Investigating the effect of audio visual materials as warm-up activity in Aviation English courses on students’ motivation and participation at high school level

Şule Y. E. Seçer, Mehmet Şahin*, Bülent Alcı

Faculty of Education, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the effects of video use as an audio visual material as warm-up activity on students’ motivation and participation in Aviation English courses at high school level in the viewpoint of English instructors. This paper is based on a qualitative study design in which focus group interview is used as the data collection procedure. The participants of the focus group interview are four instructors teaching Aviation English, teaching 10th graders in a state high school. It is a fact that the use of video like the other audio visual aids is a proper ice breaker and motivation tool for teenagers in today’s modern world of technology. According to the analysis of the data collected by focus group interview, the findings, revealing the positive effect of video use on students’ motivation and participation, are categorized and discussed within the scope of the study.

Keywords: video as audio-visual material, warm-up activity, students’ attention, motivation

1. Introduction

1.1. Audio-visuals in language teaching

It is a commonly accepted opinion among high school teachers that one of the challenges teachers generally face is gaining the attention of the students who usually have a very tight schedule of schooling and try to handle a very
dense curriculum in each of their lessons. Attracting the attention of high school students whose minds are commonly preoccupied with other subject matters more interesting for the teenagers between the ages 15-18 is a big challenge for foreign language teachers, as well. However, audio visual materials when properly selected and precisely used by language teachers can be a very useful aid in breaking the ices in language classroom by captivating students’ attention to the subject matter.

It is common knowledge that residence in foreign country, where visitors associate the words with realia he sees, the most effective way to learn the language…Since we cannot take our classes into the foreign country the next best thing to do would be to bring the atmosphere of the country in the room as accurately as possible… In foreign language teaching, audio visual education has played the role of accessory designed to present the culture of the foreign country, and this accessory could become the integral part in teaching the language itself. (Mueller, 1955, p.237).

In parallel to what Mueller argued, Borglum (1952) stated the idea that ‘a number of slides will eliminate the walls and transport the learner into that country on the wings of his imagination’ (p.315).

According to the definition of audio visual materials, made by The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, audio visuals are any materials that pertain to sight and/or sound (IFLA, 2007). Use of audio-visuals at schools has become an integral part of education, and even of services offered by school libraries (Swank, 2011). In parallel, for Ameh (2012), the immense role of audio-visuals in assisting students to learn at their own pace and consequently make learning process meaningful stimulating and stress-free is in no doubt (p. 222).

In a Reading lesson, during the short story reading activity, it is argued that students comprehend the story better when they have the chance to receive their ‘preferred mode of annotation’. The results of this study show that, by multimedia learning, learners actively ‘elicit relevant verbal and visual information’, and they also ‘organize the information into coherent mental representations, and integrate these newly constructed visual and verbal representations with one another.’ (Plass, ChunMayer, Leutner, 1998, pp. 25-36).

1.2. Gaining attention and warming-up

Robert Gagne, an educational psychologist, who pioneers the science of instruction, identifies the mental conditions that are necessary for effective learning and the nine steps of instruction that draw a clear line to follow in designing instruction (1985). In his ‘Theory of Instruction’, Gagne (1985) presents nine ‘Events of Instruction’ providing an instructional framework for an effective learning process and organizes appropriate instructional events as follows:

Fig. 2. Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction. (http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/learning/id/nine_step_id.html)
The first step in Gagne’s nine steps of learning is capturing or arousing learners’ ‘attention’ when they first arrive at class in order to make them involved in the learning process and in order for any learning to take place, by an abrupt stimulus change, such as gesturing or speaking loudly, by starting the lesson with a thought-provoking question or interesting fact, by providing an interesting visual or multimedia such as a short and attractive segment of videos (1998). Wick, Pollock, Jefferson, and Flanagan (2006) applying Gagne’s instructional theory of nine steps in workplace describe how the nine steps of learning can be applied in workplace to extend workers’ interest and increase performance when the learners apply their new skills to the job. They also emphasize the importance of the first step of attention by claiming that workers often perform what their manager’s stress, and tend to ignore what their managers ignore.

