Effects of Videos on EFL/ESL Learners' Writing Proficiency and Vocabulary Acquisition: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review presents and discusses the effects of videos on vocabulary acquisition and writing skills in the EFL/ESL classroom, as shown in research published in the last decade. Due to the growing interest in using videos in the EFL/ESL classroom, we find it important to examine how it affects the students’ language acquisition and how the students perceive videos for learning purposes. The findings are organized into the following themes: effects of videos on writing, effects of videos on vocabulary acquisition, learners’ attitudes towards videos, and lastly, motivation. The main conclusion is that using videos is beneficial to vocabulary acquisition and writing proficiency, and that it stimulates learners’ motivation, as derived from their positive attitudes on videos. Finally, the teachers’ role in the EFL/ESL classroom regarding video teaching is discussed as well as potential areas for further research.
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1 Introduction

In our digital era, as it is often called, electronic devices and the Internet are constants. Technology in its many forms fulfills needs and purposes in both our private and professional lives. Integrating it in teaching, in particular, is a goal shared by schools, national agencies of education, and researchers. In Sweden, teachers should encourage the use of digital technology by students as well as emphasize the risks pertaining to said usage (Skolverket, 2018a). All individuals who work with children and students should not only have the knowledge to provide students with opportunities to develop their digital competence, but also the ability to choose appropriate digital resources for learning and utilize the benefits stemming from digitalization in teaching (Skolverket, 2018b). Using digital and technological tools has greatly influenced the field of language teaching and learning (Eren, 2020), which raises the interest in this research area.

One widely important aspect of technology and Web 2.0 tools is the social network sites, also known as SNSs. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211), they can be defined “as web-based services” through which users can create a profile and make associations with other users, thus creating their own list of connections. After 2003, a plethora of social networking sites emerged, most of which emphasizing the existence of a profile and highlighting the list of other users said individual is connected to. A specific category of SNSs is the one of Language learning social network sites, also known as LLSNSs. They can be described as online communities where interaction between language learners is the focus (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). This category of SNSs combines instruction and communication as well as social networking and language teaching.

In addition, other websites evolved in order to benefit from the growing popularity of SNSs. Sites whose initial main function was “media sharing” attained “SNS features”, thus becoming SNSs themselves (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 216). Two major websites that illustrate this development are Flickr, which focuses on photo sharing, and YouTube, which focuses on video sharing.

YouTube is one of the most popular and widely used social network sites. Recent statistics claim that YouTube has “over one billion users”, which can be considered as nearly a third of Internet users overall (Bhatia, 2018, p. 106). Godwin-Jones (2007) considers YouTube as a “multimedia library of real language” spoken by “real people”, which can facilitate language learning (p. 16). He mentions that English teachers utilize this collection of videos, as English is the language used in most of them. Some videos are used as “sample
lessons” for the students to view and discuss (Godwin-Jones, 2007, p. 16). Other videos are designed with a specific goal of language learning, such as listening comprehension or vocabulary acquisition. Nevertheless, the benefits are not limited to English teaching.

Regarding the integration of technology, or any kind of material, in teaching, one has to consider the role of the teacher. Teo (2011) argues that technology cannot benefit teaching and learning unless teachers “use technology the way it was designed to serve” (p. 2432). Due to the vast advancements in technology and its influence over teaching and learning, teachers are expected to integrate digital tools in their teaching with expertise (Pelgrum, 2001). A vital factor in effective integration of computer and language teaching is teachers’ attitudes toward technology and their degree of willingness to use it. However, not all language instructors view the use of technology in the classroom as desirable or beneficial enough.

A theoretical framework is provided in the background section in order to better understand the findings and discussion of this review. A brief definition of the multimedia, videos, and vocabulary follows in order to clarify what is included in the later sections. Furthermore, an introduction to Mayer’s (2005a) cognitive theory is given, which describes how we learn through multimedia and is supported by many of the studies we found. After the presentation of the results, the findings and recommendations for future research are discussed. This review aims to investigate how to integrate videos in EFL/ESL teaching, with a focus on learners’ vocabulary acquisition and writing proficiency as well as learners’ attitudes towards videos in the EFL classroom. It is of interest for our future profession as teachers to use videos as efficiently as possible, regarding both receptive and productive skills, especially considering the different purposes they can fulfill in people’s daily and professional life.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Videos and multimedia

This literature review considers Mayer’s definition of multimedia which encompasses videos. Mayer (2005b, p. 2) views multimedia as the combination of words and pictures emphasizing their presentation. The former can be in spoken or written form, while the latter as illustrations, photos, animation, or videos. He encourages multimedia learning by arguing that “people learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone” Mayer (2005b, p. 6). Mayer introduces another term, multimedia instructional message, which means communication that includes words and pictures for learning purposes. Mayer (2005a)
explains that the communication can be performed using any medium, such as paper, computers, and face to face. Since words can be printed or spoken, whereas pictures can be static or dynamic graphics, Mayer (2005a) considers illustrations, charts, and photos as well as animation and video clips in his definition and approach. Consequently, his definition of multimedia is broad and encompasses numerous mediums and formats. However, this literature review only considers dynamic graphics, namely videos of any format, online or not.

