VIDEO-MAKING ASSIGNMENT IN ESP

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Abstract. *The use of videos in foreign language teaching is a common activity which supports motivation, verbal and non-verbal communication, and an access to the target-language culture. Thanks to digital video technology, videos can be edited and adapted for students, depending on their age and/or language level. Video can also be employed to record student projects in or out of the classroom, and students can also be encouraged to use technology and create their own video. This paper describes an assignment in which 3rd year students of the Faculty of Information Technology, University "Mediterranean" Podgorica, create their own videos in pairs. The students are encouraged to make videos of their own choice (role-play, documentary, animation, tutorial), and achieve the final goal of this approach, which is to demonstrate both their communication and vocational skills, but also to improve their knowledge of English for Information Technology. The secondary aim of this paper is to explain the conducive effects of pair work which are supported by collaboration and cooperation.*

Key words: *video, pair work, communication skills, English for Specific Purposes, collaboration, cooperation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's students, known as digital generation, do not take information technology as an innovation which has to be explored further, but use it regularly in their everyday life. Nicoletti and Merriman (in Roberts, 2010, 98-99) offer an explanation that the digital generation does not think of the technology itself but of the kind of activities it enables. Such a perception impacts the whole education process. Roberts points out the reasons for that: the digital generation grows up with digital technologies, they are computer literate and highly connected; they are multi-taskers and are reluctant to use traditional learning methods; they are prepared for future jobs that are different from those in the past; teachers are still not fully prepared or adequately equipped to meet the needs of these students (2010, 107).

Teachers, business leaders, and education experts in the USA established the Framework for 21st Century Learning[1], where they defined the skills which students need in order to be successful in their future career and life. The Framework includes the skills in these areas: Life and Career, Learning and Innovation, which comprise critical thinking, creativity,

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[1] http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework, retrieved on 30 May, 2017

communication and collaboration (four Cs skills), and, Information, Media and Technology. The 21st century students believe that, thanks to the availability of computers and the digital skills they possess, they can successfully acquire all necessary skills and knowledge.

However, even though the students have computer skills, that is not the only prerequisite they need for successful learning, and particularly foreign language learning. As Bonk states, every individual controls their educational experience (2009, xiv), that is, they are responsible for their learning. Here, the will is of crucial importance, because the Internet and the materials that it provides cannot make students independent. Moreover, as Bruce and Hogan (in Chapelle, 2005, 745) point out, "We cannot simply choose our tools (i.e., to write longhand, use a typewriter, a word processor, or e-mail) in order to be literate participants. Instead, the technology chooses us; it marks us as full, marginal, or nonparticipating…"

Modern information and communication technologies are developing and advancing at a high speed, enabling the development of the software and applications that will enhance education. These software and applications should encourage students to take a more active engagement in learning, as well as to introduce a change in the education process by bringing the outer world into school. On the other hand, foreign language learners and ESP learners have to be ready for the outer world and their prospective profession. In gaining that, they have to develop the four language skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening. In this paper, we will present an assignment which may be useful for improving speaking and listening.

1.1. Speaking and listening

Although speaking is the first and most important means used in teaching and learning, this is the skill that seems to be least practiced in the classroom, that is, there is no specific methodology for developing speaking (Bygate 2009, 404). There are numerous reasons why it is difficult to speak a foreign language, and Lazaraton (2001, 103) states the following: it is necessary to learn the reduced forms and elisions, as well as slang and idioms, or otherwise learners would sound too formal or bookish; the learner needs to learn the accent, rhythm and intonation of language, which is often very difficult; interaction with other speakers is considered the most difficult aspect of spoken English, as it involves different aspects of meaning. In ESP context, however, language competence is not always crucial for successful communication. A non-native expert certainly does not master grammar and vocabulary as a native speaker, but may be more "familiar with a particular speech genre or communicative goals of a speech event" (Feak 2013, 44).

