A BLENDED LEARNING STUDY ON IMPLEMENTING VIDEO RECORDED SPEAKING TASKS IN TASK-BASED CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Yasemin Kırkgöz
Faculty of Education
Department of ELT
Çukurova University, Turkey
ykirkgoz@cu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT
This study investigates designing and implementing a speaking course in which face-to-face instruction informed by the principles of Task-Based Learning is blended with the use of technology, the video, for the first-year student teachers of English in Turkish higher education. The study consisted of three hours of task-based classroom instruction, complemented with one hour of additional class time, which was devoted to viewing and evaluating students' video recorded speaking tasks, assigned as homework. A mixed research method was used to collect data from multiple sources: recordings of a pre-and post-course speaking task, analysis of the video-recordings of students' speaking tasks, informal interviews with the students, and a written end-of-year course evaluation survey. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data revealed that students made noticeable improvement in their oral communication skills, and they were positive in their perceptions of integrating technology in the lesson. The study also indicated that the use of video camera, as a technological tool, had a positive impact on students' viewing and critically evaluating their speaking tasks. Attention is drawn to a number of potential advantages of integrating technology into face-to-face instruction, and it is suggested that video cameras represent a language learning resource worthy of further investigation.
Keywords: blended learning, speaking skills, student teachers of English, mixed research method, task-based speaking course (TBSC), video camera

INTRODUCTION
In the last decade, second language (L2) courses that combine face-to-face learning and applications of technology, in particular computer assisted language learning (CALL), have been the subject of numerous studies (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Dewar & Whittington, 2004; MacDonald, 2006; Neumeier, 2005; Stracke, 2007). These courses usually require students to attend traditional face-to-face classes and to work independently with a synchronous and/or asynchronous communication tool. As existing studies have shown, this blended approach has become the most popular model of CALL use in L2 learning, particularly in language programmes where CALL components can provide face-to-face instruction with an "efficient use of human and material resources" (Salaberry, 2001, p. 51).

L2 courses that incorporate technology in combination with face-to-face instruction have been found to promote L2 learning effectively as they can give students the flexibility to work independently, at their own pace, promoting language acquisition (Felix, 2003; Collentine, 2000; Singh, 2003). In a study, Ayres (2002) reported that a vast majority of the L2 English and Japanese learners felt that computer enhanced instruction was motivating and appropriate to students' learning needs. In addition, those participants believed that online activities promoted learning, and they expressed the need for the inclusion of more web-based activities in their instruction (see also Beauvois, 1994, 1998; Warschauer, 1996). In a similar study, Felix (2003) found that the incorporation of technology into face-to-face instruction helped L2 learners of Italian, Japanese and English feel more comfortable with technology and the learning of L2. About two thirds of participants in Felix's study believed that web-based activities facilitated learning. The students with more positive attitudes were those who had been exposed to activities with clear goals, organized tasks, and immediate feedback.

As a growing number of L2 learners now experience technology in combination with face-to-face instruction, it is important to examine the value of this technology integrated learning on L2 learners' speaking and their perceptions of technological tools to ensure their success in the learning process. This study seeks to broaden the existing body of research by examining L2 Turkish learners' perceptions towards the use of video cameras as a supplement to face-to-face task-based learning environment, and the effect of using this blended approach on improving students' speaking proficiency.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE
The use of technology: Video cameras
The availability of a variety of media technologies allow users to record audio and video files in a reasonably short amount of time leading to the increased use of video cameras in lecture halls and other learning environments (Odhabi & Nicks-McCaleb, 2009). Increasingly, researchers have begun to explore the benefits of

recording lectures as well as student speaking to make them available for students to access in many different formats including streaming video, Postcast/Videocast and interactive flash presentation (Chandra, 2007; Christel & Frisch, 2008). Hence, the use of a video is increasingly finding its way into CALL contexts.

The literature on integrating video-recording of student speaking in language learning offers several advantages: First, students can watch and see themselves and their fellow friends' performances. Similarly, teachers can use video to help students become better speakers in English (Lonergan, 1984; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1990). In addition, students have the opportunity to view the recording on video more than once. Thus, recordings allow students to replay the video as many times as they need; so, they can make self-evaluation of themselves as well as their fellow friends. As a consequence, students become self-critical, because they can see their problems and trace their improvements.

Task-based learning
A review of the literature on task-based learning (TBL) reveals several different definitions of the term 'task'. Viewing tasks from a classroom interaction, Willis (1996) defines a task as "a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome" (p. 53). Foster and Skehan (1996) view tasks as activities that are meaning-focused and outcome-evaluated and have some real-world relationship. Long and Crookes (1993) note that as well as being meaning-oriented, classroom tasks must have a clear relationship with real-world contexts of language use and language need.

Pedagogic tasks
Long (1989) distinguishes between target and pedagogic tasks in which target tasks are viewed as "what the learner will eventually do in English" whereas "pedagogic tasks" are considered as "activities worked on in the classroom to approximate the target tasks" (p. 6). Willis and Willis (2007, p. 12-14), highlight several characteristics of a 'task': it should engage learners' interest; primary focus should be on meaning; there should be a clear outcome; the task should relate to real world activities, and it should be encouraging.

