USE OF DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDING IN THE PREPARATION STAGE
OF PRE-SERVICE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' MICRO-TEACHINGS

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ABSTRACT

The paper reports the findings of a study done to investigate the perceptions of 64 pre-service foreign language teachers on their experiences with digital video recording during the preparation of their micro-teachings to practice teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). For two semesters and in two EFL Methodology courses participants worked in small groups to prepare their lesson plans and in-class micro-teachings and their group discussions were self-recorded. Main data collection instrument of the study was a survey which included multiple choice/short answer questions to gather demographic data and open-ended questions on participants' perceptions about video-recordings. Data were analyzed both quantitative and qualitative means. Findings of the study illustrate that the use of digital video-recording in the preparation stage of micro-teachings may have both advantages and challenges, which are discussed in the paper in relation to the author's suggestions for pre-service teacher education and the use of digital videos.

Key Words: Digital videos, foreign language teacher education, pre-service teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Easy access to relatively affordable video recorders as well as in-built cameras in laptops and cell phones has made digital video capturing and viewing very popular in our lives. Particularly, the use of smart phones made it possible to record digital videos, edit and upload them to the Internet as well as to share videos with numerous online communities via online tools such as Facebook, Youtube, and Blogs. In addition to the everyday use of digital videos, teaching and learning with the help of digital videos have been very common in education for the last couple of decades. Even though the use of video has always been present in education, the introduction of digital video parallel to video capturing and editing software in personal computers has led to an increase in individual use on self-recorded videos by both teachers and learners.

In addition, use of digital video can potentially be a powerful and effective technique in teacher education programs. Research done on the use of video to promote teacher reflection and awareness has generally shown that teachers benefit from using, recording, and viewing videos in several ways. For example pre-service or in-service teachers can watch good examples of teaching in their fields, they can watch peers' teaching, or they can watch their own teaching performances. In technique, teachers -whether pre-service or in-service-can analyze videos, reflect on the content, and/or give comments. This process is believed to increase the level of awareness about teaching and learners in general (Dymond & Bentz, 2006; Hernandez-Ramos, 2007; Kong, Shroff, & Hung, 2009; Liu, 2012; Tripp & Rich, 2011). In addition to promoting awareness and reflection among teachers in teacher education programs, using videos have several other advantages. Videos are advantageous because videos provide teacher educators and teacher trainees with an opportunity to see the link between theory and practice (Dymond & Bentz, 2006) , a record of teaching practice for future use (Wu & Kao, 2008), and analyze the teaching/learning processes in slow motion by allowing to "replay, freeze, or view actions frame by frame" (Hung et al, 2004). Videos also serve as a "mirror" to one's own or other's teaching as they present an authentic representation of real world account of what happens in the classroom (Dymond & Bentz,

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2006). So, Pow, and Hung (2009) claim that student teachers "may have a mental model for a planned teaching experience and have another mental model of what actually happens" (p. 776). Videos can help teachers to close the gap between two mental models as videos may provide an objective view of what happens in the real classroom. Clarke (2009), who asked learners to state "the plus, minus and interesting features of the use of cameras as a viewer" (p. 960), reported that learners found "video clips as more 'honest' conveying emotions and complexity in a way that it is not possible with text"(p. 960).

Use of video may have further benefits and advantages for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teacher's education because with the help of videos EFL teacher trainees can watch native speakers, native EFL teachers, improve their speaking skills in English with self-monitor, and observe non-verbal language (Clarke, 2009) which is an integral part of communication. Using videos to teach English is a regular technique in EFL classrooms. However, how to create, edit, and present a video in EFL classrooms has been the focus of EFL teacher education programs only for the last couple of years. Hernandez-Ramos (2007) states that "the need to develop a critical ability when looking at video, and to use this ability as a reflection and learning tools about one's own practice, can only be developed with explicit practice" (p. 38). In other words, EFL teachers, like any other teacher in any field, need to experience the use of video for reflection on their own teaching and for their learners' learning in their undergraduate education, which calls for an understanding of the advantages and challenges through experiencing the use of digital videos as learners themselves first.

