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## Video Project Assignments and Their Effectiveness on Foreign Language Learning

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of video project assignments (VPA) on foreign language learning. The subjects of the study were students at School of Foreign Languages, Uludağ University in Turkey. 100 students from elementary (33), pre-intermediate (33) and intermediate (34) levels were selected to analyse how their video project assignments contributed to their English language learning process. Following the assignments, the subjects were asked to do a questionnaire which aimed to reflect their points of view on the effectiveness of VPAs. The results of the questionnaires were evaluated quantitatively.

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### 1. Introduction

Recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and digital advances have provided learners and teachers with new insights into language learning and teaching. These rapid developments in ICT and technology-implemented learning affect the way we teach and learn second or foreign languages (Danan, 2010; Kern, 2006; Nikitina, 2009; Stepp-Greany, 2002). On the importance of making use of technological tools in education, Reinders and White (2011) state that technology is a tool that helps learners and educators to achieve certain educational goals. They add that technology has created opportunities for interaction, situated learning, and support for learning outside formal context.

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The advances in ICT have contributed to the emergence of new literacy practices (Hafner & Miller, 2011). One of these practices is digital video projects prepared by learners. In these projects students are engaged in assignments to prepare videos in which they practice the language they learn. Implementation of these projects has a number of benefits for the learners. Hafner and Miller (2011) point out that video projects provide a social context within which learners are able to interact with one another as well as experiment with a range of digital video technology to create personally meaningful multimodal artifacts. Furthermore, through these projects, learner's ability to use digital video technology to capture and play back their own performances as well as the performances of others would facilitate reflection on their language learning. Based on the findings of the researchers' study on digital video projects, Hafner and Miller (2011) conclude that the digital video project tasks appear to have been highly motivational for students since the students' comments on the video projects have revealed that the tasks provided students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning, and they have found the digital video projects to be novel, fun, challenging, and meaningful. Furthermore, preparing video projects encouraged students to cooperate in ways that fostered peer teaching.

Video projects provide several benefits for learners by creating more dynamic and interactive classrooms along with promoting positive interdependence and individual accountability (Jensen, Mattheis, & Johnson, 2011). In addition, these projects foster learner autonomy and enable learners to practice the target language in a collaborative, enjoyable, and motivating atmosphere. Nikitina (2009) indicates that the convergence of technology and pedagogy has a great potential in making teaching and learning experiences rich, memorable, motivating and enjoyable for both the learners and their teachers. Nikitina (2009) points as following:

We need to re-think the ways in which we organise the proceedings in our classrooms so that a learning experience becomes more meaningful, relevant, and enriching for the learner... Involving language learners in video-making project in the target language offers a feasible way to infuse constructivist pedagogical strategies into foreign language teaching. (p.166, 173)

As emphasized by Nikitina (2009), with the help of video projects, language learners have a chance to practice the target language in a more meaningful way and to develop useful strategies that can ease their learning process. Moreover, Masats, Dooly, and Costa (2009) regard video making as an effective learning tool since it engages students in a cooperative project which is an excellent opportunity for integrating all students in the class. Besides, since project based learning connects content and target language(s) to students' own lives through tasks that are intellectually and emotionally challenging, it is suggested that video production should be used as an integrative learning tool (Masats, et. al., 2009).

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the student video project assignments (VPAs) administered at a state university in Turkey. The motivations for the VPAs implemented by the current institution were to engage the students in projects in which they could find opportunities to improve their language skills, foster autonomy, study collaboratively, reflect on their own learning, and combine technology with language learning. The research questions for the present study were:

1. What are EFL students' perceptions on the effectiveness of VPAs on their foreign language skills?
2. What are EFL students' perceptions on the effectiveness of VPAs on their foreign language learning process?
3. What are EFL students' perceptions on the implementation of VPAs?

## **2. Setting & Participants**

The study was conducted at the Preparatory School of a state university where students receive compulsory intensive English education for two terms. There were 1300 students in total at the school. For the present study, 100 students from six different classes were selected randomly from elementary (2 classes), pre-intermediate (2 classes) and intermediate (2 classes) levels.

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