

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORACY SKILLS IN AN EFL CONTEXT USING YOUTUBE VIDEOS: A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of YouTube videos in the oracy skills of a young learner through the implementation of differentiated instruction. The research which was conducted was a case study and qualitative data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. Action research was also conducted through a series of ten YouTube-video based lessons grounded upon the principles of differentiated instruction. The efficiency of the methods and approaches which were implemented were verified by the results of the pre- and post-listening and speaking test which were both applied before and after the intervention of the ten lessons. To triangulate the study, qualitative research was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews to the student and his mother before and after the intervention. The findings showed that there was an improvement in the student's performance as regards the listening, the speaking, and the grammar-lexis structure skills.

**Keywords:** YouTube, oracy skills, video, technology, case study

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This research study endeavored to investigate the enhancement of oracy skills through the use of YouTube videos to a fifteen-year-old English language learner of B2 level with the application of differentiated instruction. In this realm, specific research questions were formulated:

1. Do YouTube-based video lessons enhance listening skills?
2. Do YouTube-based video lessons enhance speaking skills?
3. Can the student improve the sentence structure and formation through YouTube-based video lessons?

In order to answer to the aforementioned questions a case study was conducted. A Case Study methodology provides tools to the researcher to thoroughly examine complex phenomena within their contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2015). Furthermore, this research was also an action research as the researchers are also the teachers who decided to examine their own teaching situations. Namely, a series of ten differentiated YouTube-video based lessons were taught to the student in order to refine his oracy skills. A performance listening and speaking skills test was implemented before and after the intervention so as to scrutinize upon the student's overall performance with regard to the aforementioned modalities. To triangulate this research,

so as to ensure its validity and reliability, a qualitative research was also conducted through the use of Semi-structured Interviews to the boy and his mother. Differentiated instruction was also conducted as it facilitated the process of learning and ameliorated student's oracy skills.

## **2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. The Oracy Skills in EFL**

Oracy is the ability to express ideas effectively, understand the spoken language and to respond appropriately. The term was coined in 1965 by Andrew Wilkinson in order to highlight the significance of speaking and listening skills which were neglected according to him until then, and to acknowledge oracy as being of equal importance to literacy and numeracy (Wilkinson, 1965). He defined oracy as the ability to speak and understand spoken language (Wilkinson, 1962). Oracy is of major significance since it constitutes the basic form of communication among people which enables them to express themselves, their inner thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas. Spoken language is a unique characteristic of the human species and a key to our evolution and civilization (Tomasello, 2010). People develop oral competence gradually and learn from interactions with other people (Kaldahl et al, 2019). Spoken communication is foundational to education, in general, and language learning, in particular. It is the dominant way in which teachers instruct and students learn and develop cognitively from teachers' or peers' responses (Alexander, 2012). Hughes (2002) claims that interaction amongst students or between teacher and students has an impact on language learning. Talk lies at the heart of language learning; it assists thinking and that means it assists learning. Vygotsky (1962) acknowledged the dynamic connection between language and thought. He recognized that speech is central to developing new ways of thinking and communication with a more skilled person, peer or adult, in the 'zone of proximal development', which is the gap between what learners can do on their own and what they can accomplish with guidance, constitutes interaction integral to learning (Jones, 2016). The term oracy underlines the strong and bidirectional relationship between the skills of speaking and listening. In more detail, oracy is a two-way process between interlocutors and as such, it involves the productive skill of speaking since a form of linguistic output is demanded, and the receptive skill of listening in which the input is received and understood (Kaldahl et al, 2019). The inter-relatedness between the aforementioned skills is complex and one skill supports the development of the other (Kaldahl et al, 2019).

Developing oracy is considered beneficial for learners during school, and beyond. The ability to interact orally well and according to the context is regarded as a significant component of students' communication skills (Jackson, 2014). In this globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, skills such as critical thinking, innovation, collaboration, problem-solving and global communication are essential and the ability to communicate orally in the English language is highly appreciated in all fields of life (Jackson, *ibid*). As English is the 'lingua franca' of the age, the skill to articulate ideas, negotiate and interact using the English language will lead to innumerable opportunities in education and the workplace (Goh, 2014). Even though literacy skills are still a requisite, the need for oracy skills, for international communication is, nowadays, imperative (Goh, *ibid*).

