TEACHERS ENGAGING IN RESEARCH
Edited by: Kenan Dikilitaş, Mark Wyatt, Judith Hanks and Deborah Bullock

This volume is dedicated to English language teachers’ accounts of their engagement in research in their own classroom contexts throughout Turkey, a country where there has been an upsurge of practitioner research in recent years. The intrinsic benefits of such activity, in terms of more motivated learners and teachers, are becoming more widely known. Publications such as this, which appears just prior to the IATEFL Research SIG’s 2nd international teacher research conference in Turkey (held in conjunction with Bahçeşehir University), continue to spread the word. Themes addressed in this volume include teacher research-mentoring (which is vital as teacher research spreads), developing collaboration and autonomy in language learning, skills development, teachers’ reflections on their own development, and technology and language practice.

Kenan Dikilitaş is an ELT teacher educator and researcher, particularly interested in teacher research for professional development. He has organized international conferences for the IATEFL Research SIG and conducted teacher research projects in Turkey; he has published several edited books and papers in ELTJ and EAR.

Mark Wyatt has worked in ELT in Thailand, Nepal, Oman, the UK and the UAE. His articles have appeared in various journals including the ELTJ, LTJ and System. He moderates the IATEFL Research SIG discussion board and co-edits ELT Research.

Judith Hanks has worked in China, Italy, Singapore and the UK as an EFL teacher and teacher educator. She has authored Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching and co-authored (with Dick Allwright) The Developing Language Learner: an introduction to exploratory practice.

Deborah Bullock is a freelance educational consultant and writer, specialising in primary and secondary ELT. Her interests include learner-centred approaches to assessment and practitioner research. She is the IATEFL Research SIG publications manager and has co-edited several teacher research publications.
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IATEFL Research Special Interest Group
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Introduction

The complexity of teachers’ work is increasingly being realized, together with its importance for practitioners. While trying to overcome potential practical challenges they might face when presenting input and managing activities and tasks, teachers also monitor the learning process through feedback and sustain social interaction. Moreover, teachers usually work with a variety of learners, posing the additional challenge of adapting pedagogical practices to emerging contexts. This is not a straightforward process, however, and teachers often need to work hard to understand new teaching contexts and deal with unpredictable issues. It requires careful thinking and planning, and sometimes even developing a research plan to delve into issues more deeply, in order to inform their practices and understandings.

Teacher research (TR) is conducted by and for teachers (Bullock & Smith, 2015) helping them to understand their teaching practices and the way teaching shapes learning. In this sense, teachers attempt to personally theorize their practices by following a research process that they design in their capacity as teachers; this has intrinsic value (Borg, 2013) since it supports the growth of educational practitioners in local contexts. However, there are concerns about the extent to which teachers can carry out methodologically robust investigations which can contribute to the world of educational research (e.g. Ellis, 2010). We feel that attempts such as this book can not only move the research experiences of language teachers forward, but also serve a mediating role between academic researchers and teacher researchers. This volume is the latest in a series of books of teacher research that have emerged from a series of conferences in Izmir, Turkey, a context which we now describe.

Context

Turkey is categorized as an economically developing country where English is learnt and taught as a foreign language with different instrumental pur-
At the outset, the teacher-researchers, who had been mostly supported by in-house mentors from the initial stages of their research in their different institutions, were given guidelines to ensure consistency in terms of chapter organization. These prioritized in-depth description of purpose, context, research procedure, and reflection upon learning from the research experience. This last point is important. Indeed, it addresses an issue also noted by Farrell (2016) in his review of the 2015 publication, that reflection was sometimes limited in teachers' accounts. We note that for this publication, reflection was an explicit requirement and influenced selection.

Once submissions were received, the editors reviewed the 48 studies and made an initial selection based upon content, guidelines and the number of clarifications, revisions and amendments that would be required for the work to meet a publishable standard. Unfortunately, while we would have liked to provide additional support to include and publish more studies, this was not feasible due to space and time constraints.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of three chapters which focus on different theoretical aspects of TR provided by the plenary speakers. Of these, Mark Wyatt focuses on psychological and educational benefits achieved through engagement in research with reference to a sample of teacher-researchers from one of the universities in this local context. Through indicating how these teachers overcame initial uncertainties, supported by mentoring, to embrace research and engage deeply in research processes in ways that helped them connect more closely to their learners, Wyatt shows how rewarding the TR experience could be. Meanwhile, Judith Hanks discusses the concept of 'research as practice', whereby research is integrated with the normal pedagogic activities of teachers and learners. Hanks problematizes traditional notions of research, and suggests alternative approaches such as action research, reflective practice, and most recently, exploratory practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). Drawing on the principles of exploratory practice, she analyses a case study of teachers and learners puzzling about their own teaching and learning in the context of EAP (English for Academic Purposes). She concludes that the success of exploratory practice resides in the emphasis it places on poses such as passing tests, and/or qualifying for Higher Education. English is the medium of instruction (EMI) at many private higher education institutes (Nunan, 2003), which demand high levels of academic English. There has been a growing interest in the quality of language teaching particularly at university level and the TR movement is one initiative of this development. Encouragement of TR has been evident for a few years at different Turkish universities as a way of supporting professional development (e.g. Atay, 2008).

I (Kenan Dikilitaş) started initiating TR projects as a means of supporting professional development at a private university in Izmir in 2010. Follow-up conferences and publications also commenced at that time. Initially these conferences were local but increasingly became international, supported and subsequently managed by the IATEFL Research SIG. A related development in recent years has been the involvement of external mentors (Richard Smith, Anne Burns, Mark Wyatt, Judith Hanks, Simon Borg, Dick Allwright, and Martin Lamb). These external mentors contributed either by attending and presenting at the yearly conferences, visiting or conducting face-to-face tutoring and feedback sessions. This growth into an internationally supported context also increased national interest in successive conferences and publications.

This publication follows on from the 5th conference, which took place in June 2015. Earlier publications following the first four conferences (Dikilitaş, 2012; Dikilitaş, 2013; Dikilitaş, 2014; Dikilitaş, Smith, and Trotman, 2015) appeared at yearly intervals. The last of these volumes was reviewed by Farrell (2016), who was appreciative of it getting TR out in the public domain. Farrell highlights several positive things about the volume. For example, he sees the book as "a great resource for other practising teachers to consult on similar issues" and "a very useful way of promoting their reflective learning" (p.2). In our view, the knowledge generated by teachers in this book reflects how teachers deal with the issues, questions, and points-to-improve in their normal teaching practices. The chapters also present unique, local teacher-driven perspectives towards an understanding of a wide variety of topics, which should be of interest to teachers in a range of contexts.

Contributing authors come from different universities across Turkey, where they work as instructors in foreign language schools. Since dissemination is an integral part of the research process, and writing, however challenging, is key to developing thinking, these publications provide a valuable contribution, not only in sharing findings, methods and techniques, but also in helping budding teacher researchers to engage with the research process as a larger enterprise.

Contents

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of three chapters which focus on different theoretical aspects of TR provided by the plenary speakers. Of these, Mark Wyatt focuses on psychological and educational benefits achieved through engagement in research with reference to a sample of teacher-researchers from one of the universities in this local context. Through indicating how these teachers overcame initial uncertainties, supported by mentoring, to embrace research and engage deeply in research processes in ways that helped them connect more closely to their learners, Wyatt shows how rewarding the TR experience could be. Meanwhile, Judith Hanks discusses the concept of 'research as practice', whereby research is integrated with the normal pedagogic activities of teachers and learners. Hanks problematizes traditional notions of research, and suggests alternative approaches such as action research, reflective practice, and most recently, exploratory practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). Drawing on the principles of exploratory practice, she analyses a case study of teachers and learners puzzling about their own teaching and learning in the context of EAP (English for Academic Purposes). She concludes that the success of exploratory practice resides in the emphasis it places on
relevance of research (agenda, process, findings) to practitioners. Next, Kenan Dikilitaş discusses the context in which he mentored teacher researchers, with special emphasis on the challenges he experienced and how TR functioned as a catalyst, central to teacher development in the school. He shows how school development is closely related to effective professional development projects and what potential impacts on the school can be achieved through sustained engagement in research.

In Part 2, there are chapters that investigate the mentors’ experiences of teacher-research-mentoring (TRM) (Dikilitaş & Wyatt, 2016) in different contexts across Turkey. The increasing number of TR projects has created natural environments for TRM practices, and as editors, we took the opportunity to ask these mentors to write about the process with reference to their actual experiences. This part offers a variety of TRM experiences, including challenges and descriptions of ways to overcome them.

So, at the beginning of Part 2, Yasemin Kırkgöz and Mustafa Yaşar report on a collaborative in-service teacher development program undertaken to facilitate and support teachers during the implementation of a new Primary ELT curriculum. They describe the experiences of the teacher educators and the ten teachers involved, discuss the challenges they faced and conclude with some implications for future, similar projects. Next, Seden Eraldemir Tuyan describes TRM at the School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University. Inspired by Dikilitaş’s work in Izmir, she initiated her own TR project, leading a team of nine volunteers focused on different classroom issues. She explains how she provided support, helping the team to realize the benefits to be gained from participation. On a similar theme, Mine Bellikli investigates attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of TR in Atılım University. She found that teachers were interested in workshops giving examples of other TR activities, but some wanted incentives for the extra work that TR would involve. Nevertheless, having tried TR, teachers reported they had learned a lot and enriched their understanding of classroom issues. Next, Cemile Doğan describes a project which brought together ten ELT instructors working at different universities in Konya to work collaboratively on developing their research skills and attitudes to professional development. She describes in detail how she initiated and implemented the program, the challenges she faced and her reflections on the experience. In the following paper, Yasemin Kırkgöz focuses on two teachers who took part in the university–school collaborative project described in Chapter 4. She describes how she facilitated and guided two Grade 2 teachers to carry out action research for the first time and shows how scaffolding and facilitation enabled the teachers to cope effectively with their classroom concerns, and to learn and develop professionally. Utku Kara concludes this section with his reflections on TRM at the School of Foreign Languages at Marmara University, where he set up a TR project. Kara describes both how he managed it and how the team benefited.

In Part 3, the studies conducted by teachers are thematised into four sub-themes: collaboration & autonomy, skills development, teachers’ own development, and technology and language practice. These sub-themes show the variety of issues which teacher–researchers face. Four researchers investigate learner issues reporting on the potential use of collaborative learning (chapters 10–13), and efforts to encourage greater autonomy and responsibility for learning. The next seven studies investigate teaching and practicing different language skills, especially ‘speaking’ (chapters 14–20). Teachers’ focus on this productive skill as a research topic suggests a challenge or growing interest in developing active language users. The following three chapters investigate how teachers develop instructional practices (chapters 21–23), and each focuses on different aspects of teacher talk. These three chapters relate closely to the previous six in which teachers investigated ways of developing speaking skills in the classroom. In the final chapters (24–27), there is more focus on developing language production through interaction via social media or the use of technological tools.

Collaboration & Autonomy

From the School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University, Diser Sucak reports on a study designed to support goal-setting and self-regulation in learners. Scaffolding appeared to help disorganized students to plan their time more effectively. Next, Cemile Buğra reports on incorporating creative writing activities into classroom practice with a view to encouraging more active participation. She presents evidence of learners’ engagement with these activities and examples of their work. In the third study in this section and from the same university, Beyza Kabadayı reports on taking steps to support fuller learner autonomy. She describes how she provided more opportunities for peer learning, monitored her instructions and questions to avoid over-teaching, and
encouraged greater freedom in classwork and homework activities. It seems these initiatives led to gradual changes in learner behaviour. Finally, Seden Eraldemir Tuyan also reports on encouraging peer learning at the same university by means of a collaborative learning tool. She presents evidence of this helping students and then, drawing on data she collected from them, suggests the innovation led to improvements in their use of English and their inter- and intra-personal skills.

**Skills Development**

Meltem Turan Eroğlu and Günsel Erdem describe the implementation of cycles of speaking, extensive reading, and writing activities in language classes at Atılım University. They investigated both teacher and student attitudes to the innovation, and found that while teachers were generally positive, learners were less keen because they felt they lacked time. Eroğlu and Erdem conclude that teachers need to spend time helping students to appreciate the importance of extensive reading skills to their future academic and professional lives. Feride Güven and Meltem Turan Eroğlu report on experimenting with flipped classrooms in English for Academic Purposes courses at the same university. They found a range of student attitudes: some were enthusiastic, others less so. They cited technological difficulties, lack of time, and a preference for more traditional approaches to teaching as possible reasons for negative responses. Nevertheless Güven and Eroğlu remain optimistic, arguing that with appropriate support, flipped classrooms can be a helpful tool for cooperative and collaborative learning.

The next three studies were carried out at Gediz University, İzmir. Firstly, Rukiye Eryılmaz investigates challenges to developing learners’ speaking skills and implements a text-based syllabus approach. She designed a speaking course using transcribed texts of authentic conversations and engaged the learners in understanding linguistic characteristics of conversations. She concludes that text-based speaking activities promoted self-confidence and also reflects on her own development. The study by Koray Akyazı also investigates how speaking skills can be developed and to this end, he used authentic TED talk videos on a variety of topics of interest to his learners. Learners’ comments indicate that they developed presentation skills, and increased their self-efficacy during presentations. Hasan Savaş also deals with speaking reticence and to help his students overcome this, he introduced two techniques: *Take Notes and Speak (TNAS)* and *Think and Speak (TAS)*. He found that students felt more confident and developed more ideas as a result of these techniques. He also reflects upon his own development referring to a deeper understanding of how he was able to promote speaking in his classrooms. From Çukurova University, Berna Balç addresses the issue of her students’ apparent anxiety when asked to engage in speaking activities. To reduce this anxiety, she incorporated peer assessment into work with picture description speaking tasks and then evaluated student reactions. The peer assessment seemed to help. And finally, CeAnn Myers, Yuliya Speroff, Merve Gazıoğlu, Buket Tanyeri and Fatma Aksoy describe an action research project they undertook at Meliksah University in Kayseri to explore the relationship between student motivation and speaking activity types. They were interested to know which activities students preferred and why, in addition to understanding how their preferences changed after experiencing activities more than once. As a result of their research they gained a better understanding of what motivates students to participate in speaking activities.

**Teachers’ own development**

From Gediz university, İzmir, there are three studies focusing on teachers’ own development. In the first of these, Ceylin Özünül describes how she attempts to understand why and how she uses L1 in her classroom by keeping diaries and recording some of her lessons to examine her own language use. She reflected upon this research experience by concluding that she can self-regulate her L1 use using a variety of techniques. In the second study, Gülşah Tercan investigates her corrective feedback strategies by generating data through recording and transcribing her own lessons. She implemented different strategies and elicited the learners’ views to understand which corrective strategies they preferred, and felt were of benefit. She concluded that she developed awareness in what students want and mastered skills in using these strategies. In the final study in this section, Nur Demirel aims to understand her own teacher talking time and develop strategies to reduce it, a challenge she has sought to overcome for some time. She implemented several strategies to increase student talking time while systematically reducing her own.
Technology and Language Practice

Zeynep Aksel Alıntaş and Pelin Özmen created a Facebook group for their students, where they could use target vocabulary in social interaction. They found that the students produced more online than they could in the classroom. They also realized that they explored different and effective ways of supporting vocabulary learning outside the classroom. Semra Değirmenci Mutlu, Koray Akyazı and Tuğçe Karaulutaş explored students’ and teachers’ perceptions of a CALL tool, English Central, at İzmir University School of Foreign Languages. All three authors were studying on a MA TEFL program at the time of the study and took advantage of this opportunity to gain experience in conducting qualitative research. In the final section of their report they describe not only how the study has impacted on their classroom teaching, but also the invaluable lessons they have learnt as researchers and how this will impact on future studies they undertake. In another study, Merve Babiker, Sezen Savaş and Günsu Taşıl investigated collaborative asynchronous and synchronous computer assisted written communication to explore the influence of various interaction types. They found that synchronous communication could help learners develop their critical thinking skills and is more preferable with students due to its immediacy when compared to asynchronous communication. They also report that they developed a better understanding of the roles of different interaction types. In the final chapter Esin Yüksel designs an extra-curricular activity using podcasts to foster learners’ speaking and listening skills. She found that using podcasts helped learners deal with real-time language, which might compensate for the lack of interaction with English speaking people. She also reports several professional gains as a result of engaging in this research.

Conclusion

To sum up, this book contains a wealth of teacher research in a range of different contexts. We believe these chapters go some way to convey the breadth and depth of possibilities for teachers interested in investigating their own practice, and we hope that readers will be encouraged by these stories to undertake investigations of their own.

The editors

References


PART I
Introduction

Unfortunately, in the world of English language teaching, long-standing scepticism as to the value of teacher research has not entirely dissipated, and has certainly been evident in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century in high places. For example, writing about ‘action research’, then becoming popular in 2001 soon after the publication of an influential volume on collaborative action research by Anne Burns (1999), Scott Jarvis, chair of TESOL’s Research Interest Section, complained indignantly: “whether action research really does (or even can) consistently lead to better teaching practices remains an open empirical question that has not yet been resolved” (Jarvis, 2001, cited in Borg, 2004, p. 6).

If we listen, though, to the voices of learners and teachers connected through teacher research, the psychological and educational benefits of such activity very soon start to emerge. For example, from a learner perspective, Lucas Lombardi, a 12-year old Brazilian student, quoted in Allwright and Hanks (2009), declares “the teachers who know that they learn with their students are the ones we like most” (p. 4). Teaching is a learning profession, and if students are conscious, as here, that their teachers are learning with them, from them, for them, through a form of teacher research that involves learners as co-participants and co-researchers, in this case ‘exploratory practice’, then this is likely to enhance the affective dimensions of learning. Engaging in research can be motivating for teachers, too. For example, Emily Edwards (in Burns and Edwards, 2014) declares that this has led to improvements in her students’ learning, her teaching and her work as a curriculum developer. Furthermore, she writes: “it has been a catalyst for my further academic study, for my involvement in other colleagues’ professional development and for dissemination of my research through publications and presentations” (p. 79). Clearly, regardless of the views of sceptics such as Jarvis (above), educational
and psychological benefits of teacher research can be evident to participants such as Lucas Lombardi and Emily Edwards in their Brazilian and Australian contexts respectively.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore in detail such benefits in a local Turkish context in which teacher research has been encouraged. To this end I present findings of a study conducted in Izmir with Turkish teachers. Before that, though, I discuss theoretical issues further, examine the context and then outline the research methodology employed. Data for this chapter were gathered with the help of Kenan Dikilitaş, with whom I have co-authored a related study (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015), and I would like to thank Kenan for this help.

Literature review
With a view to empowering teachers and their learners, teacher research has been encouraged by various leaders in the field in recent decades (e.g. Allwright, 2003; Burns, 1999). However, research still seems to be a minority activity for teachers in most contexts, as Borg’s (2009) large-scale survey research with teachers in many countries suggests. There may be various reasons for this, including environmental factors such as the absence of institutional support and/or mentoring and/or resources, and limited time due to heavy workloads. If a typical working week involves 38 teaching hours with classes that are each composed of approximately 40 students, as tends to be the case in Chile for example (Smith, Connelly and Rebolledo, 2014), then any classroom research that teachers engage in needs to be sensitive to the context in its design, e.g. through making use of naturally occurring data, if it is to be at all sustainable. For teachers to get this far, though, they need conceptions of research that encourage them to engage practically with it. Unfortunately, though, as Borg’s (2009) research indicates, this is probably often not the case, with notions of ‘research’ as an activity that involves ‘objective’ outsiders conducting large-scale studies that test hypotheses in quasi-scientific, quasi-experimental ways more likely to come to the forefront of their thoughts. Such conceptualizations might explain their typical disengagement.

Though the paradigm wars (Gage, 1989), a period marked by lively and sometimes acrimonious debates between post-positivists, constructivists and critical theorists, may be in the past, it is still the case that journals devoted to language teaching include many more quantitative than qualitative studies (Richards, 2009); Richards suggests that only between 8% and 25% of the studies in many leading journals are qualitative. A particularly disappointing finding of his study is that of the 15 international journals Richards surveyed covering the period 2000–2007 very few gave much coverage to action research and exploratory practice, with Language Teaching Research the exception. This is regrettable since these are approaches to practitioner research that support an empowering of teachers and their learners. As Burns (2010) says of action research, it “involves taking a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts”, with a view to closing a gap between what you see happening and would like to see (p. 2). Exploratory practice is sometimes seen as a form of action research, e.g. by Richards (2009), though Hanks (this volume) prefers to see it otherwise, as a junior member of the same rambunctious practitioner research family. Dedicated to principles such as putting the quality of life first (Allwright, 2003), exploratory practice also emphasizes making the learners central to the process. As Hanks (2015) explains, “learners are encouraged not only to investigate questions that have puzzled their teachers, but also to formulate their own questions and investigate issues themselves” (p. 118).

It seems likely that engaging in action research or exploratory practice in a sustained way is likely to be a highly beneficial activity. As argued in Wyatt (2011), teachers engaging in classroom research over a period of time might gain from the development of research skills, increased awareness of the teaching / learning process, renewed enthusiasm for teaching, greater collaboration with colleagues (Atay, 2008), enhanced self-efficacy beliefs (Henson, 2001) and continuing commitment to professional development (Kirkwood and Christie, 2006). However, as has been pointed out by Borg (2013), teachers might gain less from such endeavour if their experience of teacher research is within the confines of continuing in-service teacher education, as they may be primarily instrumentally-motivated to complete their qualifications. Whether or not they are primarily instrumentally- or perhaps intrinsically-motivated, though, it remains the case, as Edwards and Burns (2015) highlight, that there are very few accounts of teachers continuing to develop as action researchers over a sustained period outside teacher education. This is not to suggest that this does not happen, but it does sug-
gest that this longitudinal dimension to development is rarely documented. An implication for research into teacher research, therefore, is that where such development amongst teachers occurs we need to explore it to gain further insights that can inform practice elsewhere; this is the rationale for this chapter.

The research context
As documented in various sources (e.g. Çelik and Dikilitaş, 2015; Dikilitaş, 2015; Smith, 2014; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015), the context that is the focus of the research reported on here is a university foundation programme in Turkey, where teacher research has been the main continuing professional development activity since 2010, under the leadership of a dedicated teacher trainer. In this particular university context, there are (at the time of writing) teachers with as many as 5 years’ experience of carrying out research projects working alongside less experienced teacher-researchers, recruited in the intervening years as the university has expanded.

These teacher-researchers work in a fairly challenging context, teaching approximately 25 hours per week between September and June each year, with the task of helping learners up to an upper-intermediate English level that will facilitate their further academic study. While teaching, many of them have also been researching, developing small-scale studies each year with the help of workshops provided by the teacher trainer, weekly meetings, small group and individual mentoring discussions. Every year since 2011, these teacher-researchers have presented their studies at an annual conference that has become increasingly international, supported by the IATEFL Research SIG and plenary speakers including Dick Allwright, Simon Borg, Anne Burns, Judith Hanks, Martin Lamb and Richard Smith. After presenting at the annual conference, the teacher-researchers have written up their work for publication to appear in dedicated volumes produced annually such as this one (see also Dikilitaş [this volume] and Smith [2014] for further details about the research context, and Dikilitaş [2012, 2013, 2014] and Dikilitaş, Smith and Trotman [2015] for the earlier volumes). It should be evident from this brief description, though, that this is an environment in which teacher research has been nurtured and has flourished.

