



Use of Social Media for Productive Skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)¹

Mehmet BİRĞÜN², Yusuf POLAT³

Abstract

Productive skills, speaking and writing, are crucial yet quite difficult skills to master in language learning. For this reason, various methods and techniques are incorporated to enhance speaking and writing skills. This research investigates high school students' perceptions about the use of social media (YouTube and Blogger) for enhancing productive skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning during the hybrid education process at the time of Covid-19 pandemic. Students were given a choice between traditional workbook tasks and creating blog posts on Blogger or videos on YouTube throughout a semester. Case study, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. In this context, convenience sampling, one of the purposive sampling types, was adopted to form the study group, and the study group consisted of 32 participants studying in a private high school during Covid-19 pandemic. Before the implementation began, students were trained on preparing digital content on YouTube and Blogger. Afterwards, students prepared their own digital content throughout the semester. At the end of the implementation, the data were collected via a questionnaire on Google Forms. Descriptive analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data. The study examines and uncovers a generally positive reception towards the use of Youtube and Blogger for enhancing productive skills in language education. However, variations in responses highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of its effectiveness. This research contributes to discussions on modernizing language education by revealing both the potential benefits and pitfalls of utilizing social media platforms for language skill development.

Keywords: Writing, speaking, productive skills, English as a Foreign Language, EFL, homework, social media.

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce'de Üretken Beceriler için Sosyal Medya Kullanımı¹

Özet

Üretken beceriler olan konuşma ve yazma, dil öğreniminde çok önemli ancak ustalaşması oldukça zor becerilerdir. Bu nedenle, konuşma ve yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için çeşitli yöntem ve teknikler kullanılmaktadır. Bu araştırma, lise öğrencilerinin Covid-19 pandemisi döneminde hibrit eğitim sürecinde Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce (EFL) öğreniminde üretken becerileri geliştirmek için sosyal medya (YouTube ve Blogger) kullanımına ilişkin algılarını araştırmaktadır. Öğrencilere bir dönem boyunca geleneksel çalışma kitabı ödevleri ile Blogger'da blog gönderileri veya YouTube'da videolar oluşturma arasında seçim yapma şansı verilmiştir. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan durum çalışması kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda çalışma grubunun oluşturulmasında amaçlı örneklem türlerinden biri olan uygun örneklem yöntemi benimsenmiş ve çalışma grubu pandemi döneminde özel bir lisede öğrenim gören 32 katılımcıdan oluşmuştur. Uygulama başlamadan önce öğrencilere YouTube ve Blogger üzerinden dijital içerik hazırlama eğitimi verilmiştir. Sonrasında öğrenciler dönem boyunca kendi dijital içeriklerini hazırlamışlardır. Uygulamanın sonunda veriler Google Formlar üzerinden bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Verileri analiz etmek için betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, dil eğitiminde üretken becerileri geliştirmek için Youtube ve Blogger kullanımına

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² Dr., Kütahya Health Sciences University, Kütahya/Türkiye, mehmet.birgun@ksbu.edu.tr / emiprofessionaldevelopment@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0001-6487-3554

³ Dr., Ministry of National Education, Gaziantep / Türkiye, yusufpolat58@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002- 1927-1965

yönelik genel olarak olumlu bir yaklaşımın olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, yanıtlardaki farklılıklar, etkinliğinin incelikli bir şekilde anlaşılması ihtiyacını vurgulamaktadır. Bu araştırma, dil becerilerinin geliştirilmesi için sosyal medya platformlarından yararlanmanın potansiyel faydalarını ve tuzaklarını ortaya koyarak dil eğitiminin modernleştirilmesi tartışmalarına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazma, Konuşma, Üretken Beceriler, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce, EFL, Ödev