1.1.2 Approaches to Multimedia Learning

There are numerous approaches to multimedia learning one can follow. Mayer (2005b) considers the presentation modes view and the sensory modalities view. The former requires verbal and pictorial representations, whereas the latter auditory and visual senses. However, he rejects the delivery media view because it focuses on the technology used, such as video combined with, for example, audio or the teacher’s voice. That is of note since this literature review aims to indicate the role of the teacher in integrating videos in teaching.

In order to design multimedia instruction messages, one can consider a technology-centered approach or a learner-centered approach. The former focuses on the technological advances and selecting the medium that presents information best. Mayer (2005b) argues that access to technology becomes the goal, instead of learning with technology. Consequently, learners conform to technology, instead of adjusting it to the learners’ needs and goals. In contrast, the learner-centered approach studies how to adapt technology in order to facilitate learning and thus focuses on the relation between technology specifications and the human cognitive system. Mayer (2005b) aligns with the learner-centered approach and further argues that “multimedia designs that are consistent with the way the human mind works are more effective in fostering learning than those that are not” (p. 15).

1.1.3 Mayer’s Cognitive Theory

The cognitive theory introduced by Mayer (2005a) considers four aspects. Theoretical plausibility ensures that the theory aligns with the cognitive science principles of learning, and empirical plausibility ensures that it aligns with empirical research evidence on multimedia learning (Mayer, 2005a, p. 46). Additionally, the theory provides results that can be tested in scientific research, according to testability, while the theory also considers
applicability, meaning that it contributes to the development of designing multimedia instructional messages.

The cognitive theory of multimedia learning is based on three principles that follow how the human mind works: dual channels, limited-capacity, and active processing. The dual-channel assumption argues that the human information processing system consists of dual channels for visual/pictorial and auditory/verbal processing. It is grounded on the dual-coding theory, first introduced by Allan Paivio (1979), which divides the learning process into two, the verbal processing and the non-verbal processing. Paivio (1979) argues that we can process information through two channels and create separate representations of information which results in better learning. Mayer (2005a) elaborates on the two processes, explaining that the verbal channel processes what we hear and understand from external information sources, for example, narration, and the non-verbal channel processes visual influences, such as video and subtitles. If the two channels are stimulated at the same time during a learning process, learners are more likely to acquire the information more deeply (Mayer & Anderson, 1991, 1992). Furthermore, the second principle argues that each channel has a “limited capacity for processing” (Mayer, 2005a, p. 43) where multiple channels can handle more information together. The third principle explains that active learning involves a “coordinated set of cognitive processes” (Mayer, 2005a, p. 43) where learners need to be active during the learning process, for example, post-video discussions or comprehension tasks.

1.1.4 The use of videos in the EFL/ESL classroom

Videos are used in different ways in the EFL/ESL classroom and often in an ineffective way. Jurkovič and Mertelj (2015) argue that teachers often use videos only for vocabulary acquisition and tend to forget that videos can contribute to other skills. Moreover, according to Hobbs (2006), some teachers use videos as a reward for good performance in class or as a method to maintain a quiet and calm environment in the classroom. However, Merkt et al. (2011) point out the importance of the effective use of videos, since teaching with videos is not any different from other methods: “[…] the effective use of videos - just as the effective use of print - requires active and self-regulated information processing by the students” (p.702). Teachers need to plan lessons carefully with the specific target group in mind and have a clear pedagogical plan, as Çakir (2006) emphasizes the importance of the contribution of the teacher:
It is certain that the teacher is as effective as the video film in teaching through video, because he is the only person who enables the learners to comprehend what they watch and hear by using some of the communicative techniques. The teacher can be a controller, an assessor on organiser, a prompter and a participant as well. (p. 68)

Furthermore, Cinganotto and Cuccurullo (2015) stress the importance of using the right material to suit the learners’ level, the learners’ background knowledge, and what the students actually need. When using videos in the classroom, it is not as easy as pressing play.

1.2 Method

Initially, while considering our research topic, we aimed to include studies that investigated the impact of videos on the receptive and productive skills as well as vocabulary acquisition. However, we noticed that the research on the effects of videos in EFL teaching was wider than we had anticipated, which caused us to limit our scope to two skills. Due to our interests, we chose writing proficiency and vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, in order to provide a thorough discussion on our topic, we also chose to extend the intended age span, including both young and adult learners, since few studies were conducted with young participants.

We located the empirical studies in the following databases: Education Collection, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), and MLA international bibliography. The terms we searched for are: Multimedia, audio-visual, videos, foreign language, second language, EFL, ESL, vocabulary, writing. The keywords were chosen in relevance to our choice of area and the theoretical background on integrating videos in EFL teaching. For instance, some studies use multimedia and others videos while conveying the same meaning. When combined, the keywords provided a coherent search field that proved to be fruitful in terms of the number of studies we found.

Studies before 2005 were excluded to keep the review as recent as possible. A study by Čepon (2013) used Slovenian audio and English subtitles in the videos, but it is included in this review, because it is the only study that is conducted in Europe and investigates the relation between videos and writing. All studies involved were conducted with the help of an experimental group and a control group. In a few cases, there were more than two groups involved, while comparing different kinds of aids. To investigate the participants’ attitudes towards video-teaching, the studies employed interviews and questionnaires.
2 Findings

This section presents the results of the empirical studies we chose to include in our literature review. After reading the research material, four main themes emerged. These are the effects of videos on writing skills and vocabulary acquisition, respectively, learners’ attitudes towards using videos in the classroom, and lastly, motivation. Motivation, in particular, is an effect found in studies that investigated the impact of videos on writing proficiency and vocabulary acquisition, so we consider it as a separate theme in order to highlight it as an important denominator.

