

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WATCHING A FUNNY VIDEO AND ITS EFFECT ON LEARNING NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Lec. Gökçen YENİ*

Abstract

This study examines the effect of watching a funny video on learning new vocabulary items among preparatory school students at a university teaching English in Istanbul, Turkey. It investigates if there is a positive effect of feeling relaxed by watching a funny video when the students learn new vocabulary items in a foreign language. In addition, it was surveyed if the subject of video is important or not in this study. The study was conducted with 78 students. The students are preparatory school students and beginners. After 4 classes were chosen, they were termed as Control Group 1 and 2, Experimental Group 1 and 2. A video, which is about pronunciation mistakes, was watched by Control Group 1 and Experimental Group 1. Extracurricular video, about insomnia, was watched by Control Group 2 and Experimental Group 2. Control Groups watched videos which make the students bored. Experimental Groups watched videos which make them laugh. At the end of the study, while Control Group 1 has predicted average 1 word, Experimental Group 1 has predicted average more than 2 words (2,166667). Similarly, while Control Group 2 has predicted less than 1 word (0,090909), Experimental Group 2 has predicted more than 1 word (1,619048). It is seen that watching a funny video, which is especially about the foreign language, has an effect on learning.

Key Words: Foreign language teaching methods, feeling relaxed, watching a funny video, learning new vocabulary items.

* Nisantasi University, Istanbul, Turkey, Address Ergenekon Caddesi No: 45, 34380 Şişli / İstanbul, Turkey, gokcen.yeni@nisantasi.edu.tr

KOMİK BİR VIDEO İZLEMENİN YABANCI BİR DİLDEKİ KELİME ÖĞRENİMİNE OLAN ETKİSİ

Özet

Bu çalışma İstanbul (Türkiye) 'da ki yabancı dilde eğitim veren bir üniversitenin hazırlık okulu öğrencileri arasında, komik bir video izlemenin yeni kelime öğrenimine etkisini incelemektedir. Çalışma, öğrenciler yabancı bir dildeki yeni kelimeleri öğrendikleri zaman, komik bir video izleyerek rahatlamının pozitif bir etkisinin olup olmadığını araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada video konusunun önemli olup olmadığı da araştırılmıştır. Çalışma 78 öğrenci ile yapıldı. Öğrenciler başlangıç seviyesindeki hazırlık okulu öğrencileridir. 4 sınıf seçildikten sonra, sınıflar Kontrol Grubu I ve II, Deney Grubu I ve II olarak adlandırıldı. 1.gruplara telaffuz hataları ile ilgili, 2.gruplara ders dışı uykusuzluk konusu ile ilgili videolar izletildi. Kontrol Grupları öğrencileri sıkın, Deney Grupları ise öğrencileri güldüren tarzda videolar izledi. Araştırmanın sonucunda, Kontrol Grubu I ortalama 1 kelime tahmin ederken, Deney Grubu I ortalama 2den fazla kelime tahmin etti. Aynı şekilde Kontrol Grubu II ortalama 1den daha az kelime tahmin ederken, Deney Grubu II 1den daha fazla kelime tahmininde bulundu. Sonuç olarak, özellikle yabancı dil ile ilgili komik bir video izlemenin öğrenme üzerindeki etkisi görüldü.

Anahtar Kelimeler: yabancı dil öğretim teknikleri, rahat hissetme, komik bir video izleme, yeni kelime öğrenimi

Introduction

When the students start to learn a new language, memorizing or learning of the words is difficult for them. So, new techniques have been investigated to cope with this difficulty. This study examines the effect of watching a funny video on learning new vocabulary items among preparatory school students at an English-language University in Istanbul, Turkey. When they feel relaxed by watching a funny video, it is tested if prediction of a word meaning is easy for them. It is also investigated importance of the subject of video on learning new vocabulary items. Two types of studies have been analyzed to see it.