Speaking is closely related to listening, which is the most used skill in everyday life: it is used twice as much as speaking, four times more than reading, and five times more than writing (Morley, Aural Comprehension Instructions: Principles and Practices 2005, 70). Morley outlines four models of teaching listening which support different language learning theories and pedagogies: 1. Listening and repeating, 2. Listening and answering comprehension questions, 3. Task listening, and 4. Interactive listening. The model of interactive listening comprehends development of critical listening, critical thinking, and effective speaking abilities, that is the development of communicative skills within linguistic, discourse, socio-linguistic and strategic competences (2005, 71-72).

Technology information is an invaluable tool for practicing and improving all language (and all other related) skills as well as for learning a foreign language, including the language for specific purposes.

2. TECHNOLOGIES FOR ESP

Arnó-Macià (2014, 5) discusses that developments in information technology have had a significant impact on the development of Languages for Specific Purpose (LSP) in two ways: they facilitate access to specialized discourse and communication, and they have evolved as a language learning tool. Almost the same description is given by Bloch (2013, 385) who states that technologies in ESP have a dual role: they serve as a tool which helps in traditional forms of language learning and as a space for the creation of new forms of communication. Which technology will be used, and in which way, depends on the purpose, i.e. the needs of students. Almost all traditional learner needs can be met by some of the modern technologies.

The Internet, as one of the most widely used technologies, represents an inexhaustible source of free written, oral and audio/video materials, such as newspapers, magazines, scientific journals, news, broadcasts, lectures, online courses, etc. (Bloch 2013, 389). However, a large amount of available materials can also be a problem, because students need to know how to estimate which material is most useful to be used, in which way and for what purposes.

Butler-Pascoe (in Kern, 2013, 93-94) lists 14 benefits of using technology in ESP:

1. Provides interaction and communicative activities representative of specific professional or academic environments.
2. Fosters understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the language as practiced in various fields and professions.
3. Provides comprehensible field-specific input and facilitates student production.
4. Provides sheltering strategies for language development and content-specific understanding (modelling, bridging to students' background experiences, contextualizing, metacognitive activities, etc.).
5. Uses task-based and inquiry-based strategies reflective of tasks in discipline specific settings and situations.
6. Uses authentic materials from specific disciplines and occupations.
7. Supplies authentic audiences, including outside experts in specific fields.
8. Supports cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills required in the disciplines.
9. Uses collaborative learning.
10. Facilitates focused practice for the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills across the curriculum and disciplines.
11. Is student-centered and addresses specific needs of students.
12. Uses multiple modalities to support different learning styles.
13. Meets affective needs of students: motivation, self-esteem, and autonomy.
14. Provides appropriate feedback and assessment of content knowledge and English skills.

Another advantage of technologies for teachers is networking via the internet where they mutually share their experiences and learn from each other. In addition, technologies offer tools that simulate real-world business situations, whereby students have the opportunity to practice and acquire the necessary professional skills (Kern 2013, 112).

Thanks to the relationship between Information Technology and LSP, these skills can be acquired, and other needs of students can be met (and one of ESP's core strengths is willingness to respond to the needs of students (Belcher in Bloch, 2013, 399)). Arnó-Macià (2014, 6-7) identifies the following areas of interest related to the relationship: the

analysis of specialized discourse, online communication, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), online learning, and learner autonomy.

Still, learner autonomy is one of the key features of technology enhanced language learning.

3. TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

Leaner autonomy is also important for ESP, because students try to meet their needs and pursue their interests in their vocation/profession, and in the English language.

Edge and Warton define learner autonomy as their ability to take responsibility for their own learning. The authors believe that it originates from their wish to be independent and from the standpoint that there is always a possibility of choice (1998, 295, 302). These two authors emphasize that learner autonomy is a goal, and much more a continuous process that implies both individual and joint work. On the other hand, Holec (in Luzon Marco & Gonzalez Pueyi, 2006, 179) explains that autonomy is the ability to take responsibility for decisions in learning: what, when, where, how and how long to learn, which means the learner establishes learning goals, selects materials and techniques to learn, chooses adequate learning startegies and evaluates learning outcomes. Littlewood describes "an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions" (1996, 428). He considers that capacity comprises ability and willingness, where the ability depends on knowledge and skills, and the willingness on motivation and confidence. A student should possess all these components in order to be independent in learning, and in practice, they are closely related – the broader knowledge and better skills, the greater confidence, or self-confidence, and the greater self-confidence, the greater will to use their knowledge and skills, etc. However, as Malcolm states, motivation by itself, without a possibility for language to be used and practiced, is not efficient for learning outcomes (2011, 199). In addition, learning can be boring and unmotivating if there are not clearly set targets or if the purpose of learning is not emphasized. Malcolm further discusses that university students can be motivated by academic success and the idea of career goals, but also demotivated by limited access to language learning, inadequate teaching materials and the lack of formal support for language learning. Also, students cannot do everything by themselves and they need the teacher to guide them, give them a feedback and support (Luzón and González 2006, 184). This means that the ESP teacher has a key role in helping their students to overcome the problems they may encounter.