2.1 Effects on writing

Of the studies that focused on how using videos affected learners’ writing proficiency, three investigated it in comparison with a control group that was traditionally instructed without videos. The other three studies compared using videos to using other kinds of aids, i.e. pictures, audio, and reading. There are, therefore, two subsections that reflect this distinction and aim to investigate whether using videos enhances writing proficiency or not, and whether using videos is more effective than audio or visual aids.

2.1.1 Using Videos Enhances Writing Skills

Most studies we examined showed that using videos in EFL teaching had a positive effect on writing proficiency. The experimental group that was instructed with the help of videos outperformed the control group that was instructed without audiovisual aids, according to Čepon (2013), Hayati (2017), and Rivai et al. (2017). Čepon (2013) investigated the impact of videos with Slovenian audio and English subtitles on numerous skills, without a control group. The two other studies focused on the writing of specific text types. Hayati (2017) examined the effects of videos on learning to write a procedure text, while Rivai et al. (2017) focused on the writing of a descriptive text instead. In all of these studies, the experimental group improved more than the control group, as the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores illustrated.

When investigating how using videos affected immediate EFL acquisition, there were two questions that arose, including whether subtitles should accompany the video, and if yes, in which language. Čepon (2013) chose a video with the audio in Slovenian and the subtitles
in English, in order to confirm the effectiveness of this model that was mentioned in an older study. The video assigned to the university students in Ljubljana was Wulfy, during which an elder person looked for their dog. Apart from other skills that are outside the scope of this review, Čepon (2013) investigated the impact of videos on the learners’ writing skills in terms of spelling and the ability to write a summary. To assess the learners’ spelling abilities and EFL retention, identical pre- and post-tests were administered, which consisted of three multiple choice questions, each with three possible answers. Čepon (2013, p. 89) mentioned an example of a question that tested spelling, which was “How do we spell correctly in English Slov. sestavine? a) ingridients b) ingredients c) ingritiends”. Čepon (2013) opted to evaluate the results based on the number of mistakes the participants made before and after the experiment. Thus, the main factor in determining the impact of videos on EFL writing regarding spelling, was whether the participants retained the correct answers after watching it or not. Due to the number of questions the participants responded to being three, the maximum number of mistakes they could make was also three. Čepon (2013) found that the largest improvement was observed in the individuals who had made two and three mistakes during the pre-test, or in other words, those with the lowest pre-test scores. Moreover, the task to summarize “the video by mentioning five key events along with five pre-selected key words from subtitles” in five sentences was only included in the post-test (Čepon, 2013, p. 91). In the assessment of the participants’ texts, grammatical accuracy was not taken into consideration, while ten points was the maximum score, one point accounting for each plot event and one point for each key word they spelled correctly, and six points was the passing grade. However, if a participant mentioned a pre-selected word but not the plot event that contextualized the key word, no point was given. Also, summaries with more or less than five sentences were excluded. The results showed that out of the 49 participants who fulfilled the criteria, 11 received 9 points, while 37 participants passed the task overall. Čepon (2013, p. 98) concluded that the learners improved their writing skills due to their ability to “retain the phonological information from the subtitles”.

The argument for using videos to enhance the learners’ writing skills, due to the experimental group’s great improvement, was also supported by Hayati (2017). In her study, she aimed to investigate whether videos were an effective way to teach the writing of a procedure text to young learners. During the experiment, the teacher used video in the instruction of the experimental group but not for the control group. While the pre-test was set to estimate the participants’ knowledge about this text type, the goal of the post-test was to see if the students understood how one wrote a procedural text. However, the scoring
reflected the students’ abilities in content, organization, vocabulary, and language mechanics. The results showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group at the end. During the pre-test, the average score in the experimental group was 47.93 and during the post-test 63. For the control group, the average scores of students’ pre-test and post-test were 51,53 and 57, respectively. In terms of improvement, Hayati (2017) discovered that the participants in the experimental group improved by 15.06 on average, whereas the ones in the control group gained 5.46 between tests. She concluded, therefore, that the experimental group improved more than the control group, indicating that using videos was beneficial in teaching the writing of a procedure text.

Videos also benefited the teaching of the writing of a descriptive text, according to Rivai et al. (2017), who studied whether students in Indonesia can learn how to write a descriptive text better through videos or traditional instruction. In the pre-test and post-test, the participants were to write three paragraphs of five sentences each. Unlike Hayati (2017), the study by Rivai et al. (2017) started with the pre-test scores of both groups being on the same level. For the experimental group, the average score during the pre-test was 87 and 138 in the post-test, whereas the control group scored an average of 85 in the pre-test and 109 in the post-test. The results indicated that the experimental group improved by 51 points, whereas the control group by 24.5. According to Rivai et al. (2017), using videos to teach the writing of a descriptive text was successful and effective, given the high improvement rate shown by the experimental group that received instruction integrated with videos.