1. Literature Review

Related to second language vocabulary learning, many methods and techniques have been used so far. The most recognized and commonly used methods for teaching a second or

foreign language are Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Audiolingual Method.

Grammar Translation Method is not new. It has been used by language teachers for many years. It focuses on the translation of texts, grammar, and rote learning of vocabulary. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. According to the Grammar-Translation Method users, a purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to read literature written in the target language. Thus, students need to learn about the grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language.

As with the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method is not new. The purpose of this method is to learn how to use a foreign language to communicate. It tries to teach language inductively. Moreover, it uses some techniques such as conversation practice and paragraph writing. These techniques improve students' vocabulary knowledge. Even if students learn many new words with this method, its priority is speech, not directly teaching vocabulary.

The Audio-Lingual Method is also an oral-based approach. However, it also drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. The Audio-Lingual Method supporters think that language is a kind of habit formation. Students can learn many things by doing something again and again. Hence, it focuses on stimulus and response. Likewise, a lot of drills have been used like Chain Drill, Substitution Drill. Through these drills, new vocabulary is presented to the students by using dialogs. However, vocabulary is kept to a minimum while the students are mastering the sound system and grammatical patterns. Except these three methods, many approaches and methods have been used to teach vocabulary.

Today, many educationalists are trying to find new attractive techniques. One of them is using video in lessons. It is based upon studies in healthcare field. Recently, researchers have been investigating the effects of watching a funny video on patients. In this area, a study was conducted by Gurinder Singh Bains (2014) at Loma Linda University. It is about fighting memory loss with a smile. In short, the study is that the stress hormone cortisol can negatively affect memory and learning ability in the elderly.

A 20-minute funny video was watched by healthy seniors and seniors with diabetes. Then, their cortisol levels were measured. After that, they were compared to non-video

watchers. The researchers found that watching funny video helped them score better on memory tests and significantly reduced their cortisol levels.

Additionally, scientists at Loma Linda University conducted a survey with 31 people. These people watched a funny video, and then they watched a more stressful and serious video. The scientists measured their brainwaves by using an electroencephalography device. The result shows that when people watched a funny video, they used all parts of their brain and their gamma waves are abundant. These waves have a positive effect on people's awareness and relieving stress. This study shows that watching a funny video may increase students' awareness and help them in the lessons.

A similar study has been also conducted by Michael Miller (2006). As "*Watching funny films may reduce risk of heart disease*", one of the titles in a journal by Nursing Standard (2006), watching funny films may have a positive effect on heart disease.

Miller indicates that a good laugh could be beneficial for cardiovascular system. Anxiety, which is one of the chronic life stressors, may increase risks of coronary heart disease. In the study, the researchers recuperated 20 healthy male and female volunteers (mean age 33) with normal blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose profiles to a randomized trial. After an overnight fast, they measured brachial artery reactivity. Then, the volunteers watched parts of a film which was designed to cause either mental stress or laughter. One minute after viewing stopped, the researchers measured volunteers' brachial artery vasodilatation. After 48 hours, the groups watched the other parts and the measurements were repeated. Brachial artery vasodilatation fell in 14 subjects after watching the film that caused mental stress. However, it increased in 19 after watching the humorous film. ($p < 0.0001$) There were big differences between baseline and the laughter phase and between baseline and the mental stress phase. After these measurements, it was seen that mean vasodilatation rose 22 per cent during laughter and fell 35 per cent during mental stress ($p < 0.0001$), with absolute changes of 2.6 and -1.9 per cent respectively ($p < 0.0007$). It is believed that the fall in vasodilatation from watching a film causing mental distress is similar with the situation after anger. Since anxiety and distress are a big obstacle for students learning, the problem may be solved enabling them laugh.

Another study has been conducted by Gamze Şenbursa (2014), from Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation at Okan University in Istanbul, Turkey. Three groups were formed. In the first group there were elderly patients with diabetes. In the second group there were healthy and old aged adults. These two groups watched a funny video before the test. The third group didn't watch the video.