Classroom implementation of task-based language teaching
Task-based language teaching (TBLT) proposes that "the primary unit for designing a language programme and for planning individual lessons should be a 'task' because task promotes L2 learning. An important phase in the TBL framework is the task cycle (Willis, 2009). Willis describes three components of the task cycle - task, planning and report- and highlights that the teacher has a crucial role in each component. She also remarks that the task cycle can be adapted to different teaching situations. Nunan (2004) raises several principles to be considered in a task-based curriculum. Through *scaffolding,* learners should be provided with a supporting framework to facilitate learning. *Task dependency* refers to one task growing out of, and building upon the previous one. The concept of *recycling* enables learners to maximize opportunities for learning. In TBL, active learning is expected so that learners acquire the language by *actively* using it. Nunan also notes that *integration of form and function* is needed to make the relationships between grammatical form and communicative function clear.

Task-based instruction is considered to be potentially suitable for learners of all ages. It is agreed to be particularly effective when the learners are engaged in relatively similar real-life tasks. As such, task-based language instruction has been employed by many researchers, and it has proved to be highly effective in enhancing the learning of a second or foreign language. Loumpourdi (2005) reports making a transition from a prescriptive 'Presentation-Practice-Production' (PPP) approach, normally used by teachers in Greece through TBL in teaching grammar for intermediate-level students. After realizing that the grammar course, previously based on PPP approach, focusing on the presentation and practice of grammatical features, not only confused and bored students but also failed to achieve the desired results, she decided to change it gradually by introducing grammar tasks that were meaningful to learners. Loumpourdi (2005) reports that TBL offered several benefits to teaching grammar: tasks kept students interested and provided more natural learning opportunities, and the students were able to grasp the meaning and the functional use of the grammar better besides acquiring accuracy of forms.

In another study, Stark (2005) adopted TBLT into a business English syllabus for advanced students in Switzerland by incorporating project type task sequences to promote effective communication. Using websites, e.g., *Henry Ford's early mass production of cars*, and supporting materials, e.g., business press covers on current issues related to the company as authentic input, she set up similar pedagogic tasks and simulations such as giving a businesslike meeting, team work and presentation on a real well-known company, e.g., *Nike* to replicate real world activities. Stark found that setting up similar tasks to *achieve task repetition* helped bring the

functions of language and communication to the forefront, and contributed to achieving grater accuracy and complexity in students' task performance.

Kiernan (2005) developed a project in which he used traditional narrative tasks to low-level adult learners at a Japanese university to build up learners' general conversational narrative skills and to prepare them for conversational situations outside the classroom. Kiernan demonstrates how these low-level Japanese students, who at the beginning did not understand English, despite several years of English at school, "moved from stunned silence to a babble of chatter" (p. 59) and were able to amuse each other with personal anecdotes told in English. In another study in Japan, Muller (2005) introduced TBL to very low level Japanese students by adapting a vocabulary-focused lesson from the PPP-based textbook to TBL. He reported that implementing TBL proved a challenge with beginners, as the students, who initially, had very little spoken ability in English, were able to develop their spoken English.

THE STUDY
In the context of learning English as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL), in addition to gaining basic communication skills, speaking with a greater degree of proficiency is of great significance, particularly for students who are to accomplish various academic tasks in English. Despite this, many students fail to achieve the desired level of proficiency in the target language due to several reasons. These may include establishing speaking courses on traditional views with an exclusive focus on linguistic features to the neglect of meaning, and not creating opportunities for the students to speak on topics that would be relevant to their present and future needs. As a result, students may experience problems in oral communication and become hesitant in speaking English. Since speaking is required in academic and professional performances, the lack of oral production skills becomes a serious disadvantage.

This study aims to design a speaking course in which face-to-face instruction, based on the principles of TBL is blended with the use of video for the first-year student teachers of English in Turkish higher education.

The study addresses the following research questions:
1. What are the student teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of video-recorded TBSC as a blended learning environment?
2. What is the contribution of the blended approach to the improvement of student teachers' speaking skills?

METHODS
Primarily a qualitative research, the study incorporates mixed research methods, i.e., the use of different instruments and procedures to examine the impact of blended approach on promoting a group of Turkish student teachers' speaking proficiency. Mixed research methods have frequently been implemented by CALL researchers "to strengthen and cross-check the data before conclusions are made" (Levy, 2000, p. 173).

Data collection tools
Data were collected from multiple sources: recordings of a pre-post-course speaking task, students' video-recordings of speaking tasks on a weekly basis, informal weekly interviews administered with the students, and a written end-of-year course evaluation survey to analyze learners' experiences. The employment of mixed methods provided opportunities for triangulation, allowing the results to be cross-validated, thus enhance validity and increase the depth and breadth of the understanding of the study (Burns, 2000; Motteram, 1999).

Participants
The participants of the study were 28 first-year student teachers of English; seven male and 21 female, aged between 21 -22, attending to a state university in Turkey. The students had similar backgrounds concerning the amount and type of language instruction they had previously received. On entry to the course, their knowledge of grammar and reading comprehension was at the lower-intermediate level, but, they were quite inadequate in speaking skills. None of the students had any prior experience in using video for language learning purposes.

Course setting
Speaking is one of the fundamental courses that student teachers of English are required to take in their first-year of teacher education programme. However, from the author's observation, many student teachers, despite having received a speaking course, do not display an acceptable level of competency in speaking English nor are they always engaged in meaningful spoken interaction needed to carry out various academic tasks.