On the other hand, despite this need and the popularity of videos in EFL classrooms, the studies done on the use of digital video by EFL pre-service teachers are limited in number. Moreover, research on how FLE pre-service teachers use digital videos out of the classroom in the preparation stage for teaching practice is almost non-existent. Thus, there was a need to explore the EFL pre-service teachers' opinions about the use of videos for the preparation of teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT) Methodology courses in the undergraduate programs. The study reported here was designed to take a step to meet this need. The main goal of the study was to investigate the advantages and challenges the use of digital videos recorded during study group activities of EFL pre-service teachers outside the classroom. Main research question asked in this study was:

1) What are EFL prospective teachers' perceptions on the use of digital video recording of their group work activities in the preparation stage for ELT Methodology micro-teachings?
a) Based on the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers, what are the advantages of using digital videos in the preparation stage of micro-teachings
b) Based on the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers, what are the challenges of using digital videos in the preparation stage of micro-teachings

With the help of the data gathered via this study, the educator-researcher hoped to analyze the advantages and challenges of digital videos in EFL teacher education courses with input, comment, and feedback from EFL pre-service teachers. Rest of the paper gives more specific information about the method used in the study, findings of the study, and discussion of the findings.

METHOD

In this section demographic data about the participants, the context in which the study was conducted, and the data collection procedures are presented in addition to the data collection instruments and data analysis methods.

Participants
Participants of the study were 64 prospective EFL teachers who were in their third year of a four year B.A. program in Foreign Language Education at a state university in Turkey. Eight of the participants were male and the rest, 56, were female. The average age of the participants was 21. Participants were given a consent form at the beginning of the survey and they had the right to or not to participate in the survey. Each participant was

given a number in the data collection and data analysis process to keep the identity of the participants confidential and to preserve the rights of the participants. List containing the names of the participants and their assigned number was accessible only by the researcher.

Data collected in Part A of the survey revealed that out of 64 participants 38 perceived themselves as "Intermediate" computer user whereas the rest, 26, perceived themselves as "Advanced" level computer user. None of the participants viewed themselves as "Novice" computer user, which indicated that they had basic computer skills. In terms of video-recording skills, three participants stated that they were "Novice", 45 identified themselves as at "Intermediate" level, and 16 participants viewed themselves having "Advanced" skills in video-recording. Another finding that was revealed in Part A was that all participants, except one, used personal laptops. Thus, participants were not short of technological resources to view their preparation videos (prep-videos). In order to record their prep-videos, more than half of the participants (35) participants used digital camera, 22 used cell phone camera, and seven used in-built laptop camera. Overall participants had the necessary technical skills and technological devices to record and view their prep-videos.

Data Collection Procedure and Instrument

The data collection procedure lasted for two academic semesters. In each semester participants attended ELT Methodology courses and in these courses participants were expected to prepare EFL lesson plans and take part in micro-teachings in the classrooms. Participants prepared their lesson plans in pairs or groups of three; however, pair or group members took turns to act as teachers in the micro-teachings in class. Before micro-teachings, participants were asked to video record their pair/group work and hand the recording in to the educator-researcher on a DVD on the day of the micro-teaching. Participants were asked to video record five to ten minutes of their group work activity to avoid excessive file size and recording/storage problems. Participants were advised to record the important stages of their preparation showing the main decisions they took regarding their lesson plans and micro-teachings. Participants were expected to use English at all times as they were being trained to be future EFL teachers in a university whose medium of instruction is English. All the prep-videos were watched within two weeks after the initial submission of the files and participants were given general oral feedback on the appropriateness of the videos for course purposes by the educator-researcher. At the end of the two semester period, each pair/group submitted five video recordings in five different lesson plans and micro-teaching topics.