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Introduction

Language education has come a long way since the adoption of technology in traditional language classrooms. To meet the needs of learners, educators have made use of numerous technological tools and practices to facilitate language learning. One such tool is the social media and it addresses the unique characteristics of today's students, known as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001), since these students have been raised in a digital world. They are quite different from the generations preceding them in a range of ways (Seemiller & Grace, 2017), and the way they learn is one of them. Homework, on the other hand, is found to be closely associated with students' achievement and learning in language education (Amiryousefi, 2016; Chang et al., 2014). Furthermore, studies have revealed that there is a relationship between grade level and the effectiveness of homework (Paudel, 2012; Wallinger, 2000). Therefore, the use of social media has been increasingly recognized as a valuable homework tool for enhancing productive skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Research has shown that social media platforms can be effectively utilized to improve writing skills among primary students (Nee et al., 2019; Yunus et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of fostering media literacy skills in the EFL virtual classroom, where social media has enabled successful cross-cultural communication among students (Bilotserkovets et al., 2021). Furthermore, the literature review has indicated that social media can have a positive impact on language learning, including improving motivation and academic writing (Akpan, 2021). Additionally, the use of social media has been found to enhance communication skills among EFL learners (Mitu, 2020; Sun et al., 2017). The effectiveness of using social media as a learning tool has been explored in various contexts, such as in the EFL setting, where it has been found to facilitate discussion groups and support language learning activities (Li,2017, Özhan, 2022). Additionally, the implementation of social media in the classroom, particularly through microblogging platforms, has shown possibilities and challenges for language learning, indicating its potential for enhancing language skills (Le Baron Earle, 2013). Overall, the literature supports the use of social media for productive skills in EFL, highlighting its potential to enhance writing, communication, and language learning in both traditional and digital learning environments. However, it is essential to consider the challenges and cultural aspects associated with the use of social media for language learning, emphasizing the need for further research and exploration of best practices in integrating social media into EFL pedagogy.

In the field of EFL education, mastering speaking and writing skills poses a challenge. As educators, it is of great importance to search for innovative approaches to homework that will enable students to practice these vital skills. One of the promising ways to achieve this goal could be the use of social media platforms. Given that today's learners are already familiar with such platforms, it may yield significant results for the field of EFL. The main purpose of this study is to investigate high school students' perceptions of the integration of social media, especially YouTube and Blogger, into their English learning experience as part of their homework assignments. Therefore, the research questions of the study are as follow:

What are the benefits of blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

What are the reason for choosing blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

What are the difficulties while doing blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

What are the future blogger and youtube assignments topics for students as part of t students' homework?

Method

This study uses a qualitative case study research design to explore high school students' perceptions of using YouTube and Blogger for EFL assignments during the hybrid education model in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Participants

The sampling method chosen for this research is convenience sampling, one of the types of purposive sampling. The idea behind purposive sampling is to focus on people with certain characteristics that can better assist relevant research (Etikan et al., 2016). The participants selected for the research are 9th grade Science and Technology high school students enrolled in EFL courses. The participant group of this study consists of 32 students in total.

Data Collection and Analysis

As for the procedure, for one semester, students engaged in a homework structure that allowed them to choose between traditional workbook assignments and productive tasks on YouTube and Blogger. These productive assignments were given consecutively each week as an alternative to traditional workbook assignments. To ensure a structured approach and encourage students for the productive assignments, the researcher provided students with pre-determined samples and structures related to specific topics for each YouTube and Blogger assignment. The students shared their digital assignments with the rest of their classmates during the online lessons, and they were encouraged to comment on their classmates' content. When the lessons were face-to-face, the digital assignments shared with the researchers were shared with the rest of the class via Whatsapp groups of the classes in order to enable them with a natural interaction similar to that of the online lessons.

The primary data collection method utilized in this study is qualitative, and data is gathered through the administration of a structured questionnaire delivered via Google Forms. The questionnaire used in this study was developed by the researchers and is tailored to the objectives of the research. It incorporates a combination of questionnaire questions to gauge students' perceptions quantitatively and open-ended questions that allow participants to provide detailed qualitative insights. While preparing the form, the opinions of experts in English language teaching were consulted, and then the form was given its final form.

