developed based on the criterion of *Task Fulfillment* in the IELTS writing scale to achieve high inter-rater reliability (Appendix 2).

Eight speaking tasks on personal experiences were designed by the teacher-researcher to elicit monologue type of discourse (i.e., narrative) from learners through digital video recordings on a par with their proficiency level and regular activities in class (Appendix 3). With the purpose of increasing the likelihood of classmates watching and interacting with each other (Bloch, 2007), the teacher-researcher chose to set up a private Facebook group as a platform to which the learners could upload their video recordings. The reason of choosing a private Facebook group as a video-hosting platform was that the learners were already familiar with Facebook and used it frequently in their daily lives. Besides, a significant advantage of Facebook as a video-hosting platform is that it is compatible with various types of videos, which means that all videos can be played on any computer with Internet connection.

In addition to the speaking exam and tasks, the adapted scale, and the private Facebook group, a focus group interview was conducted to investigate the learners’ perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes. Focus group interview was chosen as a method of data collection for it elicits rich qualitative data efficiently (Dörnyei, 2007). As the researcher’s main aim was to create a supportive atmosphere in which discussion was promoted by giving the participants a chance to explain their points of views, she asked more general questions such as “What do you think about the digital video recording as an extensive speaking practice?”, “Do you find it useful to identify

your strengths and weaknesses?”, and “How did it contribute to your speaking skills?”. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), focus group interviewing generally includes 7 to 10 participants, but the size of the group can change. In this study 7 learners participated in the focus group interview.

3.4. Procedure

Before and after the completion of eight video recording assignments, the speaking module of IELTS was administered to the learners as pre- and post-test to evaluate their oral performance in English and to provide useful feedback on the learning process. In the first and third parts of the exam, the learners were not given any planning time before they started conveying their ideas on the given topics, yet in the second part of the exam, where the learners were given written task cards as prompt, one-minute planning time was given to the learners before they started to talk about the topics given. The speaking exam was conducted individually and each learner was allocated 8 minutes. The conversations were recorded on a MacBook Pro for transcription and analysis.

In order to ensure valid and reliable scoring, a second rater with two years' experience in both teaching and assessing speaking skills was involved in the assessment procedure together with the teacher researcher. The second rater also worked as an instructor in the same school with the researcher and both raters had the formal training on the use of the IELTS speaking scale.

As for the video assignments, once a week, with certain exceptions, learners were asked to upload their videos speaking in English on a given topic for about three minutes. The exceptions were the first week, the mid-term, and the final exam weeks, as well as other weeks in which the learners had to deal with the other assignments in their coursework. Thus, for the practical purposes of the class, eight video recordings in the semester fully met the requirements. Although the learners were allowed to revise and redo their video recordings as many times as they desired before the deadline, they were instructed not to memorize or read from a script while recording their speeches. Furthermore, they were required to shoot their video in only one shot without taking any breaks. Upon the completion of the video recording, they uploaded their videos to the private Facebook group and one week later they received brief written feedback from the instructor with regard to their overall performance in the video. As such, the teacher was able keep track of the learners' learning progress throughout the research period.

One week after the completion of all video assignments, 7 learners were interviewed together by using focus group methods, through which the researcher aimed to explore the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recording in speaking classes.

The pre- and post-test scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale were statistically analyzed through SPSS 20.0. First, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between two sets of composite scores assigned to the learners by two raters to confirm inter-rater reliability. Next, to determine whether there was a significant difference between the learners' scores in pre- and post-tests in terms of their composite scores and scores obtained from the fluency criterion in the scale, a paired sample t-test was performed on the data. This analysis was aimed at finding out the relative impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, in particular fluency.

Apart from the statistical tests used in the study, an analysis of learners' discourse in pre- and post-tests was undertaken to determine whether measures of fluency in learners' output differ as a result of the video recording assignments. In order to obtain precise temporal measures, the learners' speech samples were transcribed through a software called Transcriber (<http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php>). By means of the software, each silent pause was detected and measured in milliseconds. In line with the guidelines recommended by Freed (1995), Freed (2000), Morley & Truscott (2006), and Iwashita (2010) for the measurement of fluency in oral performance, the temporal features of speech such as filled pauses (*ums* and *ers*), unfilled pauses, disfluencies, total pausing time (as a percentage of total speaking time), speech rate, and mean length of run were examined in this study (Figure-2).