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Bandura, 1997)

The social learning theory, introduced by Albert Bandura, proposed that learning can also occur simply by observing the actions of others while the behavioral theories of learning suggest that all learning is the result of associations formed by conditioning, reinforcement, and punishment. The first step, involved in the observational learning and modeling process is ‘attention’ according to which the learner needs to pay attention in order to learn. Anything that distracts attention is going to have a negative effect on observational learning. If the model is interesting or there is a novel aspect to the situation, it is far more likely to dedicate full attention to learning (1997).

Warming up and gaining learners’ attention or paying attention on the subject matter is the initial step of teaching and learning process in both viewpoints. Warming up activities are essential components that foster motivation. Allwright (1984) claims that warm up activities are designed to attract students’ attention, to help them put aside distracting thoughts, and to get them ready to focus individually and as groups on whatever activities that follow. In addition, Kay (1995) defines ‘warm up’ as the first stage of a lesson plan: “It is an effective way to help the students begin to think in English and to review previously introduced material. Different types of warm-ups help provide variety and interest in the lesson” (p. vi). Furthermore, Dornyei (2001) claims that the most important thing in generating learners’ interest in class is widening their appetite and arousing their curiosity and attention so that they will get more involved with the subject matter. According to Cárdenas (2001), “students learn best when they can address knowledge in ways that they trust. They will learn best through doing rather than reflecting” (p. 18). Velandia (2008) demonstrates the common aspects to be considered in the preparation of a warm-up activity as in the diagram given below:

![Fig. 3. Aspects to be considered in a warm up activity](image)
1.3. Learners’ motivation

In broad terms, Dornyei and Skehan (2003) defines motivation as something ‘responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it’ (p.614).Ormrod (2006) also defines motivation as ‘something that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior; it gets students moving, points them in a particular direction, and keeps them going’ (p.365). Ahmad (2008) gives a definition of ‘motivation to learn’ in general sense as ‘the tendency to find school related activities meaningful and worthwhile and therefore to try to get the maximum benefit from them’ (p. 336).

In the last decade, the importance of motivation in second language learning has attracted more attention from teachers and researchers not only due to its importance for understanding language learning but also its potential to maximize success in language learning. The serious study of motivation in language learning began with Lambert and Gardner’s work on the social psychology of language learning. Gardner (1985) defined motivation primarily in terms of ‘motivational intensity’ such as ‘the effort learners were prepared to make to learn a language and their persistence in learning’. During the 1990s, Gardner’s socio-psychological view of motivation as ‘causative’ that leads to second language achievement was challenged as it fails to acknowledge ‘resultative dimension of motivation’ which explains that motivation in some learners results from success in learning. (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

Noels et al. (2000) provide a detailed model for two basic types of motivation which are ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’. They define extrinsically motivated behaviors as ‘those actions carried out to achieve some instrumental end’ and intrinsic motivation as ‘motivation to engage in an activity because it is enjoyable and satisfying to do so’ (p. 61). Ellis (2004) also points out that more teachers have increasingly recognized the importance of both ‘extrinsic motivation’ that students bring to the language classroom and ‘intrinsic motivation’ that is generated inside the classroom through the choice of instructional activities (p.537). Noels et al. (2000) also distinguish three types of intrinsic motivation;

- knowledge: the motivation derived from exploring new ideas and knowledge,
- accomplishment: the pleasant sensations aroused by trying to achieve a task or goal,
- stimulation: the fun and excitement generated by actually performing a task (p.63).

Dornyei (2001) also proposes four groups of motivational strategies for the language classroom;

- strategies for developing the basic motivational conditions: creating a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom,
- strategies for generating initial motivation: increasing the students’ expectancy of success in particular tasks and in learning in general”,
- strategies for maintaining and protecting motivation: making learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learners by enlisting them as active task participants”,
- strategies for encouraging positive self-evaluation: offering rewards of a motivational nature.

In brief, he emphasizes that ‘there is no doubt that student motivation can be consciously increased by using creative techniques’ (p.144).