Before and after the test, their cortisol levels were measured. Cortisol levels of the ones, who watched a funny video, both decreased and a progress was seen in their memory. At the end of the research, it was seen that humor has a positive effect on reducing stress. Laughing is a kind of medicine that strengthens memory.

All these studies in healthcare field are an inspiration to studies in educational field. The effects of video usage have been measured by researchers. In some studies, videos have been presented with captions in order to teach new vocabulary items in a foreign language. Winke, Gass and Sydorenko (2010) investigated the effects of captioning during video-based listening activities in their study. They used three short videos with and without captioning. After learners watched videos, they took a vocabulary test based on video. The results show that video with captioning is more effective on the learners' performance. Similar to this study, Zarei and Gilanian from Imam Khomeini International University (2013) researched the effects of multimedia modes on second language vocabulary learning. In their study, they used videos three different ways; video-audio-captions (VAC), video-captions (VC) and video-audio (VA). After they showed the videos, the participants took a vocabulary test. They could not find big differences among the tests' results, but the participants (VAC and VC), watching the video with captions, were better than the VA group.

Wenhua Hsu from Shou University, Taiwan (2013) has a survey on the effects of audiovisual support on EFL learners' productive vocabulary. This study was conducted in a writing composition class. In order to remind learners' previous vocabulary knowledge, four different ways were applied. These are video with captions, video without captions, video with screen off and silent video with captions. According to pre-test and compositions' results, incorporation of teaching vocabulary and video may positively influence students' performance.

Sarah Lynn, who is the writer of *Q-Skills Reading & Writing Level 1 (2015)*, suggests “More Laughter and Less Stress” in one of the reading texts in it. According to book, people are relaxed and produce more oxygen, when they laugh. Then, this oxygen goes to brain. So, they can learn better and remember information before they learned.

It is seen as a result of all these studies that using video has a positive effect on vocabulary learning, and watching a funny video has a positive effect on both health and learning. For these reasons, this study has based on relationship between watching a funny video and its effect on learning new vocabulary items in a foreign language.

2. The Research Questions

Two separate studies were conducted in this research. The importance of the video subject was also measured.

- 1- Is there a positive effect of watching a funny video before learning new words in a foreign language?
- 2- What is the result when the students watch a boring video before they learn new words?
- 3- What is the result when they watch a video, related to the subject?
- 4- What is the result when they watch a video, unrelated to the subject?

3. Method

In this study, convenience sampling, which is the most common sampling type in education, was used. Students were picked from the university in order to access to them. This sampling type may be useful, but it is very careful to limit generalization due to the number of students and school. Participants were chosen randomly into all A1 level classes. Then, they were assigned in a control and experimental group.

78 students took part in the study. The data of 16 students was canceled because of limitation. The students are prep school students and beginners. Two kinds of studies were arranged and 4 groups were formed. 12 unknown English words were asked to the groups before and after the video. These words were given with their word formation,

synonyms and some pictures, related to the words. First, the papers were handed out to the students and asked them to divide the paper as before and after. Then, the words were showed to them and asked them to write their predictions in before part of the paper. After that, video was watched and the words were asked to them again and they wrote their new predictions or corrections in after part of the paper. The results were formed and compared in an Excel file.

Study 1

Two groups were formed as Control Group 1 and Experimental Group 1. There were 7 students in Control Group 1 and 12 students in Experimental Group 1. Control Group 1 watched a boring video about pronunciation mistakes in English. Experimental Group 1 watched a funny video about pronunciation mistakes in English.

Table1. Word prediction mean before and after the video

	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Control Group 1	4,714286	5,714286
Experimental Group 1	3,833333	6

**The video is related to the subject in this study.*

Study 2

Two groups were formed as Control Group 2 and Experimental Group 2. There were 22 students in Control Group 2 and 21 students in Experimental Group 2. In this study, extracurricular video was used. Control Group 2 watched a boring video about insomnia. Experimental Group 2 watched a funny video about some jokes, made to sleepers.