### **2.2. Oracy and the Use of Videos and YouTube**

The teacher is required to create an encouraging and motivating environment for the students to feel intrigued during language instruction. Nunan (1999) suggests that teachers and researchers should assure that all learners have fair and impartial opportunities to promote their interpersonal speaking and learning skills through small or large group discussions. From this perspective, the oracy class can benefit from the use of videos. Sherman (2003) defines videos as today's medium and states that people nowadays spend more time using audio-visual materials rather than printed ones. The combination of two different senses seeing and hearing arouses interest and makes language presentation more comprehensible since it enables learners to study non-verbal elements such as posture and gesture (Slaouti&Kanelopoulou, 2005). Canning-Wilson's (2000) survey certifies that students like learning languages through videos and confirms that visual clues assist comprehension of the material.

In this technological age, however, the video is not limited to television. The emergence of the Internet gave a chance to instructors to apply online resources to traditional classes and to facilitate language learning by making it meaningful and interesting. YouTube is regarded as one of the most efficient internet-based educational tools to stimulate students to learn through the videos that are presented to them (Deng &Yeun, 2010). It offers various kinds of video content from video clips, to films and even videos that are made by YouTube users some of which can be highly exploited in class. The teachers have the opportunity to select the videos that are suitable to pupils' needs and engage them in meaningful and motivating tasks so as to improve their oracy skills in a communicative framework.

YouTube is an authentic source for class materials (Lee, 2010). In such an authentic context the students

come to grips with real-life situations and are able to explore different cultures in a challenging and invigorating way (Cakir, 2006 cited in Argawati, 2014). Barrs (2012) states that this mode of instruction promotes cross-cultural development given that users from different cultures can upload videos on the platform, comment, share, edit and discuss. According to Alimemaj (2010) YouTube can boost autonomy because it triggers learners to watch clips or videos constantly even outside the classroom as application is available in their smart phones. Watkins (2011) also confirms that utilizing a YouTube video inside and outside the class can build authentic vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, conversation, and critical skills. Screening YouTube videos is a motivating and exciting way to learn faster in a stress-free environment without the limitation of the traditional classes where the educator is the dominant figure (Alhammai, 2013; Snelson & Perkins, 2009). Many researchers worldwide have affirmed the positive impact of YouTube on language learning (Barrs, 2012), on speaking skills (Alhamami, 2013; Silviyanti, 2014), on the enhancement of fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and content (Riswandi, 2016). YouTube is considered an innovation in learning which can retain pupils' attention, enable them to remember the input better and interact willingly and without restraint (Wagner, 2007). Students love the social media and YouTube because it functions as a learning tool that enhances and refines oracy skills in the 21st century.

### **3. THE RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1. The Aim of the Research**

The purpose of this research study was to add insight into what extent the use of YouTube-video based lessons can refine the oracy skills through the application of differentiated instruction to a fifteen-year-old boy who is an English language learner of the B2 level in order to enhance his listening and speaking skills. Based on the purpose of this research, the following research questions were set:

1. Do YouTube-based video lessons enhance listening skills?
2. Do YouTube-based video lessons improve speaking skills?
3. Can the student improve his sentence structure and formation through YouTube-based video lessons?