Descriptive analysis method was used to analyze the raw data obtained in the research. Descriptive analysis is used to process data that do not require in-depth analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). With descriptive analysis, the findings introducing the individuals interviewed are evaluated, the data are tried to be defined through content analysis, the data that are found to be similar and related to each other are interpreted by bringing them together within the framework of certain concepts and themes (Karataş,2015)

Credibility of the Research Study

In order to increase the quality of the study, each stage of the research was explained in detail and detailed descriptions were made. The method, participants, data collection tool and the reasons why data analysis was preferred were explained. During the data collection process, long-term interaction was provided with the students. Expert opinion was consulted in the preparation of data collection tool. The data were analyzed separately by the researchers and then they came together and worked

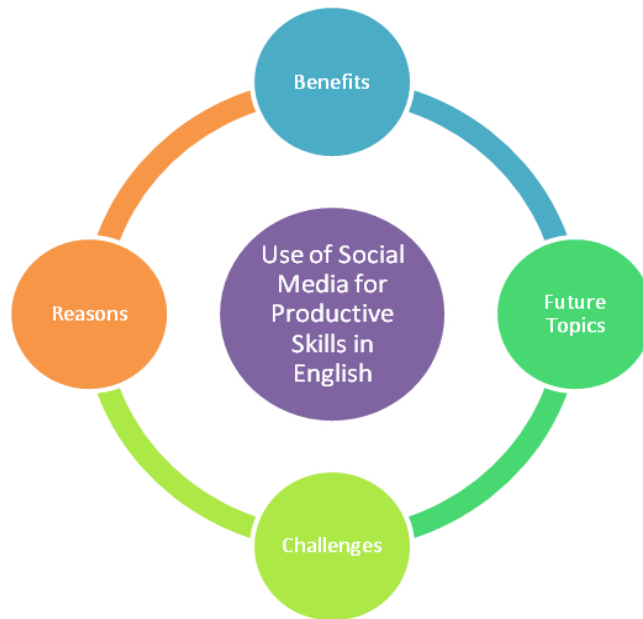
together until a consensus was reached. At every stage of the study, the necessary sensitivity was tried to be shown to be consistent.

Findings

The research findings were evaluated in the context of students' views on the productive language skills of youtube and blogger applications. The findings of the study are presented as themes, categories and sub-categories. Within the scope of the research, four themes reflecting the sub-problems were obtained. These are presented in Figure 1. Detailed findings, direct quotations and observation findings related to the themes are divided into subheadings.

Figure 1

Themes on the Use of Social Media for Productive Skills in English



As seen in Figure 1, four themes were obtained from the student forms. These themes are “benefits, challenges, reasons and future topics. Each theme is discussed in detail below.

What are the benefits of blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

The findings obtained from the participants' explanations regarding blogger and YouTube applications are presented in Table 1 as categories and subcategories.

Table 1

Students' opinions on the benefits of youtube and blogger

Sub-category	Codes
Benefits	Vocabulary building
	Development of speech

	Establishing new sentences
	Socializing with friends
	Facilitating vocabulary memorization
	Development of writing
	Love for language learning
	Language practice
	Interaction in English
	Peripheral learning

As seen in Table 1, the participants' opinions on the benefits of blogger and YouTube applications, became evident under the sub-categories of "vocabulary building, development of speech, socializing with friends, facilitating vocabulary memorization, development of writing, love for language learning, language practice, interaction in English, peripheral learning". It is seen that youtube and blogger applications are beneficial and it can be stated that these practices motivate students. Some participants' opinions on this subject are given below:

“I think blogger homework is more fun and more effective.”

“While doing this assignment, I learn both by writing and by reading what I write. For this reason, I think this assignment is very important for my English development.”

“I prefer blog assignments because I think that most of the phrases I use in the blog will help me in spoken language in daily life.”

“Writing paragraphs in English with YouTube and blogger applications made me have more fun.”

Almost all participants stated that these youtube and blogger applications were useful. While these practices motivated students in one context, they also contributed to the development of their autonomy skills in language learning.

What are the reason for choosing blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

Findings obtained from the participants' explanations regarding blogger and YouTube applications are presented in subcategories in Table 2 under the reasons category.