Research methodology
To gain insights into the teacher-researchers’ experiences of research, their underlying cognitions with regard to this and how these have been shaped, Kenan and I developed a questionnaire. Focusing on different dimensions of the research experience, such as developing research questions, designing research instruments and producing coherent reports, these based on Borg’s (2010) criteria for good quality research, the questionnaire elicited their levels of self-confidence in these different areas, their rationale for these judgements, their self-awareness of any changes over time and what they ascribed these to, and any impact they identified that research had had on their teaching, their work with colleagues and their learners (this instrument appears in Wyatt and Dikilitaş [2015]).

The questionnaire was distributed by Kenan electronically and then emailed to me directly by the teacher-researchers who participated; 14 did so (which represents a modest sample of the active teacher-researchers on the foundation programme: approximately 20-25 present at the annual conference each year). The findings below are based on their responses. For Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2015), other sources of data were also used in a multi-case study of three of the teacher-researchers. Here, though, I use just the questionnaire data and consider the responses of all 14, thus gaining a broader though less in-depth picture and with the limitation of depending on self-report data, which of course may make the findings less dependable. Data were coded manually; from this content analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), themes of interest emerged.

Regarding data presentation, though real names are used in the multi-case study with the three teacher-researchers’ permission (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015), for this article I have not sought permission for this (from the other 11), and have accordingly anonymised all 14, as Teacher 7 (T7), for example. This is in line with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity given in the introduction to the questionnaire. Ethical guidelines were thus followed. The results, organized according to thematic analysis, are presented below.
Results

Overcoming initial uncertainties

It is evident from the data that the notion of engaging in teacher research was one that many teachers had initially felt very uncertain about, partly, as one wrote, because they “hadn’t had any [prior] education or experience in doing research” (T6). A result of this was typically low self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986) with regard to doing research, with T12 reporting, for example: “at first, I was very anxious”. Several reported feeling disoriented, e.g. T4, who wrote: “at the beginning of my first research, I did feel totally lost”. A lack of self-confidence was linked to awareness of limited knowledge, e.g. by T14: “at first I didn’t know what research is, how to write research questions, how to think critically”. Some are aware they had a great deal to learn, with T10 recording, for example: “in my first research, I wasn’t even aware there were ethical issues to consider”.

With immersion in the research experience, practical knowledge in conducting research seems to have developed, with teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs growing accordingly, a relationship also noted in Wyatt’s (2015a) research in Oman amongst teachers developing as researchers. T10, for example, links increased self-confidence with improved skills in data analysis: “when I first started doing research, I generally felt lost in all the data, but I don’t feel lost anymore. I can study systematically”.

However, this greater self-confidence isn’t entirely widespread. T13 confides, for example; “I don’t think I have the competence to develop appropriate research methods because you need to be a professional to do this”. This statement suggests, actually, that T13 could develop a greater sense of being a teacher researcher. With developing practical knowledge from experience, one would expect the distancing language employed here (a teacher researcher is not a professional?) to disappear. However, there is another issue here too; T13 appears to have a ‘fixed mindset’ (Dweck, 2000). According to Dweck’s theory, a teacher like T13 who believes they lack the competence to develop in a particular way, here in identifying ‘appropriate research methods’, is less likely to achieve this development than a teacher with a ‘growth mindset’ who believes that with hard work it is possible. So T13 might benefit from a specific kind of scaffolding focused on developing a growth mindset.

Other teachers are conscious that while they have grown in some ways they still need further support in specific areas, e.g. in analysing data, as highlighted by T9: “I have data but I do not know how to analyse them. When I look at the data I collected I only see letters or numbers. It is very difficult to analyse”.

Being supported to engage in teacher research

As noted above and described elsewhere (e.g. Çelik and Dikilitaş, 2015; Dikilitaş, 2015; Smith, 2014; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015), various forms of structured support have been provided and, in responding to the questionnaire, teachers acknowledge the value of this. T2, for example, highlights the benefits of attending many workshops, reporting: “with the help of those training sessions, I think my self-confidence has improved”. For T7, the mentoring is highly prized: “Talking to Kenan about my study has helped me understand teacher research better. He gave me lots of advice on how to design my research”.

T2 highlights how scaffolding, which became less important over time with the growth of a sense of autonomy, had helped: “At the beginning, our teacher trainer helped us choose which method to follow”. Teacher-researchers who feel less autonomous than T2, who is one of the more experienced, report they still need quite structured help, though. For example, while demonstrating respect for the teacher trainer’s expertise, T4 reports: “I generally get help from my trainer about research methods because he knows the appropriate ones for each unique research better than me”. Others are conscious that they need to become more independent, e.g. T13, who acknowledges: “I still need the help of my teacher trainer to guide me. Maybe I depend too much on my teacher trainer”.

As to the direction of the support provided, there has been a steer towards action research, with T8, for example, highlighting there have been workshops on this, as elaborated on by Çelik and Dikilitaş (2015). As these authors note, early in the process of supporting research engagement at the university (in 2010-11), the teacher trainer noticed a tendency of the novice teacher-researchers to adopt Likert-type questionnaire designs in the positivist tradition; he guided them towards other approaches, e.g. action research, and alternative research methods, including qualitative interviews, as well. T1 specifically says this has helped, while T14 now reports: “thanks to my advisor, I can prepare interview questions appropriately”. Other skills the teacher trainer has helped develop include those associated with reflective observation, which T6, for
example, indicates having benefited from: “With the help of the training, I am able to notice the difficulties that my students are having”.

Much of the support has been collaborative, with teams working cooperatively together. “Our action research meetings have helped me to discuss my research with colleagues”, writes T5, “and get some help while shaping my research questions”. “When there is someone you can talk to”, reports T14, “it’s good to see other points of view”. Clearly, there has been beneficial peer interaction.

**Focusing on issues to address**

As to the content of the teacher research investigations, the issues they chose to focus on (with the help of scaffolding) with their classes, many of the teacher-researchers spoke about these in terms of ‘problems’. This word, associated with some forms of action research, tends to be avoided by exploratory practitioners, e.g. by Allwright and Hanks (2009), due to its negative connotations. In exploratory practice, the term ‘puzzle’ (absent from our data, though T1 uses the word ‘dilemma’) is preferred instead. Rather than talking about ‘problems’ in action research, Anne Burns (2010) concentrates on problematising. She explains that ‘problematising’, which she sees as central to the analytical process, “doesn’t imply looking at your teaching as if it is ineffective and full of problems. Rather it means taking an area you feel could be done better, subjecting it to questioning, and then developing new ideas and alternatives” (p. 2).

Some of the teacher-researchers seem to be problematising in the way Burns (2010) suggests, i.e. looking at the gap between what they see happening and what they would like to see, and some ascribe this to the training they have had and to the experience they have gained in conducting research. T8 reports, for example: “Thanks to our teacher training sessions and my research studies, I think I have developed an ability to identify problems in my classes. Compared to the past, I have been better at determining the language problems of my students”. Similarly, in also focusing on the students’ learning, T2 indicates: “As I observe my lessons while teaching, I can see problems such as the lack of motivation in students. If I feel there is a problem, I try to understand why this happens and what can be done to overcome it”. Interestingly, T2 is focusing on a ‘why’ question here; ‘why’ questions are also central to the ‘puzzling’ of exploratory practice (Hanks, 2015; this volume).

However, some of the less experienced teachers do seem to be viewing ‘problems’ as personal issues that relate to inefficient teaching, which might unfortunately reflect the lingering influence of the ‘deficit model’ (Breen, 2006). T6, for example, argues: “The aim of researching is to solve a problem. To solve a problem, you should admit it and take firm steps to solve it”. The word ‘admit’ is perhaps unfortunate, as it tends to collocate with ‘fault’, ‘mistake’ or ‘crime’. According to Berliner (1988), novice teachers with less than three years’ experience (such as T6) can tend to view teaching primarily as performance, which might explain why the notion ‘problem’ has been seized upon. Doing research collaboratively, though, is at least a way of opening up the classroom to trusted others, stimulating reflection and initiating dialogue, even if there is this concern with performance still, evident in the words of another novice researcher: “I got used to the idea of sharing my problem with other people, even with the students. I also made the students realize that I am aware of my problem” (T3).

There is also evidence of more confident partnerships developing between students and the more experienced teacher-researchers, e.g. T5, who reports: “Usually I collaborate with my students while doing my action research; they don’t refrain from helping me”. This bonding suggests both collaborative action research (Burns, 1999) and forms of exploratory practice that emphasize learner participation (Hanks, 2015; this volume).

In these teachers’ accounts, there is evidence, as also noted in an Omani context by Wyatt (2015a), of growth in teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs in exploring issues related to students’ learning through research engagement, with the reflective process key to this. T8, for example, explains: “I have gained confidence in discovering the problems. I have started to reflect on the reasons behind the learning difficulties of students”. However, there is also recognition that greater knowledge of the topics under focus might also be required; teachers of course draw on knowledge of different kinds, including formal knowledge that feeds into teachers’ predominantly practical knowledge (Borg, 2006). T13 acknowledges: “There is still a lot to learn about identifying problems because I believe identifying problems requires background information too”. ‘Background’ information that relates to the practical knowledge teachers possess includes that relating to the learners, learning processes, the curriculum and the context (Elbaz, 1981) and such knowledge needs patiently developing. In both exploratory practice (Allwright and Hanks, 2009) and forms of action
Engaging language teachers in research
Mark Wyatt

Doing research definitely helped me while I plan my lessons and design my materials. It gave me the insight to look deeper for the reasons of some problems in teaching and learning English. It gave me the confidence to question my and others’ practices in teaching. Doing research studies every year helped me learn my job better and more efficiently.

Other teachers highlight similar benefits. While some focus on the practical, e.g. T1, who says: “I now have a better understanding of my classroom practices”, others emphasize gains that relate to cognitive growth. T13, for example, argues that “the more you do research, the more analytical you become”, while T5 indicates she has “become more critical and open to inquiry”. T10 reports: “Doing research helped me reflect more autonomously on my teaching”, T11 now feels better able to evaluate the quality of the lesson just taught, while T2 also feels she “can observe [herself] more realistically and critically”. These personal benefits echo some of the thoughts expressed by Emily Edwards (Burns and Edwards, 2014), as reported above.

As with Emily too, one senses a belief in the empowering nature of teacher research in these practitioners’ comments. T7, for example, affirms: “Doing teacher research keeps a teacher active and it keeps the learning process alive”, while T12 feels that personal growth gained from reflecting on research carried out with one class, benefits other classes too, as the overall quality of the learning/teaching experience within the community is enhanced. T14 is conscious of the benefits spreading into different spheres of professional activity: “I’m more self-confident now while teaching, talking to people, presenting. Studying on my own made me a more autonomous researcher too”. In Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory, a sense of autonomy is key to intrinsic motivation. Growth in autonomy is beneficial for other reasons too. For example, autonomous teachers might respond more flexibly to their learners’ needs.

There is indeed recognition amongst these teacher-researchers that learners are benefiting from the research, that they are gaining from having a more finely-tuned, contextually-sensitive education that is focused more closely on their needs. This, for example, is from T12: “I feel that my awareness of what the students expect with regards grammar teaching has increased. I take the learners’ background and expectations more into consideration when planning and delivering instruction”. Furthermore, there is awareness that specific cog-
nitive and linguistic needs are being more fully supported through teaching that is now research-informed. T4, for example, tells us: “after I started doing research, I began to use inductive teaching methods which made students use their critical thinking skills and discover rules by themselves”, while T1 describes an intervention so: “The reason why I chose podcasts this year is the difficulty that Turkish students have in speaking and I want to explore whether podcasts can assist them or not”. Through engaging in such practical classroom research, the quality of learning and indeed the quality of classroom life can be improved (Allwright and Hanks, 2009; Burns, 2010).

Students are likely to appreciate the value of research, as their teachers acknowledge. T9, for example, affirms: “my students generally say that the research has been very useful”. There is also an affective dimension to their experience. “The fact that students mostly enjoyed participating in these researches”, reports T5, suggesting a link between student and teacher motivation, “made me feel satisfied and more enthusiastic”. This is interesting in light of the argument, e.g. made by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 158), that “if a teacher is motivated to teach, there is a good chance [the] students will be motivated to learn”. Here we see motivated learners, feeling motivated through being engaged in research through their learning teacher (like the Brazilian boy quoted above from Allwright and Hanks [2009]), in turn motivating this teacher, making their teacher feel more enthusiastic. There is a virtuous circle here that the teacher research engagement is central to.

For the benefits of such teacher research to be felt, it needs to be shared and the teachers recognise this. T6 highlights, for example, that “sharing is the most beneficial part of researching”. Participation at the annual conferences in Izmir over the years has been whole-hearted, which is recognised by teacher-researchers who speak regularly at this conference, e.g. T5, who says: “When I present my research at the conference, the audience’s enthusiasm keeps me enthusiastic as well”.

Conclusions

It is evident from the above that a lot of healthy research activity seems to have been taking place amongst the teacher-researchers on this foundation university programme in Turkey. I have described this as ‘healthy’, as it appears to have been intrinsically-motivated (Borg, 2013) and led to various other benefits. The teacher-researchers describe their students as participating happily in research designed to help them develop new cognitive and linguistic skills. These students appear to have benefited from their teachers becoming more reflective, autonomous and flexible, and from the curriculum being adapted to their needs on the basis of their teachers’ research findings. The community appears to have been strengthened as a result.

At the same time, the teachers have benefited personally too, from overcoming initial uncertainties about research to embrace the kinds of research that teachers can do, i.e. not large-scale experiments in the positivist tradition (Cohen, Manion and Morrison), but action research (Burns, 2010) or exploratory practice (Hanks, 2015) with their learners. There is evidence they have engaged deeply, ethically and intellectually in different aspects of this process, e.g. in conducting literature reviews, building trust with participants, analysing data, and comparing their findings with those of other studies, and are aware of their growth in these areas. They are conscious that engaging in research has improved their teaching, their understanding of and relationships with their learners, their skills in curriculum design, and their research skills, in terms of observing, reflecting, questionning critically and planning. Moreover, the benefits have been experienced not just in terms of knowledge growth but also in terms of motivation. As engaging in teacher research has helped these teachers become more autonomous and more efficacious, this has also helped them become more intrinsically-motivated, since these qualities, together with relatedness, which they have also experienced to a greater extent, are characteristics of those who enjoy their work (Ryan and Deci, 2000, Wyatt, 2015b). Since this has all happened in a collaborative environment, with teacher-researchers supporting each other, the community has been strengthened too.

It is evident from the above that the various teacher-researchers who participated in this study have reached different stages of development. This is entirely natural, particularly since some have been engaged at it for longer (up to five years), during which time their practical knowledge and self-efficacy beliefs as teacher-researchers have grown, while others are much newer to the process and still need continuing mentoring support that scaffolds their efforts towards greater independence. The mentoring provided by the teacher trainer in this context has clearly been vital, and Kenan deserves a great deal of credit for the way in which he has motivated the teacher-researchers to engage, scaffolded their efforts, and provided a framework with conference presentations and publications at the end of yearly cycles that has helped them grow.
Though the research reported on here is methodologically limited in several ways, e.g. by sample size and reliance on self-report questionnaire data, it nevertheless seems to indicate that teacher research is gradually becoming a sustainable enterprise in this context, which is both wonderful and rarely documented (see though: Edwards and Burns, 2015, for another example). If research involving teachers and their learners can have beneficial long-term effects, such as those noted here, these need to be recorded, so that others around the world can draw inspiration too.

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Engaging language teachers in research

What might research as practice look like?

Judith Hanks

Introduction

It is often suggested that language teachers should engage in research, but as busy practitioners with heavy workloads, it is difficult to see how this might be achieved. In this chapter I outline the problems with orthodox research, arguing that practitioner research holds more promise for those interested in investigating language teaching and learning.

However, I acknowledge that there are also challenges for practitioner research. Issues such as lack of time, lack of relevance, lack of resources, are frequently cited as barriers. In response to these issues, one form of practitioner research, known as Exploratory Practice (EP), suggests integrating research and pedagogy by using normal pedagogic practices as investigative tools (Allwright, 2003; Allwright & Hanks, 2009).

But how might research be integrated into pedagogic practice? And what might we expect to find if we try it out ourselves? In sum, what might “research as practice” (Iedema & Carroll, 2015, p.68) look like?

Problems with orthodox research

[O]rthodox research does not provide what teachers want to know; teachers seek understanding and illumination rather than explanation and definition. (Burton, 1998, p. 425)

Often, when people think of ‘research’ they make a number of assumptions: that it should be large-scale, objective and replicable; that its findings should be generalizable. Traditional ideas about research emphasize the need for product and improvement. But as has been pointed out (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Borg 2010, 2013; Burton, 1998), there are major problems with this
attitude when we consider the context of language education. The fluid, ever-changing dynamics of individuals and groups working in a class, and the infinite variety of variables inside and outside the classroom, as well as the ethical dilemmas involved, mean that research with experimental/control groups is deeply flawed, and large-scale questionnaire-based studies often remain at a superficial level. Classrooms are highly complex social situations, where traditional notions of research simply fail.

What alternative forms of research might help?

...in order to understand precisely what takes place in our classrooms, we have to look at these classrooms as entities in their own right and explore the meaning they have for those who are involved in them in their own terms.

(Tudor, 2001, p. 9)

Tudor (2001) argues that if we are to understand what happens in classrooms, then we need to move away from the notion of the external researcher looking in, and, instead, position practitioners themselves as the key observers. This empowering view echoes the arguments of many others (Burns, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2009; Johnson & Golombek 2002), and it is central to the various forms of practitioner research that have grown up over the past two decades. It is particularly pertinent to the form under consideration here: Exploratory Practice.

Before examining EP, however, it is worth taking a moment to distinguish between the many forms of practitioner research on offer. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) provide a helpful overview of the plethora of different approaches available to practitioners interested in investigating their own classrooms. Under the umbrella of ‘practitioner inquiry’, they consider Action Research, Teacher Research, Self Study, Scholarship of Teaching and ‘Using Practice as a Site for Research’. They rightly argue: “it is not our intention to blur important ideological, epistemological, and historical differences” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 2009, p. 39), aiming instead “to illuminate important differences at the same time that we clarify commonalities.” (ibid.). Their multidimensional vision, which encompasses similarity as well as difference, is a useful introduction to some of the key issues involved.

Careful consideration of these issues means that attempts to subsume all under an umbrella term of either Action Research (AR) or Teacher Research (TR) are misguided. The latter limits practitioners to teachers only, but there is surely a more fruitful, and inclusive, approach if we broaden the remit beyond teachers to include administrators, curriculum developers, managers, teacher educators, … and (as in EP) learners.

Even more problematic is the claim that Action Research should be the umbrella term. This smacks of over-simplification where the deep philosophical and epistemological systems underpinning different forms of practitioner research are minimized or ignored. No disrespect to adherents of AR is meant here (people working in AR are clearly doing good work in their own way, and for their own purposes), I merely establish the right to individual recognition for EP. It is not to be subsumed under someone else’s label. As I put it in an on-line debate recently: “…if you were to call my brother ‘Judith’, he’d think you were a bit odd” (Wyatt, Burns and Hanks, 2016).

A better way of characterizing the relationship between the different (and equally important) forms is to think of a “rambunctious family of practitioner research” (ibid.). In this metaphor, Action Research, Reflective Practice sit alongside one another, with the younger sibling of Exploratory Practice taking its place in the family, sitting roughly mid-way between them, as in Figure 1 below. There is room in this family for more siblings, more forms of practitioner research, characterized here by the catch-all of ‘etc’.

![Figure 1: Practitioner research: family relationships](Image 509x150 to 588x198)
The principles of exploratory practice

Having claimed a space for EP, I need now to establish what it is. Exploratory Practice is a process-oriented approach to exploring language learning and teaching, done by, and for, teachers and learners. These practitioners are (i) invited to puzzle about their own experiences of language learning and teaching, and, having (ii) identified puzzling issues, to (iii) explore their practice(s) together, in order to (iv) develop their own understanding(s), (v) for mutual development, (vi) by using normal pedagogic practices as investigative tools.

Over the past twenty years, EP has evolved. It is an organic framework which is adaptable and which has the capacity to grow and change in response to new ideas, yet retains a strong core of principles which inform and support EP activities, relationships and approaches. These principles are stated as follows:

Seven principles for inclusive practitioner research

The ‘what’ issues
1. Focus on quality of life as the fundamental issue.
2. Work to understand it, before thinking about solving problems.
3. Involve everybody as practitioners developing their own understandings.
4. Work to bring people together in a common enterprise.
5. Work cooperatively for mutual development.

The ‘who’ issues
6. Make it a continuous enterprise.
7. Minimize the burden by integrating the work for understanding into normal pedagogic practice.

(Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 260 original emphases)

The principles have been extensively discussed elsewhere (see Allwright 2003, 2005). Notions of ‘quality of life’ (Gieve & Miller, 2006), of ‘collegiality’ (Hanks, 2013a), of ‘puzzling’ (Hanks, 1998, 2009), and of ‘working for understanding’ (Allwright, 2015) have been examined and analysed. I will not, therefore, go over old ground again. Instead, I will consider the intriguing notion of ‘integrating the work for understanding into normal pedagogic practice’.

Integrating research and practice

If we accept Allwright’s proposition that the “essential function [of research] is that of working for understanding” (2015, p. 20), then the kind of work we are talking about here is a form of research. Not the traditional/orthodox forms referred to earlier, but a much more creative, inventive, innovative form of research.

Exploratory Practice is process-oriented; it seeks to weave the research process into the pedagogic process. Not adding to the workload of the practitioners; not taking time away from the curriculum, but integrating the research (or ‘the work for understanding’) into the learning/teaching process itself.

Here EP diverges significantly from AR. Burns describes AR as encapsulating an “inherent tension in the terms action and research” (Burns, 2005, p. 59-60). This creates a picture in my mind’s eye of the practitioner pulled in opposing directions (see Figure 2): with ‘action for change’, battling with the more introspective ‘research’.

EP, on the other hand, seeks to turn the two arrow-heads around (see Figure 3), bringing the explorations into/from the practice itself:

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This is a more satisfying (and less colonial) way of looking at the field. It allows each approach to have its own identity, while also acknowledging the many positive relationships between them.
Using what we would be doing anyway in our teaching/learning as a way of doing research, is a very simple concept, and yet quite difficult to explain. The following case study, based on part of my doctoral research (Hanks, 2013b), might help to clarify matters.

**A case study of ‘research as practice’**

My personal puzzles when I started off (in 2006) were:

- I wonder why we don’t do EP in my situation (EAP in UK)?
- I wonder what happens if we try it?

I was working as a teacher on a very intensive 10-week pre-sessional course (I call it PS10) in a language centre in a British university, where pre-sessional courses aiming to prepare students for the rigours of academic study in the UK were prevalent. On PS10 there were 84 students from all over the world (mainly, but not exclusively, the Middle and Far East). Time was limited; we needed to develop language levels, improve academic skills, and orient to the demands of academic study in a British university, so that the students could start their academic degree programmes in September.

My own ethical imperatives meant that I wanted to ensure that their learning was prioritized at all times. Here EP’s notion of using “normal pedagogic practices as investigative tools so that working for understanding is part of the teaching and learning, not extra to it” (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 167, original emphases) came into its own.

I worked closely with a number of volunteers (students and teachers), but for this chapter, I focus on one teacher (John) and three students (Kae, Lynne, and Meow¹). The activities I describe are typical of EAP pre-sessional courses generally: group work, project work involving surveys, questionnaires, interviews, oral/poster presentations, and long written assignments.

I began by giving a 45 minute ‘live lecture’ to the students, in which I introduced the notion of Exploratory Practice. The live lecture had a dual function: firstly, it offered the students a vital opportunity to listen to a ‘live’ lecture (i.e., not a recording) and practise their note-taking skills. This is something which students on pre-sessional courses, often find problematic, because of the need to concentrate for long periods, and take adequate notes. Consequently, pre-sessional courses generally include a ‘listening to lectures and taking notes’ strand as a standard activity to prepare students for their academic degrees. This lecture was part of that strand on PS10.