At the end of semester two, in order to answer the research questions of the study participants were given a survey. The survey was designed in English and participants wrote their answers in English. This survey was mainly divided into two: Part A: Multiple choice/short answer questions to gather demographic data about the participants, data on participants' perceived computers skills, and types of technological tools that they used for prep-videos and Part B: Open-ended questions to gather data on the perceptions of the participants' about the advantages and challenges of prep-videos. Two open-ended questions that were asked to participants in Part B were:

1. *In your opinion, what are the advantages of recording your preparation sessions before the micro-teachings? Please, support your answer by giving specific examples.*
2. *In your opinion, what are the challenges of recording your preparation sessions before the micro-teachings? Please, support your answer by giving specific examples.*

Data Analysis

The data gathered in Part A of the survey were analyzed through frequency analysis. The participants' answers to open-ended questions in Part B were analyzed through 'Constant Comparison Method' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). All the responses of the participants Part B of the survey were read and analyzed line by line and patterns emerged from the data were analyzed through 'open, axial, and selective coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, in open coding the data were coded to identify each category of meaning emerged from the participants' responses to open-ended questions. As a result of open coding, common themes that

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emerged from the data were listed. In axial coding, open coding themes were analyzed and grouped under similar categories. Finally, most common themes were chosen in selective coding to the point of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hatch, 2002); that is, until no further relevant data regarding categories emerged.

FINDINGS

Responses of the participants to the open-ended questions asked in the survey revealed several advantages and challenges of using videos in EFL pre-service teachers' preparation for their micro-teaching activities. These advantages and challenges will be presented in relation to participants' perceptions and excerpts from their responses to the questions in the following sections.

Participants' Perceptions about the Advantages of Prep-videos
Participants stated several advantages of prep-videos in the survey. Table 1 below shows the top five commonly stated advantages of prep-videos stated by the participants in their answers to Question 1 in Part B. Table 1 also presents the frequency of each advantage calculated at the end of the coding process in qualitative data analysis.

Table 1: Top Five Most Frequently Stated Advantages of Prep-videos

Order	Advantages of Prep-videos	Frequency (*f*)
1st	Allowing self-evaluation and correcting mistakes	19
2nd	Increasing self-confidence by being more prepared for micro-teachings	18
3rd	Improving speaking skills in English	17
4th	Helping to analyze the lesson plans in a better way	16
5th	Increasing collaboration with peers and ensuring fair distribution of work load	13

As it can be seen in Table 1, the first advantage stated by the participants was related to self-evaluation. Recording and watching their prep-videos encouraged participants to evaluate their work objectively. With the help of prep-videos, 19 out of 64 EFL teacher trainees stated that they could see the weak points in their lesson plans because they had to talk about the process they went through. For example, one participant wrote:

"While you are preparing your lesson plan you may not see the faults of the lesson plan but if you vocalize it in some ways like recording, you can see the mistakes and correct them." (Participant 17)

Another participant stated that prep-videos encouraged them to talk about the lesson plan, which helped them to be more prepared for the micro-teachings:
"When we record our preparation sessions, we talk about our lesson plans and what we will do. It makes my micro-teachings easier. I remember what I will say exactly. Sometimes I realize some errors in our lesson plans while recording videos, then I correct them. It is useful in this aspect." (Participant 35)
Second advantage of prep-videos was increasing self confidence among teacher trainees. Eighteen participants wrote about this advantage. One participant said "I know what I am going to do in detail and I feel confident" (Participant 20) and another one stated "I feel more professional while I am recording my lesson plan" (Participant 29). Some participants felt that going through the prep-video process was similar to rehearsing the micro-teachings. For example:
"It helps us to revise what we did and speak about it so I can say recordings were some kind of mini micro-teachings" (Participant 42).

"This enables us to see what we have done for the micro-teachings better by revising it one more time and video-recording helps us too feel more confident in micro-teachings by improving the ideas related to the lesson plan and by developing our speaking." (Participant 11).

"It helps me to revise what we did in our lesson plan and why we put some activities in it. It also helps us as a group to work collaboratively while we are telling what we have integrated to our lesson to be given (Participant 63).

Thanks to the prep-video activity, participants felt more relaxed and comfortable in the actual micro-teaching as they had rehearsed what they would say and do in class. They also had the chance to reflect back on their activities, which made them more aware of the decisions they made as a group and the rationale behind these decisions. Another advantage of prep-videos was improving speaking skills. Participants found prep-videos helpful especially for improving their pronunciation in English. One participant stated that with the help of the prep-video she had a chance to listen to her own speaking English (Participant 61). Another participant talked about this advantage by saying that:
"Good for our pronunciation skills. For example, when I am speaking I can't realize how I spell a specific word, but when I record my voice I find my mistakes (grammatical, pronunciation) and correct it before micro-teaching"(Participant 30).