Many researchers (Reinders / Hubbard 2013, Erben, Ban / Castañeda 2009, Luzón and González 2006, Motteram 2013, Kern 2013) point out that technology enhanced language learning implies learner autonomy. However, they indicate that technologies themselves do not ensure autonomy. Learner autonomy and student-centered learning are essential to ESP learning, and the studies show that contemporary technologies have a positive impact on student autonomy, because they stimulate and facilitate the choice of materials, time and learning. In that way, students become researchers, initiate communication and participate in it, create textual, audio, video, graphic and similar material as part of a task or project, but, at the same time, help their teacher to create a course. With all these activities, the student takes a great deal of responsibility for learning, and thus also for the outcomes of that learning.

4. THE VIDEO-MAKING ASSIGNMENT

Reinders and Hubbard present the affordances of computer-assisted language learning which they find relevant for the development of learner autonomy, among which we highlight authenticity, interaction, situated learning, multimedia, new types of activities and empowerment. These six advantages particularly support the video-making assignment which we will present here: students use real-world materials related to their interests, they communicate with each other by using technology, they discover language on their own outside the classroom, the use of multimedia fosters the way to target language input, but also enables students to find authentic materials, and students take control of their learning and develop critical thinking (Reinders / Hubbard 2013, 362-365).

Karasic and Vedentham (2015, 113) agree that "perceptions of and actual use of technology in the classroom allow educators to align video assignments with learning outcomes and cognitive goals, such as innovation and critical thinking." However, it is not only the video itself, but the process of its creation that enhances language learning: collaborative dynamics, negotiation and communicative interactions are raised during the process (Tiraboschi and Iovino 2009, 136). The result of these activities is improvement of target language speaking, but also of listening.

4.1. The background of the assignment

While teaching IT students English for over a decade, we have noticed that the 1st year students express a stage fright when presenting their seminar papers, and the other students listen to them with more or less attention, which depends on: 1. How much they are interested in presented topic, 2. How interesting the presentation itself is, 3. How good the student's English is, 4. How favourite the student is among the other students. Our research has shown that the second and the third reasons are the most important ones, as, in later discussions, students stated that every topic is interesting if presented in an interesting manner. Of course, it can be difficult if the student does not have well developed vocabulary and speaking skill in English and, especially, if they are shy and they lack confidence. The research has also showed that students are more attentive during presentations if they are supported by *PowerPoint* or some other visual presentations, but only if they contain pictures, figures or a video.

During the first four semesters, we try to improve students' speaking skills and broaden their vocabulary, aiming to develop their confidence in giving oral presentations, which is not always an easy task, mostly due to syllabus and curriculum. The syllabus cannot always be implemented in a desirable way, for a number of reasons: large groups of students (20 to 60), 45-minute class periods three times a week, a big difference in students' pre-knowledge of the English language, etc.

Having all these in mind, as well as the quote "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.", we considered setting an assignment where students would present both their speaking skill and vocational knowledge, and where they would be able to develop their listening. Finally, in winter semester 2015/16, we decided to include video making as an assignment into the 3rd year syllabus.

4.2. From the idea to the final product

We made this decision having Sokolik (2001, 485) in mind, who claims that creating a video is the most complex activity for students, but it also meets their needs best. Our idea was to motivate students and make them help each other, negotiate, cooperate, and share responsibility for the results of the joint work through work in pairs. We also wanted to find out how much this kind of assignment can improve students' speaking skill. The aim of this task was, first and foremost, to provide students with theoretical and practical knowledge of their vocation, using English for Information Technology.