The first reason for this could be attributed to the fact that the use of prescriptive PPP tends to be a well-established approach in many speaking courses in Turkey, as in some other countries, e.g., Greece (see Loumpourdi, 2005 for details). However, as contended by Willis and Willis (2007), such courses offer a very simplified approach to language learning, and are unlikely to develop students' speaking skill, adequately. Additionally, some courses follow a structured-based approach focusing on form and accuracy to the neglect of meaning and communication. As a result, students fail to attain a usable level of fluency and proficiency in L2 even after years of instruction (Skehan, 1996).

In view of the numerous benefits afforded by TBL and the use of technology, discussed earlier, the present Task-based speaking course (TBSC) has been founded on the premises that task-based instruction blended with the use of technology, would be more conducive to developing student teachers' ability to communicate as fluent speakers of English. While stressing a focus on meaning and communication as its priority, the present course also considers form and accuracy mainly in the context of meaningful classroom interaction. In other words, as supported by SLA research, students' attention to the formal features of L2 is considered important for language learning, but only if it is done while maintaining emphasis on meaning and communication (Long & Robinson, 1998).

TBSC was based on the principles suggested by Willis (1996); Willis and Willis (2001) in combination with other frameworks, notably Skehan (1996; 2003) and Nunan (2004) to meet the speaking needs of the students in this specific context. The course was scheduled as three lessons of face-to-face teaching, each lesson lasting 45 minutes, and it lasted one semester (14 weeks). An additional one-hour classroom time was added to the weekly schedule which was devoted to viewing and evaluating students' speaking tasks, which the students video-recorded independently working mainly in groups, each consisting of three or more students.

The following steps were followed in developing the framework of the blended TBSC.

Needs assessment
Initially, needs assessment was conducted to identify student teachers' speaking difficulties, their perceived needs and expectations from the speaking course and the kind of topics they wished to be included in the course. To ascertain students' initial language learning needs in speaking, students were invited to speak on one of the argumentative topics below, as a pre-course speaking task:

- Most university degrees are theoretical and do not prepare students for the real world. They are therefore of very little value.
- In the words of the old song "Money is the root of all evil".

Each student was asked to speak into a microphone attached to a PC and their talk was recorded using Goldwave as a record device for further data analysis.

The next stage involved analyzing students' initial speaking using an oral test rating scale, specifically developed for this study. The rating scale featured five categories: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy and task accomplishment, and a clear definition of five descriptors in each category were provided. A score is awarded for each category to a maximum of 20, the whole oral test rating scale totaling 100 points. The global speaking score for each student is calculated by summing up the scores that a student receives for each category.

Each student's recorded speech was listened to several times by the researcher, and was scored using the oral test rating scale discussed above. Another researcher, also familiar with the scale, scored students' speaking independently using the same rating scale. Consistency of raters and agreement among them was high; 92.6%. Any disagreement among the raters (researcher and the second rater) was resolved through discussion (see discussion section for findings).

Needs analysis served as a diagnostic tool in helping the researcher to identify problems that student teachers experienced in expressing themselves orally. It also helped to identify students' specific language needs to be integrated in TBSC. Common problems students experienced ranged from lack of vocabulary and fluency, weak pronunciation, frequent occurrence of language errors.

Furthermore, students were interviewed using a semi-structured interview, which lasted between 15-20 minutes. The purpose of the interviews was to evaluate students' present level speaking ability, to elicit their perceived difficulties in speaking, and their expectations from the speaking course. Interviews, which were conducted in English, were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analyses.

Students (*N=28)* unanimously agreed that they expected to improve their pronunciation, fluency and accuracy. They stated that they felt anxious and shy about speaking in the presence of others, and their knowledge of vocabulary was restricted. In fact, these problems were already evident in their initial speaking performances. While the initial pre-course speaking task served to identify students' language needs, the same speaking task was given at the end of the study, serving as a post-course speaking task to determine the effect of technology-based TBSC on learning outcomes as will be discussed in the data analysis section.

The next stage in the study involved designing the course that would address those identified student problems, their specific needs and expectations.

Determining the tasks
Target tasks were determined in accordance with the findings of needs assessment. The guiding principles in determining the themes and content for tasks included the students' interests, familiarity, and their relevance to students' needs. Students' preferred topics, e.g., money, education, language, fashion, tourism were integrated into the course. Thus, tasks focusing on a variety of actual topics were generated to cater for the present and future speaking needs of student teachers of English.

Sequencing the tasks
Sequencing was done according to the complexity and the cognitive demands of the tasks (Robinson, 2001). For example, earlier tasks in the present course were cognitively less demanding than those in later units, as illustrated below:

Sample task 1: You are working as a tourist guide, taking a group of tourists around one of the wonders of the world. Give as much information as possible on your chosen wonder answering each tourist's question.
Sample task 2: Conduct a research to find out which words have entered into Turkish language. Discuss benefits and its dangers. How would you solve this invasion?

Each task illustrated above was designed to be performed as a group work. While Task 1, which was *a narrative task,* was studied during the second week in the course, Task 2, *a problem solving task,* was the last task scheduled in the course, as it was thought to be cognitively more demanding.

In the present TBSC, also corresponding to each task was a particular rhetorical function, e.g., narration, description, problem-solution, argumentation. In this way, the relationship between communicative function and grammatical form was made clear (Nunan, 1993; 2004). By providing a range of tasks, and taking into account functional and communicative features of the tasks, the course aimed to provide students with speaking skills and experiences transferable beyond the classroom and meet student teachers' academic requirements.