The number of filled pauses was calculated by counting the pauses such as *uhm*, *er*, or *mm* that occurred in the speech. The number of unfilled pauses was calculated by counting the number of pauses of 1 second or more in speech (Mehnert, 1998). The number of disfluencies was calculated counting repetitions, restarts and repairs that occurred in speech (Freed, 2000). In order to enable comparisons, instances of filled pauses, unfilled pauses, and disfluencies were counted per 60 seconds of speech since actual speaking time of each learner differed. Total pausing time was calculated by adding up all the unfilled pauses. Speech rate was calculated by dividing the total number of syllables produced in a given speech sample by the amount of total time expressed in seconds (Kormos & Dénes, 2004).

Following Riggan's (1991) suggestion, unfilled pauses longer than three seconds were excluded in the calculation of speech rate for unfilled pauses shorter than three seconds are widely regarded as articulation pauses, not hesitation markers. Mean length of run, which

is a manifestation of how lengthy the language produced between two pause boundaries, was calculated as an average number of syllables produced in utterances between pauses of 1 second and above (Mehnert, 1998). To see if there was a significant difference between the learners' performance in pre- and post-tests in terms of the measures of fluency, a paired sample t-test was run on the data.

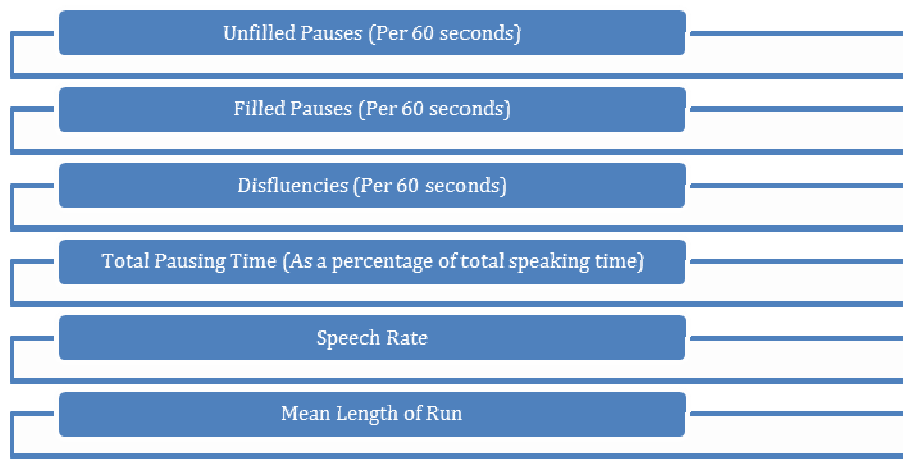


Figure 2. The measurements of fluency analyzed in this study.

Last but not least, data collected through the focus group interview pertaining to the learners' perceptions of the integration of digital video recording into speaking classes was categorized qualitatively after the researcher perused the transcriptions to get a sense of the data (Creswell, 2007). Descriptive coding was conducted to explore the patterns in the data (Saldana, 2011). Based on the emerging themes, the learners' perceptions on the utilization of digital video recording in a speaking class were presented.

3.5. Results

3.5.1. Inter-rater reliability

For the study utilizes a test of production as pre- and post-tests, in which raters' judgments affect the decision to be made about the performances of learners, the reliability of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using analytic scale was examined by calculating the correlation coefficient of the scores.

Table 1. The correlation coefficient of raters' ratings.

| | | First Rater | Second Rater |
|--|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| First Rater | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .937** |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 10 | 10 |
| Second Rater | Pearson Correlation | .937** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 10 | 10 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | |

As demonstrated in Table 1, the correlation coefficient obtained for two raters is .937, which indicates a quite high inter-rater reliability. In addition, it was found that the correlation coefficient for first and second rater was statistically significant with a *p*-value smaller than .05, which means that the test scores assigned to the learners by two raters are reliable.