To summarize, regarding the question of whether using videos enhanced writing proficiency or not, learners seemed to be able to write better texts after watching a video, as illustrated by their scores in the pre-tests and post-tests.

2.1.2 Audiovisual Versus Visual and Audio Aids

Apart from questioning whether using videos had an impact on the learners’ writing skills, another issue that arose was whether videos, or also referred to as audiovisual aids, were more effective than other mediums, such as visual and audio aids. In their comparative studies, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) and Nur et al. (2019) agreed that videos enhanced the participants’ writing skills more than other aids, whereas Styati (2016) argued that there was no improvement due to videos. Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) considered the visual input as reading texts and investigated the impact of audiovisual, visual, and audio input on learners’ writing proficiency. The three groups were provided with the same content yet in
different modes of presentation. The audiovisual group watched three documentaries, the visual group read the texts of the same documentaries, while the audio group listened to the same documentaries. Despite having been exposed to the same information in the documentaries, and the participants’ minimal score difference in the pre-tests, the groups performed differently in the post-tests. Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) opted to evaluate the results based on the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. They found that the visual presentation in the form of reading did not affect the learners’ writing skills. Further, the mean score in the audiovisual group was greater than the one of the visual group. When comparing the impact on the audiovisual and audio groups, the results showed that the former outperformed the latter. Given the results, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) concluded that the audiovisual group outperformed the visual and audio group, meaning that watching the videos had greater impact on the learners’ writing skills than reading and listening to the texts.

The greater impact of audiovisual aids on the learners’ writing skills in comparison to visual and audio aids was supported by Nur et al. (2019), as well. Nur et al. (2019) aimed to investigate whether Instagram videos enhanced the participants’ writing proficiency. The experimental group watched the videos on Instagram about the topics that the teacher had uploaded before the latter presented additional information to explain the captions in the videos. In contrast, the control group was instructed with visual aids, namely pictures, meaning that they looked at pictures that illustrated the assigned topics. Regarding the pre-test and post-test, Nur et al. (2019) opted for writing an explanation text on the topics they discussed during the experiment, which encompassed varied natural and social phenomena, from rainfall to corruption. To evaluate the participants’ texts, Nur et al. (2019, p. 116) applied the writing test that consisted of questions “commonly” found in the tests that assessed writing at “senior high schools in Indonesia”, with the maximum score being 100. Further details on what was measured were not provided. Nevertheless, Nur et al. (2019, p. 118) described that 70 was the low limit that indicated “good” writing quality, while 55 was the upper limit for “poor” writing. Even though both groups improved, Nur et al. (2019) found that more participants in the experimental group received a score over 70 than in the control class during the post-test. Given that there were more members in the experimental group that received a score below 55 in the pre-test and more members that received a score over 70 in the post-test. Nur et al. (2019) concluded that the experimental group improved more than the control group.

However, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) and Nur et al. (2019) were contradicted by Styati (2016), who concluded that using pictures was more effective than YouTube videos in
enhancing the participants’ writing proficiency. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of videos and pictures on the learners’ writing skills. The experimental group was instructed with videos, whereas the control group with pictures. The pre-test and post-test required from the participants to write a descriptive paragraph including the main idea, supporting statements, and a conclusion. To evaluate the learners’ writing skills, analytic scoring was employed, consisting of “organization”, coherence, grammatical accuracy, language mechanics, and “quality of expression” (Styati, 2016, p. 310). However, only mean scores for both groups are provided in Styati (2016), which showed that the post-test score of the experimental group was lower than the pre-test, unlike the control group. Using pictures improved, therefore, the writing skills of the participants, whereas videos on YouTube did not.

Apart from test scores based on matrices, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) also reviewed the quality of the texts the participants produced. Among the findings in Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) was that the audiovisual group produced rich texts in content and form. Not only did they express new perspectives and elements in the post-tests, but they also managed to structure and organize them better. Whereas the audiovisual group applied information obtained from the videos, the group that had read the text did not adopt any linguistic element. Moreover, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) noticed that the experimental group improved in grammatical as well as syntactic accuracy.

Given the results provided by the majority of the studies above, we might be inclined to infer that audiovisual aids are more effective in enhancing the learners’ writing proficiency than audio and visual aids that include pictures or reading a text. However, there was no consensus regarding which aid is more impactful to writing skills.

2.2 Effects on vocabulary

The research found on videos’ effect on vocabulary acquisition is presented in different themes in this section due to the variety of research design and aims, such as videos’ impact on vocabulary in general, the effect of subtitled videos, on advanced vocabulary, and individual differences.

2.2.1 Using videos to enhance vocabulary acquisition

The result found in the studies conducted on vocabulary taught through video, showed that the vocabulary acquisition was higher among the video groups compared to other methods,
which was text or audio only. For example, Yawiloeng (2020) conducted a test where an English class at a university in Thailand was exposed to an English vocabulary video on computer-based language. The post-test showed that the students’ vocabulary knowledge was higher compared to the pre-test. Kabooha and Elyas (2018) examined whether using YouTube to tell a story in a reading class would be more effective on vocabulary acquisition than only reading a story. A pre-test and post-test were conducted on vocabulary comprehension with an experimental group and a control group of 18-20-year-old female English students in Saudi Arabia. A YouTube-video was shown to the experimental group and the control group read a text with the same story. The post-test revealed that the experimental group achieved a significantly higher score compared to the control group. According to Kabooha and Elyas (2018), the positive result for the experimental group was related to Mayer’s (2005a) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, namely that students learn better if they are exposed to both visual and auditory senses rather than one at a time.