#### **3.2. The Research Method**

For the needs of this particular research, a case study was conducted in order to answer to the aforementioned research questions regarding the development of oracy skills in an EFL context using YouTube videos. A case study is an in-depth and detailed examination of a specific situation, which will provide reference of the student's progress, and will permit a 'hypothesis' design, and further analysis (Gerring, 2011). Generally, the basic principle of a case study is that it attempts to elucidate a set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were applied, and with what outcomes (Yin, 1989 cited in Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). To triangulate this research so as to assure its validity and reliability qualitative research was applied in the form of semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach can provide the researcher with the potential to depict multiple realities and to encourage a subjective truth (Bogdan & Biklen in Castellan, 2010). Interviews permit the researcher to gain knowledge of the interviewee's world and to understand the meaning or the nature of the participant's day-to-day experiences (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). There are three different types, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Polit & Beck, 2006). In the specific research semi-structured interviews (SSI) were applied as a tool for the collection of data. The data that is induced from SSI can provide rich, comparable and reliable qualitative data (Palmer & Bolderston, *ibid*). The present study can also be characterized as an action research because the researchers are also an instructors who explore their personal teaching situations. Action research is an alternative, authentic and meaningful way to carry out research in the educational context in which the teachers/researchers participate in all the stages of the research (Hine, 2013).

#### **3.3. Pre- and Post-Tests**

Pre-test and post-test design is employed in experimental and quasi-experimental research in order to determine knowledge before and after the application of an approach, and it evaluates the degree of the development achieved (Dinitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Pre-tests are administered before the beginning of the lesson, they are mainly diagnostic and learners are not expected to excel in them. They measure the pre-existing knowledge, they reveal the pupil's learning level, and inform the instructor about the topics that require further elaboration (Kuehn, 2019). Post-tests are generally identical to the pre-tests which were assigned and they are administered directly after the completion of the intervention. In the specific research a State Certificate of Language Proficiency (SCLP exam or Kratiko Pistopietiko Glossomathias-Kpg Exam) listening and speaking test of a B2 level was administered to the learner.

## 4.THE RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Pre- and Post-Tests Results

The pre-test was conducted before the application of the intervention so as to determine the subject's competency level. Concerning the listening section, the learner's performance was very good in both parts A and B. More specifically, in part A 13 out of the 15 items were correct (86,6%) while in part B he had completed 8 out of 10 items correctly (80%) and his total score was 83%. Regarding the speaking part of the pre-test his performance was evaluated on assessment criteria which were grouped under two main categories, namely criteria for assessing task completion and language use (Karavas, 2009). Each criterion was accompanied by a 5-Point Likert Scale in order to minimize subjectivity in marking open-ended items and activities. In this framework, his overall speaking performance could be characterized as moderately satisfactory. In respect to activity one (1) (Dialogue, in the form of an interview) the student had difficulty in responding to the last question, there was hesitation and stuttering and he used his mother tongue in his attempt to ask for clarifications three times. Although in activity two (2) (one-sided talk, based on visual clues) his performance was good, as he developed ideas adequately for the social context which he was called upon to talk, he used personal pronouns incorrectly six times. As regards activity three (3) (Mediation, based on a Greek source text) his performance was average as the student mostly translated rather than relayed Greek input. Even though he was comprehensible, he used only a few ideas from the Greek text.

The post-test was identical to the pre-test and its main aim was to reveal the differences regarding the learner's performance due to the integration of YouTube-video based lessons into the EFL instruction. The post-test findings present an immense interest as they show improvement in both listening and speaking parts which indicate the positive impact of YouTube lessons on fostering the learner's oracy skills. Namely, in the listening part the student scored 100% in part A, and 90% ,in Part B, which indicates an improvement of 13,4% in activity one (1) and 10% in activity two (2) in comparison to the pre-test results (Table 1). Overall, there was an advance of 11,7% in the student's performance regarding listening skills as table 2 illustrates.

**Table 1: Scores in Activities 1 & 2 in Pre- and Post-Listening Test**

	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
Activity 1	86,6% (13/15)	100% (15/15)	13,4%
Activity 2	80% (8/10)	90% (9/10)	10%

**Table 2: Total Scores in Pre- and Post-Listening Test**

Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
83,3%	95%	11,7%

Speaking was the part with the most evident development. In activity one (1) and two (2), the student responded to all the questions in a fully satisfactory manner. He was comprehensible without any effort throughout the test. In activity one (1) the student responded fully satisfactorily as he answered all the questions fluently and accurately. In activity two(2) his performance was also adequate as his only error was the wrong use of a verb tenses that occurred twice. Regarding activity 3 his performance was fairly satisfactory because he tried to relay information in the target language. Overall, in relation to the quality of language production there was an evident improvement in terms of pronunciation and intonation, lexical range, fluency, cohesion, coherence and, communication strategies so as to avoid a breakdown in interaction this time. The findings show a distinction between the pre-test and the post-test score, thus, it could be concluded that there was an improvement in the use of YouTube-video based lessons in teaching oracy skills.