3.5.2. Comparison of the learners' scores in pre- and post-tests

The focus of this paper is to empirically examine the effectiveness of digital video recordings on enhancing the EFL learners' oral performance, in particular fluency. Hence, this analysis was intended to find out whether digital video recordings contributed to the improvement of learners' oral skills, especially fluency, or not. Table-2 presents the descriptive statistics of the scores assigned to the learners (out of 9) by two raters in pre- and post-tests.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics of the scores assigned to the learners.

| | N | Pre-Test | | Post-Test | |
|---------------------|----|----------|------|-----------|------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Fluency | 10 | 4.72 | 1.15 | 5.30 | .97 |
| Content Elaboration | 10 | 5.10 | 1.10 | 6.10 | 1.17 |
| Composite Score | 10 | 4.99 | 1.21 | 5.52 | .91 |

To determine whether there was a significant difference between the means of the learners' both composite scores and scores obtained from the fluency, and content elaboration criteria in the scale in pre- and post-tests, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the learners' scores obtained from the fluency

criterion in the scale in pre- ($M=4.72$, $SD=1.15$) and post- ($M=5.30$, $SD=.97$) tests; $t(9)=-2.20$, $p=0.055$. Yet, it was found out there was a significant difference between the learners' scores obtained from the content elaboration criterion in the scale in pre- ($M=5.10$, $SD=1.10$) and post- ($M=6.10$, $SD=1.17$) tests; $t(9)=-3.13$, $p=0.012$. In addition, the results indicated a significant difference between the learners' composite scores in pre- ($M=4.99$, $SD=1.21$) and post- ($M=5.52$, $SD=.91$) tests; $t(9)=-2.88$, $p=0.018$. Taken together, these results show that the incorporation of the digital video recordings into EFL speaking classes improved the learners' overall oral communication skills, though it did not have any statistically significant impact on learners' fluency, a component of the oral proficiency.

3.5.3. The analysis of learners' performance discourse

With the purpose of determining whether determinants of fluency in participants' output differ between pre and post-tests the learners' actual performance discourse was further analyzed. For the measurement of fluency in learners' oral performance data, the temporal variables of speech such as filled pauses, unfilled pauses, disfluencies were counted per 60 seconds. Next, total pausing time (as a percentage of total speaking time), speech rate, and mean length of run were calculated. In order to examine if there was a significant difference between the learners' performance in pre- and post-tests with respect to the means of the determinants of fluency, a paired sample t-test was performed. Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test results of the aforementioned measurements of fluency in learners' oral performance in both pre- and post-tests.

Table 3. The descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test results of the measurements of fluency in learners' oral performance.

| | N | Pre-Test | | Post-Test | | t | df | p | 95% CI for Mean Difference | |
|--------------------|----|----------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|----|------|----------------------------|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | | | | |
| Filled Pauses | 10 | 10.83 | 5.17 | 11.46 | 5.87 | -.64 | 9 | .534 | -2.79 | 1.55 |
| Unfilled Pauses | 10 | 7.36 | 3.30 | 4.95 | 3.69 | 1.79 | 9 | .107 | -.63 | 5.45 |
| Disfluencies | 10 | 2.64 | 1.33 | 1.92 | 1.14 | 1.79 | 9 | .106 | -.18 | 1.63 |
| Total Speech Time | 10 | 213.53 | 48.18 | 254.30 | 63.29 | -2.19 | 9 | .056 | -82.85 | 1.32 |
| Total Pausing Time | 10 | 20.87 | 11.89 | 14.11 | 14.52 | 1.58 | 9 | .147 | -2.88 | 16.41 |
| Speech Rate | 10 | 2.14 | 0.61 | 2.27 | 0.55 | -1.90 | 9 | .089 | -.28 | .02 |
| Mean Length of Run | 10 | 23.40 | 20.02 | 43.99 | 52.54 | -1.72 | 9 | .119 | -47.63 | 6.46 |

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of the paired sample t-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the measurements of fluency in the learners' oral performance data in pre- and post-tests. These results suggest that the utilization of digital video technology in EFL speaking classes as an extensive speaking practice did have any significant impact on learners' fluency, providing a partially negative answer to the first research question.