COMPONENTS OF THE BLENDED TBSC
The course required students to attend three hours of face-to-face classes, and then work independently planning and video-recording their assigned speaking tasks in groups. Following this, one-hour of classroom time was added to the weekly schedule to view and evaluate students' video-recorded tasks. Face-to-face classroom instruction component of the TBSC consisted of the following three components:

Pre-task
This stage was intended to clarify the objectives of the task and do task briefing (Willis, 1996). In this initial phase, task planning activities were done to provide learners with a repertoire of topic-specific vocabulary, some potential language, and general information students could draw on during the task (Skehan & Foster, 2001). According to Nunan (2004), an exposure to input is needed in interactive and communicative tasks. Input was obtained from multiple sources to create a context for learners. Students read texts or dialogues drawn from a textbook, newspaper articles or other written sources on the theme. Through consciousness raising activities, students' attention was drawn to some key language features and vocabulary in these texts.

An alternative source of input for the students was to listen to recordings of a similar task being carried out by a native-speaker. The aim of this was to provide students with a model for task performance, create a stimulating communicative context, and raise their awareness of how native speakers naturally use various devices, e.g., repetition and clarification requests (Willis, 1996). Other sources of input were obtained from student searches of websites, and watching a movie on a related theme.

Task cycle

The crucial role of planning time in the success of task performance is highlighted (Willis, 2009). Thus, during the task cycle, students prepared for the tasks for 10-15 minutes by planning an outline of their talk in writing, or in note form. Students, working in pairs or in groups depending on the nature of the task, made a list of key points covering what they considered to be crucial in performing that particular speaking task.

After the students had planned for their specific task, they then rehearsed it before reporting on it orally. During this stage, the researcher who was also the teacher provided students with the necessary scaffolding encouraging them to produce ideas, monitoring their progress, and giving individual coaching where necessary. Students were encouraged to integrate the new lexis and language they had acquired from their readings into their speaking as part of active learning (Nunan, 2004). They were also instructed to focus on appropriate strategies to enable them to become effective speakers of English.

Report

At the report stage, students presented results of their task orally in groups or in pairs with a focus on meaning and effective communication to convey information appropriately and fluently. Since each group or pair's talks were different, they listened to compare versions, and commented on each other's talks.

BLENDING CLASSROOM LEARNING WITH VIDEO-RECORDED TASKS

This stage involved assigning students a speaking task similar to the one studied during that particular week, as an extension to the face-to-face learning carried out in the classroom. Students were required to prepare for the task collaboratively outside the class hour. Following Willis (2009) who advises task recordings, using a digital video camera, students video-recorded themselves doing the speaking task, an example of which is given below:

The theme covered in the face-to-face learning is *English as a global language.* The classroom teaching is mainly devoted to discussing the reasons for English being a global language. Students' assigned task is related to the *influence of English on the Turkish language,* as stated below:

Conduct a research to find out which words have entered in Turkish language. Discuss benefits and its dangers. How would you solve this invasion?

During the next class hour, students' digitally video-recorded speaking tasks were viewed. While viewing the tasks, each student's task performance was evaluated using the oral test rating scale, discussed earlier in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy and task accomplishment. Additionally, students were given feedback on various aspects of their talk, and they were provided with focus-on-form through consciousness-raising by drawing their attention to relationships of form, meaning and function.

Brindley (2009) suggests that adopting task-based assessment requires that teachers and learners become accustomed to considering language tasks as indicators of progress and achievement, and learners need to understand the criteria for evaluation of performance. Thus, students were informed of the criteria for assessment of each task based on the oral test rating scale to assess their task performance, and they were suggested to critique on any aspect of the task.

In addition to video-recording of their speaking, the students listened to their own speech and transcribed sections themselves. Using task transcripts, students were asked to *notice* and highlight interesting features and the language that they used in their talk. These proved to be very useful in increasing students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

DATA ANALYSIS

Student scores from the pre-and post-speaking tasks were systematically entered into a computer for quantitative analyses, which was later analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), version 11.5. Paired Samples T-test was administered to find out if there existed any significant difference between the pre-and post-speaking scores of the students.

Data from the interviews and end-of-course evaluation were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis to identify emerging themes and trends. Following the strategy of analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), the researcher read through the interview transcripts several times to have a holistic nature of the data. Tally charts were used to produce a list of responses to each question to find recurrent themes. Based on the qualitative analysis of the responses given to each question, information was organized and categorized to achieve data reduction to approximate towards "an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomenon'' Wiersma and

Jurs (2005, p. 206). Salient comments regarding students' responses to each interview question were identified and noted. A similar procedure was adopted in analyzing students' written responses to the end-of-course survey evaluation.

FINDINGS
The two research questions will be examined based on the empirical evidence gathered from different research instruments.

Student teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of video-recorded TBSC
Students responded positively on integrating videos into speaking classes. They appreciated particularly intrinsic features of the use of video-enhanced tasks, and the opportunities for interaction and collaboration with other students, which they perceived as facilitating learning, adding innovation to the traditional face-to-face classroom teaching, expressed below:

> We haven't used video for recording our speaking and evaluating ourselves before so it was the first experience to study speaking this way. The use of video made the lessons more enjoyable and close to real life situation.

