# DIGITAL VIDEO TECHNOLOGY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY WITH 'LOST'

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### *Abstract*

*This paper presents a case study on the effectiveness of video technology as a tool in language teaching. The study took place in Ankara University TÖMER Trabzon Branch. Digitally captured video segments from the popular TV series 'Lost' were used. The participating students (n=14) first viewed the selected segments without sound and discussed the actions in small groups, and then they viewed the segments with sound and English subtitles. The students were provided a list of idioms/ vocabulary and grammatical features taken from these segments. Students created their own dialogues using the idioms and expressions that they learned. They were also asked to comment on the benefits of using digital video technology. The results of the feedback questions indicated that the students were highly motivated by the use of digital videos and agreed that the selected digital segments were both entertaining and educational. The students were also observed using newly acquired grammatical forms and idioms/vocabulary in their written responses.*

***Key words:*** *digital video technology, English language learners, authentic materials.*

# YABANCI DİL SINIFLARINDA DİJİTAL VİDEO TEKNOLOJİSİ: 'LOST' İLE BİR ALAN ÇALIŞMASI

***Özet***

*Bu alan çalışması dijital video teknolojisinin etkin bir dil öğretim aracı olabileceğini ortaya koymak üzere hazırlanmıştır. Çalışma Ankara Üniversitesi TÖMER Trabzon Şubesi'nde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada 'Lost' dizisinden alınan video kesitleri kullanılmıştır. Katılımcı öğrenciler (n=14) seçili video kesitlerini öncelikle sessiz ve altyazısız olarak izleyip küçük gruplar halinde ilgili kesitteki olayları tartışmışlardır. Ardından dil odaklı çalışmalar için kesitleri sesli ve İngilizce altyazılı olarak izlemişlerdir. Öğrencilere kesitlerden alınan sözcük/deyim ile dilbilgisi öğelerini içeren çalışma kağıtları dağıtılmıştır. Etkinliğin son bölümünde yeni öğrendikleri deyim ve ifadeleri kullanabilecekleri diyaloglar oluşturmaları istenmiştir. Öğrencilerden ayrıca dijital video teknolojisinin sınıf ortamında kullanılmasının yararları hakkındaki görüşlerini belirtmeleri istenmiştir. Dönütlerden elde edilen bulgular öğrencilerin dijital video kullanımını son derece güdüleyici, seçilen kesitleri de oldukça eğlendirici ve eğitici bulduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Öğrencilerin öğrendikleri sözcük/deyimsel öğeler ile dilbilgisi öğelerini yazılı yanıtlarında kullanabildikleri gözlemlenmniştir.*

***Anahtar kelimeler:*** *dijital video teknolojisi, ingilizce öğrencileri, özgün materyaller.*

**1-INTRODUCTION**

"Educational technology for educators" refers to any type of media technology used in teaching and learning, such as computers, slides, audio, video, and digital media (Lever-Duffy, McDonald, & Mizell, 2005). According to the International Society for Technology in Education, school teachers should embed "technology-supported learning" into their classrooms as "the world is different. Kids are different…learning is different…and teaching must be different too (NETST, 2002, p.5, as cited in Lever-Duffy et al, 2005).

The use of educational technology in language teaching is not a new interest (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007), as English language teaching has always been an area of study that is continuously updated with brand new technologies and innovative ideas. For instance, language laboratories and audio visual equipment were vital tools in Audio-Lingual and Communicative Language Teaching methods in the 1960s and 1970s. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was introduced in the early 1980s, and included many different tasks the students could accomplish with computers (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) was developed in the 1990s using the Internet and other communication technologies (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

Although foreign language teachers now have many options to integrate technology into their classes, the effective use of technology-based instructional materials remains a daunting experience for teachers who lack supervision and training in educational technology. However, most young learners are "digital natives," in sync with the newest technologies, and they demand that the teachers bring them into the classroom (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). In this respect, the use of videos is a relatively easy task for both teachers and students when compared to complex computer software or advanced internet use.

The purpose of this paper is to present a case study on the effectiveness of video technology as a teaching tool in language teaching.

**2-METHODOLOGY**

**Research Question**

The major question of this study is:

Is digital video technology an effective tool for English language learners?

**Participants and Research Context**

This study took place in a foreign language institute located in the Black Sea region of Turkey. This highly respected institute teaches more than 20 different languages and has branches spread throughout Turkey. The participants in the study (n=14)

were mostly university students between the ages of 16 and 24. Students were recruited from pre-intermediate and upper intermediate English language classes. All the participating students signed a consent form to give permission for the researchers to collect data. 'Lost', an American serial drama about characters who survived a plane crash on a tropical island, was used as an educational tool to teach English as a foreign language.

## Data Collection

The data was collected through video and audio tapes. As some of the students might be unfamiliar with the 'Lost' series, the class teacher presented a power point called, 'Not to get lost on Lost,' introducing the main characters, plot of the story, and a brief summary.

After the presentation, the participating students were divided into groups of three and informed that they were about to view four segments from 'Lost'. These segments were taken from the second episode of the series and digitally compiled for ease of viewing specific segments and for use in multiple classes.