2.2.2 Subtitled/captioned videos

A large number of articles that investigated the effect of using video on vocabulary acquisition focus on whether videos with subtitles are more beneficial compared to without. Furthermore, the findings revealed different results regarding subtitles' effect on productive- and comprehensive vocabulary. In a study on productive vocabulary by Hsu (2014), conducted on English-majoring freshmen at a Taiwanese university, Hsu (2014) found that videos without any captions led to a higher production of non-basic vocabulary. In the study, captions are explained as subtitles that describe the most important events in a scene and non-basic vocabulary is described as words that are more advanced than the 2,000 most common words. The post-test in Hsu’s (2014) study, tested non-basic vocabulary through a writing task, which is used to test productive vocabulary. In contrast to Hsu (2014), Wang’s (2019) study on subtitles’ effect on vocabulary showed that all types of subtitles outperformed the no subtitles-group on vocabulary acquisition. However, while Wang (2019) conducted her study to examine if videos with and without captions had an impact on vocabulary comprehension, Hsu’s (2014) study investigated vocabulary production and advanced words.

2.2.3 Advanced vocabulary

Other studies on videos effect on vocabulary acquisition found that videos could also be effective when teaching advanced vocabulary. A study by Hsu (2014) showed that videos had
a positive effect on non-basic vocabulary, where the participants who watched videos outperformed the control group that did not. Hsu (2014) concluded that students listened to sentence structures better without the caption options and could, therefore, write sentences that included more advanced vocabulary in the post-test. A similar result was found in Lin and Tseng’s (2012) study on digital tools in the classroom, where three groups of students in the seventh grade read a text with a number of advanced words that they were later tested on during a post-test to evaluate the vocabulary acquired. One of the groups had the text in a digital version with the option to click on specific words to show a video of what the word meant. The results showed that the group with the video option obtained a higher vocabulary acquisition compared to the other groups who did not have video as help. One of the groups using only text, outperformed the video group when they were tested on the words learned two weeks later, but the video group still obtained a higher score of vocabulary learned overall. This indicated that words learned through text may be remembered for a longer time, but a higher number of words was learned through the video format in the test, compared to only text.

2.2.4 Individual differences

The results revealed that the efficiency of subtitles on vocabulary could differ due to individual differences, such as learner level. In a study conducted by Wang (2019), she found that the results from her study varied depending on the level of the learners. She conducted a vocabulary comprehension test with four caption conditions: No captions, L2 English, L1 Chinese, and dual (L1 and L2). She performed the test on four groups of Chinese university students, two freshman groups, a junior group and a first-year graduate group. The two freshmen groups performed best with the L2 English and the L1 Chinese modes and worst with the no captions. A similar result was found for the first-year graduate group who performed best with the L1 Chinese mode and the dual caption mode. The junior group on the other hand, learned better with the No captions mode and L2 English mode. The mixed result indicated that individual differences, such as learner level, is an important factor to take into consideration when choosing videos with subtitles (Wang, 2019). In a similar study by Zarei and Rashvand (2011) on different subtitles’ effect on vocabulary acquisition, the same result concerning individual differences was found, that low-level learners benefited more from captions and high-level learners from regular subtitles.
2.3 Learners’ Attitudes toward the use of Videos in the Classroom

This section will treat the participants’ attitudes toward video teaching found in the research. The overall positive attitude among the students led to a higher motivation, creativity, and the desire to learn. The section is divided into two parts to present the results in a coherent way.

2.3.1 Perceptions on videos

Regarding the participants’ opinion on being exposed to videos in the classroom, the studies converged in positive attitudes. Hayati (2017) evaluated learners’ perceptions by using the t-test and found that “the value of t-table on degree of significance of 5% is smaller than the value of t-test” (p. 35). Therefore, the teaching of the writing of a procedure text with videos elicited stimulation and engagement. The same attitudes were discovered through interviews in the study by Nur et al. (2019). The participants disclosed that they enjoyed learning English using videos and Instagram in a classroom setting. In addition, they mentioned that they liked finding and watching short videos uploaded by Instagram users. When writing on the SNS, they felt at ease, because they could express their thoughts freely. They also appreciated how easy it was to search for more information online at the same time, as well as receive feedback from the teacher. However, it was challenging for the participants to learn the language that the users spoke. Interviews were also employed by Čepon (2013) to investigate whether they valued using videos in the classroom. Yet, their responses varied. All participants disclosed that they perceived viewing videos as entertainment distinguishing them from materials used in language teaching and learning. More than a half of students revealed that they experienced less anxiety and stress in the classroom than they usually did. Many of the participants expressed “satisfaction” from reading the subtitles with ease and “claiming responsibility for their own FL learning” (Čepon, 2013, p. 96). They considered videos as a useful tool for self-study, which allowed them to be “in charge of their own FL learning” by diverging from “traditional teacher-led instruction” (Čepon, 2013, p. 96). The participants also revealed their belief that using videos would save “time and money” and their “hope for using this method as a new FL learning tool for non-native speakers more frequently in class” (Čepon, 2013, p. 96).
Furthermore, the positive attitudes towards video teaching also showed in Kabooha and Elyas’ (2018) study on the effect of watching YouTube during a reading class. 68% of the participants answered that they found videos attractive, while 3% disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed, and 24% remained undecided. On the question of whether using YouTube in class gave the participants confidence in using the English Language, 69% agreed, 8% disagreed and the remaining 23% did not take stance. Moreover, motivation did also encourage the students’ creativity in Yawiloeng’s (2020) study where the participants watched a video on computer-based language to examine if it was beneficial for vocabulary acquisition, the participants answered a questionnaire on their experience of video as a teaching tool. The students’ all-over experience was that the video shown was an effective method for language teaching and the design of the lesson was helpful for creativity and awareness of individual differences.