From the observation of the researcher, the students seemed to prepare better when they knew that they would be recorded. Generally, students reported that they liked seeing their recorded speeches because they could identify their problems and see their improvements. According to them, this process enabled them to keep their own record of progress. The following extract from a student reflects the opinion of the whole class:

> We have become aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Comparing my first and the last speaking task, I can see great improvements in my pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. I definitely see a great progress in my speaking skills.

In addition, students appreciated the supportive atmosphere created and the benefits of *scaffolding*, particularly during evaluating their video-recorded speaking tasks. They stated that the feedback they received helped them develop useful strategies:

> This video integrated speaking course has really been very productive in many ways: First, our instructor's supportive behavior made us feel relaxed. She clarified the points we did not understand. Also we were able to develop various strategies. We are now progressing step by step in the way of speaking like a native speaker. This is not a dream but it is just only up to use; focusing on the speaking strategies.

The impact of the blended TBSC, particularly students' video recording of their speaking tasks independently working at their own pace, has been significant in helping students to overcome their anxiety. The following extract illustrates leaving behind their fear of making mistakes and perceiving speaking as a process of continuous practice.

> At first, we had some anxiety, which comes from our previous education system which taught us to be silent. However, the present speaking course encouraged us to speak English. In a short time we were able to overcome the silence syndrome. Although we had some anxiety at the beginning of this course, after a while we felt more comfortable and self-confident. This was because of our new methods which we have learned. Through this method, first we gathered some information about the topic, such as learning some new words, then discussed about the subject using the new words. This method enhanced our vocabulary. By performing the tasks we learned how to use new expressions in context. All these helped us gain a production-based skill and develop our fluency in English.

Contribution of the Blended Approach to the Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills
This research question will be addressed in relation to data obtained from pre-and post-speaking tasks and an end-of-course evaluation.

Findings from pre-and post-course speaking tasks
In order to determine the extent to which these student teachers benefited from the blended TBSC, they were asked to speak on the same topic, as they did at the beginning of the course as a post-course speaking task. Each student's talk was recorded and rated using the same oral test rating scale, discussed earlier. Descriptive statistics were employed in analyzing the data. The findings are reported below:

Table 1: Students' pre-and post-course speaking scores
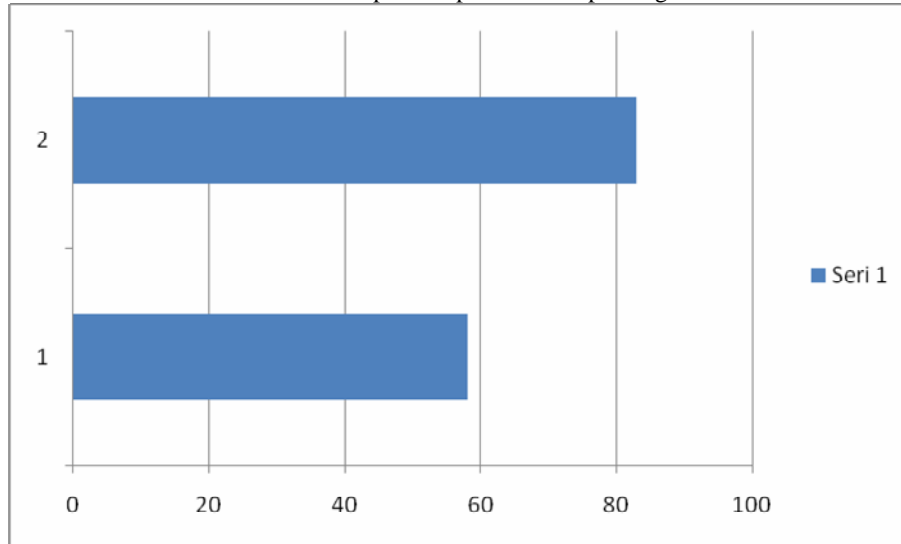
As indicated in Table 1, students' mean speaking score, which was measured as 58.0 before they took the course, which increased to 82.86, as measured at the post-course speaking task, indicating 43.3% of overall average increase in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy and task accomplishment as assessed according to the oral test rating scale.

Table 2: Results of paired samples T-test regarding pre-and post-course students' speaking

Score	N	$\overline{X}$	sd	df	t	P
Pre-course speaking	28	58	5.35			
				27	-26.575	.000
Post-course speaking	30	82.86	4.75			

In accordance with the results of the Paired Samples T-test, as indicated in Table 2, a significant difference (p <.001) has been recorded between the pre-course and post-course mean speaking scores of students, suggesting that the blended TBSC has had a considerable influence on each student's speaking performance.

When students' initial talks were compared with the final talk, considerable progress was found to have been made. Initially, students' oral production was inadequate; their knowledge of the topic was superficial; they produced some disconnected ideas and many language mistakes; they were unable to support their ideas; their use of vocabulary was limited, and they did not have much confidence in speaking.

This is illustrated below by the transcript of one student's pre-course speaking on the topic: "Most university degrees are theoretical and do not prepare students for the real world. They are therefore of very little value".