The second function was to introduce the framework of EP, and to invite volunteers for the study to come forward. I ended the lecture by asking “What puzzles you about your language learning/teaching experiences?”. As a follow-up activity students were asked to write a summary of the lecture using their notes - again, summarizing is an academic skill that many students find challenging, and is therefore a typical activity in EAP.

The overwhelming response was one of excitement from the participants. Many learners related this to the fact that they had never before been asked to think about what puzzled them. They were clearly intrigued by the possibility of EP. Students told me in interviews that this was a novel and enjoyable experience:

**Kae:** It’s fantastic because we don’t usually think about this kind of question so [laughs] I don’t know whether I will find the answer of the question- of the puzzlement, my puzzlement, but it’s exciting.

**Meow:** I think it’s very helpful for me if I can understand what puzzle I have. And I just find ‘Oh! I have a lot of puzzle that I never thought about it before!

¹ Pseudonyms
The teachers, too, seemed to relish the opportunities for deeper analysis of their teaching lives, and emphasized the advantages for the learners doing EP. For example:

**John:** I feel quite excited because the particular class I’ve got […] will really want to do it

### So what did we do?

The first four weeks of PS10 included an EP strand: 1–2 classes out of 15 per week – these were classes that were dedicated to ‘language development’ (ie development of the four skills, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation), so nothing was taken away from, nothing added to, the syllabus. Students worked together on their puzzles, refining their (research) questions, then identifying ways in which they could develop their understandings of the question. For the most part, this involved some form of data collection (usually via questionnaires or interviews), and some reading:

**John:** I’ve suggested to them that they use a lot of other media […] We also discussed *how* they would further their knowledge of their puzzle. What could they do? […] Things like the internet, library, talking with other students

This was followed by analysis and collation of the data, with the aim of students giving poster presentations in week 4. All the students on the course used the corridor to hang their posters, then presented their work to other students, their teachers, and others in the centre. Such activities are similar to the kind of poster presentations that might be found at a good academic conference, and commonly found in EAP. The learners were hugely motivated, not only by the (slightly competitive elements of) poster presentations, but also by wanting to exchange and share what they had found out:

**Kae:** I want to share my problem [*laughs*] to any other people […] it is interesting to show my problem, show my thinking to others, and they will be excited by the problem, yes, I’m happy

They also began to develop a sense of their own autonomy as learners:

**Lynne:** if just in class the teacher said something and we just accept some answer and I think it’s easy to forget it… and I think every student take part in this process and we found the answer by ourselves. I think it’s very useful

Interestingly, some students became more enthusiastic in the weeks following the poster presentations. As students wrote up their group assignments in which they gave an account of what they had done (roughly analogous to a ‘methodology chapter’ in a dissertation or thesis), their understanding of, and sympathy for, the process seemed to gain depth.

To sum up, then, practitioners (learners and teachers) set their own research agendas (puzzles), worked together to explore their agendas; collected/generated data, analysed the data, and prepared poster presentations. After their poster presentations, the learners worked together to write group assignments – these drafts were read and commented on by the teachers. Throughout, the learners were practising key language skills as well as academic skills (learning to work with others, collecting and analyzing data, presenting and writing up findings), while exploring their puzzles.

Reflecting on the process, John noted the difference between the problem-solving approach assumed by many other forms of practitioner research, and the emphasis EP places on developing understanding:

**John:** the vast majority of them hadn’t solved anything. But they had learnt more.

He went on to explain his own enthusiasm for EP:

**John:** [it’s] such a good thing because it’s given them an excellent speaking and writing opportunity

and added:

**John:** they can see it’s *entirely* relevant […] to what they’re going to be doing.

Crucially, EP is relevant to the practitioners themselves. Since the practitioners are the ones who set the research agenda (by asking puzzled questions
about their language learning/teaching experiences), and they are the ones who implement the research, and develop their understanding(s) of the issues that puzzled them, they are also the ones who benefit from the research.

Reflections

In this chapter I introduced the principles of Exploratory Practice, and distinguished this form of practitioner research from other, equally respectable, forms. I illustrated the notion of 'integrating the work for understanding into normal pedagogic practice' by presenting a case study of pedagogic practice (in EAP) where the work for understanding (ie research) was undertaken by teachers and learners. And I suggested that the successful implementation of EP in my EAP context was due to the relevance of the research to the participants.

This work does not take place in isolation. There is a thriving community of Exploratory Practitioners in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and EP takes place in China, Japan, the UK and the USA. Not only that, but in recent months, Exploratory Practice has started up in Turkey. Working on a project funded by the British Council-Newton Travel Grant-Katib Çelebi Fund, Kenan Dikilitaş and I have set up a network of teachers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers, interested in developing EP in Izmir.

In conclusion, Exploratory Practice is creative, motivating, and ‘entirely relevant’ work for learners, teachers, teacher educators. It affords potential for Research as Practice, but I would like to turn that phrase around, and suggest a new possibility: (Exploratory) Practice as Research.

References


Teacher research as a catalyst for school development

Kenan Dikilitaş

Teacher research is teacher-led research carried out to promote pedagogic understanding of actual classroom practices. Research engagement generates locally contextualized knowledge created by teachers for specific benefits in their own context. There has been a controversy, however, as to how beneficial teacher research studies are, as they are done by teachers who might lack research competence. This implies that the research outcomes may not be reliable enough to base further implications to use in the classroom (Fishman and McCarthy, 2000; Ellis, 2010; Foster, 1999), let alone its contribution to the field of English language teaching (Brown, 2005). This chapter exemplifies one of the unique projects that have been conducted since 2010 in Turkey. I will focus on the impact and knowledge created in the same context for the last 5 years. The contribution made by these projects to the school includes several aspects ranging from individual teacher development to peer collaboration, regional, national and international promotion of school context, and an established research culture in the school. In this sense, teacher research can be a particular tool which promotes schools and their development (Burns, 2003; Borg, 2013) as well as teachers’ individual professional development. However, only listing the benefits and positive impact of doing teacher research on teachers themselves may be misleading. There is a growing understanding that looks at the issue of impact from a general point of view that includes micro and macro contexts (teachers, learners, schools, communities of practice and English language field). These areas of impact can be promoted through bringing the community together via conferences and follow-up publications, which is the case for this project.

School context

This chapter is based on the studies carried out in 2014 and 2015 with preparatory school instructors at Gediz University, Izmir partly under the su-

Wyatt, M., Burns, A and Hanks, J. (2016). Teacher/practitioner research: Reflections on an online discussion. TESL-EJ.
Characteristics of the context

Figure 1 shows characteristics of the research context with reference to underlying principles. As addressed in the previous section, a culture of development rather than summative teacher appraisal has been established. It was purely in a process-based mode, which encourages the teachers to be engaged in planning, conducting, disseminating and writing up research for more than eight months. It was also a bottom-up movement in that teachers, though supported by an internal mentor, initiated their own research with topics of interest. They were mostly on their own in these journeys as mentoring was limited to one-hour weekly meetings. However, in addition to the mentor, they had the opportunity to work with their colleagues during workshops and informal tasks in the school. I also found out that some had e-mail exchanges for further discussion with one another as well. In that sense, knowledge was co-constructed. One of the other critical aspects was the theory-practice opportunities. The teachers have a sustained access to the classroom so they all carried out their research with real students in their own classroom. From that perspective, classrooms served as places where theoretical knowledge also became experiential knowledge through active engagement in implementing particular ideas such as corrective feedback, text-based approach to teaching speaking, teacher talking time, use of L1, using podcasts for speaking and listening, using social media for teaching English etc. Therefore, teachers doing research in their own classroom makes them pay attention to theoretical knowledge without preventing them from gaining practical knowledge. Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2015) discuss the self-efficacy development of three teachers from this context through sustained research engagement (4-5 years) and highlight the role of research in developing self-efficacy for understanding and doing research and developing practical knowledge.

Though the characteristics discussed above are particularly critical for the context, they are not unique to it because any context that offers and supports educational research could be described in a similar fashion.
Background

This chapter discusses research studies carried out by teachers, most of whom have had experience of doing teacher research since 2010. It was this previous experience that helped them continue after I chose to leave my position in the institution in March. My contribution till that time was extensive and continuous through regular weekly meetings, which then became online distant support particularly for some. Most were able to move forward without my support. I would like to share the characteristics of the teacher researchers. There were only two researchers who were new to the idea of research for professional development, but one had an MA degree and the other was continuing hers. Some other teachers were doing / had done MAs in literature. This background was a facilitative factor for them as they easily transferred their existing research knowledge into this form of research. Most of the others were continuing their MA but they also had experience of engagement in such research in varying lengths ranging from 3 to 5 years. However, it is also to be noted that this teacher research experience was also one of the many other factors, possibly the most critical one, which inspired them to commence an academic career. Though it has not been discussed in the literature so far, teacher research, as an example of experiential research engagement in this context, served as a preparatory element in the transition of teacher researchers to academia as MA students as teachers, e.g. Koray reported (Wyatt, Burns and Hanks, 2016).

Initial criticism 2010–2011

Throughout the whole project since it first started I was doing something that was quite the opposite of what they were expecting. According to Smith (2014), what they expected was one-shot sessions where they were passive recipients (Borg, 2015) of knowledge, whereas what I was expecting from them was their active involvement in generating the experiential and practical knowledge they needed in their own specific context. Confronted with such a training programme, the teachers started to moan about the potential work and efforts needed to be put in. The most common excuses and complaints were as follows:

• Why are you opting for a challenging way for us?
• Why don’t you tell us what to do and we leave the sessions?
• I don’t need all these. I am happy and my students love me. They are happy too.
• Why do I spend my free / limited time on researching?
• Why do you make us work rather than you do all the job?
• Why do you keep me busy all year long on a specific topic?
• Teacher research is too theoretical and does not impact classroom practices!!
• I have been a teacher for a long time and PD is for novice teachers!!!
• Why do we present at a conference? I can’t talk in public!

Having been exposed to these complaints and excuses directly or indirectly, I came to a point where I could have given up as I tried to visualize in figure 2.

I chose to convince them (and myself) not to give up through encouraging talks and establishing closer relationships. I succeeded in convincing some through not all of them through attitude changing talks and close monitoring. These initial criticisms were gradually replaced by a relatively more positive stance as teacher research was felt to be contributing to the teachers and the school in many ways.
My insights into teachers’ motivation for researching over the years

Motivation to engage in research is key to doing and sustaining it. Expecting teachers to develop their professionalism and understandings of their practice through active engagement in doing research may sometimes be impeded due to the motivational issues. Borg (2013:116) lists 11 reasons for not doing research, as induced from 696 teachers. These include lack of the following: time, research knowledge, supportive context, support from mentors and colleagues, personal interest in research, and encouragement from employers. These reasons are either the causes of lack of motivation or the consequences of lack of motivation. Lack of time is a matter of creating it rather than having it. Learning to do it also requires engagement in a supportive environment. The projects discussed in this chapter exemplify a context where teachers are busy with teaching full time but where they are also supported by an internally hired mentor who can encourage them to do research and offer research knowledge as well. There is motivational support but how the teachers see this support may vary. To boost motivation particularly among young researchers such as those involved in these projects, we need to highlight two issues raised by Emma Ushioda who in an interview with Falout (2011) makes two suggestions to stay motivated. The first is embedded in a social dimension which recommends “talk to like-minded research colleagues and share ideas and problems”. She finds this as being “motivationally so important to our development as researchers”. The other is to make explicit links between practice and research where there is relevance. She also adds to this that mentors could initiate efficient discussions about these links.

During the same period, profiles of researchers in relation to dimensions of motivation have varied. While some had actual incentives to do research on particular pedagogic issues, the others did research as a way of increasing prestige and getting promotion. So I will use the following categorization of motivational constructs (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Gardner, 1985). The former argues intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. While intrinsic motivation reflects the natural predisposition to learn and internalize, extrinsic motivation reflects external control. The latter argues integrative and instrumental dichotomy as motivational constructs.

Extrinsically motivated teachers

My initial observation was that some teachers were externally motivated to do research, which was mostly induced by me as the only mentor. My pushing them from the beginning and setting goals for them helped them carry out the research. Such teachers were dependent on mentor support more than some others were. As doing teacher research was an institutionally-supported professional development with the mentor’s initiation, some felt obliged to engage in it. They might have seen this initiation as a factor for their continuation in the institution. It could be described as ‘I do research as institutionally expected from me’. However, it was not easy to mentor these teachers as there was also a kind of resistance in the process. I had challenges in overcoming all sorts of dissatisfaction and disengagement. Most of these teachers failed to meet institutional expectations. However, it was not easy to mentor these teachers as there was also a kind of resistance in the process. I had challenges in overcoming all sorts of dissatisfaction and disengagement. Most of these teachers failed to complete their research particularly because they lacked intrinsic motivation, while those with extrinsic motivation who did complete their research did so to meet institutional expectations.

Figure 3 shows the critical factors that influenced my support for teachers whose motivation was externally driven.
Researchers in this category usually made excuses related to the ‘time’ factor and expected direct guidance during the training sessions contributing little creativity emerging from their autonomy over the research itself. I also observed lack of agency and ownership as well as self-study skills. For example, such teachers expected me to tell them the ‘right’ (in positivistic sense) way of writing literature review, collecting quantitative data, analysing them quantitatively as well. They found it time-consuming to collect and analyse qualitative data. This was a clear sign of the motive for completing the research rather than learning from and with it. I observed that benefits to be gained remained limited among such teachers.

**Intrinsically motivated teachers**

There were also teachers who were motivated to do research on specific topics relevant to their classroom practices. Such teachers were determined to gain more insights into issues they want to promote their knowledge and practices for. For example, Nur (in chapter 23) investigated the continuing and persistent challenge of balancing her teacher talk during instruction. From observations and discussions with me as a mentor, it became clear that she had been aware of and tackling this issue for a couple of years. She decided to develop strategies to make a constructive change to her use of instructional language.

Gülşah, another teacher, also demonstrated that her research was intrinsically motivated (in chapter 22). In our talks she realized that she always corrected learners’ errors in the same way and wanted to discover other ways of doing so. In addition, she noticed in her practice, that she did not follow up on whether learners were benefiting from the feedback she provided orally. Her study addresses actual issues arising from her practical experience in the classroom.

Figure 4 shows different motivational aspects of intrinsically motivated teachers concentrated on self-growth in the form of understanding more about actual challenges and pedagogic issues. Another aspect is satisfying curiosity because for some of them the topic of research was not a particular problem or challenge. For example Esin (in chapter 27) wanted to understand how podcasts could be used to promote the development of listening and speaking skills and carried out research based on learners’ hands-on engagement in producing podcasts and reflecting on other students’. The other aspect relates to developing practical knowledge. For example, Ceylin (in chapter 21) felt she was over-using L1 and so aimed to understand more about how she was using it. She recorded her lesson and analysed why she turns to L1 and what she conveys through using L1. By doing so she came up with some personal strategies to overcome this or use L1 more efficiently and systematically. Similarly, Nur (Chapter 23) aimed to develop some practical knowledge about her practice of teacher talking time and students talking time. By finding out how she was using language during her instruction, she developed lesson plans in-
including specific activities that could help her reduce her talk and increase the quality of it.

**Instrumentally motivated teachers**

Another group of teachers I observed was those who focused on presenting and publishing their research. This was their main motivation. In this group, the teachers were more concerned with the ultimate product, oral or written, which could bring them an opportunity of promotion such as becoming a level coordinator.

Teachers with integrative motivation

There were also teachers who had integrative motivational purposes in doing research. Most of these teachers overlap with those in the intrinsically motivated teachers group. According to the process-oriented model of motivation (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998), different types of motivational constructs may vary individually at different phases of the learning process. Such teachers exemplified several aspects shown in figure 5. They were motivated to progress in their careers as teachers and to become researchers, while at the same time they developed a sense of collaboration and reflection relying on theoretical and practical knowledge. Rather than seeking ultimate solutions to the questions in their research, they deepened the insights, developed several perspectives, included learners more creatively, and paid attention to critical reflection during the engagement in research. For example, Rukiye, a teacher researcher with 5 years of experience, did her research to help learners develop their speaking skills by adapting a different method of doing so. To this end, she prepared authentic texts produced by native colleagues and transcribed them as written texts and used them for helping students analyse textual aspects such as identifying spoken grammar and the strategies used to convey meanings. She also included other teachers particularly those whose native language was English. She prepared audio and textual listening materials for learners which could model the text-based speaking, experimented them several times with learners and reflected on the implementation with teachers and learners (See Chapter 17). She is now a Ph.D student and reports that teacher research experience helped her gain confidence and develop self-efficacy to start academic career though she came from an English language and literature background without specific engagement in English language teaching. She is also investigating research reticence/disengagement among some teachers in her school for fulfilment of one of her Ph.D courses.

Another teacher researcher, with a non-English language teaching background, who developed his teaching and researching skills through engagement in research was Koray. He engaged in doing research in 2012. Since then he has developed his understanding of teaching (vocabulary and grammar) and doing research (writing literature review, identifying research questions, analysing and presenting findings, and writing up research), which he himself reported (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015). He has been willing to reflect on others’ studies and offer collaborative help as a colleague. He has also gained more insight into theoretical and practical aspects. He also reported that the research culture and context at school led him to collaborating with the mentor/ trainer in his free hours, which also encouraged him to start an M.A in English language teaching in 2014.
Integrative motivation offers several opportunities for teachers ranging from closer connection with relevant academic articles and books to developing the research agency of learners as active researchers. Like Rukiye, who is investigating reasons for disengagement in teachers in this supportive context, he is now writing his MA thesis on teacher research which investigates 4 teachers’ engagement in research and perceptions of learners towards teacher-researchers.

Facilitation and mentoring: observed impact

Working with such a group of teachers for long periods in several successive projects who have varying motivational orientations not only facilitated my role as a mentor but also increased the quality of research studies over time. The observed quality-increasing characteristics were as follows:

- topic selection for research became more realistic over the years, e.g. actual classroom-related issues
- more and more collaboration among the researchers as critical peers, e.g. some became emerging mentors for others
- greater amount of exchange of ideas, materials, and comments
- more and more motivation offered to those who need it by peers
- deeper insights as a result of mentor-teacher researcher interaction
- more relevance of the studies to the classroom and teacher experiences
- better interpretation of findings as personal and professional knowledge
- developed decision-making process during research stages
- greater awareness in research knowledge and implementation
- more effective writing-up process
- greater enthusiasm and more confidence for dissemination of research at the conferences

Impact areas

Research engagement created several impact areas in the school and in the community of practice. I made the following categorization of the impact areas depending on my observations and the data I collected for the research I carried out over the years.
Most teachers who participated in the teacher research projects I have conducted since 2010 reported that they developed awareness (Smith, 2014, Dikilitaş, 2014 and 2015), self-confidence and self-efficacy for doing research (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2015), revisited their attitudes towards research as a PD strategy and became more and more motivated by engaging in doing research. I categorize such impact areas as core impact, thinking that these are cognitive changes that happen in the individuals themselves.

The second category I introduced was immediate impact, which includes impact on teachers’ classroom practices as a result of their research, and impact on learners as those who are influenced by teachers’ emerging or modified practices. It is inevitable that teachers are influenced by research engagement and influence others through their growing knowledge, understanding, awareness and motivation. Teachers’ personal reflections on the impact of their research engagement can be found at the end of each of their reports.

The last category of impact includes that which happened at the relatively macro level including schools, colleagues, other schools, and curriculum though these areas of impact are not primary goals. However, as a result of embeddedness of teachers and schools, it is not surprising for the curriculum to be influenced by the results. The teacher research projects and follow-up conferences and publications also inspired other regional universities. One carried out its second conference which includes the teachers’ presentations of teacher research and case studies (Trotman, 2014). Another example of impact beyond the school is the teacher researcher work by other universities in Turkey which I partially supported as an external mentor with online feedback and workshops.

The project since 2010 seems to have contributed to the school context in several ways ranging from impact on the teachers and their practices including learners to elements in and beyond schools such as colleagues, school curriculum, and other schools.

School contexts where teachers are encouraged and supported to do research for professional development are very limited in number in Turkey. The project and publications referred to in this chapter can have motivational influence on other schools but also contribute to the field of educational research from the teachers’ perspectives as the experier of what happens in the classroom. Teacher research studies can also inform academic researchers about what teachers do when they are challenged in their classroom and how they develop new perspectives and can promote their practices.

References


**PART II**

*Teacher Research Mentoring*
Main focus

This paper describes an in-service teacher development program through which we, as university teacher educators, carried out collaborative action research with the participation of ten English teachers working at primary schools. During this collaboration, we served as facilitators, supporters and co-researchers by sharing our research expertise with the participant teachers to contribute to their professional development. We collected data from interviews, lesson observations, focus group meeting discussions, video-recordings of the lessons, teacher-created artifacts such as lesson plans and teachers’ documentations of their action research projects, and our field notes. Each teacher completed four cycles of action research. In this paper, we will describe the collaborative action research teacher development program, explore the experiences of the teachers in terms of professional development, talk about the challenges faced by the project team and the teacher researchers and conclude with some implications.

Background

Recently, a number of curriculum innovations in ELT have taken place in primary education in Turkey. After the first curriculum innovation in 1997, the English language started to be taught as a compulsory school subject to grade 4 and 5 students. In 2005, the ELT curriculum was revised, and from 2013-2014 English has been taught at a much younger age to grade 2 students (age six).

Teachers are a key factor in the successful implementation of an innovation (Fullan, 1993; Dalin, 1994). Hence, they must be encouraged through teacher professional development opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2006), particularly during the first critical years following educational change (Fullan, 1993; Kırkgöz, 2008).
Professional development for practicing teachers in Turkey is conducted mainly by the Turkish Ministry of National Education through in-service teacher training programs. Evaluation of these programs has shown us that they tend to be short-term workshops, seminars, or talks, which may not require teachers to be so active, and may not specifically address the everyday needs of the teachers (Atay, 2008; Bayrakçı, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to support teachers to cope with their daily emerging issues. What underlies the rationale for the present teacher development project is collaborative action research.

Action research is the process by which practitioners study problems in a systematic manner for self-improvement and to increase their knowledge of the curriculum, teaching, and learning (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; Stenhouse, 1975). The action research process comprises action cycles of planning, implementation, reflection and evaluation. Since it was originally proposed by Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1946), action research has been implemented as a form of professional development for classroom teachers to affect change in teachers' instructional practices (Jaipal and Figg, 2011). However, as noted by Burns (2015), action research becomes all the richer when teachers have the opportunity to work collaboratively with others, rather than working in isolation. The collaboration provides the teachers with support to address the immediate teaching challenges that they face. A research team from a university working with teachers is a potentially very fruitful collaboration (Burns, ibid) because in this way, the research expertise of the researchers is combined with the practical expertise of teachers.

Research focus

Three teacher educators collaborated with 10 English teachers teaching grade 2 classes to young learners aged 6-6.5 in state primary schools in one province, Adana to facilitate and support teachers' implementation of the new ELT curriculum.

Procedure

This collaborative project took place following the latest educational change from November 2014 to June 2015, involving a university research team (two researchers and one PhD student) and 10 English teachers. The research team conducted a questionnaire with grade 2 English teachers in different schools in Adana, and 10 teachers were identified using convenience sampling from the findings of the questionnaire (Kırkgöz and Yaşar, 2014). The teachers who agreed to participate in our project, with approval from their schools, were from seven primary schools.