### 4.2. Analysis of the Results of the Semi-Structured Interviews

The data derived from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and grouped into axes each of which referred to a particular thematic area. According to Creswell (2014) semi-structured interviews could be examined if the researcher categorized the questions through axial coding. The latter is a technique that relates data together so as to disclose categories and codes rooted with participants' opinions (Allen, 2017). The responses from the semi-structured interviews, before the intervention, were classified into four axes each addressing a specific thematic framework whereas the answers of the semi-structured interviews,

after the intervention, were grouped into two axes referring to a particular thematic area.

#### 4.2.1. The Semi-Structured Interviews before the Intervention

The first axis aimed at collecting demographic information, the participants were asked general questions (Laforest, 2009) to break the ice and to familiarize them with the process. Concerning the educational level of the interviewees, the mother stated that she had graduated from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, from the School of Early Childhood Education, whereas the student was attending the third class of Junior High School. The mother also stated that she is a proficient user of the English language as she holds a C2 level English Language certificate and the student had been learning the target language for five years at his State school while, at the same time, he also attended English private lessons at home. Both participants affirmed that the mother helped the student in his English homework mainly by providing ideas for his writing tasks or by explaining unfamiliar vocabulary to him. The father of the family works in the private sector, he has studied Technology in a Technological Institution and he does not speak English (Figure 1).

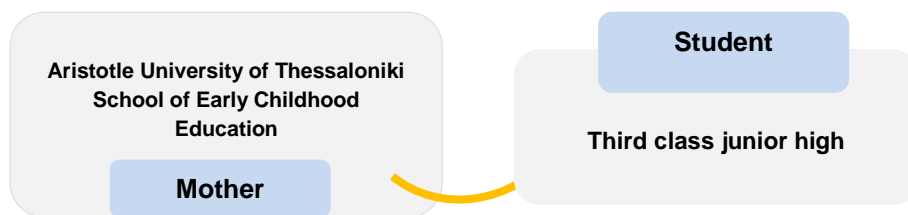


Figure 1: Qualifications of Participants

The second axis revolved around general questions about the student's education and his attitude towards the English lesson. According to the answers provided, the latter likes school in general and as regards the English lesson he has a positive attitude towards it, he finds the vocabulary and grammar easy to learn while he faces difficulties in his speaking (Ur, 1996) and writing skills. The mother claimed that even though the student expresses his difficulties regarding the English language to her, he does not seem to be too concerned about the issue. The student, on the other hand, mentioned that he tried to work harder on the language areas which were more problematic by learning fixed statements and sentences by heart and by devoting more time to his speaking, and writing tasks (Figure 2).