Students initially viewed the selected segment without sound and discussed the action in small groups, making predictions about the actions in the next segment. Following this discussion, the students viewed the segment with sound and directed their attention to the list of idioms and vocabulary terms to make predictions about their meanings. In the assessment part, students were also provided with a list of idioms and vocabulary from the digital video segments and were asked to match them with synonyms that had also been provided on the sheet. They were also asked to role play with the provided daily expressions and vocabulary to measure their comprehension of the viewed segment and the use of new idioms, vocabulary and grammatical forms in their responses. As the levels of the students in two classes are different, a simplified version of worksheet was used for the pre-intermediate class. At the end of the class, the teacher requested feedback from the students regarding the use of digital video technology.

## Data Analysis

The classroom sessions were captured on video and audio for further analysis and they were later transcribed verbatim.

## 3-RESULTS

### First Part: Video captures without sound

In the first step of the activity, the teacher showed the students selected digitally captured segments without sound and subtitles. After each segment, students dis-

cussed the action in small groups. In the first segment, Sayid and Sawyer (the main characters in the show) were shown brawling about something on the beach. The fight was stopped by Kate. After the students had seen this segment without sound and subtitles, the teacher asked the students to make predictions about that particular scene and try to figure out the reasons behind the fight. Here are some responses from students:

*Sawyer likes giving other people nicknames. Maybe they were fighting for because of nicknaming the others[ because he was nicknaming the others]. He also has some antisocial behavior [s]. That might be the reason for their fight. Another reason might be that Sayid is black [Middle-Eastern]. (Alp, Upper Intermediate)*

*Sayid and Sawyer fought because of Kate. (Aslı, Pre-Intermediate)Merve*

*Not for Kate. To escape from the island. (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)Pınar*

*After falling on the island [After becoming stranded on the island], they discuss[ed] how to leave the island. Their opinion is divided [They had different opinions]. Sawyer-the confident man- said 'Hey guys, follow me!' and the other one said, 'Hey guys, follow me!' So they fight [fought]. (Jae Soon, Pre-Intermediate)*

In the meantime, the teacher circulated between groups and evaluated whether the students needed any input during their group discussion. As he felt that the groups had completed the activity, he moved on to the next stage, in which he asked the students to discuss the same segment as a whole class. The teacher observed that some of the participants suddenly became silent when they were asked to voice their opinions to the whole class.

In the second segment, that the students were about to watch, the survivors were heading into the jungle and heard a roaring sound from a distance. A creature was approaching. The teacher froze the scene at that moment and asked the students to make predictions on what creature was coming out of the jungle. Here are some of the comments made by the students during group discussions:

*They saw something or heard a voice (Sare, Upper Intermediate) Meryem*

*A lion (Alp, Pre-Intermediate)*

*A wolf (Seyhan, Pre-Intermediate)Kübra*

*A bear (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)Pınar*

*A pig (Zeynep, Pre-Intermediate)Meltem*

The teacher continued to the third segment in which the students saw everyone running away except Sawyer. The creature coming after them was a polar bear, which Sawyer shot with a gun. The teacher froze the scene and asked some follow-up questions such as; "What's a polar bear doing on a tropical island?" "Can people carry guns on planes?" "How did Sawyer find the gun?" As the students got stuck with the discussion after a while, the teacher asked some additional follow-up questions to keep the discussion flowing. As the students were excited about the discussion in their groups, they could not help but keep interacting with each other as a whole class.

*Kate is a criminal. (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)*

*A police [officer] had a gun. (Aslı, Pre-Intermediate)*

*Sayid is a soldier. (Alp, Pre-Intermediate)*

*But the gun is Sawyer's. (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)*

*Maybe Sawyer stole the gun. (Aslı, Pre-Intermediate)*

*Sawyer killed the polar bear by using [with the] a gun. (İpek, Pre-Intermediate)*

*But the weapon? They were traveling by plane? How did he find it? (Alp, UpperIntermediate)*

*Yes, how did he find it? (Sare, Upper Intermediate)*

In the last segment, the survivors were questioning Sawyer to find out how he got the gun. Sawyer said that the gun belonged to a US Marshal, who was allowed to carry a gun on the plane. Surprisingly, Kate took the gun away from Sawyer and disassembled it. As the sound was again off when the students watched the segment, the teacher asked the students to make predictions about the action.

*We can understand [We guess] that the gun belongs to someone who was responsible for the security of [on] the plane. (Alp, Upper Intermediate)*

*Maybe someone on the plane is a police officer. After the plane crashed, Sawyer took the plane [gun] and killed the animal. And I think they are discussing where he found the gun I think they don't trust Sawyer. (Sare, Upper Intermediate)*

*They talked about the gun. They asked Sawyer how he found the gun. He said he was a policeman. He showed the [his] badge. (Demircan, Pre-Intermediate)*

*Kate divided [unloaded] the gun and gave the bullet to Sayid, and the gun to Sawyer. She wanted nobody [did not want anyone] to use the gun. (Hoh-Sung, Pre-Intermediate)*

**Second Part: Video captures with sound, expressions/vocabulary study and role play**

Students watched the video captures again, with sound, and they were urged to focus upon the language used in the conversations. Later, the teacher handed them a worksheet with some of the expressions used in the segments and asked the students to match them with synonyms that had also been provided on the sheet. The students completed this activity while reviewing the captures with sound and subtitles and finished the matching activity with ease.