At the beginning of our project, we held an introductory meeting with the participant teachers to introduce the teacher development program, define our responsibilities as well as our expectations from the teachers. Our responsibilities were to enhance teachers' professional practice by providing them with support and scaffolding to facilitate their implementation of action research. We encouraged the teachers to play an active role during this process and take a dual role: teacher and researcher.

Having thus established a collaborative action research (CAR) partnership, in the second meeting we introduced the details of our program; the requirements of the new grade 2 ELT curriculum as well as the philosophy of CAR. The three researchers from the project team were assigned to seven schools to collaborate with the participating teachers in facilitating and mentoring teachers' implementation of CAR and observing their lessons.

Over the following six months, the teachers, under the supervision and support of their university partners/researchers, took the initiative in evaluating their teaching practice and identifying a problem or a research focus that they wished to explore. They designed an action plan, implemented this with their grade 2 classes, reflected on their action, and finally documented their action research projects.

After the teachers completed each action research cycle, we held focus group meetings, each scheduled outside of school time at a convenient venue. Each meeting lasted 3-4 hours, and was attended by the research team and the teachers. During the meetings, teachers presented their action research projects, reflected upon their experiences, exchanged ideas, obtained constructive suggestions and feedback from the project team and furthered their knowledge about CAR. All discussions from the meetings were audio-recorded. Teachers completed four cycles of CAR in a year-long action research experience.

The research team also engaged in weekly project meetings to discuss the project. The teachers were invited to attend such meetings on a voluntary basis. In addition, teachers continued to participate in workshops given by the researchers to meet their specific needs in teaching English more effectively.
to grade 2 students. The research team engaged in in-depth communication and close collaboration with the teacher researchers through school visits, lesson observations, telephone calls, and emails in addition to providing online resources relevant to the teachers' research topics.

**Data sources**

Qualitative methods were used to collect data from interviews, lesson observations, the researchers' field notes, focus group discussions, video-recordings of the lessons, teacher-created artefacts such as lesson plans, and the teachers' and researchers' documentation of the CAR projects. Teachers were observed individually to evaluate their action and instructional practices and document specific examples of action research pedagogy. The lessons were video-recorded, and we took field notes recording the action research process of each teacher, including the possible impact of the action research on teacher learning and their instructional practice. Individual interviews were conducted to explore teachers' views and feelings about their participation in the program, and to explore their experiences.

**Data analysis**

The qualitative data from the data collection tools was analyzed by means of content analysis, and data from different sources was triangulated. The ongoing analysis of the data from various sources six months after initiation of the project indicates that CAR contributed to teachers' professional development in at least three dimensions.

**Benefits of CAR**

**Knowledge construction**

Teachers saw the opportunity to do action research as a productive way to "broaden their horizons". The collaborative nature of this type of action research enabled teachers from the same and different schools to work together on a common theme, to deepen their knowledge of how to teach grade 2 students (a younger age than they had been accustomed to) effectively, and to increase their awareness of new practices in teaching English to this younger age.

**Support by the research team**

Teachers consistently reported that they gained considerable support from the university researchers through focus group meetings and workshops, in which they engaged in collective discussion and reflection about new teaching and learning practices, the methodology of CAR, and how to teach differently in young learner classes to bring about novel practices and to solve contextual problems effectively. In addition, they stated that constructive feedback they received from the project team encouraged them to critically reflect on their current teaching practices and helped them gain further insights into their teaching.

**Enhanced professional confidence in one's own efficacy as a teacher**

We found that through affirmation from colleagues as well as the research team, the teachers' motivation and confidence in teaching English to grade 2 students was enhanced, which they stated that they lacked at the beginning of the project.

These three dimensions outlined above are reflected in the comments of one of the teachers:

> At a time when I was searching for solutions for the instructional problems in my grade 2 classes, the invitation by the project director to join this project seemed to open a door to a new way of thinking and problem-solving in my grade 2 classes. I was unfamiliar with action research, but the attraction of this particular project for me was its collaborative nature. I saw it as a unique opportunity to explore my difficulties and to learn useful strategies for dealing with these difficulties with other teachers experiencing similar concerns. Participation in this project has been a professionally rewarding experience for me.

**Challenges of CAR**

While the collaborative experiences in the present study were viewed by participants as fruitful, the following experiences can be described as our challenges.

One of the first challenges that the project team faced was that action re-
search can be time-consuming and risky. Because of the collaborative nature of the action research, we, the research team had to take the risk of sharing the responsibilities with participating teachers and hand over some of the control. It was also risky because sharing the power and responsibility with the participants left the future of the project in their hands. Although we were actively collaborating with each teacher, we did not have control over how their action research cycle would turn out. During the focus group meetings, we were as excited as the participants to learn about what everybody had done, how, and what we could learn from it.

Training the teachers as researchers and helping them to acquire the skills to implement action research cycles was time-consuming because in our educational system focusing on teaching and research was somewhat new to our participant teachers.

Next, turning participant teachers to researchers was not easy. Teachers often have the misconception that research produces abstract knowledge that is not relevant to everyday practices. Also, the research process is seen as a specialist activity that only certain people practice. Getting teachers to see research as something that not only any teacher can do, but that actually all teachers should do during their teaching practice, took some time.

Another challenge we experienced was that at the beginning of the project two teachers dropped out because they had different expectations and did not like the way CAR was progressing. This involved replacing them with two new teachers and starting the process all over again.

Action research, therefore, can be confusing for both the researchers and the participants. Balancing the roles of researcher and change facilitator was not easy. Although we defined the roles and responsibilities of both the research team and the teachers, there was often confusion about how much research teachers should be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating during an action cycle. Who was going to decide what to do and how to do it? Whose plans and purposes would we follow? At the beginning, we realized that the teachers were depending on us too much and we also tended to become too involved in planning and implementing the cycle. So, the challenge for us was to let them struggle and find their way. We had to find the balance between being actively involved in their project and stepping back and letting the project process happen naturally.

The final challenge we faced is that CAR can be overwhelming and scary for the participants. Sharing in the responsibility of the project and acting as a researcher was difficult for some teachers. In addition, the project required teachers to look at their practice closely and critically and then do something to improve it. For many, this was difficult but the real difficulty came when we asked the teachers to share their projects with the group. Although some enjoyed the process of talking about personal challenges, it was not easy for others to disclose their professional shortcomings. Our challenge, as the research team, was to form a supportive relationship among all the participants, help them feel free, comfortable and able to contribute, while at the same time provide a sense of challenge and stimulation and create a safe zone for them to share problems and failures. In order to help the participants to develop a supportive relationship, at the beginning we held the meetings in warm and cozy environments outside of their school and the university. After that, we used a meeting hall at the university where they could feel comfortable and at the same time safe to share their experiences with others freely.

As reported by other researchers, our study reveals that partnerships between academic researchers and school teachers is a highly rewarding experience despite the challenges and complexities involved (Orland-Barak et al, 2004; McLaughlin et al, 2006; Jaipal and Figg, 2011; Kasi, 2011; Kırkgöz, 2015). However, we have observed that by taking part in this CAR project, we have evolved in our roles as co-researcher, facilitator and supporter. We, therefore, agree with Anderson and Herr (1999) who suggest:

> academics and practitioners need to continue to find ways to work together and to see their critical reflection on these efforts as part of the new scholarship. Only through problem solving from within the messy realities of failed and successful collaboration, can we move our agenda forward (p. 20).

**Critical aspects**

During this project we noted some important issues related to action research and teacher professional development. First of all, collaboration is an important aspect of action research. Collaboration in action research has to be done through partnership and two-way communication. Researchers have to give up thinking of themselves as experts, and teachers as only participants of a study.
In fact, until the participants become equal partners and responsible researchers, action research will fail to create change because action research focuses on practical and immediate change rather than creating abstract knowledge that may or may not result in any change in practice.

Action research also requires collaboration with others apart from the research team and participants. Action research is about community building and creating a culture where people work toward common goals. In educational settings, action research affects school administrations, other teachers and parents and families and motivates them to do more.

Action research is cyclical so that during the process not only does the change occur but also the teacher researchers evolve to be more competent and skilful practitioners. Learning from our own experience enriches our further planning and practice and we can only learn from our own experience if we carefully evaluate it. Action research gives us the means and motivation for this careful evaluation.

An important issue raised in this project is that unless the teachers acquire ownership of their professional development, in-service programs are prone to fail. Action research enables teachers to take responsibility for their own lives as teachers and helps them develop in their own way and at their own pace.

Further implications

Teachers clearly need guidance and support to integrate action research into their teaching practice so that it minimizes the likely challenges. Some conditions that support action research need to be created to minimize such challenges.

The first condition relates to the mentorship provided throughout the research process. Participating in collaborative research under the supervision of university partners provides teachers with experiences where they can be coached in a variety of research strategies. Our experience suggests that teachers need to be approached in a teacher-friendly manner, and supported in their action research, in the formulation of a manageable research objective, in reflecting on their action and in documenting the impact of their action.

The next condition is the need for consistent communication and encouraged engagement by the project team, which is essential for sustainability of the project. Communication with the teachers is essential, as it serves to enhance teacher confidence, comfort level, and motivation during the process. A characteristic feature that emerged in this study was the need to establish a consistent form of team communication.

We hope that similar projects with teachers can be conducted in different contexts to promote teachers’ professional development. Such findings will give teacher researchers insights into the practical aspects of the collaborative process, and assist them in planning effective action research.

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References

The challenge of implementing collaborative action research


5 A journey of enquiry to improvement: the story of an enthusiastic action research team of EFL instructors

Seden Eraldemin Tuyan

Our context

The context of this action research project is YADYO, the School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University in Turkey. I have been working here for more than twenty years in different academic offices, including syllabus, staff development as well as being a devoted EFL instructor. The primary aim of our school is to provide English language education for the students studying at Çukurova University, Turkey, at international standards. Even those students studying in departments where the medium of instruction is English for only some of their subjects need to develop the English language skills necessary to succeed in their departmental courses and make use of all kinds of resources that will be related to their academic studies effectively and to communicate in written and oral contexts in English to continue their professional and social lives. In this respect, every year the school serves 1500-2000 students who are newly admitted to different majoring programs offered by Çukurova University according to their level of English starting from A1 to B2 or upper levels. Each classroom at YADYO is led by a team of two or three instructors. The staff of our school includes 70 professionals (65 full-time instructors, 2 assistant professors and 3 administrators). Our instructors are highly qualified, most holding MA degrees while almost 20 have PhDs. Some of these instructors also work part-time or full-time in different academic units of the school such as the Testing Office, Curriculum and Material Development, Self-Access Center, Project Office and Staff Development Unit.

How did we start the project and why?

I have always been a profound enthusiast of action research in every phase of my professional life, including my roles as an EFL instructor and an academic researcher. So, when I first heard about the June 2014 IATEFL ReSIG Conference hosted by Gediz University, despite being late for the abstract submission,
I still wanted to become an audience participant and experience the atmosphere of the conference. To me, the conference was a great success not only in terms of my having the chance to listen to the invaluabley fruitful and inspiring talks given by respected plenary speakers, Richard Smith, Anne Burns and Dick Allwright, but also the learning and sharing environment provided by the conference organizers to all the participants of the conference. Just then and right there, I really felt that I was dying to be a part of that community who gave their hearts to teacher research. At that moment, I couldn't wait to meet Kenan Dikilitaş, the father of the wonderful project that the conference was all about. We had a very nice conversation with him about how he started the project in 2010 as the head of the professional development at Gediz University to help the teaching staff engage in classroom research with and for their students to develop professionally. His idea was great and manageable and a similar kind of project could be started at YADYO as well to improve the dynamics of professional development at our school as the existing Staff Development Unit (SDU) had not been working very effectively in terms of organizing “structured” developmental activities for the teaching staff within the school. This was mostly because of the teachers’ heavy workloads and related time constraints. For the last six years, the only developmental activity which could be offered by SDU had been some workshops or seminars given by guest speakers.

Kenan Dikilitaş was very motivated about spreading the idea of his project and determined and resourceful about helping the creation of different teacher-researcher teams across Turkey. During our conversation, he suggested that I should form a team of teacher-researchers at my institution and become a part of the following year’s conference with our own project. He offered guidance and made me believe that I could handle being the leader of such a research team. He sounded so encouraging that when I was back home, I told my colleagues all about my experience at Gediz University, shared the publication of the previous conference with them and asked for volunteer participants for such a professional development activity. Eight volunteered. That was it. I had my own research team. Finally, at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year, our own research project started as a continuous professional development activity (CPD) at YADYO, under my leadership.

What did I do to support researchers?

The project served as a journey of enquiry to improvement in the EFL context both for me as the leader of the team and the eight instructors who voluntarily took part and accompanied me on the way to personal and professional development. We were a group of 9 professionals, 5 with PhDs, 2 with MA degrees and 2 PhD. candidates. According to the survey I conducted, the participants reported the following reasons for joining our group.

- Develop new teaching strategies
- Interact with colleagues
- Engage in teaching-related research
- Learn about Action Research
- Harmonize with change
- Improve teaching in a systematic way
- Go further in professional life
- Be part of a group who can understand one another’s problems
- Collaborate and share classroom experience with colleagues

I was lucky as the leader of this group in the sense that all the participants somehow had some understanding of action research because of having been involved in academic research previously. However, we needed to have a kick-off session to share our project expectations, build a supportive environment for organizing our existing knowledge about action research and share this prior knowledge. In short, the first thing we should do was to develop a shared understanding of action research among the participants of the group. Therefore, 2 weeks before the kick-off session, I sent an e-mail to the group members explaining what the project would entail, the date and time of the meeting and asking them to arrange the time of their lessons accordingly. I also attached Anne Burns' book “Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching, a Guide for Practitioners” to my e-mail recommending everyone to read mainly the first two chapters (‘What is action research?’ and ‘Planning the action’) before coming to the session. After all, I tried my best and advised others in the group to remind one another to read the book for the successful continuity of the project whenever and wherever I saw them, even in the ladies room and the corridors of our school, causing bursts of laughter and fun. Our project had started to bind us in its own ways and I was happy to feel that way.

The kick-off meeting went in the way I expected and planned earlier. We started the meeting by clearing our understanding on how to conduct action research in our own classrooms using Anne Burns' suggestions in the
book. We also shared our previous experience and stories about action research we had conducted earlier. In the second part of the session, I introduced the teacher-research program suggested and prepared by Dikilitas (2015, p. 53). And as a whole group we agreed that his program should serve as our roadmap until the end of the year so that we would be ready and able to present our studies at the IATEFL ReSIG International Teacher Research Conference held by Gediz University, 17–19 June, 2015. Dikilitas’s suggestion was to split the research engagement process into four stages for conducting individual projects and completion of the related activities by the team members in due time (see Table 1).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Planning the research design</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Identifying purpose and scope</td>
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<td>2. Specifying research questions</td>
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<td>3. Discussing data collection tool</td>
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<td>4. Deciding on analysis of the data</td>
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<td>5. Outlining the research plan</td>
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<td>2nd</td>
<td>Doing teacher research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Preparing tools for data collection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Designing classroom activities or materials</td>
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<td>3. Collecting data</td>
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<td>4. Transcribing or sorting out the data</td>
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<td>3rd</td>
<td>Analyzing the data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Answering RQs with evidence from the data</td>
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<td>2. Drawing out implications</td>
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<td>3. Developing ideas for reflection</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>Writing-up</td>
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<td>1. Writing up the section of the research</td>
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<td>3. Preparing the presentation</td>
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<td>4. Submitting the research</td>
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<td>Presentation at a Teacher-research Conference</td>
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Considering our workloads and other time constraints we decided to have our sessions monthly, nevertheless promised to have one-to-one meetings when required and divided the stages into 2-month periods: (Stage 1: October–November), (Stage 2: December-January), (Stage 3: February-March), (Stage 4: April-May). We also set the date and time of our next meeting promising to observe our own classrooms to identify the purpose and scope of our research and to choose our questions, data collection and analysis strategies by then. Everyone in the group was expected to come to the next meeting with a draft outline of her research plan including me. As part of my interest in emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, I decided to conduct my own research in my own classroom as one of the participants of the research team. I really wanted to empathize with the possible struggles my colleagues might experience during the process and thus understand and help them better.

In our next meeting in November, almost everyone was certain about what puzzled them in their classes. We shared our scopes, purposes and research questions with one another during that meeting. Critical reflection which was supplemented by critical friendships among the group members caused motivation and provided direction for our projects. We refined our research plan outlines until the December meeting. At the end of Stage 1, with the help of the two meetings held, private talks in the offices, chats in the corridors and everywhere available, text messages on WhatsApp. and above all the ongoing support and feedback from Kenan Dikilitaş, we were ready to move on to the 2nd Stage of our research engagement process, mainly the data collection period.
All in all, at the end of the 1st Stage, due to the need to work on similar issues going on in the classroom and the foci of topics for research, two research partnerships emerged out of our research team. The other 5 instructors including me preferred to have our individual projects. The focus areas preferred by the teacher-researchers were mainly about improving writing, speaking, learner autonomy, language learning attitudes and motivation. The research topics represented in this volume include those related to personal goal setting, supporting autonomous learning, using creative writing activities, and encouraging peer assessment and peer collaboration.

How I felt about the group development

From my point of view as the leader of this group, the main concerns of forming a usual AR group for CPD purposes could be about attitudes towards action research, developing the required research skills for carrying out individual studies, selection and development of a research topic, reviewing the literature. However, considering the participating ELT instructors and their backgrounds, our case was different. Although our group research started as a voluntary CPD activity and the group members were very enthusiastic to conduct research in their own classrooms, the time to be devoted to come together as a whole group and spare for individual studies turned out to be very limited. So, no matter how challenging the problem was, I needed to do something in the best possible way to lead the participants of the group to arrange their time for meetings and consequently create some extra time for the continuity of the individual studies.

With this aim in mind, I decided to help the participants become a professional learning community who act and study together to direct their efforts toward improved student learning (Hord, 1997) and care for one another’s improvement. The creation and the growth of our caring community with a sense of team spirit helped us solve our time problems to a great extent. Despite the fact that we could only have two formal sessions to cover many issues in two months, we were able to complete our research outlines to go on our way and ready to continue with the requirements of the 2nd Stage (Dikilitaş, 2015, p.53). Our research group model was also based on Kuh’s idea of Critical Friends Group (CFG) whose focus is on individual teacher practice as well as shared knowledge and collaboration among colleagues (Kuh, 2006).

In order to make this idea work for our own situation, we took our own responsibility as participants to help one another in terms of completing our research outlines in due time. We discussed our research questions, research tools asking for critical feedback from the group members via e-mail, small group meetings, coffee-table talks…We cooperated wherever and whenever possible to have better research outcomes and perform our best as a research group to go further. Our cooperation and collaboration for the betterment of our individual teaching practice and our students’ learning continued until the end of the 4th stage of the research engagement process even when we were presenting our individual projects at the June 2015 IATEFL ReSIG Conference in İzmir. In short, the philosophy of our group, which was based on being a caring community within the school environment, helped us considerably to compensate for the time which couldn’t have been arranged properly for the whole group meetings during the research engagement process.
Additionally, I believe that the profile I displayed as their leader also affected the continuity and the productivity of this action research community as well as the devotedness of its participants. During that time, first of all, I was sincerely ‘me’, conducting my own classroom research with my language instructor identity, and suffering from the same problems about time. I was thus understanding instead of judging them (empathy). Also, I was always ready to provide support whenever needed (availability). The ambiance I intended to create during the group meetings and the personal conversations were always trusting, supportive and caring. In that respect, it was very rewarding to see that the content of the feedback given by the group members regarding me as their leader, the expectations met and the gains provided by being a part of this research group were all consistent with my own personal reflections. Some of the gains reported by the participants were as follows:

- synchronizing personal philosophy with teaching practice,
- sustaining collaborative learning through personal conversations and caring talk,
- being listened to and feeling understood,
- learning from one another and having the chance to ask for and get help from others in the group,
- understanding self and the research process while talking to others in the group,
- cooperating with the research partner in terms of complementing each other, boosting one another’s vision and learning from one another,
- feeling valued and accepted to be asked for recommendations for betterment of others’ research in the group,
- having meetings, discussions, sharing opinions with the other group members and getting informed about new topics in the field,
- reflecting on personal teaching experience and thus evaluating and fine-tuning teaching styles, strategies, and approaches,
- improving time management skills throughout the process to meet the deadlines to be followed by the research group,
- observing the students more and thus noticing individual differences for better classroom practice.

Besides the positive outcomes, the survey results also revealed some problems the participants faced other than time during the research engagement process. For example, a participant teacher reported that following a research cycle was challenging, requiring a constant review of the tool and expected outcomes when compared to academic research, whereas another found narrowing the initial focus of research, putting ideas into words and planning actions difficult. At the research design stage, my support as leader was felt particularly valuable by some of the team, though others felt they benefited from my mentoring more constantly throughout the process.

What I learnt from this experience and what change I could make to my supervising/mentoring in the future by justifying the impact of this experience on me?

I had numerous personal and professional gains throughout this leadership experience while conducting the project. First of all, it was great to feel that all the participating group members enjoyed being a part of this teacher-research project and benefitted from what we shared not only on a professional but also personal basis. The values like trust, unity, co-operation, responsibility, caring, courage shared among the group members helped me mirror myself in front of my own and others’ eyes. In this way, I also had the chance to monitor, check, revise my values and characteristics as a leader. I once again realized that a good leader should be tolerant, open-minded, and reflective and above all equipped with all kinds of mental and spiritual tools to keep a group going and be successful. I also felt how strong a leader’s influence could be in terms of creating change for the better. Moreover, I had the chance to review different sources of information and kinds of literature to be able to have a command of conducting action research and help the group members in supervising their individual projects.

It’s certain that doing action research has a powerful impact on teachers’ professional development especially for the betterment of individual teaching practice and student learning. Therefore, I wholeheartedly believe that the practice of action research group projects should continue as part of CPD in schools. To me every group is unique and has its own spirit and dynamics as well as learning needs. Accordingly, staff developers should fight against the teachers’ problems such as workload and related time constraints by offering manageable, time-saving training programs that involve classroom research especially in the form of action research groups at their core.
and mentoring these kinds of programs, they can make use of the ideas behind different forms of professional development such as the Professional Learning Community (Hord, 1997) and Critical Friend Group (Kuh, 2006) like I did and can get satisfactory results.

References

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6  

Attitudes towards “Teacher Research”

Mine Bellikli

Background to the research
This paper illustrates my first year trainer experience at Atılım University. Atılım is a private foundation university established in 1997 where English is the medium of instruction. To support the preparatory school which provides nine-month English Language Programs to students, we as the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) with 15 full-time and 8 part-time teachers offer four different two-year courses.

DFL administration is very important to instructors’ development. Various approaches have been implemented to encourage instructors to refresh their subject based knowledge and to equip themselves with updated information. To list some we tried:

- Observations with experienced teachers or colleagues
- Reflective practices (sharing best/ worst classroom experiences)
- Group discussions
- Staff meetings
- Workshops with external experts

Financial support and encouragement to give presentations in other university conferences are also offered to DFL instructors. There wasn’t any team or unit for development. All the above mentioned activities had been done on a voluntary basis by the help of people in charge of the administration of the department.

Contributions to these activities were not satisfactory, (however). Attendance of the activities was on a voluntary basis. Therefore, instructors didn’t feel obliged to attend the activities. They came up with different excuses like: some of them think the sessions don’t align with the knowledge and skills that they need to improve, some of them say because of time constraints they don’t
find enough opportunity to discuss the subject in detail and the sessions turn out to be a waste of time. In addition, instructors complain about lack of time as they have things to complete instead of expending energy on the meetings and discussions in PD sessions. So, most of the developmental activities were done by only a few people.