2.3.2 Perceptions on Videos’ Impact on Learning

During the interviews in Čepon (2013), the participants were also asked about which skills watching a video would improve. 50% of the students revealed that they believed the videos would enhance their reading skills, while 25% of them thought that their writing skills would benefit the most. Although the remaining participants could not choose one particular skill, they mentioned that exposure and keen focus on English subtitles would facilitate their EFL learning, in general. In addition, they emphasized that dedication and careful studying promoted foreign language acquisition significantly.

The attitude among learners towards video as a teaching tool for vocabulary acquisition is positive. The participants divulged that they could memorize “meaningful phrases, not isolated words” because it was “easier” (Čepon, 2013, p. 95). They could not only infer the meaning of unknown English words from the context provided in the Slovenian audio without hindering the reading of subtitles, but they also enjoyed doing so. Several participants stated that they could remember when they needed to focus on the subtitles. Such instances transpired when they wished to learn “how certain Slovenian words were translated, either new words or the ones they were just not familiar with their translation or spelling” (Čepon, 2013, p. 95). In their interviews, Ramezanali and Faez (2019) found that 85% of the participants in their study felt that video had a positive impact on their word learning, which was also shown in Kabooha and Elyas (2018). In their semi-structured interviews 96% of the participants thought that the video lesson helped them in their vocabulary acquisition, and the
remaining 4% could not decide (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018). Most of the participants were also convinced that with the help of videos as a teaching tool, their productive vocabulary, as in writing, would be better.

2.4 Motivation for learning

Our findings showed that video-teaching motivated the participants in the test groups to perform better and engage more in the tasks given compared to the control groups who did not use video. Apart from the improvement in the post-tests, the other denominator found is the experimental group’s higher motivation to learn. Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) noted in their study that the visual group was not motivated to read the assigned text in comparison to the other groups whose inputs were either to watch documentaries or listen to audio. In contrast, the participants in the audiovisual group became more motivated to write about the topics assigned to them. Rivai et al. (2017) found that their experimental group exhibited higher motivation in the teaching-learning process, in general. They explained that the atmosphere during the instruction of the experimental class was “more active and lively” and that the students “enjoyed the teaching-learning process and learned the materials easily” (Rivai et al., 2017, p. 164). In contrast, the control group experienced boredom and less motivation for learning.

Exposure to videos as an input and the presence of interlingual subtitles contributed to creating a peaceful atmosphere that could facilitate learning (Čepon, 2013). Čepon (2013) concluded that a low affective filter of learners, calm “learning environment and learners’ immersion in a FL stimulus” to have a positive impact on learning (p. 99). Specifically, the combination of English subtitles and a Slovenian audio reduced the participants’ anxiety by simulating the experience of a leisure activity and instead, increased their excitement and motivation to learn English. In agreement with Mayer’s theory, using videos did not maximize the participants’ cognitive capacity and allowed further processing of new information.

Our findings showed that the use of videos in the classroom motivated students to perform better and stated that videos made the lessons more interesting. Another study who found motivation as an important factor for vocabulary acquisition was Kabooha and Elyas’ (2018) research. “The majority of the students in the study strongly agreed that the use of YouTube in their classrooms for learning new vocabulary provided an attractive and interesting learning environment and that it motivated them to lean faster and better”
(Kabooha & Elyas 2018, p.78). A similar result was found in Celis Nova et al. (2017) research, where they used educational videos to teach vocabulary to a group of 12-year-olds with low motivation towards English class. The study showed that videos increased the student’s motivation and that their vocabulary improved significantly in the post-test compared to the pre-test. Motivation was also noticed as an explanation to the positive result from the video-based test group in Lin and Tseng’s (2012) study on seventh graders at a junior high school in Taiwan. The study showed that the participants who used a video-based text in contrast to those who used a regular text were more motivated to learn new words compared to the other groups which correlated with the positive results of the video-based group on the vocabulary test conducted.

3 Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the findings presented above, also in connection to our theoretical background, as well as highlight their limitations and potential contributions to future research of EFL/ESL teaching and learning. We will also discuss the effect of different types of subtitles on vocabulary acquisition and writing. Lastly, we will reflect on using videos and the role of the teacher in the classroom and explain how research on this subject can evolve.