3.5.4. Learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recording on the improvement of their oral skills

In order to find out the learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recordings on their speaking skills, which is the locus of the second research question, a focus group interview with seven learners was carried out. Upon coding the data descriptively, the emerged themes were "Contributions of the Digital Video Recordings to the Learners' Speaking Skills" and "Limitations of the Digital Video Recordings".

3.5.4.1. Contributions of the digital video recordings to the learners' speaking skills

The codes under this theme were "improving fluency", "elaborating ideas", "learning new vocabulary items", and "boosting self-confidence". First of all, the learners pointed out that the video assignments enhanced their fluency, granting them an opportunity to practice the language outside of the classroom. Besides, they stated that the digital video recordings helped them to realize the prevalent use of pause fillers, and hesitation markers in their own speeches and how those disfluency markers in their speeches irritated them as listeners. One of the participants expressed how being irritated by her own disfluency markers affected the way she spoke up:

...I was so irritated by those um, umh, and errr sounds in my speech that while I was shooting videos, I commanded my brain to not produce any kind of fillers in my speech. I remember, once I had to shoot the same video 10 times to live up to my own expectations. (Tilbe, Focus Group Interview)

Secondly, over half of the learners expressed the difficulty they had at the initial stages of the video recordings since they were unable to convey all of their ideas in a precise and brief way within the allotted amount of time. In addition, some of the learners stated that not until they watched their own videos over and over again did they realize that they could not develop topics satisfactorily in their speeches. They claimed that the video assignments assisted them in elaborating the content of their speeches with supporting ideas, and examples

in such a manner that their ideas would be clearly transmitted to the audience at the end of the video. One of the learners pointed out how he benefited from video assignments giving an example from one of his classes in the following way:

In my novel classes, we discuss about the plot, characters, and setting of a novel. At the beginning of the semester, I thought I was elaborating my ideas satisfactorily about the book; however, for some reason, I could not obtain a high grade in the class. Yet, upon watching my first video, I realized that I had a lot of repetitions in my speech, and that, in fact, I was talking about the same stuff without a full stop. Then, I started to have a few ideas on my mind prior to my talk and I think last week I was quite successful since I talked for about 3 minutes and got 9 out of 10. (Eralp, Focus Group Interview)

Thirdly, learning new vocabulary items was a perceived gain of the digital video recordings. Three of the learners stated that they sometimes got stuck in their speeches due to lack of some topic-related vocabulary items at their disposal, and they had to shoot the videos one more time after they looked up the unknown words. Furthermore, they pointed out that they could easily recall the words that they used during their video recordings after two or three weeks, which indicates that digital video recordings created a learning opportunity for them and helped them to access new vocabulary items easily.

Last but not least, learners stated that watching themselves speaking English and comparing their performance in the first and last video assignments helped them regain self-confidence and increased their motivation to speak English since they were offered a chance to observe the leap of improvement in their speeches, which, in turn, gave them a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, they pointed out that sharing their videos with their friends, though initially seemingly daunting, gave them an opportunity to be involved in a real task that required the use of English. Thus, they had a chance to watch others' performance and learn from one another. For instance, one of the learners expressed how she started to feel less embarrassed while speaking English in front of her peers thanks to the digital video recordings:

I used to feel so embarrassed about the way I spoke English and my mistakes, and thought that everybody is just better than me in speaking English. That's why in our first video assignment, I waited for everybody's post before I uploaded mine. However, when I watched my friends' videos on Facebook, I saw that everybody did some mistakes. So, I felt less embarrassed about my mistakes. (Amina, Focus Group Interview)

Besides, they stated that they were not as excited as they were in the first speaking exam since they already knew what they were capable of doing, and even if they had no idea about the topic, they could sustain the conversation with some examples.