Table 2. Word prediction mean before and after the video

	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Control Group 2	5,454545	5,454555
Experimental Group 2	5,285714	6,904762

With this study, not only has been positive effect of watching a funny video measured but also the importance of video subject has been measured.

4. Results

In Control Group 1, after the students watched a boring video, 6 out of 7 students predicted average extra 1 more word and 1 student could not make any prediction. In Experimental Group 1, after the students watched a funny video, 12 out of 12 students predicted average more than 2 words.

In Control Group 2, 14 out of 22 students didn't change their predictions after they watched a boring video. 3 of them changed their predictions from correct to incorrect one. 5 of them changed their predictions positively. In Experimental Group 2, 17 out of 21 students could make a positive prediction after they watched a funny video. 4 of them could not make a new prediction after video. (*The results are in Appendix part.*)

As can be seen in Table 3 and Table 4, watching a funny video before learning new vocabulary items are more effective than watching a boring video. When the results are compared between Control Groups and Experimental Groups, it is seen that Experimental Groups' word prediction means after video are higher than Control Groups' word prediction means.

Table3. The differences between watching a funny video and boring video

<u>Means</u>	
C.G.1 (1	C.G.2 0,090909
E.G.1 2,166667	E.G.2 1,619048

Table 3 shows how many words on the average were predicted by the students after they watched the video. While Control Group 1 has predicted average 1 word, Experimental Group 1 has predicted average more than 2 words (2,166667). Similarly, while Control Group 2 has predicted less than 1 word (0,090909), Experimental Group 2 has predicted more than 1 word (1,619048).

Table 4. The importance of video subject

The means of the video, related to the subject			
C.G.1	1	E.G.1	2,166667
C.G.2	0,090909	E.G.2	1,619048

The means of the extracurricular video

Furthermore, when Study 1 and Study 2 are compared in Table 4, it is also seen that the subject of the video is important. While Control Group 1 has predicted average 1 word, Control Group 2 has predicted average less than 1 word. Similarly, while Experimental Group 1 has predicted more than 2 words, Experimental Group 2 has predicted more than 1 word. The students, who watched a video about their lessons, have higher means than the students, watching extracurricular video.

Discussion

Overall, this study supports that any kinds of funny videos draw students' attention before they learn new vocabulary items. When they feel comfortable, they focus on learning much more. Laughing reduces stress on them and they have better results. Because funny videos have massive and deep impact on the students. Most of the students love to watch funny videos because it refreshes their mind and lowers their stress level.

As can be seen in both results and previous studies, watching a funny video has a positive impact on people. It is important for learning, strengthening memory and reducing stress. It can be seen clearly; when the results are compared among these 4 groups, the subject of video is also important for the students. The ones, who watched a video about their lessons, have more predictions. It can be concluded that the students may pay attention to learning much more when they watch a video about their lessons.

Conclusions and Further Study

While this study shows the existence of a positive effect on learning new vocabulary items by watching funny videos, it is an exploratory study of a very limited population on account of the number of students. As an exploratory work, this study answered some questions but it should be measured with many more students.

In further study, predictions of another level student could be checked. Besides vocabulary, some rules or forms could be taught or some different kinds of funny videos could be used.

Considering the previous studies, watching funny videos are also important for health. Body secretes a hormone name endorphin while laughing. So, these two kinds of studies can be carried out together.

Limitation

The study was conducted by only A1 level students since the number of A2 and B1 level students is insufficient.

16 data were canceled due to the fact that the students were not allowed to use dictionary.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

Bains, G.S., (2014). "Fight Memory Loss with a Smile", <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/04/140427185149.htm>, 19.12.2015.

Hsu, W. (2013). "The Effects of Audiovisual Support on EFL Learners' Productive Vocabulary", *ReCall*, 26, 62-79.

Lynn, S., (2015). “More Laughter and Less Stress”, *Q: Skills for Success Reading and Writing (1)*, Oxford.