The fourth top advantage that participants wrote about in relation to prep-videos was on organizing the lesson plans in a more detailed and better way. Participants (f=16) stated that prep-videos were helpful in going over the lesson plan before the actual micro-teaching so that they could see whether the stages, tasks, and activities were linked meaningfully. For example, Participant 1 said:

"It helps us to see the lack of smooth organization of the lesson plan. When we see that we don't turn back to the lesson plan but we are careful about the transition between the stages when we are doing our micro-teachings" (Participant 32).

Another important advantage of recording prep-videos was related to collaboration and fair distribution of workload among group members. Prep-videos made sure that group members came together as the videos would be watched by the instructor. In this way, prep-videos served as a control mechanism in the group work activity, which led to more opportunities for group members to share ideas and opinions.

"If there is no recording sometimes just one member of the groups does everything, but if there is recording everybody has to be there" (Participant 22).

"It provided us to take an equal role in preparing the lesson plan" (Participant 36).

"By means of that (*prep-videos*), group members get together and share their opinions" (Participant 47).

As participant 47 stated without prep-videos, it was not possible for the instructor to know for sure if everyone attended the group meetings, contributed to the preparation of the lesson plan, and supported their group members for the success of micro-teachings. With the help of prep-videos, even teacher trainees who were reluctant in coming to group meetings and/or collaborate with peers had to be present in the preparation stage of the micro-teachings. Another participant also mentioned that prep-videos were useful in increasing the level of collaboration and interaction among group members:

"The video recording task is very useful for the students. Video recording increases collaboration, interaction among group members. They can be aware of what they are doing and revise their work" (Participant 57).

In addition to the top advantages of the prep-videos listed in Table 1, some participants also stated that they enjoyed and had fun in prep-video activity:

"It was enjoyable. We gather and prepare ourselves. I mean not only we prepare our speech, we also prepare ourselves, our clothes, hair. It was funny" (Participant 55).

Thus, being in a group work activity for the prep-videos might have also had a motivating effect among some of the teacher trainees. In summary, EFL pre-service teachers in this study believed that prep-videos were useful because they helped teacher trainees to see/correct their own mistakes, increase their self-confidence, improve their speaking skills in English, analyze their lesson plans in more detail, and increase the amount of collaboration and fair distribution of workload within their study groups.

Participants' Perceptions about the Challenges of Prep-videos

A number of participants (f=21) wrote that prep-videos were not challenging whereas some other participants mentioned several challenges of prep-videos. Top five frequently given answers to Question 2 in Part B by the participants are listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Top Five Most Frequently Given Participant Responses about the Challenges of Prep-videos

Order	Participants' Answers	Frequency (f)
1st	None/No challenge	21
2nd	Recording prep-videos was time-consuming	14
3rd	Not useful if prep-videos were recorded after the preparation is over	13
4th	Video-recording made me nervous	9
5th	Speaking in English in prep-videos was difficult	3

Almost one third of the participants (f=21) said that prep-videos did not have any challenges. Among the participants who pointed out some challenges, the most frequently stated challenge of prep-videos was time-constraints (f=14). Participants stated that designing the lesson plan, preparing the micro-teaching activities, and recording the prep-videos took a lot of time.

"It requires time to record. It may seem just 5 minutes, but sometimes we have to record the video more than two times. Since we can make some mistakes and laugh to some situations we have to record the video again and again" (Participant 32).

In addition, participants stated that it was sometimes difficult to find a day and time suitable for all group members to come together and record the videos. Another challenge that was mentioned by some of the participants (f=13) was related to the ineffectiveness of the prep-videos. This challenge resulted from group members' not following the proper process of group work and prep-video activities. Instead of recording the videos as they prepared the lesson plan, some participants chose to record the video after all the work was done.