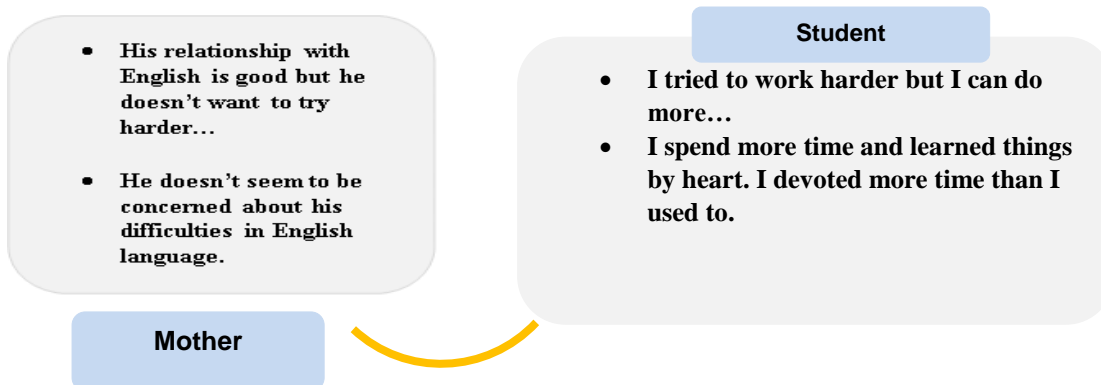
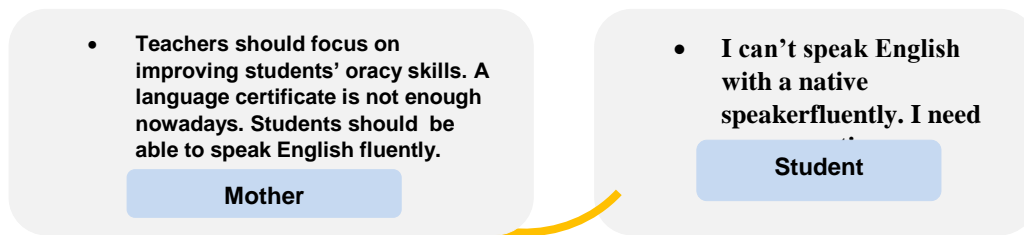


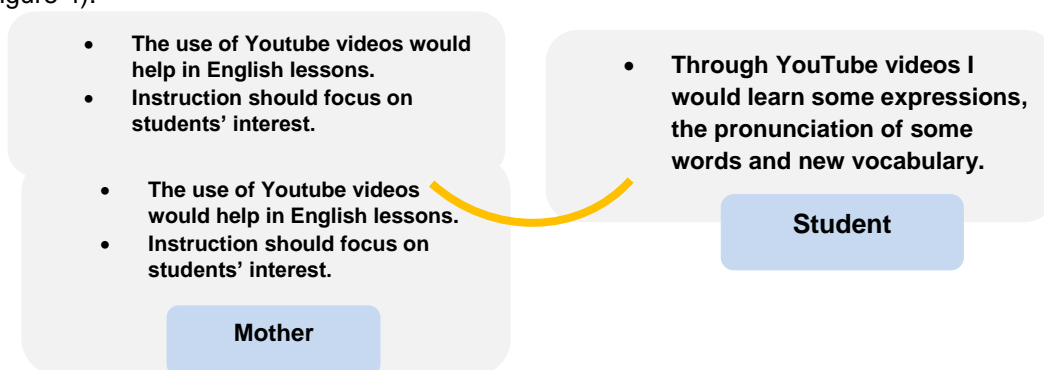
Figure 2: Exploring Student's Attitudes towards the English Lesson

As far as the third axis was concerned, the questions explored the English lesson focusing mainly on oracy skills (Figure 3). In particular, the mother expected English language teachers to help the student learn how to communicate efficiently in the target language. According to her, a language certificate is of little value nowadays unless the student is able to interact in English (Goh, 2014). She contended that teachers should insist on teaching oracy skills and to speak only in English during the tasks. As regards the listening skills the student claimed that his weaknesses, in the specific modality, could be dealt by watching videos, films, and by doing more listening tasks (Chang & Chang, 2014). Concerning his speaking skills, he admitted that he cannot speak fluently with a native speaker and that it is necessary to improve his speaking skills (Ur, 1996). The participants' views converge with regard to oracy skills since they consider that further practice is required (Alexander, 2012).