In the second part of the activity, the students were asked to role play using the expressions and vocabulary given by the teacher. As the students were working in their small groups, the teacher circulated between the groups and provided assistance. Here are some examples from groups:

*My transceiver doesn't work. Can you fix it? (Alp, Upper Intermediate)*

*I hope so. I can try. (Seyhan, Upper Intermediate)*

*What the hell is that? (Buğra, Pre-Intermediate)Tarık*

*It's a monster. (Ayhan, Pre-Intermediate)Ahmet*

*What's happening? (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)*

*We saw something like a monster. (Ayhan, Pre-Intermediate)*

*But we are not sure (Deniz, Pre-Intermediate)*

*Maybe we can find [something to use as] a signal for help. (Ayhan, Pre-Intermediate)*

*OK. Let's go. (Buğra, Pre-Intermediate)*

**4- STUDENTS' FEEDBACK**

At the end of the lesson, the teacher gave the students an activity evaluation form consisting of five open-ended questions designed to find out whether the students were interested in the activity and whether the activity helped them understand daily expressions and vocabulary taken from 'Lost.' With the first four questions of the evaluation, the students were asked to point out pros and cons of using the activity in class and ways to make the activity stronger for the next time. They were also

asked to discuss the benefits of using digital video technology in foreign language classes:

> *When we try to figure out unknown vocabulary and expressions all by ourselves, they are easier to remember. (Zeynep, Pre-Intermediate)*

> *The activity helps us, especially with learning daily language. (Alp, Upper Intermediate)*

> *We had a great group activity. We had group activities before but not everyone was on the same page. Here, everything [referring to the video segments] is so obvious that we all discuss by viewing the videos at the same time. (Aslı, Pre-Intermediate)*

> *Not boring. It's fun and it is easy to concentrate in class. I think that you try not only to learn English, but also develop your creativity. I like this teaching method. (Hoh-Sung, Pre-Intermediate)*

> *The videos and the dialogues the teacher chose were so interesting that we could not but think and discuss them. That naturally helps with language improvement. (Aslı, Upper Intermediate)*

As the students generally liked the activity, the only concern the students had was the time limitation:

> *Maybe the students can focus on the lesson more than one hour because it is fun. So [the teacher] needs to expand the class time. (Hoh-Sung, Pre-Intermediate)*

The fourth question asked the students whether the use of digital video technology in foreign language classes would contribute positively to their language learning experience:

> *I can definitely say that it helps me improve my vocabulary and pronunciation. (Alp, Upper Intermediate)*

> *It sure can. We can learn the language without getting bored with the vocabulary and the pronunciation of these words. Grammar is generally boring for the students but we realized that grammar could also be fun when we learned words in dialogues. (Demet, Pre-Intermediate)*

> *It helps me learn daily language and how to pronounce the words accurately. (Alp, Pre-Intermediate)*

> *The combination of audio and visual made the learning more powerful. (Seyhan, Pre-Intermediate)*

The final question asked the students to comment on whether they wanted to see similar activities in their classes. Every student in both level groups said 'yes' demonstrating that it was an enjoyable learning experience and they felt this method of teaching enhanced their understanding of the material.

## 5-CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out whether video technology was an effective tool in language teaching. For that purpose, 14 participating students viewed the selected segments from an American serial drama and completed several discussion and writing activities. During the assessment, the students were asked to comment on the benefits of using digital videos to learn English. The results of the open-ended feedback questions indicated that the students were highly motivated with the use of digital videos and agreed that the selected digital segments were both entertaining and educational. The students were also observed using newly acquired grammatical forms and idioms/vocabulary in their written responses.

Almost without question, the use of digital video technology can be burdensome for teachers who are used to following a routine and do not want to take any risks. However, the teachers can actively engage the students in language learning if they allot some extra time to preparation of several activities that help the students become more involved with the video segments. This effort allows students to gain the benefit of being exposed to daily conversations and vocabulary used in an authentic context, rather than the artificial scenes designed by coursebook writers. The chosen video is also crucial. The 'Lost' television series is a world wide phenomenon among the young generation and the students enjoy watching the series in their daily lives. Bringing the series into the class and making it an educational activity seems to be an answer to teachers who do not want to get cornered by using techniques and instuctional tools which will eventually make the students frustrated and bored. An important point that foreign language teachers need to take into consideration when planning this kind of activity is that teachers need to continually keep an eye on the students when they work in their groups and make sure that every student is actively engaged in both group and whole class discussions.

In summary, this case study provides evidence that digital video can be a valuable educational technology tool for the language teacher, but adequate preparation is critical for success.

Bu çalışma 7-8-9 Ekim 2009 tarihlerinde Trabzon'da Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi'nde gerçekleştirilen 3. Uluslararası Bilgisayar ve Öğretim Teknolojileri Sempozyumu'nda sunulmuştur.

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