Miller, M., Mangano, C., Park, Y., Goel, R., Plotnick, G.D., Vogel, R.A., (2006). “Impact of Cinematic Viewing on Endothelial Function”, *Heart*, 92 (2), 261-262.








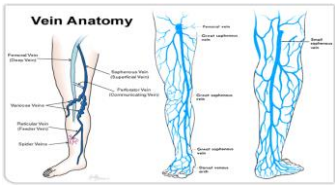
Şenbursa, G., (2014). “Reducing Cortisol Levels By Watching Funny Videos”, <http://www.canlihaber.com/2015te-kahkaha-atin-hafiza-kaybini-onleyin-kahkahanin-yararlari-nelerdir-55993h.htm>., 05.12.2015.




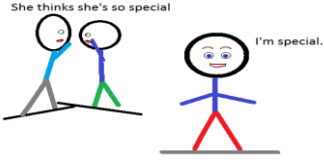
Zarei, A., and Gilanian, M., (2013). “The Effect of Multimedia Modes on L2 Vocabulary Learning”, *International Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*, 2(5), 1011-1020.

“Watching Funny Films May Reduce Risk of Heart Disease”, (2006), *Nursing Standard*, 20/25, 19.

Winke, P., Gass, S. and Sydorenko, T., (2010). “The Effects of Captioning Videos Used for Foreign Language Listening Activities”, *Language Learning & Technology*, 14(1), 65-86.

Appendix

 <p>Collide (v) Bump, crash</p>	 <p>Famine (n) Scarcity</p>
 <p>Plunge(v) Dive, fall</p>	 <p>Relic(n) Classic, ruins</p>
 <p>Scar(n) cicatrix</p>	 <p>Decrepit(adj) Old, peaked</p>
 <p>Evolve(v) Enhance, change, develop</p>	 <p>Vein(n) vessel</p>

 <p>Arbitrary (adj) permissive</p>	 <p>Postpone(v) Delay, put off</p>
 <p>Primitive(adj) rudimental</p>	 <p>Boastful(adj) Arrogant, big head</p>

Study 1

	CONTROL GROUP1			EXPERIMENTAL GROUP1			
student 1	3	4	1	student 1	4	6	2
student 2	7	7	0	student 2	4	5	1
student 3	2	3	1	student 3	4	6	2
student 4	6	8	2	student 4	7	9	2
student 5	6	7	1	student 5	3	7	4
student 6	4	5	1	student 6	3	4	1
student 7	5	6	1	student 7	5	7	2
	4,714286	5,714286	1	student 8	2	5	3
				student 9	4	6	2
				student 10	3	5	2
				student 11	4	6	2
				student 12	3	6	3
					3,833333	6	2,166667

Study 2

CONTROL GROUP2				EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2			
student 1	1	3	2	student 1	5	5	0
student 2	6	6	0	student 2	4	5	1
student 3	5	5	0	student 3	8	8	0
student 4	8	10	2	student 4	4	5	1
student 5	5	2	-3	student 5	6	8	2
student 6	6	7	1	student 6	4	7	3
student 7	4	4	0	student 7	6	6	0
student 8	7	8	1	student 8	7	8	1
student 9	7	5	-2	student 9	5	5	0
student 10	7	7	0	student 10	5	6	1
student 11	8	8	0	student 11	5	7	2
student 12	6	6	0	student 12	5	8	3
student 13	5	5	0	student 13	4	7	3
student 14	2	2	0	student 14	7	8	1
student 15	3	3	0	student 15	10	12	2
student 16	6	6	0	student 16	8	11	3
student 17	6	5	-1	student 17	3	6	3
student 18	10	10	0	student 18	4	5	1
student 19	4	4	0	student 19	2	5	3
student 20	4	4	0	student 20	4	7	3
student 21	4	4	0	student 21	5	6	1
student 22	6	8	2		5,285714	6,904762	1,619048
	5,454545	5,545455	0,090909				