**Figure 3: English Language and Oracy Skills**

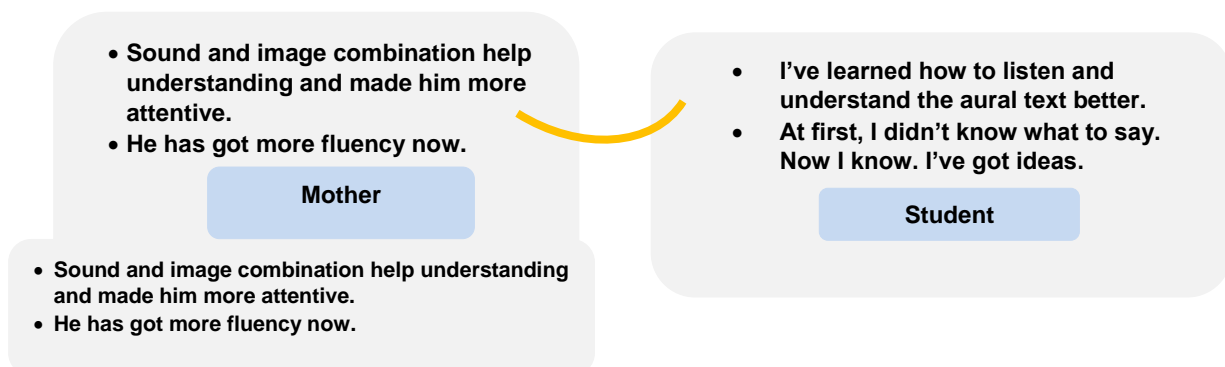
The fourth axis focused on technology and education. The student stated that his relationship with technology is very good as he uses the Internet for approximately three hours a day. He also added that he likes watching videos on YouTube and he considered the integration of YouTube videos in the English lessons an interesting option because the platform can spark variety (Albahlal, 2019). The above are in line with the mother's perceptions, who apart from advocating the assistance of YouTube videos in contemporary EFL teaching (Jalaluddin, 2016) because students are keen on learning with the use of technology (Canning-Wilson, 2000), she also contended that instruction should focus on students' interests and predilections (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Technology and Education**

#### 4.2.2. The Semi-Structured Interviews after the Intervention

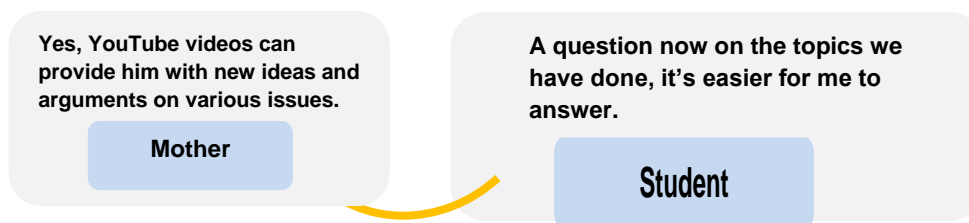
The first axis investigated the changes that were observed in the student with regard to oracy skills. Namely, the mother replied that the student liked YouTube-video based lessons because the whole procedure was a challenge for him. She also stressed that his listening skills were improved because the combination of image and sound, that videos offer, made the student pay more attention during the lesson and helped him understand the material (Oddone, 2011). In addition, according to the mother his speaking skills were also enhanced mainly in terms of fluency (Riswandi, 2016). The student found YouTube-video based lessons more enjoyable "...instead of doing the same things over and over again, we do something different through the use of YouTube videos. I learnt more things and in a more pleasant manner". He stated that his oracy skills improved because after the intervention he felt more confident than before to interact with a native speaker. He also stated that his pronunciation was ameliorated (Wagner, 2007) after the ten lessons. Finally, both participants would like YouTube to be integrated into his English language lessons, ideally once a week, so that he could practice and improve his oracy skills (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Changes Observed in Terms of Oracy Skills**

On the second axis participants were asked questions concerning the YouTube video's impact in EFL

instruction (Figure 6). According to the student YouTube videos could function as a source of ideas and arguments on various contemporary issues and could also broaden his intellectual horizons, "...before the lessons I didn't have so many ideas. Now I have lots of ideas". The above are in line with the mother's perspective on the issue. Furthermore, as reported by the mother YouTube videos should be integrated in EFL since she regards them as a "convenient and smart" solution; the student, on the other hand, believes that it is hard to incorporate YouTube videos in the school curriculum because the majority of Greek schools lack the necessary equipment for their implementation in the English lesson. Finally, he claimed that he is not willing to watch YouTube videos on his own initiative in order to boost his oracy skills, yet, his mother stated that he will do it unintentionally because he enjoys watching videos and using technology in general (Alimemaj, 2010).