3.5.4.2. Limitations of the digital video recordings

The codes under this theme were “No Impact on Accuracy”, and “Technical Problems”. To start with, the learners pointed out that the digital video recordings did not help them to improve their accuracy in actual conversation. Although they stated that they sometimes had to shoot a video more than three times to have an error-free sample, they did not feel that it contributed to their actual oral performance. One of the participants stated that he found it quite difficult to transfer what he had produced in the video to his real conversation with the other people in terms of grammatical accuracy:

Although I noticed that I misused the “if clauses” in my speech even at the initial stages of recording, I still have some difficulty in producing them correctly in my actual speech. I think we need more weeks to shoot more videos. Maybe that would help... (Can, Focus Group Interview)

As stated by the learner, some of the students explained that eight weeks were not enough to improve their oral accuracy, and having more weeks to shoot videos might be of help for they would have more opportunities to practice the patterns that pose challenge to them in their oral production.

Next, the learners made the point that the time they had to spend uploading their videos to Facebook was sometimes much more than they would expect due to the large size of the videos. Thus, they suggested that it would be practical to have an online learning environment where they can shoot their videos without having to upload them from their computers or mobile phones.

4. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine whether digital video recordings as an extensive speaking practice would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners’ oral skills, in particular fluency. The results of the statistical and discourse analyses suggest that the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes as an extensive practice improved the EFL learners’ overall oral proficiency and content elaboration at a significant level, however, it did not have any statistically significant impact on the improvement of learners’ fluency, which accords with previous studies (Sutudena & Ramazanzadeh, 2011; Baniabdelrahman, 2013), which reported that the utilization of digital video recordings considerably enhances the EFL learners’ speaking skills.

On the other hand, the findings do not confirm those of Akef and Nossratpour (2010) in that recording digital videos on a weekly basis does not lead to a significant improvement

in EFL learners' oral performance with respect to fluency. One probable explanation for the lack of significant improvement in learners' fluency might be that sharing their personal experiences through digital video recordings on Facebook acted as a spur for learners to express themselves freely and without feeling the pressure that they might have experienced in class. Thus, they were encouraged to take risks with the target language focusing on content at the expense of form, which resulted in significant improvement not in fluency, but in content elaboration. As Skehan (1996) as well as Willis and Willis (2001) argue, the tasks in which learners have a real purpose and audience to communicate with lead them to emphasize content over form since the focus is on the accomplishment of the task. Hence, the learners in this study might be motivated by the free expression of meaning, leaving form to play a secondary role (Sun, 2012).

As regards the learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recording on their oral communication skills, the findings revealed that, interestingly, the learners perceived an improvement in their fluency for they were provided with a chance to extend the speaking practice outside of the class and to identify the weaknesses in their speeches, which is consistent with the results obtained in Sun (2012), Danny Huang and Alan Hung (2010) and Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011). These authors argued that this result might stem from the fact that learners can alleviate their speech anxiety over time and become more confident in speaking a foreign language through voice blogs or digital video recordings, which, in turn, increases their perceived speaking skills.

Next, the findings indicated that the digital video recordings helped the learners to satisfactorily elaborate the content of their speeches, which is in tune with that of Kim (2014), who explored how ESL learners' oral proficiency changed through online recording tools and receiving feedback from their instructor outside of the classroom, in that the learners started to speak up more confidently and making longer sentences after they used recording tools. Put it differently, learners elaborated upon the content of their speeches by providing examples since they had a chance to express themselves freely through digital video recordings. Besides, having their peers as audience might have also contributed to the learners' content elaboration for their primary emphasis is on the expression of meaning, rather than on form. The findings also showed that the digital video recordings provided the learners with an opportunity to learn and use new vocabulary items in their speeches. A similar result was also reported by Kırkgöz (2011), who concluded that video recordings helped the learners to expand their theme-related vocabulary.

Another benefit that was noted by the learners regarding the use of the digital video recordings was that it helped them to build up comfort and confidence, and increased their motivation for speaking the target language. One possible explanation for this might be that the majority of learners viewed the digital video recording assignments as a positive language learning experience, rather than as a component of the assessment. The accumulation of those videos gave them a sense of achievement and strengthened a sense of ownership of their own learning, which may elevate their level of motivation (Ho, 2003). In a similar vein, Hsu et al. (2008) suggest that having an individual blog or a speaking portfolio gives the learners a great sense of achievement and facilitates their language learning.