In the 2014-15 academic year, the DFL administrators decided to organise all these activities more systematically and decided to appoint a Continuous Professional Development Coordinator (CPDC). During the unit meetings and in appraisal discussions instructors stated that they were not happy with the voluntary system as it was not systematic and done by only few people. So, it was decided to encourage all staff to take part in professional development activities and “teacher research” was introduced and implemented as a new activity for all, including administrators and part-time instructors.

**“Teacher research” as a new experience**

Learning to teach is a lifelong struggle. There are many things waiting to be discovered and learnt. In order to get satisfaction from the work that instructors are doing, they want to be as effective as possible and provide the best learning opportunities for their students. Continuous learning happens when instructors are actively involved in the process. And as Burns states instructors are learning during the process: “In AR, a teacher becomes an ‘investigator’ or ‘explorer’ of his or her personal teaching context, while at the same time being one of the participants in it” (Burns, 2009, pg. 3). Therefore, instructors become the learners while they are performing their professions. This is not all; when instructors acquire knowledge, it is not for improvement of the self only but also to improve their environment. “Teacher research” can be defined as the process of studying a school situation to understand and improve the quality of the educative process (Johnson, 2012). When instructors conduct investigations into the area of their interest and then share what they have learned with the rest of the school community the study consequently contributes to organizational learning. If we consider learning as “active production” rather than “passive reproduction” as Elliot states (1991, p.14), research in any subject is one of the best ways for self learning, self development and becomes a tool to form a learning organization. This “teacher research” provides instructors with the necessary skills, new knowledge and ways to improve the quality of education in addition to raising educational standards within their institutions..

For sure, there are many other types of continuing professional development activities such as reading readily available articles, books, attending conferences, learning from more experienced colleagues (mentoring), getting training sessions from experts or having discussions in unit meetings. However instructors are generally inactive in these training sessions and they do not benefit enough from them. It is good to have somebody else’s ideas but true learning happens when one implements one’s own ideas oneself in one’s own context. According to Borg:

Teacher research can also give teachers an added sense of professional autonomy because, in contrast with conventional training courses, teacher research is driven by teachers themselves – they make decisions about what to focus on, how, and when. External ideas from, for example, reading, can of course support teachers in making such decisions, and advice from more experienced colleagues can also be valuable – but ownership of the process lies with the teachers themselves. (2014, p.2)

Moreover, “teacher research” promotes reflective teaching and thinking, expands instructors’ pedagogical repertoire, reinforces the relation between practice and student achievement and puts teachers in charge of their job. Doing research is the more productive developmental activity among those mentioned above. “Teacher research” enables the instructors to do the necessary preparation and guide their own learning actively. Besides, doing research facilitates innovation in teaching and learning and sharing this research with colleagues builds a team spirit in the school, promotes instructors’ motivation and strengthens their identification with their schools. The major objective of this study was to identify the attitudes of the instructors toward “teacher research” in the Department of Foreign Languages at Atılım University.

**Significance of the study**

In-service training is an ongoing process of professional development. Through this process teachers continuously improve their skills and create a successful, effective school environment which may result in more successful learning outcomes. In the Department of Foreign Languages at Atılım University, we decided to do “teacher research” as the major part of our professional develop-
Methodology

In this study I intended to use a quantitative paradigm because I wanted to elicit teachers’ perceptions on “teacher research” as objectively as possible. However, quantitative data is of limited use when working on perceptions. When perceptions are the focus of the study, qualitative data is used more to support the research. To mention some methods; first of all, I kept a journal for each research study and tried to note down instructors’ ideas about their research alongside other necessary information. An observational checklist was also prepared and filled in at weekly meetings with instructors. A mini-survey (only three open-ended questions) was given at the beginning of the process in order to find out the instructors’ approach towards research by asking them:

1. What is your personal understanding of teacher research?
2. What are your personal reasons for doing teacher research?
3. What do you hope to get from doing teacher research?

A more formal open-ended questionnaire with 8 questions was given to each participant after they completed their research. The questionnaire aimed at gathering data on instructors’ attitude towards research as a tool for Teacher Development Programme through various questions.

In the questionnaire some of the questions were intended to examine whether the instructors find “teacher research” beneficial for their professional and personal development such as:

- Do you think “teacher research” improves your teaching, career, or your institution? Why? Why not?
- What kind of in-service trainings do you find more beneficial? Why?
  (having workshops from colleagues/ class observations by administrators or trainers or peers/ sharing good-bad classroom experiences/ discussions in group-unit meetings/ teacher research)

Instructors’ ideas on publishing and sharing their findings both with colleagues in the university, and at an international conference in Gediz University in coordination with IATEFL were also investigated by asking:

- Do you think publishing or presenting your research at an international conference has made a contribution to your career?

To find out about the challenges and motivational issues of researching instructors were asked:

- What do you like/hate about the “teacher research” process?
- What motivates/demotivates you during the “teacher research” process?

And to discover attitudes to the level of support offered by coordinators and the university:

- Do you think you need more academic (more training/workshop/meeting) or administrative support (payment/reduction/appreciation) for your research?

Lastly, questions were asked to learn about the instructors’ willingness to conduct more research in the future and their feelings about the implementation:

- Would you like to conduct more research in the future? Why? Why not?
- Please feel free to comment on “teacher research” if you need to do so.

Both questionnaires were mailed to instructors and they were asked to complete them anonymously and put them in a box in the secretary’s office to encourage honest responses.

Learning as teachers and researchers

Twenty-three (all) participants answered the mini survey that was given at the beginning of the process and attended weekly meetings when necessary. Nineteen instructors out of twenty-three commented on the open ended questions that were given at the end of the semester. All instructors (except two groups) completed their research and all shared their findings in a mini-conference called “End of Year Event” in Atılım University. In addition to this, ten of the researchers found the opportunity to present their findings at the IATEFL Gediz conference.

In the formal open ended questionnaire the result of the first question showed that respondents find “teacher research” a beneficial activity for personal and professional development. They also mentioned that the opportunity to present at the IATEFL conference was good for the reputation of the institution. Most of the researchers (except two) also believed that taking part
in the IATEFL Research SIG and/or presenting the findings at an international conference will positively impact on their own reputations and careers as well.

During the research period the Coordinator led three workshops to raise instructors’ awareness of what “teacher research” is and to go through the steps of putting research into practice. Kenan Dikilitas, who was in charge of the “teacher research” process from the start to the end product, also gave a workshop at the Department focusing on the importance of “teacher research” and the steps to follow. He also answered instructors’ questions about research. Sample research from Gediz University”s publication of “Professional Development through Teacher Research” were shared with the instructors as well.

One of the questions in the questionnaire aimed to find out if instructors needed more support academically. 89% of teachers (17 out of 19) agreed that they had enough information and support to complete their research. Only two instructors said “We should do more workshops and see more examples of teacher research, there were times when we were confused but couldn’t find time to ask our questions”. Instructors were all busy during the semester and when they missed the weekly meeting it was difficult to catch up as we all teach in different faculties. Instructors have a point when they state that we need a more flexible schedule to be able to come together more.

Need of more administrative support was also noted. Even though the respondents were generally positive about having enough academic support, 80% said that due to teaching and other responsibilities, they definitely needed some reduction from the administration. 100% said time constraints made the research challenging and de-motivated them. They stated that it was very difficult to complete their research with such a heavy workload. In addition, three instructors verbalized the need for payment to enhance motivation towards research. “I could do my research in a more motivated way if I knew that I would gain something like an extra payment at the end”, and one instructor said, “definitely a payment rise will motivate me more to complete my research”. I believe that instructors are in need of recognition and reward while putting effort into these studies.’

Other interesting answered came from “What do you like / motivates you about “teacher research”?” Only 10 respondents answer this question. Two instructors out of ten said “I don’t like the idea of having compulsory research; we should have a saying in such developmental activities”. Improvement can occur when one wants. You cannot force people to improve themselves. The other respondents’ answers showed that they have a positive attitude towards research for different reasons. Two of the instructors indicated that “the end product, producing something concrete” was very exciting for them. Some others said they “like being pushed to read more and learn more about a topic that they are really interested in”. Two other respondents stated that “working in pairs and cooperation among colleagues towards similar goals motivates them a lot”. Participants’ ideas like “getting direct feedback from students’ work and seeing that professionally they are on the right track” gave them pleasure when they were implementing their research.

The majority of the instructors (16 out of 19) stated that they were willing to conduct more research in future. Some said it is a good way to improve teaching skills and understand students needs better. They also believe that “teacher research” gives them the opportunity to implement new things in their classes. Another idea arising from their answers is, “focusing on students’ needs gives different satisfaction in my profession”. Three instructors say the profession needs continuous progression and “teacher research” is a very good way to improve oneself. One of them said “it is nice to have the opportunity to work on what I really want and am interested in”. However, two instructors were not quite sure if they would like to do more research or not. They said “doing research is too time consuming and under these conditions (heavy work load) I am not sure if I can spare time for research” Only one instructor said that the “teacher research” project was exhausting and they would never think about doing it in the future.

The positive responses to the last question: “I learned a lot both during the research procedure and from the articles that I read”; “I understand the problem better and find some solutions that I will implement in my later classes”; “Research was not that much difficult as I thought, I like working on the subject that I choose”; “It is nice to share my findings with my colleagues”; “I felt valuable when the administration change some items in the curriculum according to my research”, give me evidence that “teacher research” as a professional development activity is a valuable exercise for the instructors to undertake.
What we learnt through this teacher research

Through this research, I aimed to find out instructors’ attitudes to “teacher research” as a means of Continuing Professional Development. This study helped me to find out that instructors at DFL in Atılım University in general find the practice beneficial and have a stance towards “teacher research”. As they mentioned in the questionnaire they find the research procedure a very effective way to learn new things and to point out students’ needs better. As they mentioned in the questionnaire they found the research procedure a very effective way to learn new things and to highlight students’ needs better. They also emphasized that sharing the findings created a learning environment. Instructors also appreciate that administrators have used some of the “teacher research” findings to address some curricular issues.

With our previous developmental activities, instructors had too many complaints especially about the benefits of the activities. I had the feeling that most of the instructors found the developmental activities useless and a waste of time. However, as they commented in the questionnaire, when they choose their own topic according to their interest and do the research themselves, they find “teacher research” meaningful and they benefit from it.

We cannot necessarily say that there were no problems; indeed we have faced several challenges. As all instructors clearly state in the given questionnaire, they found conducting research with a heavy teaching load very challenging. Moreover, as this was the first time for most of the instructors, they experienced a problem of not seeing the whole picture at the beginning and this issue made some of them react against the activity itself. Doing this research was a great experience in terms of the learning that instructors got from this professional development activity by being involved in the process. They also found it meaningful working on areas that they are really interested in or have a curiosity about. For future implementation of such “teacher research” projects I find the following recommendations useful to keep in mind.’

Some concrete time allowance should be given to instructors to complete their projects.

- The effort put in the research should be recognized (perhaps financially) by the administrators to motivate the instructors more.
- As all instructors experience the research process at least once, it might be a good idea to let the instructors decide themselves whether they would like to do another study or not.

I believe that “teacher research” as a tool for professional activity is very beneficial as it facilitates learning through scanning the needs of the instructors, students and the institution and analyzing the outcomes for future teaching practices. I can conclude that doing “teacher research” has a positive impact not only on instructors’ teaching practices but also on their professional development. By taking the suggestions into consideration, “teacher research” could be used as a policy of professional and personal development activities in DFL at Atılım.

References


Introduction
Located in the Central Anatolian region of Turkey, Konya is one of the few cities hosting more than 100,000 university students in two state and two private universities. Having worked as a lecturer in two of the state universities for 15 years, built close relationships with the instructors and experienced challenges and innovations as a member of the institutions both in an administrative and academic capacity, personally, I accumulated a bunch of ideas and expectations of the instructors on professional development in this context. This rich variety of learning experience laid foundations for the study to initiate action to bring the ELT instructors who are working at different universities in the city together and act collaboratively on a specified long term plan. This chapter specifically focuses on the action research program aiming to develop instructors’ research skills and enhance their attitude towards professional development.

Background to the study
Only one of the universities in Konya dates back more than six years. They all have English Language Preparatory Schools and for several departments, a minimum of one-year-prep school is compulsory before attending departmental courses. Most of the English language staff are young English Language Teaching or English/American Language and Literature graduates. Although a few instructors have more than 15 years’ experience, most have only between 3 and 6 years’ experience. To equip students with the skills they need for their undergraduate and graduate studies, the newly-established Language Schools run intensive programs with special emphasis on reading, writing, listening and speaking. Teachers have access to the latest teaching materials such as...
audio-video and online components of the course books. However, there is no professional development unit that conducts regular programs in the participants' universities. Once a year they are provided with a short training seminar in their institution. These sessions are often certificated and they are open to all language teachers in the city. The seminars usually focus on how to exploit course books in the most effective way. They are held by outsider professionals working with publishing companies. Although such sessions are of value in training especially novice teachers to discover their strengths and weaknesses in theoretical, methodological and instructional knowledge, they are inadequate in answering individual and contextual professional needs. They can be regarded as a drop in the ocean concerning their professional growth and seem far from fulfilling their full potential. As a result, what makes this study significant is that, unlike the professional seminars mentioned above, it is the first long-term professional development activity to promote teachers’ research skills through an action research program.

**Review of literature**

Glatthorn (1995) takes professional development as a systematic growth in experience and examination of teaching. To begin with, when teachers are involved in a program over a period of time, they can improve their instructional skills, practices of systematic inquiry and take part in research (Burns & Edwards, 2014). Therefore, it is vital to take a long-term, planned and step by step approach for sustaining teachers' life-long learning. Secondly, although the technological age offers opportunities to share experiences through interactive web tools, there is still the need for collaborative effort to sustain professional development. Thirdly, there is a need for the inclusion of teachers' own voice in the design and content of the program through systematic reflection. Roberts claims (1998, p.49) that: ‘...reflection contributes to growth because it frees us from a single view of a situation which would restrict how we define problems and so the resulting solutions.’ Similar to Roberts, Freire puts emphasis on reflection. In fact, reading Freire's ideas on education helped me to embody the essential constituents of this study because I believe that ‘knowledge is a social construct and beliefs are shaped into knowledge by discussion and critical reflection’ (Freire, 1987, p.97) and taking a critical stance is a *sine qua non* of a teacher development program. Critical reflection implies that teachers 'should be aware of their belief systems and monitor how far their actions reflect those beliefs' (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 55). Therefore, when planning this study, I focused on a long-term, step by step, collaborative approach, prioritizing the teacher's voice and reflection.

**The process**

**Participants**

Using social media, a call went out inviting volunteers, and especially English instructors, to take part in an action research study. A meeting was then held with the volunteers. The number of participants who came to the meeting was a complete surprise and the limit was reached in the first gathering. It was an encouraging beginning. After we agreed on a specific weekly meeting time which suited all members of the study group, I scheduled individual semi-structured interviews with the participants in their offices. During the initial interviews, they stated that they had never had the opportunity to be part of a long term professional development activity, which took into account their contextual needs, gave them a voice in the process and allowed room for discussion and systematic reflection.

I began with 10 hardworking volunteers who had a 'thirst' to do research. They were expecting to become more autonomous in addressing their own needs and to work collaboratively with colleagues to share ideas and experiences. Additionally, they stated that they wanted to be included in the decision process and if need be, have the freedom to make necessary changes whenever needed. All of them felt the short seminars had been inefficient in meeting their needs. They also stated that the so-called seminars disregarded their contextual realities:

*I don't think one-shot seminars are beneficial. Educational programs should be conducted in our own context. Sometimes we join one day seminars for a plenary speaker or raffle only. I took a lot of notes until now. However, only very little is relevant to me. These conferences bring professionals together for a few hours, we see old friends have a chat, better than nothing, but they cannot be regarded as a development activity. A teacher development program should be long term, interactive and suitable to our needs. Mostly participants do not...*
even ask questions at the end of the presentations because of time limitation. And asking a question and having a reply is not being interactive. We know that we can find the answers to our questions even by googling them (Zeynep - one of the volunteers).

The interviewee response above clearly reveals teachers’ expectations from a professional development activity. Borg (2015) identifies such modes of professional learning as ‘teacher as consumer’ mode. In this mode, teachers are engaged in externally-driven practices and their contributions are limited in both content and the process. What was intended in this study was to move from the input-led edge of the continuum to a more transformative mode of learning experience.

The Weekly Program

Before the weekly sessions commenced, I provided the participants with an outline of each week's content. The rationale behind this was to give us a concrete framework and path to follow. The participants were told that the framework was open to negotiation and adaptations or additions could be made if necessary. I informed them about the aim of the study, which was to develop professionally by being involved in an Action Research program to develop their teacher research and reflection skills. The delivery of the program would be one-to-one, pair work and group work tasks. Apart from face to face meetings with the whole group, they were also informed that they would have pre-scheduled, one-to-one meetings throughout the study. The assessment criteria were also distributed in which it was stated that regular attendance was required; all the sessions were to be carried out in a collaborative manner; the participants were to keep journals throughout the program; and the Action Research project was to be conducted by the participants either individually, in pairs or as a mini group. Participants were expected to present their studies at an international conference together with the other participants as a team, and their work was expected to be written in the form of an article to be submitted to a journal.

The overall program included the following topics:

- Week 1. Concepts on Teacher Development
- Week 2. What do English teachers need to do to become professionals?
- Week 3. Action Research
- Week 4. Reflection
- Week 5. The questioning stage
- Week 6. Planning the research
- Week 7. Act
- Week 8. Data collection tools
- Week 9. Observation
- Week 10. Data collection tools
- Week 11. Observe stage
- Week 12. Reflect stage
- Week 13. Designing the research paper for presentation
- Week 14. Individual/pair/group meetings to reflect on the studies
- Week 15. Program evaluation meeting
- Week 16. After study interviews/ Post-study questionnaires

From the first week, every session was video recorded and every week the participants filled in evaluation forms. Each week I also sat down for 5 to 10 minutes and took notes about the session in stream of consciousness mode and watched the recordings to check whether these three data sources validated one another. Teachers were provided with extra reading material on the week's topic – a well-known article, a short chapter from a book or vignettes from teachers from around the world.

Challenges faced

The participants of the action research program was a group of instructors from different universities with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Since I did not know the participants previous to the study, the initial two weeks were quite frustrating. My frustration stemmed from the fear of not being able to establish a community spirit among the participants from the beginning. The first week's meeting was designed as an introduction to main issues on teacher development and training in order to discuss the terms which are used interchangeably; namely, teacher development, teacher training, teacher education, career development within more concrete frames with reference to literature on language education. Almost each week, a warm up activity took place at the beginning of the session to energize the participants as they were
working full time all week. Unfortunately, Friday evenings were scheduled as meeting days but Friday was the last day of the week; the most tiring day. A welcoming attitude, a warm smile and a drink corner together with snacks created a friendly, relaxing atmosphere; and resulted in them sincerely sharing their ideas with one another. Most of the participants stated their impressions in the first weekly evaluation form under ‘The extras…’ heading. Here is a sample excerpt taken from the so-called heading:

“\[\text{What made us bring together although feeling exhausted before we begin the session, but refreshed afterwards, was the collaborative spirit which was built upon a cup of tea/coffee and the positive attitude which made me feel as if I was in a process of rehabilitation to gain my strength back after a loaded week. (Melih)}\]

After the second week we started working on what action research is, the stages of action research, how it is done, and went over many examples of action research conducted in teachers’ classrooms all around the world etc. These examples helped teachers build self-confidence and their fear of ‘research’ decreased as one of the participants stated in his weekly evaluation form:

“\[\text{Research was too far from me, even the word itself was scary. I wrote many papers and reports on a course when I was an undergraduate. However, as a teacher, I thought ‘research’ was something requiring very hard work and the academics did it. Focusing on what other teachers did as researchers and analyzing their stages one by one made me think ‘I can do it’ right from the beginning. In fact, I was doing the same but not systematically… My intuition was guiding me. (Deniz)}\]

Then, we started asking questions focusing on our beliefs and philosophies, classroom instruction, our learners and the curriculum. These questioning sessions formed the foundations of participants’ studies. Reflective tools such as keeping journals, audio-video recordings and observation were introduced to the participants with their strengths and weaknesses and how they could be used to gather data and improve. In the meantime, everyone was trying to come up with a question that puzzled them in their own context. A few of the participants were quick to identify questions that would steer their action research, some took more time. I did not interfere but encouraged them to record more data in their classrooms since a pattern would emerge from their recordings. Additionally, I provided support in making them think about topics that appealed to their personal interests. After 4 - 5 weeks, the participants had a route to work on. A week’s session was assigned to discussion, helping each other in bettering research questions. Then everyone agreed and made a plan on how to gather data from their classrooms.

The second step of the action research cycle, ‘act stage’ was followed by ‘observe stage’ in which the participants checked whether their action yielded better results, the areas which needed adjustments and repeating the stage by making necessary changes. The ‘reflect phase’ was the last stage in the cycle. In individual office meetings, I came together with every participant to reflect on their work. Reflection gatherings also served as ‘collaborative learning and growing richer’ meetings because research topics studied by the participants were distinct from one another, which provided the group with abundant sources. At the end of these gatherings, we added to our knowledge which would take days of laborious searching and reading. Exchanging sources and ideas made it easier and illuminating through dialogue. To conclude, the program was a flourishing experience for both sides. Eight out of ten participants were able to finalize their studies ready to present and publish. The remaining two participants were active and dedicated to their route in every phase of the study; however, an unexpected change in their schedule beyond their control did not allow them to work with their audience to the end.

Reflections and conclusions

From this experience, I can frankly say that the most essential component of coming and working together is being transparent from the very beginning. As a team leader, I was aware that a healthy professional relationship is built on mutual trust. Therefore, the intended content which was open to negotiation was available to all. It was a pre-planned route on which the participants had the freedom to add extra components or time depending on their context. On the other hand, they could omit parts which appeared to be irrelevant to their needs. What is more, recognizing the teacher’s voice in the process led to teachers feeling valued, making an effort to learn and producing more, as stated by Selma:

“Seeing myself as a teacher researcher is very valuable. I wonder how I started feeling like that as soon as the program started. It may
be because I was there to reflect on my past and future experiences. I was somebody right in the beginning. The way the program took place was multidirectional. There was a variety of relationships between participants just like it occurred in real life. I did not feel inhibited among these options.

A word, a praising look or gesture was really important. Listening to learn from others created a friendly working atmosphere where people exchanged their ideas. The participants of the study were satisfied with the step by step approach of the program. That was what they lacked in their local setting. Being a part of a long term experience was rewarding on their side. In Bilge’s terms ‘it was like doing a puzzle, putting pieces together one by one without frustration’. She added:

*Action Research is a tool as a means of improving our teaching/learning environment. You identify a problem from your own context, then you go to the next stage, then the next one. Attending a long term weekly program together with colleagues from different institutions made me discover myself professionally. But this discovery would not be possible in a one-shot seminar.* (Bilge)

*Attending one day professional development programs never made me feel confident while teaching; rather I felt as if they were designed to focus on what I do not know only. However, in this study although I added a lot to my knowledge I did not feel like a stranger. Coming together for a long time broke my emotional barriers and I found myself helping my colleagues at the same time reconsidering my own teaching methods.* (Serkan)

Over the course of the study, reflection was one of the integral parts. On the effect of keeping a journal Tuna thought that:

*Keeping a journal helped us discover our teaching. We became aware of our strengths and weaknesses. It was like investigating your own classroom and yourself. Reflecting on my work through the recordings contributed a lot to my teaching.* (Tuna)

In conclusion, for myself and the participants, the research experience was an illuminating one. Moreover, some participants became the first instructors to obtain financial aid from their institutions. This was due to their research being recognized as a professional development activity for themselves and their school, which in turn had a motivating impact on these teacher researchers in the initial stages of their career. This is one of the factors that will support the creation of a research culture in the context of the study. It gives hope and encouragement for the future of language teaching in our local context.

