Video Killed the Radio Star: Language Students' Use of Electronic Resources-Reading or Viewing?

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Abstract
The current study aimed to investigate language students' use of print and electronic resources for their research papers required in research techniques class, focusing on which reading strategies they used while reading these resources. The participants of the study were 90 sophomore students enrolled in the research techniques class offered at a public university in Turkey. The data were collected through the participants' logs as a requirement of the class as well as the semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The findings revealed that the participants were more interested in speed than deep understanding while reading for their research projects. The findings also indicated that the participants mostly benefited from scanning and skimming while reading electronic resources.

Keywords
Electronic resources, e-books, reading strategies, language students

INTRODUCTION

In this era of technological developments, we do not live, work, read, or even die as we used to. Reading, for instance, seems to have completely changed. The findings of several studies indicate that we are no longer readers as we used to be, but viewers interested in speed than deep understanding [1, 2]. These "viewers" value skimming paragraphs for a general understanding rather than reading line by line to reflect on what the writer or writers aim to convey.

Recent years have seen a drive by publishers to promote the use of electronic resources such as e-books and e-articles, which has led researchers in the field to pose the question on teachers' and learners' acceptance and use of electronic resources. For example, Jones and Brown (2011), in their examination of elementary students' preference regarding print and e-books, found that students preferred to read e-books when they were given the freedom to choose the title including features such as pop-up definitions, pronunciations of the words, and the option of read-aloud narration [3]. On the other hand, the results of the study did not favor either format, be it an e-book or a print one. In a similar study carried out in a higher education institution, Brown (2012) investigated the higher education students' acceptance of e-textbooks as alternatives to paper textbooks [4]. According to the findings, students were not satisfied with the e-textbooks, indicating preference for paper textbooks. In another study conducted to determine pre-service teachers' reflections on the use of e-books in the classroom, Larson (2012) found that 26 of the 49 pre-service

teachers (53%) believed that e-books supported their reading comprehension, while 16% felt that the use of e-books hindered their reading comprehension [5]. In addition, 31% of the participants were indecisive about this. Although not directly related to discussing the readers' views on e-books, a review article by McCormack (2012) explored the answers to the question whether e-books were making librarians and patrons 'stupid', touching upon the issues such as adoption of e-books by libraries, technical issues, and reading these books [6]. Similarly, a review article by Waller (2013) focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of e-textbooks, pointing out that the advantages seemed to outweigh the disadvantages [7].

Considering the results of the studies conducted and the review articles on the use of e-books or e-textbooks, which are outlined above, it can be stated that they include inconsistent, or better to say, different results. Moreover, the participants' use of reading strategies seems to be ignored. Therefore, this study aimed to determine language students' use of reading strategies while reading print and electronic documents, as well as the other issues that might emerge, which will hopefully fill a gap in the literature.

METHOD

A mixed-methods approach was adopted in the study to collect the data. The data collection included the participants' logs, as the first stage, on which resources (print or electronic) they read for their projects and which tools they used to read these resources (on screen or print-outs), as well as the focus group discussions conducted with the randomly selected students, as the second stage. The participants included 90 sophomore students enrolled in the research techniques class offered at a public university in Turkey. Demographic information was not collected, as the researcher did not aim to correlate the participants' responses to their personal qualities.

As a partial requirement of the research technique class, the participants were required to write a 6-page research paper on any topic of their choice, in which there must be at least 10 references to appropriate resources. Upon the approval of the topic by the instructor, the participants started to write their research projects in the middle of the academic semester, which were required to be submitted on the final date. While writing their research projects, the participants signing the consent from were asked to fill in the logs provided by the researcher. These logs were collected on the final date, and a focus group discussion was held with a group of 15 students covering the key issues that emerged on the logs: print vs. electronic resources, reading on screen vs. reading print documents, strategies applied, and careful (close) reading vs. skimming and scanning.

FINDINGS

The data collected through the participants' logs and the focus group discussions led to interesting findings suggesting that 82 participants (91.11%) preferred to read print resources as it allowed them to underline the important issues/information and to take notes regarding these issues. Importantly, 75 participants (83.33%) searched for the resources for their research projects through using their smartphones, tablets, and laptops on various platforms such as the university library catalogue and the online databases subscribed. For example, in one of the logs, the student stated that

> Upon the approval of my research topic, I started to look [for] the possible sources on my topic on the website of the library and downloaded some articles to my laptop. I quickly looked at these articles whether they were suitable. Then, I printed the related ones [ID.29].

As indicated in this log, most of the participants used the electronic devices to locate the resources to determine whether these resources were suitable for their research projects. In other words, they applied reading strategies such as skimming and scanning to decide whether they should include these resources in their discussions, which was followed by the decision to print the appropriate ones to read them carefully. Therefore, it can be put forward that these participants acted as viewers interested in speed than deep understanding while reading them on electronic devices as indicated by Baumann (2010) and Car (2010) [1, 2].

Only 11 participants (12.22%) reported that they read the resources on their tablets and laptops as they had the opportunity to read them whenever they wished. However, in the focus group discussions, it was noticed that they had difficulty in reading these resources on mobile devices due to the limitations of screen and font size, the difficulties in highlighting, and taking notes compared to traditional underlining and taking notes on print resources.

Another interesting finding generated through the logs is that 84 participants (93.33%) preferred to pay a virtual visit to the library rather than a physical one as they thought that there were more online resources than the print ones.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the participants preferred print resources to electronic resources to carefully read the materials that they consider useful for the discussions in their research projects. This finding is in alignment with that of Brown's study (2012), which indicates that students preferred to read paper textbooks as they were not satisfied with e-textbooks [4]. However, it is not consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Jones and Brown (2011), which found that students preferred to read e-books. This inconsistency might be attributed to the fact that some e-book readers provide readers with features such as pop-up definitions and pronunciations of the words [3]. However, the participants in the current study did not have devices offering these features.

Another interesting finding of this study is that the participants were busy with scanning and skimming the resources when they read them on their electronic devices. This finding seems to support the claims of Bauman (2010) and Car (2010) as the participants needed the information as soon as possible and were more interested in speed rather than the meaning while reading on screen [1, 2]. Thus, it might signal that the participants, when they read online, act as viewers seeking quick information. Similarly, this finding partially confirms the findings of the study by Larson (2012), which found that the participants were indecisive about the positive or negative effects of reading on screen [5].

The findings on the issues reading the difficulties in reading electronic materials also confirm the suggestions put forward by McCormack (2012) and Waller (2013)

in that the participants were not p the limitations of screen and font size as well as virtual highlighting and taking notes, some of which can be overcome by using larger screen and font size [6, 7]. However, the electronic devices currently available on the market do not seem to be of use. It is hoped that these findings provide some insight into how e-book publishers as well as electronic reader manufactures can optimize their services by focusing on the difficulties that readers face while reading electronic documents and thus take necessary steps to overcome them.

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Bu bildiri kitapçığında çalıştayımız boyunca araştırmacılar tarafından sunulmuş bulunan bildirilerden yayımlanmak üzere gönderilenler yer almaktadır. Geçen seneki kitapçığımızı Talat Sait Halman hocamıza armağan eden bizler, bu seneki kitapçığımızı Nobel ödülü alan Aziz Sancar hocamıza armağan etmeyi uygun bulduk. Hocamıza ülkemize ve bizlere yaşattığı bu mutluluk için teşekkürlerimizi bir borç biliriz.

Çalıştayımıza katkıda bulunan bütün araştırmacılarımıza, oturum başkanlarımıza, ve gönüllü olarak çalıştayımız boyunca görev almış öğrencilerimize de teşekkürlerimizi sunarız.

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