The assignment was presented at the beginning of the semester, so that students would have enough time to prepare and complete it, as Shrosbree suggests (2008, 80). The students were allowed to create any form of video material which included audio: a short film, an animation, an interview, a tutorial, etc. For this purpose, they were allowed to use a computer, a mobile phone, a (digital) camera or any device that they found useful. The video was not supposed to be shorter than seven or longer than ten minutes. We carefully selected the pairs of students, taking into account that each pair had a student with higher level of competence in English and another who was not that competent. From the very beginning, we also kept in mind the fact that creating video material in language learning, among other things, influences students' motivation and communication (Stempleski and Tomalin 1990, 3-4). However, while speaking was still in the foreground, the emphasis in the assignment was on the use of the key vocabulary and language structures that are included into the syllabus of English for Information Technology in the 5th semester: giving instructions (imperative), warnings, sequencing, active and passive voices, conditional sentences (types 1 and 2), *-ing* forms, relative clauses. In addition, students were encouraged to make videos that other students would be interested in watching and commenting. Thus, following the quote above, we thought that students would find it easier to present in English the topic which they had chosen, or that they would remember the content of video material that other students presented if they used technologies whose use and capabilities they were familiar with.

In 2015/16, we had 11 pairs of students, six of whom were active and did the assignment. But, when the time for presentations came, we encountered some problems. Three pairs introduced video materials that obviously were not their original work – they just recorded their voice over the video. In one case, you did not have to be an expert to conclude that the preparation of the animation took a lot of time, knowledge and hard-to-reach technology. In the other two cases, the students presented tutorials in which the content itself and the mode of presentation indicated that they were not the product of students, but of professionals. The students admitted the mistake and they were given another chance to present their own videos next week. The chance was also given to the students who had not done the assignment at all.

The other three pairs of students successfully completed the assignment. Two of them created tutorials, and one pair made a short film. They presented the topic in the expected way, using the appropriate vocabulary and all the linguistic structures that are relevant to the subject. Even the students with lower levels of knowledge, and those who expressed insecurity in oral communication in the classroom, spoke their part in the video with a touch of self-confidence and understanding. The other students in the class carefully followed the presentations and, in the end, commented them and asked some questions.

The prolongation we allowed students gave an encouraging result: seven days later, four pairs presented original videos, which enabled them to express knowledge of their vocation and of English for Information Technology.

In the winter semester 2016/17, eight out of eleven pairs of the students created videos. Only one pair was asked to repeat the assignment, as the tutorial they made was funny for the other students, but did not meet the aim of the assignment: almost four minutes of their video was mute with a Windows progress bar on the screen (Fig. 1). The students who did not complete the assignment were given another chance to present it next week, but, unlike a year earlier, it did not give results. These students were not active during the whole semester and they did not respond to this opportunity.
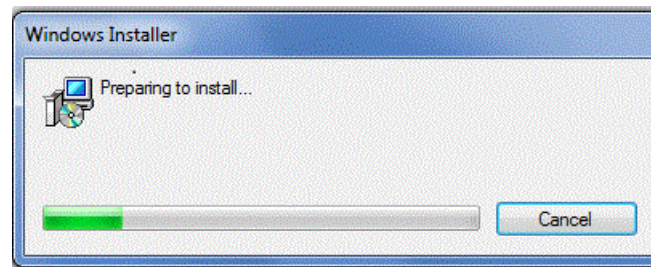

Figure 1 Windows progress bar

The other students expressed a high level of creativity. They made short films, where they showed their talents in acting, directing, making parodies[2], or created tutorials on different IT topics[3]. What is more important, in addition to their creativity and demonstration of knowledge of their vocation, the students showed off considerable competence in English for Information Technology. And, again, the other students took part in discussions and made comments about the presentations, which was one of the initial aims.

5. STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

After the presentations were given, we discussed the assignment with the students. They explained they had used various technologies, i.e. hardware and software, to create tutorials. They used computers (laptops), mobile (smart) phones as camera recorders, headsets with a microphone or a laptop with a built-in microphone for voice recording. The software used to record audio was *Audacity* and/or *Windows Sound Recorder*. After they recorded voices, they mostly used the *Sony Vegas* program to connect audio recordings. With the help of this program, they also created video animations, because it allowed them to manipulate the images, changing their settings such as contrast, sharpness, and brightness of the image. The *Pana and Crop* technique helped them to implement text into animation, as well as to create special transitions between the scenes. Movie clips were edited with *Movie Maker*.

Then we asked the students to evaluate the assignment. They agreed that it was challenging because they had done such an assignment for the first time, and the pair work pointed to the conclusion that it was a positive feeling to be in the position to help someone

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[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuSDrcsWXFk&feature=youtu.be
[3] https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7LMphZQqt1HX1U3Z0dvMUc3OVE/view,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ll7MfSFBIfw

or, on the other hand, to ask colleagues for help without hesitation. They also pointed out that they initially had a certain amount of fear because they had to demonstrate the knowledge of their vocation in English in a short time (up to 10 minutes), but it was much easier for them to record it than to talk in front of other students. The students revealed they were pleasantly surprised by their own English language competences. Actually, they learned that before they made videos they had had to explore and see (and listen to) different sources on the Internet and read some literature in English, which broadened their vocabulary. Prerecording helped them self-evaluate and analyze their performance and find best ways to improve it, just like Lazaraton suggests (2001, 107). That encouraged them to practice speaking before the final recording and that eventually made them feel positive and self-confident. Miller et al. (in Gilbert, 2013, 132) also had a positive experience with their students who felt that by doing video projects they improved their language skills. We share the feeling that all students, including those with lower English language competence, expressed a significant level of fluency in English and a broad knowledge of IT vocabulary.

On the other hand, the students reported some negative experiences. First, they had a problem with time management. Initially, they thought they would not need much time to prepare the video, and, as they had other assignments and much coursework to do, they would either give up creating the video, or try to do it 'easier way' by downloading materials from the Internet. As a potential problem in applying video in language learning, Shrosbree (Shrosbree 2008, 80) states the time needed to create one. He argues that a five-minute video takes a lot of time for preparation and creation, which could be used for language learning. Second, not all members in pairs were always ready to participate in work, so the other students in the pair had to do extra work, by motivating and reminding them to do their part of the work. In addition, the students who were more competent in English were forced to help their partners and in that way, they had to spend more time for the assignment than they expected.

We have also noticed that motivation, which is stated as a very important factor in creating a video, was not equally expressed by all students, and some of them did not complete the assignment at all, so we had to rearrange the pairs in two cases. There also arose an ethical issue of plagiarism, whose weight some of the students were not aware of. The students were originally warned that plagiarism would not be tolerated and that it presented copyright infringement. It is also a violation of the rules of studying and it equals cheating on exam.

6. Conclusion

The 21st century learners have been growing up with the development of information technology, which has made a significant impact on the role of learners in foreign language and ESP learning. The technology has made learners active participants who take responsibility for their learning. They are, also, digitally literate and, thanks to it, they easily acquire the four Cs of the 21st learning skills: critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. However, they cannot develop all these skills and competences without a teacher who helps them choose appropriate tools and applications and leads them through learning.

In this paper, we presented how the 3rd year students of the Faculty of Information Technology, University "Mediterranean" Podgorica, demonstrated their vocational and

language skills and competences through a video-making assignment. The assignment was done in pairs, so that students could increase their knowledge of English and ESP, and of their vocation. After the students presented their work, we drew some conclusions: the students improved their speaking and listening skills; they broadened their vocabulary of English for Information Technology; the assignment helped some students develop their confidence in oral presenting; and, collaborative work is of great importance for the successful completion of the assignment. However, we found some drawbacks in the assignment: due to their lack of self-confidence, some students had to be additionally encouraged to participate in the assignment, and some students plagiarized their work. Finally, we share the students' positive approach to the video-making assignment and its outcomes, and we recommend that it should be further evaluated.

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