> *In the university we're supposed to work lessons. we don't do anything other than lesson and uumm, so we're fall uummm falling behind with the other activities and real world. We have to umm...work hard every time and ... we're given a lot of homework. I think...homework is unnecessary. .sometimes it's necessary umm.. but if it's given very... too much the students tend to...not to do homework and give up working.. sometimes in university we're given lessons about uhhmm.. parent, child and culture.. how to gain money..*

The following transcript of the same student at the post-course speaking reveals that the same student used a richer range of vocabulary related to the topic, disconnected sentences turned into meaningful and coherent spoken discourse. He was better aware of stress and intonation (not indicated in transcript).

> *As every... every body knows the university education is the last and at the same time is the best education that one can get before getting his or her job. Therefore it must be of great value ummm to prepare individuals for their future careers. ummm By so doing they will have less difficulty in performing their jobs.. So.. it must be practical rather than theoretical. Ummm. Think of a doctor who hasn't done any practice ummm during his ummm university education. You know.. doctors are*

doing practices on dead bodies so they can ummm get their education practical.. but.. instead of doing so if they do studies only on papers, ummm I think they can't be good doctors in the future.. and and how can we trust such a doctor? ummm or.. think of an engineer who is building structures and so on.. if they don't go and see how the buildings are build they can't learn it well.. so I strongly agree with the idea that individuals should get practical education rather than theoretical during their university education to ummm get well prepared for careers and for their future years…

Evaluation of end-of-course survey

As stated earlier, at the outset of the course, students *(N=28)* unanimously stated that they expected to improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy; they felt anxious and shy about speaking; their knowledge of vocabulary was restricted, and they remained unable to speak fluently.

Findings indicated that students made considerable improvements in all areas in which they felt inadequate in at the beginning of the course. The analysis demonstrated the emergence of several categories: (a) students expanded their knowledge of *vocabulary* and made significant improvements in their *speaking skills*; (b) the interactive nature of pair and group work promoted *collaborative learning* and *incidental learning*, and (c) they appreciated *scaffolding*.

The students overwhelmingly indicated that TBSC met their initial expectations, as clear from the following extract:

> *The speaking course has been very useful for me. At the beginning, I hoped that I would improve my pronunciation, fluency and accuracy in speaking English. Now that we are about to complete the course, I can say that my expectations have been met. My pronunciation is much better compared with what it was at the beginning of the course. I have also improved my knowledge of vocabulary. I have learned different idioms and new academic words about different topics.*

Many students (*N=28*) stated that they had previously been exposed to form-focused instruction. The following extracts illustrate how transition from a conventional grammar-based instruction to TBSC helped students develop their fluency and confidence to speak in English:

> *At the first speaking lesson, I had almost an empty mind about speaking, for I previously did not have such a course in high school. The curriculum had focused entirely on grammar and a little writing. Therefore, I had some fears about having a speaking course at the university. I thought what a hard course it is going to be. On the contrary, it was not that much difficult as I thought. Since the very beginning, our speaking lessons have proved to be very fruitful. When I look back into the past term, I can clearly see that I am miles away from where I was at the beginning. I extended my vocabulary. Also, my grammar skills improved. I now realize how important it is to make grammatically correct speeches. Most importantly, speaking course has helped me gain an intellectual maturity and thinking critically because I talked on a variety of topics, and I now have some ideas to speak about.*

Working in pairs and groups created opportunities for *collaborative learning*, also enabling *incidental learning,* as clear from the following extracts:

- *Each group talked about different topics so we could learn different ideas from our friends. This helped us to digest new expressions and strengthen our pronunciation.*
- *My friends have contributed a lot to my speaking. I, myself, picked up many words and phrases from them. To sum up this speaking course helped me improve my speaking skills.*
- *Students stated that while performing the tasks, they acquired both vocabulary and grammar knowledge to enable them to express themselves fluently.*
- *Not only did I learn new vocabularies, but also I improved my grammar. At the beginning of this course I could not speak so good as to express my opinions clearly and effectively. As time went by I improved my speaking.*

Undoubtedly, the most important benefit of the TBSC was that students, through cognitively engaging tasks that reflect authentic and purposeful use of language, were able to communicate meaningfully and effectively. This is illustrated by the following sample task:

> Imagine that you are an English teacher. Your students are having difficulties in learning English. What language learning strategies would you advise them?

As seen in the following video-recorded transcript, the task is performed as a group work and group members acting as a *teacher and students:*

Sample task:

S1: I have short memory to remember names. Sometimes I can easily forget the name of my neighbors; friends please tell me…. some of the tricks to develop a filing system in my mind.
T: You… you cannot remember the names then… try to picture people's faces in your mind, or if there are similar names in your relatives… your family…try to think of an example .. and you'll remember them
S2: My problem is far more different…. My problem is that ….not remembering things… I've got lots of things in my mind … exams, lessons, etc. These things always slip my mind .. and .. I'm very absent minded. What can I do?
T: You should write things down on a piece of paper and stick them on your wardrobe but be careful about it. Because it should be somewhere you always look at.
S3: I have a problem too. I can't remember new words in the new language ….. I memorize them but I can't keep them in my mind for a long time. What can I do?
T: Always repeat repeat… The more you write words down in the new language the more you remember them. Or you can make a sentence with the word.. When you forget a word's meaning remember the sentence and you'll recall it.

The main reason for students to speak fluently, as evidenced from the above-illustrated tasks could be attributed to the empowering potential of the blended TBSC, which helped student teachers to be aware of the amount of theme-related knowledge, language and vocabulary. In addition, the fact that students performed two similar tasks under each theme, one during the face-to-face learning and the other outside the lesson, helped to achieve task continuity; thus, leading to greater accuracy and complexity in performance.