Table 2

Students' opinions on the reasons for choosing youtube and blogger as part of their assignments

Sub-category	Codes
Reasons	Fun and fruitful
	Like taking videos
	Time availability for taking videos
	Interesting topics
	Contributive
	Peripheral learning

As seen in Table 2, the reasons for choosing youtube and blogger more than other types of assignments were determined. Since youtube and blogger are "fun and fruitful, contributive along with providing interesting topics, peripheral learning, interaction with friends" for students , it was found that youtube and blogger were seen as positive for students. It was determined that youtube and blogger applications were seen positively in terms of positively affecting attention and motivation, developing students' sense of responsibility, making the daily routine more regular, and increasing the time to study. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"I prefer "Youtube" and "Blogger" assignments as they are more fun and teach the language in a more endearing way."

"Well, it depends on the topic of the youtube assignment, but youtube is fun."

"I liked speaking English on camera."

"While doing youtube homework, both my speech improves and I enjoy doing something."

What are the challenges while doing blogger and youtube assignments as part of students' homework?

The findings obtained from the participants' explanations about the challenging aspects of youtube and blogger applications are presented in Table 3 as categories and subcategories.

Table 3

The challenges of "Youtube" and "Blogger"

Sub-category	Codes
Challenges	Editing youtube videos
	Getting started
	Ordinary topics
	Finding related and appropriate pictures and photos
	Shyness while making sharing
	Grammar knowledge
	Time consuming
	Conveying meaning
	Pronunciation difficulties
	Content writing
	Being before the camera
	Low internet connection

As can be seen in Table 3, the findings obtained regarding the difficult aspects of youtube and blogger are grouped under the category of difficulties. Codes like " editing youtube videos, getting started, ordinary topics, finding relevant and appropriate pictures and photos, shyness while making sharing, low level of grammatical knowledge, time consuming, conveying meaning, pronunciation

difficulties, writing content, being before the camera, low internet connection" had a negative impact on students. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"The hardest thing is to start doing it, and once you start, it continues."

"I had a little difficulty in finding suitable pictures."

"Sharing it with everyone makes you a little uneasy, wondering if there is a mistake I made."

"Youtube assignments take a very long time in terms of shooting time, background, etc."

"Sometimes there is a word and it is very difficult to find it in the dictionary. Besides, it is very difficult to put words together and pronounce them."

"It is difficult for me not to find the exact English equivalent of some words in Turkish."

What are the future blogger and youtube assignments topics for students as part of students' homework?

The findings regarding the topics that the participants prefer to do in the future regarding youtube and blogger are presented as categories and subcategories in Table 4.

Table 4

The future topics in "Youtube" and "Blogger" assignments

Sub-category	Codes
Future Topics	Up-to-date topics
	Technology
	Hobbies, Sports, Environment
	Favorite job/countries
	Didactic topics
	Entertainment
	Cuisine
	Action scenes
	Book films
	Daily life
	Film/series criticism
	Vlogs

As seen in Table 4, the topics preferred by students regarding youtube and blogger homework are "Up to-date topics, technology, hobbies- sports, environment, favorite job/countries, didactic topics, entertainment, cuisine, action scenes, book films, daily life; film/series reviews, vlogs. Below are quotes that may serve as examples of the participants' views.

"It could be about our hobbies, our favorite sport or our room."

“There may be the strangest, happiest and most ashamed moments we have experienced, and their blogs or videos may be nice.”

“There may be videos about ourselves, that is, there should be topics that we can easily talk about with someone in daily life.”

“It could be a movie/series review. We can make suggestions on random topics. On some topics (for example, the activities we like to do in our free time, etc.), we can talk about our 5 favorite things.”

To summarize, when blogger homework was assigned as an alternative to traditional workbook homework, 81% of students ($n=26$) stated they preferred blogger. As a reason for this, a big majority of them (%69) stated it was more fun while some of them said they believed it was more beneficial. When youtube homework was assigned as an alternative to traditional workbook homework, around half of the students ($n=15$) said they preferred youtube. As a reason for choosing youtube homework, a big majority of them (%73, $n=11$) said it was more fun while some of them stated they believed it was more beneficial. Some of the students who said they did not choose youtube stated that it was too demanding (41%, $n=7$). When the students were asked whether or not they believe youtube and blogger assignments have contributed to their English learning process, almost all of them said they did (94%, $n=30$). As a reason for this, they said it helped them with vocabulary learning, sentence formation and their writing and speaking skills.