**Figure 6: YouTube Impact on EFL**

## **5.DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Revisiting the Research Questions**

Based on the findings presented in section 4(above), YouTube videos appear to develop and refine oracy skills while they can also bolster sentence structure and formation with the aid of differentiated instruction. The results of the pre- and post-test, the ten lessons of the action research and the semi-structured interviews provided the answers to the three questions of this research study.

#### **1. Do YouTube-video based lessons enhance listening skills?**

The first research question revolved around the efficiency of YouTube videos for the development of listening skills. The ten lessons of the action research, the findings of the semi-structured interviews and the difference in the listening pre- and post-test scores showed an improvement on the particular modality. The ten lessons refined his aural skills as the student gained confidence in tackling authentic off-air listening input. The aforementioned are in line with the findings of the interviews in which the participants (namely the mother and the student) also stated that YouTube videos affected the student's listening ability because the picture was highly helpful with regard to comprehension (Godwin-Jones, 2012). Finally, the pre- and post-listening tests verify this result as the learner performed better in the post-test.).

#### **2. Do YouTube-based video lessons improve speaking skills?**

The second question focused on the effectiveness of YouTube on the speaking modality. According to the data collected from the ten lessons, the semi-structured interviews and the comparison of the pre- and post-speaking test results, it could be concluded that the application of YouTube can significantly refine the student's speaking skills. Based on the action research results his self-confidence, concerning the speaking tasks was gradually boosted, because he started retrieving and applying the video's information in order to express himself. Moreover, the YouTube-based video lessons created a relaxed atmosphere that lowered his anxiety, in relation to his speaking performance, which in turn aided in the enhancement of his oracy skills.

#### **3. Can the student improve the sentence structure and formation through YouTube-based video lessons?**

The third research question examined whether the student can enhance sentence structure and formation through YouTube videos. In particular, according to the ten lessons of the action research, the student had some grammatical errors which were diminished as time went by and the intervention lessons continued. The aforementioned were due to the fact that he felt more relaxed as time went by and that he gradually became aware of them and corrected himself. The semi-structured interviews confirmed this finding, because the student claimed that he felt more confident after the intervention lessons and he stated that he could interact with a native speaker much better than before. The pre- and post-test results, also, validate these findings. His performance, concerning sentence structure and formation, had obviously improved as during the post-test the student responded very satisfactorily regarding grammatical structures and sentence patterns. Sporadic errors might have occurred but there was, in general, a high degree of grammatical

accuracy.

## 5.2. Limitations and Proposals for Further Research

The existence of some limitations cannot be dismissed. The current research limits itself to one student, thus the results cannot be generalized (Anisimora & Thomson, 2012). Furthermore, another limitation is the fact that the study lasted for only one month, which may not be an adequate time span. A longitudinal research may be more informative regarding the effects of YouTube-video based lessons on speaking and listening skills. Yet, the successful completion of the lesson plans can function as an outset for further research to be conducted in the field of YouTube integration in EFL focusing, not only on oracy skills, but also on literacy, vocabulary, and grammar skills. A final suggestion would be to conduct further research which will focus on teachers' perceptions as well as students' perspectives concerning the application of YouTube on language development.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research focused on one English language student of a B2 level (to whom differentiated instruction was applied), and his mother who participated in the semi-structured interviews. In order to achieve the aims which were set, a combination of research methods were applied, to triangulate the research. The qualitative data collected, proved that YouTube-video based lessons were beneficial to the student as the latter advanced his speaking and listening skills and exhibited greater motivation towards the English lessons. Overall, the application of YouTube videos improved the student's oracy skills. Therefore, YouTube videos constitute an effective and valid source to teach and refine oracy skills in a meaningful and enjoyable manner.

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