**References**


Improving teaching practices through a university-school collaboration in young learner classrooms

Yasemin Kırkgöz

Main Focus
This article explores how two EFL teachers conducted action research by participating in a university-school collaborative project. The teachers were helped to overcome challenges emerging from teaching English in grade two classes with the guidance of an external facilitator - a university researcher. To observe the impact of the interventions in resolving the challenges, data were collected from observations, interviews, classroom artefacts and the teachers’ action research reports. Findings of the study show that with the scaffolding provided by the university facilitator, the teachers coped effectively with the reported classroom concerns in their action research, leading to professional learning and development. This study concludes with some implications about how collaborative action research can be used to promote teachers’ continuing professional development.

Background
Action research is a professional development model which is widely used to help teachers improve their teaching practice and promote their professional competence (Atay, 2008; Gao, Bhkhuizen and Chow 2011; Yuan and Lee, 2014; Somekh, 2006). The fundamental aim in action research is “to identify problematic situations or issues considered by participants to be worthy of investigation in order to bring about critically informed changes in practice” (Burns, cited in Cornwell, 1999, p.5). In this research paradigm, whereas ‘action’ refers to intervention in an existing practice in a particular social context, such as a classroom, to bring about improvement and change, ‘research’ requires the systematic observation and analysis of the change that occurs as a result (Burns 1999, 2009).
Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) present the framework of action research as follows:

- **Plan** - develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening
- **Act** - act to implement the plan
- **Observe** - observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs
- **Reflect** - reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action, [etc.] through a succession of stages (p. 10).

In recent years, university–school partnerships have been proposed as an effective means of enhancing teachers’ professional development through action research (Day and Hadfield 2004; Kırkgöz, 2015). A university–school partnership enables teachers to receive constructive guidance and scaffolding from university researchers and/or teacher educators, which can help enhance teachers’ research knowledge and skills and enable them to gain new ideas about language teaching and learning (Wang and Zhang 2014; Yuan and Lee, 2014). Furthermore, close cooperation with researchers can help teachers cope with the challenges that may arise from their work contexts.

Focusing on two EFL teachers’ action research experiences in a university–school collaborative project in Turkey, this study investigates how the teachers implemented action research, facilitated and enhanced by the scaffolding provided by a university researcher.

**Research Focus**

This study reports the implementation of one cycle of action research of two participating teachers: Fatma and Pınar, both native Turkish female teachers, who were working in the same school during the study. The two participants were chosen through convenience sampling and at the time of the study, Fatma had been teaching English for four years, while Pınar had been an English teacher for eight years. The action research took place in grade two classes, each taught by these teachers, with an average 18 students (age 6) in each class at a state primary school. Consent was obtained from the teachers and their school before the study commenced.

Here, I describe one action research cycle through a succession of stages carried out by the two teachers who focussed on the same issue or problem.

As previously stated, the first step in action research is to identify an issue that needs improvement (Burns, 2010). In the initial interview, which the external facilitator from the university conducted with the teachers, the aim was to find out whether the teachers encountered any specific challenge and/or if there was any aspect of teaching they would like to improve in their grade two classes. Both teachers stated that the fundamental problem or the issue they were most confronted with was that students were over competitive rather than cooperative during classroom activities. The teachers pointed out that they wanted to solve this problem to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. Additionally, both teachers aimed to promote their students’ classroom participation and interaction.

**Planning**

In order to bring about a workable solution to this specific problem, and to improve teachers’ practice, the university facilitator, after a review of the literature on the related topic, suggested the teachers use a cooperative project in their classes in order to promote cooperation. She also guided the teachers to consult the relevant literature and do some research in foreign language teaching to children. The teachers were also recommended to consult some useful websites such as the British Council’s ‘TeachingEnglish’ or ‘LearnEnglish Kids’ for useful activities.

Underlining cooperative project work is cooperative learning, in which students work together in small groups as a team on a structured activity set up by the teacher. While the work of the group as a whole is assessed, students are individually accountable for their work. Cooperative learning offers several benefits: in small groups, students learn to deal with conflict or competition; they can share their strengths and also develop their weaker skills as well as their interpersonal skills. When cooperative groups are guided by clear objectives, students can engage in many activities that lead to improvement in their understanding of subjects.

In order to create an environment in which cooperative learning can take place, three things are needed. First, students need to feel safe, but also challenged. Second, groups need to be small enough so that everyone can con-
tribute. Third, the task students are engaged with must be clearly defined. In cooperative learning, small groups provide a place where learners actively participate; students develop skills for resolving conflicts; goals are used as a guide (Spencer, 1994).

Hence, to promote cooperation among the students, and to overcome competition, the teachers opted to introduce more cooperative activities such as project work. They decided to build a highly imaginative teamwork on a classroom project called *making a noun tree*. The activity was to be performed with the contribution of each individual student so that it would be the product of the whole class.

Having reached a mutual consensus with the external facilitator on the collaborative project, which eventually became the focus of the teachers’ action research project, the teachers worked carefully together on a plan that was likely to have an impact on the issue they wanted to improve. The plan indicated the steps the teachers would follow in putting the action into practice.

For the *noun tree* project, the teacher would prepare a big tree with flash cards and cut out sticky notes or pieces of paper into different shapes, such as leaves or fruits, one for each child. The children would provide ‘numbers’, ‘colours’ or ‘classroom objects’ by writing nouns they learned in previous lessons on the piece of paper and stick these on the tree. This activity was intended to help students to cooperate and revise vocabulary through classroom participation.

**Action**

At this stage, the plan is put into action. The teachers prepared a *noun tree* and gave students specific guidance in terms of how to carry out the activity and what to write on the sticky papers. Then, each teacher organized their class into three groups, each group choosing one topic to provide the nouns. *Fatma* had only one grade-two class, so, in her class one group focussed on *classroom objects*, the second group on *numbers* and the third on *colours*. 

*Picture 1: The student supplying the name of a number on the flashcard*  
*Picture 2: The student supplying the name of a classroom object on the flashcard*
Pınar had three grade-two classes. In addition to focusing on classroom objects, numbers and colours, she added one more topic fruits to her cooperative project in her classes. For this, she cut the sticky flashcards into the shapes of fruits to make it attractive for the children. The children wrote nouns such as apple, orange, etc. which they had learned in previous lessons on the colourful sticky papers, also drawing the picture and colouring.

Finally, the students stuck the flashcards on the tree, one by one. During the activity, they were guided by the teachers. In this way, each child contributed to building up the noun tree.

Observe

This stage involved observing the effectiveness of the 'action' that is, documenting the effect of the cooperative activity. This was achieved by taking the photos of the children doing the activity and the generated product, the noun tree. As this was the teachers' first action research project, observation and interviews were used as data collection tools, and the external facilitator from the university provided scaffolding to each teacher on the process of data collection and analysis. The students' cooperatively produced work- noun tree- was also included for evaluation.

The following pictures (Pictures 3 and 4) illustrate the noun trees produced by the students in two different classes.
Each teacher individually applied their action research in their grade-two classes for two consecutive lessons, each lesson lasting 40 minutes. The external facilitator observed, took pictures of the activity and conducted post-lesson interviews where both teachers reviewed the lessons together, shared their research findings, and exchanged ideas for further improvement.

Reflect

The teachers then reflected on whether they had achieved the outcomes they were hoping for, i.e., whether they had succeeded in carrying out their action as planned, and whether their goal of promoting cooperation amongst the students was met.

Reflecting on their action, the teachers reported a noticeable increase in students' cooperation and interaction in completing the project cooperatively as opposed to perceiving the activity as a competition, as had happened previously. The teachers stated that they received positive feedback from the classes in which they used the noun tree project. The teachers also added that they were pleased that the children had performed the project with no competition but cooperatively.

Fatma's reflection of this process is given below:

The topic of our first action research project was related to the problems we encountered while asking our grade two students to perform activities. Due to their young age, being around about six, they have a tendency to be extremely determined and competitive. Because of this we are having problems in performing activities. As a solution, we decided on finding activities that promote cooperation rather than competition.

As a follow up to her colleague's reflection, Pınar reflected upon this experience, as follows:

The name of the activity we applied is called a noun tree. We divided the class into three groups, asked each group to find words related to the topics we assigned and write the words on the flashcards they were given and stuck them on the tree-shaped cartoon. In this way, the students, cooperatively and altogether, were able to produce a product. We applied this activity in three different grade two classes and students' response we received from each class was highly positive. Our students sincerely told us that they enjoyed it a lot and liked the noun tree activity very much. Similarly, we have been very pleased with the work produced by the students. What pleased us most, however, was the fact that we had the students perform an activity with no competition and no fighting taking place.

It was observed that cooperative learning such as making a noun tree sparked engagement in grade two classrooms of both teachers. It encouraged interaction among the students themselves, each child contributing to the task with his/her own work; thus, maximizing the level of participation as opposed to competition. This, in turn, lead to greater achievement, while promoting a sense of team work.

When children were asked if they liked engaging in the cooperative project, they all stated that they liked the noun tree activity and enjoyed cooperating to complete it. When asked what they thought about working as a team to reach the goal of making a noun tree, they stated that they felt comfortable when they work together with friends. They added that they felt less anxious about doing the activity and would like to do more activities like this. As expressed by the children, the most entertaining part of the activity was to write on the sticky papers their preferred nouns, to talk and decide in their small groups which nouns to write and to stick them on the tree.

Concerning the scaffolding they received during this process from the university facilitator, both teachers acknowledged that they gained useful insights from the guidance and support they received, which enabled them to form a better understanding of how to handle this particular classroom problem. The teachers also agreed that the support they received helped them to learn how to integrate action research into their practice.

Critical aspects

The most critical aspect of the study is that the scaffolding provided by an external facilitator, which, in this case is a university researcher, plays a crucial role in guiding the teachers about how to improve a specific issue in their classroom context through an action research project.
In addition, teacher cooperation was critical in enabling them to share and support each other, exchange ideas during the action research, and reflect on the process.

This study, therefore, demonstrates that teachers’ ideas and experiences combined with the university facilitator’s expertise through action research can be a critical source for language teachers’ professional empowerment.

Looking into the future

A primary implication of this study is the potential of action research to promote teacher effectiveness, professionalism and empowerment. This study also suggests that a university facilitator can play an important role in supporting teachers in this process, and that a university-school partnership can assist with this.

The facilitator serves as a collaborator by sharing his/her knowledge and expertise, encouraging teachers to reflect upon their teaching practices and take ownership in bringing about change and improvement, which ultimately contributes to their continued professional development.

This study was conducted in one specific context yet the findings may offer insights for those teachers and teacher educators who are interested in conducting university–school action research partnerships. The present study confirms those of others conducted by other researchers (Wang and Zhang 2014; Yuan and Lee, 2014) that a university–school partnership can enable teachers to gain new ideas about language teaching and learning and cope with the challenges that may arise from their work contexts. However, further studies concerning the implementation and on-going impact of action research are needed for the field of education to fully embrace this process.

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References

The story of the teacher development unit at Marmara university

In recent years, developments in science, technology and education have raised awareness of the language teachers in our institution and encouraged them to take responsibility for their own professional development. Since Marmara University is a public university, it is not affordable to hire a teacher trainer or an education counsellor. Nevertheless, we have the potential to find solutions to our own problems and with this in mind a teacher development team of six was elected by 120 instructors. The Teacher Development Unit (TDU) in Marmara University School of Foreign Languages was established in 2012 to help instructors refresh their knowledge, upgrade their skills in teaching English and keep motivated to achieve their full potential owing to the fact that teachers who continue to learn make more effective teachers. The TDU Team is in charge of three major tasks: attending ELT workshops and seminars, mentoring the newly-hired instructors and organising developmental activities for the teaching staff within the school. The developmental activities offered by the TDU Team were initially peer observations and workshops before the focus switched also to research. The research built on the following activities.

Workshops and seminars

During the academic year, the TDU Team organizes some workshops and seminars which are designed as a result of a needs analysis questionnaire collected from the current teaching staff. Team members share whatever they have learned from conferences, seminars and workshops with their colleagues by running a workshop themselves. Moreover, we sometimes get a chance to invite experts as guest speakers. The sharing atmosphere of the institution is
encouraged by both the administrative and the teaching staff. As a state school we do our best to promote professional development with a limited budget but with huge support.

**Mentoring and coaching**

Not only the TDU Team but also some other skilled, knowledgeable and experienced staff provide support for the newly-hired through guidance. The novice teachers of the institution are provided any kind of support they need including that about conducting an exam, filling up a form or dealing with any problem they have in their classrooms and school. During the year, they also observe the classes of their coaches as well as they are observed by them which is called class sharing. Besides, one-on-one meetings are organized to discuss and give feedback about their teaching experiences and encourage self-reflection.

**Peer-observation**

Peer-observation is about encouraging teachers to be self-reflective. Through peer observation teachers reflect on their own practice. The idea of not being evaluated by others lowers the affective filter and results in less teacher resistance. The primary aim of peer-observation is to help the participants gain insights and raise their awareness of their own teaching practices. This encourages some of the instructors to join some other developmental activities related to their profession.

Inspired by the encouragement of peer-observation, nine teachers from the institution volunteered to participate in the following Action Research Project. They agreed to work on three problematic areas to share their experiences and help their colleagues solve practical teaching problems.

**Teachers in action**

**Action research in the scheme**

There were two principal stages of the research. The first stage consisted of needs analysis, volunteer pairing, observation meetings, and sharing results. The second stage consisted of deciding on Teacher Research topics which emerged from the findings.

Nine instructors volunteered for the Teacher Research project and identified their own topics under three main themes, including classroom management, time management, and addressing different learning styles. Mentors for each team were appointed to give oral and written feedback, share literature, and hold regular meetings. In addition, two coordinators were chosen to lead the whole process by supervising both the mentors and the teacher researchers. The practitioners implemented the steps according to the problem posed, collected data by various methods and analysed the results. When practitioners are involved in all the steps of the research they develop a deeper understanding.
My major role was to facilitate the teacher researchers to conduct their own action research study. Besides guiding them, helping them solve their problems or giving them assistance whenever they needed about their study, I realized that I had some other roles, and that helped me to get deeper insights. Sometimes I put myself into students' shoes, and sometimes I put my teacher's hat on, or I turned into a researcher and concentrated on the profoundness of the study. As a researcher, you might get stuck at some point if you focus too much on your topic which hinders you to see things from different angles, and you are not open to changes. However, I tried to see the bigger picture, and started seeing things through the students' eyes. What makes the study more meaningful and useful for them? When I got the answer, I knew where to go next. Finally, I turned back to my mentoring role and helped the practitioners to find their own way by suggesting to them some articles, motivating them to keep going. It was really exciting to see things from different angles with a different perspective. This study helped me to improve my critical thinking skills and provided me a new perspective with further studies.

During the process, there might be various factors having an impact on the action research such as a busy schedule or personal issues. Two participants in my team had to give up the study due to personal issues. If you do action research, you should keep calm, be tolerant, be flexible, and be open to changes. I think I experienced all those emotional stages with the third participant. She started to study on a topic which was very broad and she had difficulty in narrowing it down. She even came to a point where she considered giving up the study. She had meetings with our coach and also with me, and during these meetings we engaged in a lot of brainstorming giving us a new perspective to the study, and she managed to narrow it down. At that point, we had a short meeting and she said:

“Utku, you guided me through critical stages with a positive attitude and a few encouraging words. This gave me the drive to go on with my action research. The positive feedback, enthusiasm, and relevant terminology just at the right time gave me a new perspective and provided me with more literature to read on or search for videos related to my study. You gave me the freedom that I needed to be creative.”

Consequently, developing a positive attitude towards the challenges helped her reduce stress and overcome her anxiety and also increased her motivation. I believe I should work on my guiding skills because it’s very important to give a desirable amount of guidance, not more than enough or less than necessary which might make teacher researchers feel lost or restricted. It’s very important to keep the balance since too much interference is also very risky because teacher-researchers should find their own way without being influenced. On the other hand, some teacher-researchers might need to know the predetermined steps of the process and have a tendency to follow them.

All in all, it was exciting, motivating and also inspiring to work with a group of volunteer teacher-researchers. They were always enthusiastic to do more. Being positive about what they are doing and being friendly are the key words to motivate them as they can sometimes feel anxious and need a break. On the other hand, sometimes you need to give them a little push to make them go a step further. Each teacher-researcher has different learning styles and perceptions. Thus, as a mentor, I should provide guidance considering these differences. Learning is a lifelong process and I’ve learnt a lot from this study. I’ve gained an insight about how to conduct research while mentoring my research team. This project showed that we can change our beliefs, our classroom practices, and behaviours; as a result, we can make a difference. One of our teacher-researchers, Aslı Yılmaz Ercan, created a metaphor about being a teacher-researcher. “Teacher-researchers resemble butterflies. Every teacher can be a teacher-researcher, just like a cocoon can turn into a butterfly, open its wings and fly towards the sun with more insight, more experience and the fulfilment of professional needs.” At the end of the project, it was so rewarding to see that our teacher-researchers are very contented. Now, they are all ready to fly higher towards the research world.
PART III

Collaboration & Autonomy
Main focus

Motivation is needed to do well in any area of our lives and setting goals helps us to concentrate on our work and guides us to achieve the tasks we need to do. With the help of goals, we can monitor our progress and take the responsibility for the decisions made for life and academic success. However, according to Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003), although everyone has goals for life which influence behaviour and feelings in many ways, many people are unaware of their goals and they have too general and vague goals which lead to failure in decision making. By becoming aware of our goals, we can plan and regulate our actions to reach our goals. From this perspective, this study was conducted to help students to set goals to direct and focus their study and become self-regulated learners. I wanted to guide my students in their learning and try to create an awareness about how setting goals would affect them both in their academic and daily lives. In order to achieve my aim, I asked the following research questions:

1- How can I guide my students to set goals and aims while they are learning?
2- Will setting goals help my students to improve themselves?

Background

Over the last decades, interest in students’ self-regulation of their academic learning and performance has increased because of the emphasis on the learners’ responsibility in classroom settings and education more generally. For Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003, p. 2), “a self-regulated learner is one who actively plans, monitors, and controls her own learning and behaviour”. Self-regulated students who set goals or plans and try to monitor their motivation
and behaviour in accordance with these goals are more likely to be successful in the school environment (Pintrich and Zimmerman, cited in VanderStoep and Pintrich, 2003). This is according to research in various subject areas with elementary and secondary school children (Zimmerman et al., 1992; Kitsantas et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2014) and with university students (Turan and Demirel, 2010; İnan, 2013). These studies found that those students who are more responsible for their own learning are more confident and motivated about achieving success in academic subjects.

In the path of lifelong learning, behaviours of the self-regulated learner include being strategic, monitoring themselves, being adaptable, responsive, thematically organized, and making efforts. Such behaviour relates to: 1) goal setting, planning and forethought; 2) monitoring; 3) controlling and regulating 4) reflection (Vanderstoep and Pintrich, 2003). Self-regulated learners direct their learning by setting challenging goals for themselves which specify their needs for personal success (Bandura, cited by Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Research focus (participants, tools and process of collecting)

Participants of this study were one of my classes at the Preparatory School (YADYO) of Cukurova University consisting of 23 students, 19 males and 4 females. They had been studying English for two months before the study was carried out. Since the performance of these students was lower than my other classes in the first achievement exam and their motivation was affected by these grades, I wanted to encourage and guide them to be more motivated in their learning experience first by setting goals for both their daily routines and academic studies. They were asked to set weekly goals which would lead them to be more organised and more willing to achieve their aims. For eight weeks during the term and before their final achievement exam, I asked them to write their opinions and thoughts about this kind of experience of self-study and make suggestions for further innovation.

Critical aspects - implementing the action

Since learning and thinking strategies are important in achieving school tasks, I asked all of my students to write about their weak and strong points while learning English or any other subjects. They wrote their own perceptions of their weak points as presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' weak points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't like searching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forgot the things I've learned very easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know the reason but I can't study for the lesson and I don't know how to study English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend less time studying and I can easily be fed up with studying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have a plan to study and I only start to practice two days before the exam.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goals can be conceptualized in different ways. For example, there are long term and short term (proximal) goals: mastery and performance goals. In line with the research, in this study students were first asked to create a hierarchy of goals and then define their long and short term goals with specific and measurable features such as: goals for general life, for university years, for department classes and for YADYO. Most of the students wrote about the importance of English in their life and in their job as they were writing about the goals for YADYO. They all wanted to pass the exam and improve their English to get a better job and go abroad. Although all of them were aware of the importance of the exam and English language, some of them had received low marks in the achievement exam. I wanted to guide the students to organize their lives according to their needs by making weekly plans after I had noticed their low marks at the end of the second term.

Underneath these long and short term goals, students were also asked to make challenging but realistic weekly plans which would guide them to become self-regulated learners. Some of the students made their plans day by day whereas the others did not give any details about the day. While the students were making their decisions about the activities they were going to do, I tried not to interfere in their plans.

As can be seen from Table 2, the activities which students planned to do during the week varied. The plans and goals were not only related with studying but also there were social activities such as routines and free time activities (going to the cinema, having a football match with friends, sleeping all day long).
The role of personal goal setting in learning

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Table 2. Plan of the week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Goals and Activities during one week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1: I will revise the units in the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2: Practice the new vocabulary at least one hour every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3: Watch the TV series “The Flash”, “Walking Dead”, “Breaking Bad”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4: Since I have a football match with my friends today, I can’t study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5: On Monday, I am going to practice the tenses and make sentences with them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observing the action

Throughout the data collection, Turkish language was used in order to create a safe environment. Students were free to write their goals and talk about their plans in Turkish. I observed that this kind of experience was really interesting for them because most of my students didn’t know how to make plans, manage and regulate their time. This became very clear when I asked them about the activities they were planning to do that day or week. More surprisingly, during these talks in the classroom, they could not even think of any activities to do at the weekends. Despite being involved in many activities after school, they didn’t keep any track of them. They became enthusiastic about writing weekly schedules and they enjoyed the hour while they were making plans. On the other hand, they realised how disorganised and indecisive they were.

As a teacher-researcher, I tried to avoid interfering in the weekly schedules but I warned them about making their goals specific, challenging but realistic. Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003) suggest that it is much more motivating to set challenging but realistic goals because when you reach your goals, you feel good about accomplishing them. Although one of my students refused to write a weekly plan, the rest of the class was eager to participate in the action. When they noticed that they were not successful in accomplishing their goals, they felt ashamed and embarrassed. Nevertheless, they continued to make decisions about the activities they were going to do for the upcoming week.

Students’ reflection

From the beginning of the study, my students were willing to participate in this experience. At first, they reported that they had no idea about what to write in their weekly schedules although they had many responsibilities and social activities. Becoming aware of their goals and aims was the first step of this journey. As Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003) state, goals energize and guide behaviour. My students reported gaining more self-knowledge and experience while they were making decisions and setting their goals; they indicated they chose different activities which led them to feel satisfaction with their plans. When they were given the weekly schedules they had made before in order to check how successful they were in following their plans, they had many comments and revealed their feelings (positive and negative) as follows:

- I feel good and I trust myself because I have done the things I planned.
- I understood how indecisive I am.
- I am ashamed of myself because I didn’t accomplish the plans I had made.
- I am proud of myself when I ticked the activity.
- I really need this plan because the quiz is coming.