When it comes to the use of video in language classroom as a medium, there has been a plenty of research, conducted on the impact of video use on language teaching. MacWilliam’s study (1986), identifying the research findings and observations on the comprehensibility of video when used for language input and on the relationship between aural and visual channels, puts forward the suitability and effectiveness of video use in language teaching. In addition, Wagner (2010) having compared two groups of students’ performances on the same listening test after making one group have audio-only texts while providing the others with video texts concludes that visual components of spoken texts are useful for the listeners in comprehending aural information.
2. Research material and method

2.1. The aim of the study

This study aims to analyze the effects of video use as audio-visual material in warm-up stage, on students’ motivation and participation in Aviation English course at high school level in the viewpoint of instructors of Aviation English. This paper is based on a qualitative study in which focus group interview is used as the data collection procedure. The participants of focus group interview are four instructors of Aviation English, teaching 10th graders in a state high school. The 10th grade level is chosen because the researcher herself is a teacher of 10th graders; therefore, have chance to work within the same group, and have an opinion about video use in English course. As the state high school is a technical school specialized on the field, and Aviation English is an inseparable part of the curriculum, the scope of the study is well chosen. Focus group interview is the proper and direct technique to collect and analyze the related data in the viewpoint of the instructors who are the experts of the subject.

2.2. Limitations of the study

The state school where this study is carried out is a special technical school having private rules and regulations about data privacy. That’s why the name of the school and of the instructors are not stated openly but coded as T1, T2, T3 and T4. This can be considered as a limitation of the study. Secondly, the research covers only on 10th grade students because the co-author is an instructor of 10th graders and can easily observe her own students within her own teaching experience and reflect her own views. Similarly, she is always in touch with them and can carry out the study easily with the colleagues teaching the same grade.

2.3. About Aviation English course and the course book

Aviation English course is one of the 10th grade courses given in two terms. It is designed as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for 10th graders. Aviation English course is a one-hour lesson of 40 minutes per week. The course book used in the course, ‘English in the Air’, is compiled by one of the instructors who is one of the participants of the focus group interview, coded as T1, as well. According to the foreword of the book, as English is an important instrument for aviators throughout their whole professional life, the book ‘English in the Air’ provides an opportunity to these occupational high school students to improve their language skills by blending aviation and English in a well-structured way. It consists of eight units, each of which includes three chapters focused on vocabulary, listening, reading, and writing skill practices. Each unit of the book is planned to be covered in two weeks, in two lessons according to the written program in curriculum. Having foreseen the of the use of audio-visuals in Aviation course, the writer of the course book ‘English in the Air’ prepared a DVD that includes video clips, taken from movies, short podcasts related to aviation and more specifically to the subject matter of each unit, short authentic videos of real flight experiences of Turkish or foreign pilots, or videos of flight simulations, shot on air or some flight bases. In each of the classrooms, that Aviation course is carried out; there is a computer, with a driver to read DVDs and internet connection.

2.4. Data collection procedure

This study is based on a qualitative research technique: focus group interview. Before the data is collected via focus group interview, one researcher with her four colleagues teaching 10th grade students used short video clips related to the subject matter of English classes as warm up activities in the beginning of every unit through out the second term in 2004-2005 Academic Year. Therefore, they could construct their personal opinions on the effect of use of video over students’ motivation and participation in Aviation English course. The 10th grade level is chosen for the scope of analysis because the mentioned researcher herself is a teacher of 10th graders; therefore, there is a chance to work within the same group, and construct opinions about video use in English course through her
personal teaching experience. The researcher applied focus group interview on four instructors of Aviation English. The reason why instructors of 10th graders’ are chosen as participants for the interview is that one of the researchers teaches 10th graders and has chance to work with and to have easy and constant contact with them. The properties of the participants are given in Table 1, below:

### Table 1. The participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Graduate Degree</th>
<th>Experience in ELT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>M (Male)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>BA in ELT</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>MA in ELT</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>MA in ELT</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>BA in ELT</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the 4 instructors teaching 10th graders were willing to participate in the interview. The participants are instructors of Aviation English course, can be considered the experts in teaching Aviation English. All of the participants are male. The first participant, coded as T1 is 33 years old. He has only a bachelor degree in ELT but he is the most experienced teacher of all as he is in his tenth year in ELT. In addition, T1 is the course book writer. He also prepared a DVD, including additional video materials related to the subject matter of each module in course book. Therefore, he knows the content of the course book, included the additional video materials, the best of all. The second participant, coded as T2 is 28 years old. He has a five-year-experience but has his MA in ELT. The third one, coded as T3, is 27 years old. He is in his fifth year in profession but has his MA in ELT, too. Two of these instructors, T2 and T3 defined themselves “inexperienced” in teaching Aviation English as it is their first time to give Aviation English course. The last instructor, T4 is thirty years old. He has no MA in ELT but has a seven-year experience in profession. He also indicated that he had been giving Aviation English course for years, so feels himself more experienced, independent in Aviation English lessons. The researcher was the facilitator of the four participant focus group discussion.

2.5. Data analysis

The focus group interview recorded on tape was carefully listened and transcribed by the researchers. The names of the participants on the tape recording were omitted and coded as T1, T2, T3, T4 in the transcript. Then, the researchers scanned the transcript to locate the reoccurrences of the key words and concepts. These key concepts were grouped and interpreted in some main categories from which the following findings were generated and the central themes of discussion were derived.

3. Findings and discussion

With the analysis of the data collected through the focus group interview, the findings are categorized under two contrasting main groups as a) the challenges, encountered in the use of video that arise from curriculum design, technical conditions, instructors and students and b) the positive effect of video use on students’ motivation and participation, observed by the instructors at classes in contrast to these challenges. Since the study focusing on both the challenges and the effects of video use is too comprehensive and long to be designed as an article, the analysis of the first group of findings, ‘the challenges of the use of video’ is omitted from the scope of the present study. The challenges in the use of video will be analyzed and discussed in a further study, merely focused on “the challenges, encountered in the use of video in Aviation English lesson at high school level”.

A part from the challenges, the data from the interview also reveals that there is a positive effect of video use on students’ motivation and participation, observed by the instructors at Aviation English classes. All the participants
point out that the use of video as warm-up activity turn the traditional English lesson, centered on teachers’ introduction and explanation into an interactive learning event, centered on students’ activity and participation. They all declare that any kind of audio-visual material can generally get students’ attention, and increase class participation in a very short period of time. A video material occasionally fails to attract attention which, teachers claim, is generally due to individual differences among students’ interests, language competence, and learning styles. According to all participants’ common view, the positive effect of the use of video on students’ motivation and participation can be categorized and discussed in the following subtitles:

3.1. Arousing students’ interest in learning aviation English

The video materials taken from movies, flight simulations, or real flight experiences increased students motivation to learn aviation English since they provide the students with an interesting and motivating learning atmosphere. The teachers observe that while watching an authentic flight video, students’ enthusiasm to express themselves in English as a real pilot is evoked by the authentic aviation English that they are exposed to.

T1 gives an example of a warm-up activity: ‘In Unit 5, ’Phraseology’, I utilize a four-minute video, taken from the cockpit of a real flight. I am very glad to observe how this authentic flight conversation of American jet pilots excites my students and motivate them in learning the objective vocabulary of radio phraseology’. T3 gives another example of the use of video as warm-up activity: ‘As an introduction to the first Unit, ‘Welcome to Aviation’, I use video clip taken from the first flight experience of Wright Brothers. I cannot forget my students willingness to learn the History of Aviation after watching’. T4 also contributes to the interview and says ‘As an introduction to Unit 2, ‘The Parts of a Plane’, the students watch a short video taken from a pilot training course about the basic parts of an aircraft. I remember all the students enthusiastically raise their hands to participate in the vocabulary practice afterwards’.

3.2. Orienting students to aviation and flight

In this occupational high school, taking the pilot training course and becoming a successful and charismatic jet pilot is the common dream of every student. So any chance given to them to watch any possible video about aviation triggers their strong desire to watch more, to dream of becoming a pilot one day, and to improve their occupational English to fulfill this dream.