Most of the studies presented here supported Mayer’s cognitive theory, which was mentioned earlier in this review. While watching the videos, both the verbal and non-verbal channels were stimulated at the same time, and the participants obtained new information and its nuances. Some participants applied to their texts contextual and linguistic elements derived from the videos (Ghaedsharafi & Bagheri, 2012). Čepon (2013), after they listened to specific Slovenian words and focused on the subtitles for their English equivalent, they could recollect the context behind those moments. The participants’ cognitive capacity was not overloaded due to processing information in audio and visual format at the same time. Instead, they strove to comprehend the content, which was within their capabilities.

3.1 Effects on writing

Apart from one study that did not find any improvement due to video watching, all other studies concluded that using videos had a positive impact on the learners’ writing proficiency. One common characteristic among the studies we found is the lack of in-depth analysis of the improvement the experimental group demonstrated. The experimental group almost always
received higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test, which supports the argument of videos enhancing writing proficiency. However, it is unclear what areas the participants improved in. Nevertheless, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) analyzed the results to a degree and found improvement in content development in the texts written by the participants in the experimental group. Čepon (2013) also evaluated the improvement in spelling but only in terms of the mistakes made before and after watching the video. Thus, the potential analysis of the results would be confined to the learners’ individual differences, such as anxiety, time needed for sufficient cognitive processing, and learning difficulties, and unpredictable factors, such as lack of attention at that specific moment when the mistake was made. Retaining a mistake after watching the video suggests that the video did not contribute to the process. Changing the correct answer to a wrong one, however, can suggest a negative impact of the video on learners’ writing skills or indicate a potential issue about the validity of the study, i.e., if the video could not have helped the learner answer correctly. The mistake could be accidental, too, due to the learner’s lack of concentration. Moreover, it would be valuable if the texts that the participants produced were examined further. However, the summarizing task was not included in the pre-test, and no information about the participants’ ability to write a summary was provided, which hinders any potential comparison. Given that the learners’ writing skills were perceived in terms of spelling and a summarizing task, and that the findings on spelling were evaluated based on the number of errors, analyzing the results on a deeper level could prove to be difficult but also beneficial.

Furthermore, despite the research on using videos in the EFL and ESL classroom to promote writing, we found only two studies that focused on specific text types. One can argue that the impact of videos on instructing such writing was accidental, seeing as there is only one study on each type. One can also argue that the text types are different and require different skills and knowledge, which hinders the comparison of the two studies. To compile a descriptive text, the writer needs to focus on content organization and coherence, while writing a procedure text requires technical language and accurate use of imperative and adverbs. Despite the differences, the results can still be valuable, especially considering the improvement ratios. In both Hayati (2017) and Rivai et al. (2017), the experimental group improved two and three times more than the control group, respectively. These are the findings of one study per text type, but given the vast difference in the gained scores, the studies imply that videos are a potentially beneficial tool, when it comes to learning to write a specific text type, apart from enhancing writing proficiency, in general.
While reading the studies, a question that arose was which aids (audiovisual, audio, or visual) benefit writing proficiency more, in what way, and to what degree. While Styati (2016) compared using pictures to YouTube videos, Nur et al. (2019) compared using pictures to Instagram videos. Moreover, Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) compared three different kinds of input, namely visual, audio, and audiovisual. Even though Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) meant visual in the sense of reading a text, and not a picture, it is noteworthy that they and Nur et al. (2019) found audiovisual aids to be more beneficial. Only the study by Styati (2016) favored pictures, instead. Therefore, a tentative answer to our question is that most studies concluded that videos were the most effective material to enhance the learners’ writing proficiency in comparison to audio and visual aids.

3.2 Effects on vocabulary

The result of this literature review reveal that videos have a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition. However, we found complications regarding individual differences and the choice of subtitles. In light of evidence, it is clear that videos can develop better vocabulary and therefore, a richer language. Mayer’s (2005a) cognitive theory can explain the positive results as both the visual and the auditory channel is stimulated through videos and will therefore result in deeper language acquisition. However, even though videos have a positive effect on language learning, there are complications regarding how to present the videos and especially what subtitle mode to choose for the best outcome. Wang (2019) pointed out that different subtitle modes suit different learner levels. The lower-level learners were most beneficial from dual-captions with both L1 and L2 in contrast to the higher-level learners, who performed better with no captions or with only L2 captions. As a similar result was found in Zarei and Rashvand’s (2019) study, it is an area that calls for further discussion. Most of the research found, were conducted on adult students at universities, and only a few studies were found on younger learners (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018; Celis Nova et al., 2017; Lin & Tseng, 2012). The lack of studies on younger learners in combination with the findings on individual differences, leaves a gap for further research to be conducted in the area. If the effects of different subtitle modes on vocabulary learning regarding learner level were to be researched, teachers would be more efficient in their vocabulary teaching through videos.

Most of the studies found on the effect of videos on vocabulary acquisition treated receptive vocabulary, and not productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary is what we understand when reading or listening, and productive vocabulary is words that we fully
understand and, therefore, can use in production (Nation, 2001). Hsu’s (2014) research, which was tested through writing, showed that video was effective regarding more advanced vocabulary and that the participants could use the advanced vocabulary in the texts produced. Hsu’s (2014) study also showed that the non-subtitled option was the most beneficial for productive vocabulary, which is interesting since all other studies found, pointed out the opposite for vocabulary comprehension.