"As to be honest, we recorded the videos after we finished the lesson plan, but we pretended we have just started the lesson plan. Because we don't have enough information or expectations without dealing with the lesson plan" (Participant 49).

"It is not so easy to record our process of preparing the lesson plan. Since when we start preparing it, it is easier to continue till we finish without giving any break. So we prepared the video after we finished preparing the lesson plan" (Participant 56).

Participants' comments above show that some teacher trainees failed to notice or chose to ignore one important function of the prep-videos which was having a record of the preparation process as they go along. Instead, some teacher trainees recorded the prep-video after they finished all the work related to the lesson plan because they wanted to focus on the lesson plan first. Most participants who did not benefit from the prep-videos were the ones who did not follow the instructions to the prep-video activity. When they recorded after all the work was done, video recording seemed as an unnecessary activity. Teacher trainees who recorded prep-videos after the preparation was finished were unable to see the value of prep-videos in contrast to the teacher trainees who followed the instructions of the activity by recording they progress as they went along. Being unable to see the benefit of prep-videos may also be the result of participants' focusing too much on what and how they are going to say in the prep-videos. In fact, about another frequently stated challenge (*f*=9) participants wrote that they were nervous and they rehearsed or wrote down what they would say in the recordings, which made the activity unnatural to them:

"Even though it is useful sometimes it is like a burden. I feel anxious. Therefore, I generally memorized what to talk before readings. It was unnatural" (Participant 16).

"It makes me nervous sometimes. I can't say anything or I don't know what to do. I hear my pronunciation, try to correct it and it takes time" (Participant 25).

The last commonly mentioned challenge participants stated was on the use of English, their foreign language, rather than Turkish, their native language.

"Generally we talk in Turkish during preparation, but we are supposed to speak in English in the recordings. Thus we focus on language so much that sometimes we may lose our concentration on our lesson plan" (Participant 13).

"It doesn't sound natural because we are under a kind of stress and talking in English doesn't allow us to behave naturally" (Participant 19)İ

"I saw that I am a bit shy while talking to camera and while speaking in English, I am not efficient enough and I am not comfortable. I understood these by means of video-recordings because it became a mirror which shows my faults, so thanks for this activity (Participant 10).

However, only three participants wrote about this as a challenge. In general, participants did not have a problem with speaking in English as they were advanced speakers of English.

While I am watching my video, I see my pronunciation and I also notice how I enjoy speaking in English" (Participant 18).

Even though the benefits of the prep-videos outweighed their challenges according to the overall analysis done on the perceptions of participants, some difficulties in prep-video activity as presented above were pointed out by the participants. In summary, we can list these challenges as time constraints, unnaturalness of prep-videos if they are recorded after the work is done, causing nervousness as a result of participants' excessive self-monitoring of speech, and the difficulty of using English as a second language.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview and Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study demonstrated that using prep-videos in EFL pre-service teacher education may have both benefits and challenges. The responses of the participants in the study revealed that that the benefits of

the use of prep-videos were relatively more than its challenges. One of the most important benefit and advantage observed by the participants was in relation to self-evaluation and correction. Teacher trainees appreciated the chance to view their lesson plans in an objective way with the help of the videos and having the opportunity to make necessary corrections before the actual micro-teaching. This finding is similar to one of the conclusions Tripp and Rich (2011) made after reviewing "63 studies where participants recorded their own teaching, examined their performance on video and reflected on their performances" (p. 1). Tripp and Rich (2011) stated that "novice teachers reported it was helpful to see other teachers at their same level because they were able to observe their peers' mistakes they would make themselves but failed to recognize previously" (p. 6). Thus, working in groups with peers, discussing the lesson plans and decisions they made to design these lesson plans might have helped teacher trainees to evaluate their work in a better way.