Watching authentic or simulated flight videos and participating in post-watching activities, the students can not only learn and practice aviation English, but they can also learn about the daily routine or living style of pilots on flight bases, and aviation culture, as well. T1 states, ‘For Example, before teaching Unit 6, ‘The Aerobatics’, I show two short video clips about Turkish Stars Aerobatic Team. One is about their daily life on base and the second is an aerobatic show of them on air. The videos drive the students crazy. I hear them still talking about it at the break time’.

After watching the audio-visual materials, most of the students are observed to be very excited, thrilled, and eager to participate in further video-related activities such as giving answer to comprehension questions or use their English and express their opinions about the video. T4 utters, ‘To warm up my students for Unit 6, ‘Unexpected Incidents’, I play a video clip from the movie ‘The Flight’. I watch my students getting thrilled by the scene, Danzel Washington turns the airplane upside down to crash to the ground slower and save the passengers’ lives’. He reports that after watching, every single student in class is very excited and motivated to give answer to some questions such as:

- ‘What would you do if you were in the place of the pilot?’
- ‘Do you agree what pilot does?’
- ‘Do you think, it is bravery or decisiveness?’
- ‘Does the pilot put his passengers’ lives at risk and exploit his duty?’
- ‘What do you think about taking risks in emergency situations?’
- ‘What are some precautions, should be taken to avoid incidents?’. 
Reminding the video ‘Wright Brothers’ which is the selected video of Unit 1, ‘Welcome to Aviation’ on DVD, T2 says that instead of it, he plays a video clip, from the legendary movie ‘Top Gun’ on internet. He claims that it is a more motivating welcome for the students to Aviation English course. He also states, ‘Very much excited by the flight scene, all my students wish to be in the cool pilot jacket of Tom Cruise, one day’.

The final example is given by T1. He says besides ‘Wright Brothers’ he also selects and puts the video, ‘Graduation Ceremony of American Air College’ on DVD as the warm up activity for Unit 1. He states ‘The students are so much influenced by the excitement of the graduation ceremony that they say to me, they cannot wait for their own ceremony for another two years’.

According to the data, collected from the interview, it can be said that all the participants believe utilizing audio-visual materials as information and communication technology is very useful and motivating way of teaching and learning Aviation English similar to the views of Noels et al. (2000), and Dornyei (2001).

4. Conclusion and recommendations

With the analysis of the data collected through the focus group interview, it can be clearly concluded that there is an obvious positive effect of the use of audio-visuals on students’ motivation and class participation, observed by the instructors of Aviation English.

The data, collected from the interview shows that the teachers can cope with the additional workload in utilizing audio-visual materials in the teaching Aviation English. It can be also outlined that all the participants reflect their positive perceptions on the use of audio-visual materials in Aviation English course. In other words, the findings of the present study reveal that the use of video as an information and communication technology is very beneficial and motivating in teaching and learning Aviation English in parallel to the views of MacWilliam (1986), Noels et al. (2000), Dornyei (2001), and Wagner (2010) that are stated in the introduction part of the study.

The following recommendations below can be given to maximize the benefits of the utilizing audio-visual materials in teaching Aviation English and to reinforce the positive effect of video use on students’ motivation and participation:

- The audio-visual materials, selected and prepared on DVD should be revised by a group of Aviation English course instructors. It can reduce the workload of overloaded instructors as there will be no need to search, select, and download additional videos.

- The pre-, while-, and post-video activities should be prepared beforehand by a group of volunteer course instructors and added to the content of the course book, ‘English in the Air’. It requires a revision and re-print of the book within all units and chapters but it will also reduce the workload of instructors and help students to learn better all throughout the term.

We are living in 21st century, which is the era of information, communication, and technological advancement. With the constantly changing needs and improving technology of modern world, the recent trend in teaching English has become the use of modern technological tools. Along with this trend, the use of audio-visuals as information and communication technology cannot be underestimated in language teaching and learning process. Suffice it to say, like all the information and communication technologies, the use of video has revolutionized language instruction and immensely contributed to language teaching and learning.

References