3.3 Learners’ Attitudes and Motivation

The learners’ attitudes towards using videos in the classroom were mainly studied through interviews, most of which lacked an in-depth analysis. The participants were asked whether they found audiovisual aids to be effective or appealing, without dissecting the matter further. In that respect, the most comprehensive results were provided by Čepon (2013). The interviews consisted of numerous questions that highlighted several areas of interest, such as perceptions on videos and how they believed video watching could contribute to skills within foreign language acquisition.

However, the study by Čepon (2013) did present certain limitations. The participants were 22, and they shared the first language, which was Slovenian, thus representing a typical homogeneous school class in Slovenia. Not all students have always the same first language, and at the same time, the results derived from one class in one country cannot account for all. Nevertheless, the study by Čepon (2013) encompassed a wide variety of factors and investigated several skills in language acquisition as well as learners’ perception on all aspects in the experiment, thus presenting a solid basis for potential future research. During the interviews before and after the experiment, the students revealed that they perceived learning phrases to be easier by memorizing them, not singular words. The students also showed interest in how Slovenian words translated to English, and they could remember some of the context that surrounded the utterance of said words.

In the studies found on vocabulary acquisition, the positive attitudes on the effects of video as a teaching tool indicated that the students both liked and believed in video-based teaching. The participants in Ramezanali and Faez’s (2019) study expressed that the participants remembered words better due to both text and video input. Again, this can be explained with Mayer’s (2001) cognitive theory as the combination of video, audio, and subtitles enable deeper learning. At the same time, a positive attitude from the students does not have to be connected to a better result. Nevertheless, all studies that included the
participants’ opinion, revealed that a positive result at the post-tests, correlated with a positive attitude from the participants which made them motivated to learn more (Čepon, 2013; Kabooha & Elyas, 2018; Celis Nova et al., 2017; Lin & Tseng, 2012).

Despite the different aims and conclusions of the studies mentioned in this literature review, motivation to learn emerges as a denominator. Several studies contained questionnaires or interviews on how video teaching affects the students’ motivation (Čepon, 2013; Kabooha & Elyas, 2018; Celis Nova et al., 2017; Lin & Tseng, 2012), and showed that the test group, who used video, were more motivated than the control groups and that the test groups achieved the best result. Čepon (2013) pointed out that the students were less anxious when watching a video since the experience was similar to leisure activities, which in turn increased their motivation. Celis Nova et al. (2017) conclude that motivation has an impact on learning and that it can be used by teachers to improve the students’ language acquisition by bringing motivating material into the classroom.

According to the research, videos seem to be a good motivator for students and would therefore be beneficial for teachers to use as a teaching tool. However, one can argue that videos cannot be seen as a motivator for the future since new technology and media platforms can replace it.

### 3.4 Teacher’s role in using videos

In light of the evidence, it can be fair to state that videos have a positive effect on language learning. However, it is important to emphasize the teacher’s role in video-teaching and how videos can be used in the classroom. As described in the background, videos are often used ineffectively or only to emphasize vocabulary acquisition in the EFL/ESL classroom (Jurkovič & Mertelj, 2015; Hobbs, 2006). The teacher has a crucial role to bring new, motivating material into class, and that motivation is not only created between the student and the material, but also in the relation between the students and the teacher (Celis Nova et al., 2017). Few of the studies included in this review mention specific information on what videos were used in the experiment, for example quality and language level, which can have an impact on the results of the study. Merkt et al. (2011) point out that education in the use of videos should be integrated into teacher-training programs for teachers to be aware of the potentials of using videos optimally.
To sum up, this review has shown that videos have a positive effect on language learning, but it is important to stress that teachers have an important role as providers of the structure needed for optimal use of videos as a teaching tool.

3.5 Areas for further research

Given the studies we found on the impact of videos on writing proficiency and vocabulary acquisition, further research is recommended. Future studies could focus on identifying the specific areas within writing that using videos can contribute to. For example, there is a distinct lack of research on the impact of videos on grammatical accuracy, transfer error or instances, and content organization and development. Since only one study was found on productive vocabulary, an area for further investigation would be to examine if the effects of video are as positive on productive vocabulary as on receptive. Regarding subtitled videos, we would encourage further research on the effect of different subtitle options on various learner levels as a variation between groups was found. Further research is needed on younger learners, since most studies on vocabulary acquisition due to video watching were conducted with the help of college or university students, which does not highlight the impact of using videos in a classroom with minors whose cognitive capacity is different from adults’. Finally, there is also a noteworthy lack of studies on this subject conducted in Europe with the exception of Čepon (2013). Almost all studies we located and presented in this literature review were conducted in Asia.

3.6 Conclusions

In conclusion, the current research presented in this review showed that videos raise learners’ motivation and have a positive effect on language acquisition, especially writing skills and vocabulary learning. All studies except one found that using videos enhances the learners’ writing proficiency. Moreover, all studies on vocabulary acquisition revealed that videos improve vocabulary, regardless of what subtitle-option was used. However, the results on different subtitle modes showed a correlation between different subtitle options and learner level. Even though many positive effects were found on the use of videos, it is of importance to remember that the teacher is equally as important in their role to create a good learning environment for the students with the selection of video, suiting tasks, and guidance. Moreover, we concluded that further research that focuses on younger learners and European
settings are needed, since most of the studies we found were conducted with university students in Asian countries.
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