As the term progressed, they indicated that these plans helped them to be motivated and well-organised and also they began to create different strategies to accomplish both their academic and social goals. Some of them explained that they were making more decisions than they used to do and they really as revising only two units of the book in one day rather than all previous units which would be over-ambitious, vague and impossible to do. Then, they started to concentrate more on study skills and managing their time and also learned to adjust their schedules. They increased the time spent on academic activities and some gave up social activities.

On the way to becoming self-regulated learners, this goal setting helped them to improve their confidence and motivation towards studying. It was strange but they felt like they were studying while they were only making their weekly schedules. That planning hour made them feel good as they became more organized both in academic terms and social life. After seeing the achievement results at the end of term, some of the students were more satisfied and happy with their performance and became more aware of the importance of having a goal and making efforts to reach that goal.
wrote some activities just to tick them because they felt good when they saw the tick on the paper. Thanks to these ticks, they said they were more likely to perform well to achieve their goals.

Students need the motivation to use their knowledge and strategies for learning and, as mentioned before, self-regulated learners are responsible for their own learning and behaviour. In this respect, I asked my students to comment on this experience and also asked for further suggestions for the following years. Pintrich and Schunk (cited by Schunk, 2005, p. 88) state “self-regulated learners engage in self-evaluation when they compare progress against goals.” These self-evaluative judgments substantiate their self-efficacy for learning and motivate them to persist. These authors also highlight that better self-regulators have positive attributions during periods of self-reflection and I wanted to know my students’ perceptions about this kind of intervention. Most of the students agreed on the positive effect of setting goals and managing their time. More surprisingly, some of them said they became responsible not only for themselves but also for me - the teacher - as they had promised to study and practice. Additionally, they stated that they should have started making plans at the beginning of the term since this experience helped them to be more organized and well prepared long before the exam, as ‘distributed’ rather than ‘massed’ practice.

Looking into the future—my reflection

From the beginning of the term, I tried to motivate and guide my students to have goals in their academic life. Although they were aware of the importance of learning English both for themselves and their departments, most of them were not very good at managing their time and therefore they began to struggle in their first year of university. I wanted to encourage them to monitor their behaviour and regulate their time since they found it difficult making the transition from high school to university. In the steps I followed with the students, we came closer and built a good relationship which made them become more interested in learning. Our class time was designed to help them make their weekly plans and I as a teacher-researcher observed their behaviours and tried to motivate them to reach their goals. I always advised them to have a realistic weekly schedule to help them. Moreover, it was also pleasing that one of my students who was not willing to make plans since he had never done so before wanted to join this experience after realizing how disorganised he was in his life. Observing that everybody was willing to engage in the activity and maintain their motivation, I was really glad to guide my students and work with them. Thanks to this study, I had the chance to observe the students’ motivation and effort not only for their academic life but also for their social life. I decided to focus more on becoming a self-regulated learner who is responsible for learning in his own classes.

References


Main focus
This study intends to explore the impacts of using creative writing activities as a trigger for active participation in class activities. The idea behind this was to see whether implementing and integrating these kinds of activities could help the learners to discover their potential for using the language and to become active participants in class. I wanted to get out of routine and bring some refreshment to my class. Thus, I tried three different creative writing activities such as writing rhyming riddles, short poems about famous characters and short stories by peer completion. After each practice, I got written feedback from the students about the activities. At the same time, I made some observations to find out how this intervention caused a change in my class and students.

Background
One of the most significant problems I was facing while teaching my prep class students is that my students were getting bored easily and they were not active participants in the classes although they had the potential to be. Even though they attended the classes, they did not participate in the lessons and also seemed to be looking for ways of skipping class. Sometimes I felt as if I was just pushing them. However, after I had in-class discussions with my students about the situation and an informal interview with my colleague who was teaching the same class, I concluded that there were some reasons which prevented our students becoming active participants. The first was that some of them lacked interest to learn any foreign languages. Secondly, most of them had misconceptions about learning the English language. I focused on the second reason as it was more challenging and it was key for raising
Using creative writing activities as a trigger for active participation

Cemile Buğra

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learners’ interests in learning English. So, if that reason could be overcome, the other might be overcome as well. The purpose of my study was to increase my students’ active participation in the classes and promote their participation by implementing and integrating new activities.

So, what would happen to my students’ participation when I implemented creative writing activities as group work or pairwork in my classes?

Research focus

Participants

The study was conducted in the School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University. There were 24 students in my class, 6 girls and 18 boys, from different departments. I had four hours a week with this class. When the study commenced, I had been teaching my students for 3 months and they were at pre-intermediate level.

Data collection tools

1) Teacher journal entries supported with audio and video recordings for further observation
2) Informal interviews with the students and colleagues who teach the same class
3) Teacher assessments and attendance
4) At the end of each incorporated activity, I gathered students’ feedback through sentence completion tasks. Students completed the following:
   a) I liked the activity because ……………………………………
   b) I did not like the activity because ……………………………....
   c) The activity was useful for me because ……………..…………..
   d) The activity was not useful for me because …………….………

Critical aspects

Action plan

I will explain the reasons why I chose creative writing activities with the help of the literature. According to Blagg (1991), creativity is designed to bring new, different and unexpected responses to an educational situation and enhances fluency, flexibility, and originality in students. Furthermore, creative activities motivate students to work together to develop social and interpersonal skills. Grainger et al. (2005, p.14) believe that “creativity encompasses both individual and collaborative activities”. We should use our learners’ creativity in the process of learning and teaching.

Writing is one of the most important productive skills and there is a new movement called writing-to-learn which accepts writing as a tool to teach or learn a topic. The supporters of the movement assert that writing increases student engagement with course materials and content, and increases retention of information and depth of understanding (Zinsser, 1998). For this reason, I prefer using writing activities.

When it comes to creative writing, this “is both a way of knowing as well as a way of knowledge creation” (Ostrom, 2012, p. 84). I believe that being able to write in the target language is proof of meaningful learning. Writing can be difficult sometimes, but if the conditions are proper, it is not that demanding. However, creative writing helps students explore the target language and gets them to use the language items they have already learned for reinforcement processes. Learners are generally used to writing tasks or guided activities. Nonetheless, creative writing gives them a chance of playing with the words, benefiting from discovery, experimentation, freedom, responsibility, and independence. Thus, I am in favour of using creative writing activities to challenge their misconceptions about using the target language. Moreover, I strongly believe that producing the target language promotes self-motivation and assists learners to take risks while exploring the language. Harmer (2007) states that when a teacher designs imaginative writing tasks, learners work harder than usual to produce better language.

Besides, I wanted my students to work as a group or in pairs as I wanted to create a collaborative and cooperative learning environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), students are capable of performing at higher levels when asked to work in collaborative situations than when asked to work individually. Group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience contributes positively to the learning process. That is why I am in favour of implementing these activities cooperatively and collaboratively.

Lastly, course books play a great role in language teaching. Course books involve many different activities to develop receptive and productive skills.
However, our students sometimes think that the course book is repetitive, boring and useless. Even though they make use of it frequently, they want to get out of routine and try something unusual in the learning process. According to Harmer (2007), it may be relatively easy for students to be motivated; however, the challenge is sustaining that motivation.

All in all, as a teacher, my goal was to be able to create conditions which served to support creativity in learning. To reach this goal, I needed to take extra steps to encourage quiet and reluctant students to be more active participants in the process.

**The Activities I used**

According to Harmer (2007), creative writing suggests imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, stories and plays which promote effective learning through self-discovery. Taking into consideration all these, I arranged some creative activities which are parallel to the subjects in our course book.

1) **Writing rhyming riddles with adjectives and adverbs**

The students had learned adjectives and adverbs before and engaged in exercises to improve themselves. For our first activity, first I described it to my students with examples on the board. Then, we started the process with brainstorming. I gave samples of rhyming adjectives and adverbs, and then all the students thought about other adjectives and adverbs, and sometimes they checked their dictionaries. Sometimes, they remembered some rhyming nouns, verbs but I warned them we were looking for just adjectives and adverbs. Unconsciously, they learned that there were some suffixes and prefixes while categorizing the rhyming words. With the help of brainstorming, their awareness of word forms was raised and they realized the differences. We wrote many rhyming adjectives and adverbs on the board. Also, I wrote some examples of rhyming riddles and short poems on the board from real students’ work. We designed the classroom for group work, with three or four students per group. I organized their groups and they started to write their riddles. At the end of the activity, I checked their products one by one and made some corrections on the paper and they rewrote their products for presentation to the whole class.

**Examples from students’ own writing:**

| My kitchen is luxurious, |
| My meals are delicious, |
| Knives are very dangerous, |
| So I feel nervous. |

| My heart is careful, |
| Because she is beautiful, |
| When she is not with me, |
| The day is awful. |

2) **Writing short poems about famous characters**

We studied famous characters and their real lives in our course book. I wanted my students to write short poems about famous characters on TV which describe their appearances, characteristics or their roles in TV series. Some of my students wrote poems about Hürem and Suleyman who are famous characters in one of the popular Turkish TV series. I wrote those poems on the board and I wanted them to write new poems as a reaction to the poems written on the board. And some students wrote poems about other famous characters while some of them wrote reactions to the old ones.

**Examples from students’ own writing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hürem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She is very famous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But she isn't very generous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be careful! I am serious,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her ego is enormous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is nervous and dangerous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a reaction to the poem “Hürem”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah! She is very nervous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at yourself! You are jealous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe she can be dangerous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But she is very famous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kuşum Aydan (Singer and TV presenter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He is really active,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But he isn't attractive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His mother is very passive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His house is very expensive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) Writing a short story by peer completion

We studied a short story in our course book and the students learned the usage of some conjunctions in the story and phases of it. Later on that week, I wanted my students to write their own short stories with their partners. First of all, I described the activity by drawing two papers on the board. I wrote two students’ names on the papers. Then, I wrote ‘beginning’ on the first half of the paper and ‘ending’ on the second half of the paper. And I wanted my students to start a story and after writing at least five sentences, I wanted them to change the papers with their partners. After that, I wanted them to read the beginning of the story carefully and complete their partner’s story with at least five sentences. We remembered the conjunctions and I explained them again on the board. When I finished explanations and answered their questions about the activity, they started to write. I went to each pair and helped them whenever they needed assistance. As soon as they completed their stories, I corrected their mistakes and they rewrote their stories. When everybody finished the activity, I collected the papers and handed out the stories so that the students could read them and give feedback to their friends. Also, I read all the stories one by one. I let my students who wrote the best read their creative stories in front of the class. At the end of the activity, they did lots of repetition and they created short stories by completing each other’s ideas.

They told me that they really liked the idea of completing their partner’s story as it was an interesting way of exploring their work, which turned out to be something different from what they imagined. When they finished the story writing, they took back their papers and read them excitedly to learn the end of their stories. I was also really excited to read their creative stories. There were some original ideas. I was very happy to see that most of them produced something original which showed their creativity.

Students’ reflections

Student A: "I liked it because I never believed I could write a poem, but now I believe I can."

Student B: "I liked it because it is easy to write in English :)

Student C: "It is useful. My English is very good, but I can’t write well :( but it is good to try."

Student D: "I liked it because writing is enjoyable today."

Student E: "I like it. Now, I can write a poem for my love :)))"

Student F: "It is useful because nothing is impossible, even learning English."

Student G: "It was useful because it was a good experience to try writing riddles and poems in English."

My reflection

When I started to do my action research, I had been teaching my students for three months. After six weeks, I could see some positive effects of activities we had done in class. When I checked the attendance list, I realized that more students attended than before. They skipped the classes less than before. The active participation of my students was apparently raised. I learned more about my students in terms of recognizing their capacity, potential, background, and their language development. Students explored themselves through practicing the language they had learned and working in groups. They saw the power of working together to create something which belonged to them. They realized that they could produce some real language in English on their own without any limitations as we practiced creative activities. While carrying out the activities, I also learned different tips to improve the activities for the better. As I saw the effectiveness of these activities, I wanted to implement more creative activities so that I could sustain my students’ motivation.

References


Main focus

This study emerged from my need to give students more responsibilities during their learning process. In order to help them to take care of their learning, I observed my students and my classroom practices. In addition, I consulted my colleagues to get ideas about their teaching practices. During this process, I had the notion that maybe I was blocking students' autonomy by not giving them enough time, opportunity and tolerance. I decided to make changes in my classroom performance to enable students to become more autonomous learners. I revisited my teaching strategies and classroom instructions, I revised some of my classroom policies, and more importantly, I tried to get used to my new teaching philosophy, because it was not easy to make changes as to who you are as a teacher. This study focuses on how small changes in your classroom practices may encourage your students to take more responsibilities and lessen your burden as a teacher.

Background

Wiemer (2002, cited in Brown, 2009, p. 118), states that “most college students today are the antithesis of autonomous, independent, self-regulating learners, and I believe that faculty has had a hand in making them so”. Wiemer indicates that as a consequence we need to take action. This was the starting point of my action research journey. I have always envied the students who are self-disciplined and eager to learn a language and the students who are aware of the requirements and the obstacles of learning a language and prepare themselves accordingly. Then I started to inquire about the underlying reasons. I observed my classes and myself for a while to identify a problem. Most of the time, I realized I was complaining about the students being reluctant to...
do an in-class activity (individual or pair work activities), being dependent on
the teacher as the source of facts or having problems understanding even the
basic instructions and being easily confused by them. I was not happy with
the picture that I saw in the class. Furthermore, I was not happy with myself,
either. I knew that at some point I had been over-teaching.

Keeping these problems about my teaching in mind, I decided to make
changes in my classroom performance to enable students to become more
autonomous learners. I drew a picture about what kind of students I wanted
them to be. I wanted them to be autonomous learners, meaning I wanted them
to transfer their knowledge into a new topic and construct it in their minds. I
wanted them to be less reliant on me, but more cooperative with their peers.
I wanted them to give feedback to each other’s projects. I wanted them to ask
questions to each other, which would lessen my talking time while increasing
theirs. I wanted them to figure out what was important for them to learn and
focus on that area as homework. I wanted them to take responsibility for their
own learning.

Research focus
I conducted the study with a total of 100 A2-level students in Çukurova Uni-
versity, School of Foreign Languages. There were five different classes at the
same proficiency level. I had 4 hours of lessons with each class in a week. I used
observation and field notes to gather data in the classrooms. I started to adopt
different techniques to foster autonomy in the classroom at the beginning of
the second term.

Presenting the new topic
After observing the lessons, I listed some of the problems that I wanted to
overcome in the classroom to encourage them to be more autonomous. To
start with, I tried to change my practice while I was presenting a new topic. I
observed that I was giving all the necessary information they needed without
giving them a chance to figure out on their own. It was a hard step to take;
Cortazzi and Jin (1996, cited in Yan, 2012, p. 557) have stated that teachers
have a traditional role as “an unquestionable knowledge-giver.” I used more
contextualized activities to present the language and then followed these with
the activities that required them to compare and deduct the language struc-
tures themselves. In order to help them, I allowed them to walk around the
classroom and ask questions to each other. I specifically remember one reac-
tion of a student at the end of a lesson complaining about how tired she was,
which made me smile, because instead of me, they were doing most of the
learning.

Peer learning
One of my goals was to teach students to depend on their friends in the class-
room. I did not want them to see me as the only source of facts, instead, I
would love them to ask questions to each other and discover together. Boud,
Cohen & Sampson (1999) refer to peer learning as “the use of teaching and
learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without
the immediate intervention of a teacher” (p. 413). To be able to do this, I had
to give up answering every question they asked, and then direct them to ask
their friends first. I increased the number of group work and pair work activi-
ties to promote this behavior. I let them use technological devices to find out
the answer. Every time they asked me a question, my first reaction was to ask,
“Did you ask your partner?” I was glad to see many of the questions were an-
swered by their partners and even little arguments about why the first partner
had not asked the other before. Once students got used to this drill, the num-
ber of questions coming to me from them decreased. Besides, I encouraged
them to walk around and ask the other pairs or groups to find out the answers,
which was even more enjoyable. Students were asking questions to each other
shouting in the classroom regardless of where they were sitting, and at that
moment, I had a feeling that they were a team and trying to prove themselves
to their teachers. They wanted to show me that they did not need my help to
finish that activity, because whenever I interrupted them to ask if they had any
problems, they said, “we got it!”

Giving instructions & asking questions
I have always criticized myself in the lessons while giving instructions. I was
not giving clear and short instructions to be sure that they understood every-
thing clearly. As Yan (2012) indicates, the success of an activity whether it is
group work or a specific role-play depends on good organization and on the students knowing exactly what they will do. Bearing this in my mind, I was ready to make sacrifices about lesson time. Then, I realized that I was repeating myself more than necessary because my students knew that I was going to give every instruction repeatedly. Then I started to write my instructions on the board using short phrases and if they needed to ask any questions, I asked them to read the board and then ask their friends. I made sure that I was giving the instructions orally for the first time in a clear and understandable way. Like other changes, this took time as well. Some of them got frustrated as I did not repeat myself, and turned to their friends, which was also one of my targets, therefore I was pleased to see their communication. Meanwhile, I was constantly communicating with them. I explained why I did not want to repeat myself. They seemed to understand that asking the same question continually was not fair to the teacher.

Homework

Homework has always been a controversial topic for me. I have never been in favor of checking the homework in the class. As Cooper (1989, p. 86) specified, homework is “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours”. For that reason, I did not want to spend my limited class hour checking homework of 17-year-old teenagers at college. However, as I did not have self-disciplined and responsible students, I needed to encourage them to engage themselves with English on a regular basis. I changed my homework style. Instead of assigning them some worksheet and workbook pages, I gave them choices. I prepared them with a list of things that they could do outside the classroom to practice English such as finding a famous saying, song, poem, advertisement, short story or movie regarding the topic we had studied that day or preparing something original. They were allowed to use any database as long as their materials were relevant. This kind of assignment was based on voluntariness. I provided them with a list of activities they could do outside, whether they did or not was their responsibility. Actually, I was more optimistic about this method at the beginning, but they were not as active participating as I had hoped. Still, I did not spend my time in the class checking their homework. I distributed each activity with its answer key and in case they needed to ask any questions I invited them to my office in my office hours. In that way, I tried to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. They needed to do extra activities not because I dictated them, but because they needed to improve their English. Additionally, while assigning homework, I reminded them to choose an activity they wanted. If they thought they did not need any vocabulary activities, they might skip that part and continue with a more important part for themselves.

Activities used in the classroom

This has been the most challenging adaptation for me for it consumed most of my time. However, I managed to compensate my lost time on an activity with the other practical solutions. First of all, I eliminated all the mechanical exercises in the classroom, which does not necessarily mean that I ignored their need for these exercises. I saved these activities for after school. I provided them with plenty of activities that they can study after school. However, in the classroom, I mostly focused on contextualized, task based activities requiring them to be in pairs or groups. According to Holec (2001, cited in Yan, 2012, p. 557) autonomy is “the ability to take change of one’s own learning” and I believe that this taught them to take some responsibility outside the school. They had to figure out in which areas they needed practice and reinforced those areas on their own. I always reminded them that they could visit me in my office hours or after lessons when they needed extra help. Students needed some time to get used to this practice as they were used to being told everything first hand, so they didn’t need to make decisions about their learning. After the first quiz, when some of my students failed and complained, I asked them a few questions to raise awareness. Did you participate in the group activities? Did you do extra exercises outside the school? Did you seek help when you had problems understanding the topic? Indirectly, I tried to show them that they did not make necessary efforts to learn.

Looking into the future

In this research, I have started something I have always meant to do. In this respect, it was a turning point in my classroom practices. As the title suggests, these were small steps to be taken, however, the effects were much greater than I expected. I went over my teaching techniques, pointed out where I was mak-
ing mistakes and then focused on creating a classroom environment where students were more self-disciplined and responsible.

Keeping in mind that change takes time, I was patient with all my students. They did not know that they were going through such a challenging process, which made the transition easier.

The first thing that I learnt is to be consistent with what I am doing. I have to be self-disciplined to be a model for my students. I planned every step beforehand.

I focused on addressing “over-teaching.” My concept of a “good teacher” has changed dramatically. Until engaging in this study, I was a teacher who was mothering and over-teaching. I could not take the risk of doing too little for my students. Instead, I chose to over-teach them. Then, I finally admitted that I did not let them take as many responsibilities as I wanted them to. A good teacher does not provide everything her students need, instead, she is responsible for guiding them to find on their own.

References


Main focus

The main focus of this action research study was to investigate and evaluate the implementation of a peer-based collaborative learning tool “The Guy next to me” in a higher education EFL classroom to help the students change their negative attitudes towards learning English. 16 EFL students at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL), Çukurova University in Turkey, participated in the study. The data were collected through Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire, the teacher’s journal entries, students’ learning logs, individual interviews with students and records of students’ attendance and the teacher’s assessments. The study found that there was a promising change in the negative attitudes of the students towards learning English after the eight weeks of implementation of the tool. Students’ and teacher’s reflections also confirmed that the students benefited from “the Guy next to me” in terms of improving their English, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, collaboration, trust, taking responsibility for their own learning and reflection.

Background

Considering what my teaching experience of different classes has added to my knowledge, I believe students differ in their motivation towards learning a foreign language and therefore display different attitudes in class, as most of my colleagues would agree. Consequently, as a language instructor who has been teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at SFL for more than 20 years, I definitely believe that an EFL learner’s motivation is affected by their attitudes towards learning the language or vice versa. Therefore, in my view the encouragement of students’ positive attitudes towards learning English in an EFL class requires us as teachers to observe our classrooms and stu-
The effect of study partners on developing positive attitudes for learning English

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan

In this way, we have the chance to understand the causes of our students’ misbehaviors and the reasons why they lack motivation towards learning. In this respect, I agree with Ellis (1994), cited in Lennartsson (2008, p. 8), who asserts “negative attitudes can impede language learning since you get these attitudes when you are not interested or have difficulties with the teacher”. The good news is those kind of negative attitudes can change into positive ones if the students realize what a good advantage it is to know that language (Lennartsson, 2008) and have a strong will to learn (Ellis, 1994).

At the beginning of the school year when I was assigned to teach this class and met my new students, honestly, I felt a bit disappointed not to have the most motivated and well-behaving students. They were a group of 16 students who I gathered were not fully aware of why they were in the class and what they were doing. I realized that nearly all students lacked self-discipline and self-motivation to learn English. Most of them considered learning English as a very difficult goal which is almost impossible to achieve. They had a tendency to attend the lessons irregularly, they were shy and anxious about taking part in classroom activities, especially speaking activities when they might take risks speaking in front of their classmates, mispronounce words and make mistakes. The class also lacked dynamics for productive teaching and learning. It didn’t seem possible to help them to learn a foreign language.

Moreover, the medium of instruction in their departments was Turkish and for them learning English was not compulsory. According to the program, they had 20 hours of English to learn weekly, ten of which fell to my teaching load. Their other teacher was also teaching this class for 10 hours. However, needless to say, he sounded a bit burned-out about this group of students due to his unsatisfactory experience from the previous years. Since it was my first time teaching this group of students, I wanted to live my own experience and try my best. Unfortunately, my teaching partner seemed right. The students looked disinterested, had no class materials, were shy, aimless, and I sensed they lacked enthusiasm towards being in class let alone learning English. I wanted to enjoy my teaching and their learning.

Research focus

Attitude is considered to be an essential factor that influences language performance (Visser, 2008); language learning shouldn’t be approached as a purely academic phenomenon. This is because the nature of language learning has psychological and social aspects and depends primarily on the learners’ motivation and attitude to learn the target language (Padwick, 2010). According to Gardner (1985), attitudes are components of motivation in language learning. In his view, “motivation … refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (p. 10). Through her study, Karahan (2007) justifies this idea and asserts that “positive language attitudes let learners have positive orientations towards learning English” (p. 84). Additionally, attitudes do not remain static; they can be changed through the learning process such as by using the appropriate materials and teaching techniques (Ghazali, 2008) and factors like better teaching strategies and a positive classroom and social environment drastically reduce negative attitudes (Choy, 2002).