DISCUSSION
The first research question asked what the student teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of video-recorded TBSC as a blended learning environment was. In general, video-recordings proved to be a very useful learning tool in recording and evaluating the speaking tasks with the learners involved in this study. Asking student teachers to record their speaking tasks independently has given students an important benefit in that they were able to communicate in English, do some additional research on the task, and relate what they had learned in the face-to-face classroom learning environment to the speaking task. The results of the survey on student perceptions indicated that most students acknowledged that recording their speaking was a real challenge for them, and that watching and evaluating their recordings increased their awareness of their own mistakes, as well as enabling them to trace their own progress.

The second research question asked what the contribution of the blended approach to the improvement of students' speaking skills was. As is evidenced from the findings obtained from this study, the speaking course that incorporated technology in combination with face-to-face instruction has been highly effective in promoting student teachers' speaking proficiency.

First, when the scores from the students' pre-course and post-course speaking task are compared, it can be seen that a considerable progress has been noted for each student. These same students also used a wider range of vocabulary, notably extending their theme-related vocabulary. Additionally, a noticeable improvement in the language used was present.
Next, the impact of integrating video into the course has been very significant in helping students overcome their anxiety, gain fluency and useful communication strategies. Students' end-of-year course evaluation reveals that this is due to the empowering potential of the blended TBSC.

As has been shown from several comments made by the students and based on informal interviews held with them, students are now more aware of the amount of theme-related knowledge they need to acquire. They have started to accept grammar and vocabulary not as discrete elements of language but as powerful means for putting their ideas into communication. While students' primary attention was directed to the meaningful communication, TBSC proved to be beneficial in achieving a balance between accuracy, fluency and gaining a higher level of complexity. This confirms Willis and Willis's (2007) argument that taking the task as a starting point, learners are encouraged to deploy whatever language they already possess, build upon it, improve and expand their capabilities. The findings obtained from this study also confirm remarks made by Foster's (1999)

arguments that "…giving learners tasks to transact, rather than items to learn, provides an environment which best promotes the natural learning of languages". (p. 69)

Another outcome from this study is that collaborative interaction provided a context conducive to negotiation of meaning, thus confirming Skehan and Foster's (2001) argument. Students acknowledged that through collaboration, they gained useful insights from their fellow friends.

Finally, the present study is consistent with studies conducted by several other researchers who found TBL to be particularly useful in developing students' language skills. The findings of the present study confirms Loumpourdi's (2005) study which revealed that using tasks into a grammar syllabus increased students' self-esteem and boosted their confidence, and those previously felt intimidated by rules were able to express themselves more willingly. In addition, students subconsciously became familiar with L2 grammatical features as the researcher raised their awareness through drawing their attention to such features.

The study also confirms that of Stark (2005), who designed a task-based specialist business English course, in several aspects. First, working in pairs/groups created opportunities for collaborative learning, enabling students to benefit from each other. Next, as in the present study, while the major aim was to promote students' communication skills, Stark notes that students developed various other skills, e.g., writing. Students found the tasks relevant, motivating and most importantly, they felt that they had improved their language skills, presentation skills, and vocabulary. Finally, as in the present study, setting up similar tasks contributed towards achieving greater accuracy and complexity in students' task performance.

The present study also parallels that of Kiernan's (2005) study, which involved using narratives with to low-level adult Japanese adult learners to develop general conversational skills. As in the present study, whilst those Japanese learners had previously studied English at school, they had little experience of having to speak English. However, implementing TBL to these students increased their confidence in conversational skills. Finally, the results of the present study is consistent with Muller (2005) in that implementing TBL proved a challenge with beginners, as the students, who initially, had very little spoken ability in English were able to develop their spoken English through the use of TBL.

These findings are also in agreement with other studies reporting the positive impact of integrating technology on L2 learning (e.g., Ayres, 2002; Beauvois, 1994, 1998; Felix, 2003).

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS
This study reported on the design and implementation of a blended TBSC that combined face-to-face classroom instruction with video-recorded speaking tasks, for the first-year student teachers of English in Turkish higher education. This implementation was found to be helpful in enhancing students' speaking skills by offering an innovative learning experience to students who were able to engage in meaningful interaction, and improve in the areas where they saw an obvious need for improvement.

Findings of this study are significant in contributing to the related literature as the results indicate that in an EFL/ESL context, a speaking course based on the principles of TBL can be conducive to promoting students' speaking proficiency along with developing their knowledge of language. The findings of this study also advance our understanding of the contribution the use of video-recordings of students' speaking tasks makes to foreign language learning, and offer useful insights to teachers and course designers in designing a speaking course.

While the present course has been designed to develop mainly the speaking skills of a group of students in Turkey, its implications extend this particular context. It is hoped that the framework discussed here will provide guidelines to researchers and teachers in other contexts to develop not only the speaking skills but also other skills for their students.

Finally, given that the research is small-scale conducted with only 28 student teachers of English, and that the context is unique, what is documented here is not generalizable. Therefore, further research into TBL incorporating the video-recordings of students' speaking, needs to be conducted with a larger number of students, to prove the effectiveness of this approach, and to further explore its full potential in teaching and learning EFL/ESL.