When asked whether or not they would want to continue getting similar assignments in the following semester, 75% of them said they would. As a reason for this, as before, being fun and beneficial were the most widely mentioned themes. Similarly, a further question asked whether they would want to get similar assignments throughout all of their high school English lessons, around the same number of students (69%) said they would. Students were also asked how often they voluntarily commented on their classmates' posts when shared with them in online lessons or through whatsapp groups during the time of the face-to-face lessons, only 16% stated they never did while 25% said they did it rarely, 31% sometimes, 22% usually and 6% always. As a reason for not commenting at all or doing it rarely, the most widely mentioned themes were that they were either clueless about what to write in their comments, or they did not simply feel like it. A noteworthy finding is that some of the students who commented on their classmates' posts said they did it due to their personal relationships with the person who posted the content.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the use of social media, particularly platforms like YouTube and Blogger, has a significant impact on language learning for students. The positive impact of social media on language learning, as evidenced by our findings, aligns with previous research indicating that digital platforms provide an interactive and engaging environment for language acquisition (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2022). The benefits observed in our study, such as vocabulary building, speech development, and social interaction, mirror the findings of Nasution, (2022) and Ahmad et al., (2022) who reported significant improvements in language proficiency through online collaborative activities. Students find these platforms fun, fruitful, and interesting, and they appreciate the availability of time for creating and sharing videos, as well as the opportunity to interact with friends. The identified reasons for choosing youtube and blogger for language learning, such as the fun and fruitful nature of the content, resonate with motivational theories proposed by Dörnyei (1998). However, challenges such as video editing, finding appropriate content, shyness, and time consumption are also associated with using social media for language learning and (Nasution, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022). Future topics for assignments on these platforms include technology, hobbies, sports, and entertainment, indicating the diverse and engaging nature of content available for language learning.

Research has shown that social media has both positive and negative impacts on students' learning processes, and a balanced approach is recommended for its use in education (Abbas et al., 2019). The use of social media for language learning has been found to improve students' motivation, confidence, and attitude, leading to outstanding improvements in their language learning capabilities (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020). Additionally, students tend to use social media for enhancing and reinforcing their communication skills, writing, and learning new phrases and structures (Ahmad et al., 2022). The positive impact of social media on language learners is also reflected in their perception of it as a precious and powerful tool for learning the English language (Mubarak, 2016).

The most important conclusion of the present study is that almost all of the high school students believe that youtube and blogger assignments contribute to their EFL learning process. Similarly, Haque and Al Salem (2019) report that use of social media for EFL learning has positive effect on students' attitudes towards and understanding of English. Furthermore, quite a few students report that using youtube and blogger as part of their EFL homework positively affect their speaking and writing skills. Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) find a similar result and state that social media has a significant impact on students' speaking skill. Most studies regarding the use of social media for EFL learning focus on tertiary level students, and therefore further research is required for a better understanding of the role of social media use in EFL learning at K-12 schools. In conclusion, the use of social media, particularly platforms like youtube and blogger, has a significant impact on language learning for students. While it offers numerous benefits such as vocabulary building and social interaction, it also presents challenges such as video editing and time consumption. However, the overall positive impact on students' motivation, confidence, and language learning capabilities makes social media a valuable tool for language learning.

This study is significant in the sense that it offers valuable insight into the ongoing discourse on language education and the modernization of teaching methodologies. By exploring the potential benefits and pitfalls of integrating social media into language skill development, this research contributes to a broader discussion about exploitation of the digital environment to meet the evolving needs of students nowadays. Furthermore, while the use of social media as part of online education is a more widely studied method in education, its use in face-to-face education as complementary to regular schoolwork is relatively less investigated. Therefore, more attention could be paid to target this research gap. Further studies could focus on the effect of use of social media assignments on various constructs commonly studied in EFL research such as motivation, attitude and academic achievement in order to get a more definitive understanding of the issue.

Limitations: The current study relies on the self-reported data of students about their opinions of the use of social media in EFL learning.

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