Concerning the limitations of the digital video recordings as an extensive practice, the findings showed that some learners did not find the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes useful since it does not include any genuine interaction as is the case in face-to-face communication. This result corroborates previous studies (Hung, 2009; Danny Huang & Alan Hung, 2010) in that some learners tend to be cautious about the effectiveness of the digital video recordings on the improvement of their actual speaking performance due to the presence of rehearsal opportunities and the lack of genuine interaction. That is to say, learners seldom need to employ communication strategies such as paraphrasing and circumlocution in digital video recordings. Hence, as pointed out by Ho (2003), the activities that would provide the learners with a chance to practice communication strategies, which are not frequently used in digital video recordings, are to be emphasized in the classroom to enhance learners' oral communication skills.

5. Limitations of the present study

One self-evident methodological limitation of the current study is the absence of a control group, which would help us to gain a better understanding of how much the utilization of digital video recordings contributed to the oral proficiency gain as compared to what the classroom would have offered alone. Besides, due to constraints of time, the digital video recording assignments lasted for eight weeks, which may not be sufficient to improve learners' fluency. Thus, a longitudinal study may yield more informative and contributing results with respect to both short-term and long-term effects of digital video recordings as extensive speaking practice. Finally, having more participants, perhaps with different levels of proficiency, would provide more precise results.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated whether digital video recordings would enhance the EFL learners' oral performance in terms of fluency. It also examined the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. The results obtained from the analysis of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale indicated that the integration of digital video recordings into speaking classes contributed to the improvement of the learners' overall speaking proficiency; however, it did not lead to a significant improvement in learners' oral fluency skills. Yet, the analysis of the qualitative data showed that the utilization of digital video recordings may not only bolster the learners' self-confidence, but also encourage them to take risks with the target language. The results have implications for both the assessment of speaking skills and the design of speaking courses in EFL contexts.

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Appendix 1. A sample of modified version of Speaking Module of IELTS

Part 1:

Entertainment

- Do you prefer relaxing at home or going out in the evening? Why?
- When you go out for an evening, what do you like to do?
- How popular is this with other people in your country?

Part 2:

Describe one of your friends.

You should say:

-how you met

-how long you have known each other

-how you spend time together

And explain why you like this person.

Part 3:

Qualities of friends

- What do you think are the most important qualities for friends to have?
- Which are more important to people, their family or their friends? Why?
- What do you think causes friendship to break up?

Appendix 2. Adapted version of the IELTS speaking scale

| Band | Fluency | Content Development/ Elaboration | Lexical resource | Grammatical range and accuracy | Pronunciation |
|-------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents fully extended and well supported ideas using clear and appropriate statements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand |
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents a sufficiently developed and extended response to the question with relevant and supported ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents and extends relevant main ideas although some ideas or points may not be fully developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| | markers with some flexibility | | | | |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presents relevant main ideas although conclusions may become unclear or repetitive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presents some main ideas but these are not sufficiently developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6 |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presents a few ideas, which are largely repetitive and undeveloped | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener |

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--|
| | and some breakdowns in coherence | | | | |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may attempt to present a few ideas, but there is no content development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4 |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ answer is completely unrelated to the task | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only produces isolated words or memorised utterances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot produce basic sentence forms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speech is often unintelligible |
| | | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no communication possible • no rateable language | | |
| | | 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not attend | | |

Appendix 3. Sample video assignment

VIDEO ASSIGNMENT-5

1. You are expected to record a video of yourself narrating **the last book/movie you have read/watched** in English.
2. The length of your video **should not** exceed 3 minutes.
3. You should shoot your video in only one shot without taking any breaks.
4. Any kind of memorization or reading from a script will be subjected to the penalty of cheating which is a grade of zero on the entire assignment.
5. You are required to submit your videos on the Facebook Page of the class. You do not have to choose Public for your post. You may adjust the privacy settings so that only I can see your post.
6. The Deadline for this assignment is **May 11, Monday** (by midnight).

GOOD LUCK! ☺