REFERENCES

Ayres, R. (2002). Learner attitudes towards the use of CALL. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *15*, 241-249.

Beauvois, M. (1994). E-talk: Attitudes and motivation in a computer-assisted classroom Discussion. *Computers and the Humanities*, *28*(1), 177-190.

Beauvois, M. (1998). Conversations in slow motion: Computer-mediated communication in foreign language classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 54*, 198-217.

Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (2006). *Handbook of blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs.* San Francisco: Pfeiffer Publishing.

Brindley, G. (2009). Task-centred language assessment in language learning: The promise and the challenge. Assessment in TBLL. In K. Van den Branden, K. M. Bygate, & J. M. Norris (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching: A reader* (pp. 435-454). John Benjamins.

Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. NSW: Pearson Education.

Chandra, S. (2007). Lecture video capture for the masses. In Proceedings of ITiCSE'07, June 23–27 (pp. 276–280). Dundee, Scotland, UK: ACM.

Christel, M. G., & Frisch, M. H. (2008). Evaluating the contributions of video representation for a life oral history collection. In Proceedings of the 8th ACM/IEEE-CS joint conference on Digital libraries, Pittsburgh PA, (pp. 241–250). ACM.

Collentine, J. (2000). Insights into the construction of grammatical knowledge provided by user behavior tracking technologies. *Language Learning and Technology*, *3*, 44-57.

Dewar, T., & Whittington, D. (2004). Blended learning research report. *Calliope Learning, 2*(1), 1-12.

Felix, U. (2003). Language learning online: Deconstructing the myths. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, *19,* 118-138.

Foster, P. (1999). Key concepts in ELT: Task based learning and pedagogy. *ELT Journal, 53*(1), 69-70.

Foster, P., & Skehan, P. (1996). The influence of planning and task type on second language performance. *SSLA*, *18,* 299-323.

Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research.* Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Kiernan, P. (2005). Storytelling with low-level learners. Developing narrative tasks. In B. L. Leaver, & J. Willis (Eds.), *Teachers exploring tasks in English language teaching* (pp. 58-68). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levy, M. (2000) Scope, goals and methods in CALL research: Questions of coherence and autonomy. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *12*(2), 170–195.

Lonergan, J. (1984). *Video in language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Long, M. H. (1989). Task, group, and task-group interactions. *University of Hawaii's Working Papers in ESL*, *8*(2), 1-26.

Long, M. H., & Crookes, G. (1993). Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly, 26*(1), 27-55.

Long, M. H., & Robinson, P. (1998). Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), Focus on form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition (pp.15-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loumpourdi, L. (2005). Developing from PPP to TBL: A focused grammar task. In B. L. Leaver, & J. Willis (Eds.), *Teachers exploring tasks in English language teaching* (pp.33-39). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

MacDonald, J. (2006). *Blended learning and online tutoring: A good practice guide.* Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing.

Motteram, G. (1999). Changing the research paradigm: Qualitative research methodology and the CALL classroom. In *Worldcall: Global perspectives on computer-assisted language learning* (pp.201-213). Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger B.V.

Muller, T. (2005). Adding tasks to textbooks for beginner learners. In B. L. Leaver, & J. Willis (Eds.), *Teachers exploring tasks in English language teaching* (pp. 69-77). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Neumeier, P. (2005). A closer look at blended learning: Parameters for designing a blended language environment for language teaching and learning. *ReCALL*, *17,* 163-178.

Nunan, D. (1993). Task-based syllabus design: Selecting, grading and sequencing task. In G. Crookes, & S. M.Gass (Eds.), *Tasks in a pedagogical context: Integrating theory and practice* (pp.55-68). Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Odhabi, H., & Nicks-McCaleb, L. (2009). Video recording lectures: Student and professor perspectives. British Journal of Educational Technology. no. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.01011.x

Robinson, P. (2001). Task complexity, cognitive resources, and syllabus design: A triadic framework for examining task influences on SLA. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 287-318). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salaberry, M. R. (2001). The use of technology for second language learning and teaching: A retrospective. *The Modern Language Journal, 85,* 39-56.

Singh, H. (2003). Building effective blended learning programs. *Educational Technology*, *43*(6), 51-54.

Skehan, P. (1996). A framework for the implementation of task based instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, *17*(1), 38-62.

Skehan, P. (2003). Tasks in L2 learning and teaching. *Language Teaching, 36*(1), 1-14.

Skehan, P., & Foster, P. (2001). Cognition and tasks. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 183-205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stark, P. P. (2005). Integrating task-based learning into a business English programme. In B. L. Leaver, & J. Willis (Eds.), *Teachers exploring tasks in English language teaching* (pp.40-49). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stracke, E. (2007). A road to understanding: A qualitative study into why learners drop out of a blended language learning (BLL) environment. *ReCALL*, *19,* 57-78.

Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1990). *Video in action.* London: Prentice Hall.

Warschauer, M. (1996). Comparing face-to-face and electronic communication in the second language classroom. *CALICO Journal*, *13,* 7-26.

Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. G. (2005). *Research methods in education.* London: Pearson Publishers.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. London: Longman.

Willis, J. (2009). The TBL framework: The task cycle. In K. Van den Branden, M. Bygate, & J. M. Norris (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching: A reader* (pp.227-242). John Benjamins.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2001). Task-based language learning. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.