Other important advantages of prep-videos for the participants were the increase in self-confidence, being more comfortable and practicing speaking skills in English before micro-teachings. This finding is parallel to what Wu, Yen and Marek (2011) found in their study on the use of videoconferencing between EFL learners and native speakers of English. The results of their study showed that "well-designed videoconferencing for interaction" increased confidence and improved motivation among EFL learners (p. 126). EFL teacher trainees could be seen as advanced EFL learners who are still in the process of developing their English proficiency levels and prep-videos also helped them to rehearse what they would say in English before the micro-teachings. Increased level of collaboration with fellow teacher trainees was another advantage of prep-videos that participants mentioned. The fact that the teacher trainees went through the preparation for their micro-teachings and prep-video recordings in groups, the whole preparation experience enabled them to spend more time together and engage in more interaction. Liu (2012), who investigated the application of an online videocase discussion community among EFL pre-service and in-service teachers to promote professional development, stressed the importance of social interaction by stating "when developing different roles in discussing teaching practices, the preservice and inservice teachers did not learn individually. Instead, the social interaction among each other fostered both groups of the teachers to self-reflect and construct knowledge of teaching together." (p. 12). Thus, collaborative work in recording and viewing videos in teacher education may be more advantageous than individual work on the part of the teacher trainees.

Even though participants stated that they benefitted from the prep-video activity in general, they also stated several challenges they faced in the process of recording and viewing the videos. Some of the challenges were related to affective factors since participants feared of making mistakes in the recordings and felt nervous. Some participants also stated that micro-teaching activities required a lot of time to prepare and conduct and prep-videos caused extra work and time. Some participants developed negative attitudes toward prep-videos because they believed that recordings were "unnatural" or "artificial". This perception may the result of participants' not following the requirements of the prep-videos. Participants who believed that prep-videos were "unnatural" also stated that they recorded the prep-videos not as they were preparing their lesson plans, but after they finished their preparations. In a way, they took the "short cut" to record the videos, which prevented these participants from enjoying the process and seeing the value of prep-videos. Participants who followed the guidelines to prep-videos developed more positive attitudes towards the prep-video activity and they stated that they prep-videos were effective in helping them to be more prepared for micro-teachings.

Implications for EFL Pre-service Teacher Education

Teacher educators who wish to increase self-evaluation, reflection, collaboration, and interaction among pre-service teachers can use digital videos in the preparation stage of the micro-teaching activities. To increase the effectiveness of prep-videos, rationale behind these activities should be introduced to teacher trainees. Desirable and correct use of prep-videos can be shown as samples to prospective teachers so that the guidelines, nature, and value of prep-videos can be observed as well as implemented by teacher trainees. Kong, Shroff, and Hung (2009), who reported "on the development of a web enabled video system for encouraging student teachers to reflect on their teaching performance" (p. 554), support this idea by suggesting that:

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Teacher training institutions should inform student teachers clearly about the rationale and process, and also remind them about the potential benefits and noteworthy issues, when using the system to scaffold the self reflection process. These initiatives help to increase student teachers' interest in and willingness to use the system (p. 555).

The quality of prep-videos can be assessed and rewarded in the grading system so that the "short cut" behavior observed in the work of some participants in this study can be avoided. In addition, prep-videos can be available in an online environment to allow peer assessment and collaborative feedback sessions. This way, teacher trainees can see each other's videos and learn from each other. Further study and research is needed to investigate whether teacher trainees would perceive prep-videos differently in other institutions and/or teacher education programs. As the participants in this study were EFL pre-service teachers, teacher trainees in other disciplines may have different view and applications with regards to prep-videos. Harnandez-Ramos (2011) states that "video is a natural 'bridge' to teachers interested in exploring interdisciplinary collaborations" (p. 37). Teacher trainees from different but related disciplines may share their videos and the effects of this kind of collaboration and interaction can also be studied as further research. Wildner (1999) claims:

…even though there are still many questions left unanswered as to how advanced technologies can be used most effectively in the FL (*Foreign Language*) classroom and as to how and by whom FL teachers should receive training in the use of teachnology, FL programs with teacher education programs have to react to the changing professional profiles of the workplace in globally oriented, information-based societies (p. 230).

It has been over a decade since Wildner (1999) made the claim above; however, the need to expose foreign language pre-service teachers to technology and train them in the effective use of it still remains. Digital video is only one but an essential technological tool in both teaching and learning. Therefore, one of the goals of teacher educators and researchers should be to continue exploring the effective use of digital videos in relation to pre-service teacher education in a various educational settings and a variety of participant profiles.

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