So, thinking about the challenges I observed in my class as I mentioned above, I intended to help my students to change their negative attitudes towards learning English and become more enthusiastic learners while learning English in my classes. To do this, I decided to incorporate ’The Guy next to me’ technique as a teaching tool into our classroom practice, as described below.

Research Question

What happens to my students’ negative attitudes towards learning English when I implement ’The Guy next to me’ as a teaching tool in my classroom?

Critical aspects

Action Plan

To have a clearer picture of my problem, first I decided to observe individual students and the whole class while teaching them. Meanwhile, I asked the students to write personal letters to me telling about their personalities, likes, dislikes, feelings about learning a language to know them better. To diagnose what I felt regarding my challenge about students’ attitudes towards learning a foreign language, I found a good scale on the internet immediately and translated it into Turkish. On one of those days, while I was watching a film on DVD, ’The Lucky One’ (2012), I was inspired by a scene, actually, where two characters in the film were talking.
Logan: What if I screw up?

Ben: I need you to be the guy next to me. We watch each other’s backs. You don’t worry about yourself. You think about the guy next to you.

The guy next to me

Logan and Ben were two people trying to help each other. So, while developing the tool I aimed to make use of collaborative, mainly peer learning principles. My students would call each other ‘study partner’. I set some ground rules for participation, contribution, assessment and asked my students kindly to attend to those rules. I made sure that students knew and understood what they should be doing for each other. Moreover, I revised how to develop skills they need to succeed in doing pair work activities, self-reflection, mainly how to write in their learning logs, self and peer assessment to evaluate their own evaluations. I assigned the pairs randomly. I gave them a project title weekly, whose content would cover the grammar and vocabulary items they learnt that week. They were also expected to present their study in class in five minutes each week and hand in their self and peer evaluations. They were assessed both on their partner’s performance and their own and got a classroom participation grade. Since the pairs were responsible for each other’s progress in learning English, they did their best to help their partners’ improvement.

Implementation of the Action

It took 8 weeks to set the right scene to start implementing ‘The Guy next to me’ - my action - of this research. During this time;

- I made use of the personal letters I asked the students to write to me, to know and understand them better, kept on observing the students especially in terms of the negative attitudes they display in class concerning learning English during the time we spent in the classroom,
- I handed out a Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (n.d.) to diagnose their attitudes towards learning language, asked my students to answer the questions sincerely, evaluated the results and tried to plan and teach my lessons accordingly,
- I tried to ensure my genuine interest in their learning motivation by organizing a classroom party, spending extra time for tea/coffee together in the school yard, in my office, offering help and being available whenever they asked, opening a class page on Facebook and asking for their contributions,
- I tried to raise my students’ awareness about the advantages of knowing an international language like English both for their personal and future professional lives by talking to them as a class and in person, told them about my personal experiences and showed them You Tube videos of England, America as if we were visiting those countries as a class, asking them how it would feel and got their ideas.
Observing the Action

Results: Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire

Pre and post-study questionnaire results indicated a positive change concerning language attitudes in terms of self-image, inhibition, risk-taking, ego permeability and tolerance of ambiguity after the eight-week implementation of the tool 'The Guy next to me' (see Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Attitudes Questionnaire Pre-test/Post-test Results (64-48=High, 47-36=Above Average, 35-16=Average, 15-0=Low)

Students' Learning Logs

The content analysis of students' reflections in the logs revealed the following themes related to their gains and concerns by the use of this tool in classroom practice.

Gains: self-esteem (6), empathy (4), fun (8), opportunity to practice English outside class (4), relationship with classmates (6), learning about one's weaknesses & strengths (3), chance for improvement (3), collaboration for better learning (5), autonomy (6), awareness raising (4), improvement in speaking and writing skills (5), motivation (6).

Concerns: Presentations are anxiety-provoking (3), no sufficient and/or common time to meet my partner outside the class (4), totally different personalities (3), I don't like my study partner (2).

A Sample Learning Log

Following is an example of a learning log filled in by Gökçe, a student in class 203, for self-reflection related to her experience in 'The Guy next to me' (see Figure 2).

We prepared a power point presentation of our topic and presented in class with my partner.

Since it was my first presentation experience I was nervous and scared, however I had my partner to turn to and it all ended well.

When I realized that something was going wrong, I could tell it to my partner as my partner was also very keen to do the best he can. Of course there were things that I couldn’t tell, still they weren’t the kind of things that would hinder our success.

I learnt to take the responsibility of my partner as well as myself knowing that we’ll get the same grades.

I was a bit selfish at the beginning, then we studied together more, collaborated and consulted each other. When we behaved in a more consistent way, we did good things.

I succeeded in cooperating with my partner. I exchanged ideas with my partner.

This technique helped me improve my speaking skills. I had rehearsals for my presentations. For reading, I often used the dictionary and improved my vocabulary.

We compensated for each other’s mistakes with my partner. We are going to practice more.

I learnt how to organize and supervise my partner while and for studying together.

This practice was my first presentation experience. Besides, I gained experience in doing collaborative tasks and sharing responsibility.
My Assessments and Attendance

During the eight weeks when the tool was implemented, the students were assessed both for their partner’s and their own performance concerning their preparation and the presentation of the project. Thus their grades, with classroom participation assessed with the help of ‘The Guy next to me’ were like awards celebrating the quality and quantity of their learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). As their teacher, I spent special effort to ensure that their presentations were held in a respectful, caring and safe classroom atmosphere where each student would feel listened to in comfort and confidence. There was a considerable increase in students’ attendance rates in the second block, the time we implemented the tool, when compared to students’ attendance in the first block of the program.

Looking into the future

It’s surely a dream of every EFL teacher to have a class full of successful language learners who are well-behaved, eager to learn, motivated and have positive attitudes towards learning a language. Nevertheless, this idea sounded a bit utopian to me even at the time when I was a student at the faculty of education to become an EFL teacher. Instead, I have always believed that good students need good teachers who are always ready to help their students with their best intentions as human beings and are equipped with the best tools to help them learn in the most effective way possible. ‘The Guy next to me’ was such a tool which was born out of my good intentions as an EFL instructor as I aimed to overcome a challenging barrier to vault for successful teaching and learning in my English classroom. That barrier was called ‘negative language learning attitudes towards learning English’, as I diagnosed it. The tool which was based on collaborative peer learning principles worked well as a cure in general with various advantageous learning outcomes. Some of these outcomes as I see them were:

- My students’ speaking fluency and writing accuracy improved.
- The dynamics of the class improved and we started to have more fun in the lessons, students seem to enjoy my lessons more and learnt more effectively,
- Motivation towards learning increased and the students started to show a genuine interest in what was taught in the lessons,
- My students started to take charge of their own learning and became more autonomous learners,
- My students became less anxious and the number of volunteer students who raised their hands to participate in classroom activities increased,
- My students started to develop a more respectful and trusting attitude towards one another, thus they listened to their classmates more attentively during the lessons when one of them started to talk.

On the other hand there were some difficulties I encountered during the implementation of ‘the Guy next to me’. Some students resisted the idea of having a study partner or my random selection of these. I continuously had talks with the students to raise their awareness related to the objectives of the tool concerning the partners’ equal participation and contribution to the preparation and presentation processes of their projects. I had to monitor their progress continuously, if they had met their partners regularly or they had had any other problems to solve that might block their learning together. I was like a referee who was conducting a match not only to have quality learning, but also to ensure the ongoing process was lived fairly in an effective, productive and beneficial way by my students. It could be time consuming for me and I carried some extra load as the teacher to check what they had done so far, to facilitate their learning process as study partners especially at the beginning of the implementation period. However, all in all, I believe the benefits of the tool far outweighed the difficulties encountered.

References


Skills Development
Background to the research

The Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) at Atilim University, a private university located in the central part of Turkey, aims to support undergraduate students in their academic studies and future careers by providing necessary English language skills and knowledge. The department offers five compulsory courses to students studying at the departments whose medium of instruction is English. ENG 201 Advanced Communication Skills, which is compulsory for sophomore students, is one of these courses. The course aims to provide them with the skills to analyse situations or texts critically and take personal stands and express their viewpoints in a persuasive way. To achieve these, we get the students to participate in critical reading activities through various texts, take part in discussions stating their ideas on a specific situation or topic, put forward arguments on given issues in a critical way, study the steps to writing argumentative essays and, in the end, produce their argumentative essays.

ENG 201 has three significant components, which are closely interdependent: speaking (discussion of controversial issues), reading (for comprehension and approaching written texts critically), and writing (evaluating different sides and arguing for one of them). In a way, reading functions as input and a ground for building other activities. However, it was observed that the students had difficulty either doing assigned readings or reaching a satisfactory level in evaluating texts. Therefore, we determined to find a way to make them read texts outside the class and given them a purpose for doing so. As a result, we decided to integrate an assessed extensive reading component to the course. The present study investigated how this application was received by the students and instructors.

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), extensive reading refers to “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is
read” (p.193). Extensive reading is intuitively considered to be plausible by teachers since it is believed to have a beneficial impact on language proficiency (Macalister, 2008). More specifically, research into the influence of extensive reading on several aspects has shown that it has a potential to improve lexical and grammatical knowledge, enhancing reading comprehension and speed, raising examination performance, develop good reading habits, and encourage a positive attitude towards reading in a second language (L2) (Macalister, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

For university students, reading has additional significance since they have to cope with large amounts of texts in a short time. However, in order to achieve this, many skills, such as automatic word recognition, skilled grammatical processing, and formation of basic meaning proposition units, are required, and these skills are developed through implicit learning, which is viewed as “central to reading fluency and reading comprehension” (Grabe, 2010, p.73). Extensive reading can facilitate implicit learning and fluency by providing exposure to the language and processing tasks repeatedly over time. In short, if a certain level of automaticity is expected from learners, it is “developed through extensive practice” (Anderson, 2014, p.173). Therefore, extensive reading has great pedagogical importance (Grabe, 2010, p.73).

Another reason why extensive reading is essential for university students is that in this way they can acquire large amounts of vocabulary. According to Macalister:

As there are so many thousands of words a learner needs to ‘know’, particularly if the learner intends to pursue a course of academic study, it is clearly impossible for every word to be ‘taught’ in the classroom. Thus, most practitioners expect that vocabulary will be acquired incidentally during extensive reading. (2008, p.248)

ENG201 is only 3 hours a week and dealing with students who show up without having read the assigned materials was an issue commonly complained about by the instructors. They had some difficulties in getting the students to engage with the discussions they had before writing practice because most students tended to come to class without having read the assigned material. Having the benefits of extensive reading in mind, some alterations have been made in the course by changing the course book and incorporating a new practice called Extensive Reading Studies (ERS) into the curriculum. First, a new course book, namely Q: Skills for Success by Oxford University, was chosen to be studied throughout the semester. It was thought to be a suitable one regarding the level, issues explored in each unit and the number and length of texts available. There are 20 texts in the course book and 8 of them were used in class for intensive reading and 8 were assigned for ERS. Students were supposed to read 13 reading texts throughout the semester, and they were required to have read 8 of them for ERS purposes. In every mini-ERS test conducted in closed book style, the students were asked 1 or 2 comprehension questions that aimed to check overall comprehension. Each test was given at the beginning of class and the time allocated was 5 minutes. At the end of the semester, students could accumulate a total of 5 points through these studies. By doing so, it was assumed that students would come to class having read the material. This would not only help them to enrich their vocabulary and language repertoire by increasing their level of exposure to the language but also foster improved reading and writing skills.

Throughout the semester, both the students and instructors had negative and positive reflections about this new practice. It was assumed that a thorough analysis of the procedure would provide direct, specific and reliable data and be of great help while basing our decisions about the nature and implementation of the practice and the course curriculum in the upcoming terms.

**Methods**

As mentioned above, this study is aimed at revealing the attitudes of the students and the instructors toward the application of a new assessment method “Extensive Reading Studies” in our context. Therefore, we set out to conduct a mixed-type research to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of students towards extensive reading studies?
2. What are the attitudes of instructors towards extensive reading studies?

In order to answer these research questions, the data was collected from 47 students, whose demographic information can be found in Appendix 1,
via a questionnaire (Appendix 2), which was applied to 47 students and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 3 for questions) scheduled with 4 instructors.

The faculties of the students who participated in this study were varied: engineering, management, arts and sciences etc. Their ages ranged between 19 and 25. The majority of them were taking ENG 201 for the first time, and some were retaking the course. As seen in Appendix 1, about 40% of the students scored 60 on the Proficiency Exam administered by the Preparatory School, and 37.5% of them received a score between 61 and 70, whereas the rest scored between 71 and 90. Therefore, it can be said that most of them had an average level of proficiency in English. As for their self-reported competencies, more than 55% of the students considered that their vocabulary, grammar and reading competencies were at a moderate level. However, interestingly, 15.2% of the students presumed their reading competency was weak, while this percentage is 8.7 for grammar competency and 6.5 for vocabulary competency.

Five instructors volunteered to take part in the interviews and all of them were female, with at least 10 years of teaching experience and with an age range of 30-47. However, their experience at Atılım University differed and ranged between 2 and 6 years. Two of them were holding a BA degree from English Language and Literature, one Linguistics, and one ELT department. All were graduates of MA programs in different departments. All the instructors interviewed either taught ENG201 during the fall term of 2014-215 for the first time, or had already done so for a few years.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) consisted of three parts:
1. Personal data about students
2. A 30-item Likert-type scale (consisting of two sub-scales: one for general attitudes toward reading and one for attitudes towards ERS)
3. Two open-ended questions

In the analyses of the quantitative data from the questionnaire, SPSS Version 20.0 was used to calculate the frequencies and other descriptive data and run correlation analyses. In order to get the results based on the open-ended questions, a content analysis was conducted with an inductive approach.

To obtain data about the attitudes of the instructors, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The aim was to allow the instructors to reflect on and clarify what was important to them about the procedure. Further explanation of the answers contributed to the accuracy and triangulation of the data collected and the interview dates were scheduled for the times they were available. During the interviews, the instructors were asked 5 questions (see Appendix 3) and when further elaboration was necessary, they were asked more questions. Then, their answers were noted and the most common answers were classified and referred to in the analysis and discussion stage.

Results & learning as teachers and researchers

The main results we attained from our research are as follows:

The data obtained from the Likert-type scale were utilized to calculate frequency of each item in the questionnaire and run correlation analyses and independent t-tests. According to the results of the frequency analysis, as can be seen in Table 1 below, the majority of the students thought that reading in English was necessary, motivating, and enjoyable based on the results for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, and 14. In these items, the number of students who agreed and strongly agreed with each statement ranges between 31 and 41 out of 47 students.

The data, although it reflects intrinsic motivation and enjoyment for reading, demonstrate traces of extrinsic motivation when the results for item 5 (N=41), 8 (N=37) and 13 (N=40) are considered. In addition, a large group of students (N=24) thought that reading in English was boring, whereas 13 were undecided about this. Also, 16 students believed that it was tiring and 20 were not sure about it. These results may raise doubts about the students’ positive attitudes towards reading, yet they do not compare to the results for other items mentioned above, which may imply that reading is viewed as a necessity, but not a favorable one. As a result, the attitudes of our students towards reading were positive on the whole, and they were aware of its importance for their language proficiency, intellectual development and future careers. However, they also think that it is a boring and perhaps (because of the number of undecided students) a tiring activity.
As for the data from the second part of the questionnaire, it was revealed that there were several important points about the attitudes of the students towards ERS. As can be seen in Table 2, although the responses to most items (e.g. 2-12, 14, 15) indicated a satisfaction with the ERS, there was considerable uncertainty with a few items (1 & 13) and relatively less uncertainty with some other items (e.g. 2, 3, 5, 12, 13). Thus, the second part of the questionnaire points to some concerns on the part of the students, though they have found ERS helpful.

Table 1. Frequency analysis of the attitude scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To become proficient in English, I should read in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading English has positive effects on my intellectual development.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading English is not troublesome if I do more practice.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel good if I read in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reading English is useful for my future.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel worried when there is unknown vocabulary in the text.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I can acquire vocabulary if I read in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reading English is useful to be successful in academic environment.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel relaxed if I read in English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I can develop reading ability if I read in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Reading English is boring.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I get tired when I read in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Reading English is useful to get a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Reading English is enjoyable.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I get to know about different values if I read in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Frequency analysis of the ERS evaluation scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The ERS texts were easy to comprehend.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The topics of ERS texts were interesting.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The instructor provided guidance about the ERS throughout the semester.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The ERS helped me to improve my reading skills.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think the ERS should be integrated into the curriculum of other English courses as well.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The amount of ERS homework was suitable for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The ERS helped me to increase my reading speed.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The ERS helped me to read more fluently.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The level of ERS texts was appropriate.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The ERS texts helped me to build up my knowledge of vocabulary.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The ERS texts helped me to build up my knowledge of grammar.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The questions on the ERS tests were easy to understand.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The questions on the ERS tests did not require us to provide too specific answers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I liked all the procedure of the ERS.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Overall I believe the ERS contributed to my language learning.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the data from the second part of the questionnaire, it was revealed that there were several important points about the attitudes of the students towards ERS. As can be seen in Table 2, although the responses to most items (e.g. 2-12, 14, 15) indicated a satisfaction with the ERS, there was considerable uncertainty with a few items (1 & 13) and relatively less uncertainty with some other items (e.g. 2, 3, 5, 12, 13). Thus, the second part of the questionnaire points to some concerns on the part of the students, though they have found ERS helpful.
of the texts on the ERS, whereas 18 students (15+3) agreed that they were easy to comprehend. At least half of the participant students (N=24, 17+7) appreciated their instructors’ guidance about the ERS during the term and the majority (N=26) expressed that ERS helped them improve their reading skills and in Item 5, 24 students thought that ERS could be integrated into the curriculum of other English courses. 32 students admitted that the ERS texts contributed to their knowledge of vocabulary. 27 students found the questions on the ERS tests easy to understand, but 20 students reported that they were not sure about whether the questions required too specific answers or not. This is interesting since the questions were mostly focusing on the main ideas and any answer which was reasonably close to the expected response was accepted. However, 24 students stated that they liked the procedure, while 11 of them reported that they were unsure whether they liked it or not. Finally, 18 students overtly stated that ERS helped their learning of English, yet 11 thought the opposite and 13 were undecided. Therefore, these results may seem a little mixed and confusing.

Besides frequency analyses, correlation analyses (Cronbach’s Alpha .93) were also carried out in order to see whether our students’ attitudes to ERS could have any specific relationships with variables such as general attitudes toward reading, their gender, academic performance, or their self-perceived competency levels in vocabulary, grammar, and reading. According to the results, the only variable with which attitudes toward ERS (M=3.28) was significantly related with was the overall attitudes toward reading (M=3.79) (r(47)=-.46, p<.001). This means that the more the students had a positive attitude toward reading, the more positive they felt about ERS.

Looking at the results of the data coming from open-ended questions on the student questionnaire (see Appendix 4), we can see that there were mainly 8 themes revealed: 1) satisfactory practice, 2) no problem, 3) problems with questions, 4) problems with texts, 5) stressful process, 6) unnecessary practice, 7) unfairness, 8) not reading tests. Although there was a group of students who spared time to appreciate the ERS practice, for example by saying “At the beginning of the semester, I was not confident about my answers, but after feedback I learned how to answer”, most students stated displeasure at the type and difficulty level of questions and lack of familiarity with them. For example, one student stated, “If we do not understand the question, we get zero points.” Some students expressed that the texts were too long and the topics were difficult and unfamiliar, whereas some complained about the frequency of the tests and being graded. Therefore, they found the process tiring (“Tiring process. We have to read texts almost every lesson”). Another group of students (especially engineering students) mentioned that they had no time for extra reading (e.g. “We’re engineering students; we have no time to do extra reading”). Finally, a few articulated that it was unfair that some students exchanged the questions and when some students took the test, they already knew what would be asked.

In order to discover the instructors’ attitudes towards ERS, semi-structured interviews were conducted. In the interviews, the instructors were asked the following 5 questions and when necessary, further questions were asked to help the instructors elaborate on their responses:

1. How useful do you think the ERS practice has been this semester?
2. What kind of difficulties did your students have regarding this practice?
3. What kind of challenges have you faced in the application of ERS?
4. Do you think that ERS has had an impact on vocabulary, grammar, and reading development of students?
5. In what ways do you think ERS practice can be improved?

Pertaining to the 1st interview question, the instructors thought that ERS was useful for students in that they read more in comparison with the previous semesters. As they report, the students came to class more prepared, which helped the lesson flow more smoothly. In relation to this, one instructor who had been working at the university for more than 5 years stated, “As compared to the previous semesters, I observe that most of my students read the texts before the lesson and this helps me do most of the activities I have in mind.” Because of the graded evaluation, most of the students felt an urge to come to class prepared. One instructor mentioned that, “The students were more motivated to read texts before coming to class and when in class they were participating in the discussions more,” which seems to have contributed to the classroom interaction. The instructors also reported that despite giving an opportunity to read more, ERS tests were so frequent that the students did not have time to look back at how they progressed. One instructor expressed that “Although the practice improved their reading skills and vocabulary, they [students] could not digest what they have learnt from each test as there came another one immediately.” Thus, it was interpreted that they took a test almost every week and they could not easily transfer the reading strategies they were told to use. For students, on the other hand, this was a new application and most frequently complained about the number of texts assigned and the difficulty of keeping up with the syllabus.
Instructors found it difficult to handle with the negative attitudes of some students both in and out of class.

About the 2nd interview question, which investigated the difficulties faced in the procedure, the instructors mentioned some concerns regarding the preparation, administration and evaluation of the tests. It was reported that since the questions were concentrating on the gist of the texts, it was not easy to distinguish the students who understood the texts from those who did not. That was considered important by one instructor who stated “There were many different interpretations of the main ideas in the texts and some questions were so general that they allowed for approximations for those who had not read the text.” Also, instructors said that standardization meetings should be held in order to discuss issues as such; however, it was not possible because of the timetables of the instructors.

Furthermore, in response to the 3rd interview question “What kind of challenges have you faced in the application of ERS?”, the instructors stated that since most of the classes were crowded, it was sometimes challenging to administer the test in small classrooms and to ensure that the students did not cheat (e.g. One of the instructors said: “The physical conditions caused difficulty in seating arrangement for the ERS tests, and I cannot say 100% they could not see their classmates’ responses”). What’s more, the tests were very frequent and ERS meant extra workload as they found themselves marking tests all the time, in addition to their other duties such as giving feedback on portfolio items.

The general opinion of the instructors about the 4th interview question was that they were not sure about how much progress their students made in terms of developing vocabulary and grammar. They believed ERS made a difference in the lexical and grammatical knowledge of some students but this could not be generalized to all students taking the course ENG201. However, the instructors thought that the students got used to answering main idea, inference and opinion questions on reading tests more easily. Thus, they believed that ERS improved the students’ reading skills.

In response to the 5th interview question “In what ways can ERS be improved?”, the instructors suggested that the number of tests could be reduced and the time between tests could be lengthened so that there could be more time left for feedback. It was also suggested that more critical questions could be asked. Also, more points could be allocated since it will really motivate students and get them to take the practice more seriously.

As a result of the interviews with the instructors, it was revealed that the instructors regarded ERS tests as useful tools to improve the reading skills of the students. However, they, like the students, thought these tests and the procedures in the application needed to be improved. The remarkable points coming out of the interview data are: a) the students started to read more and came to class more prepared, b) it was not so easy to grade ERS tests due to the type of questions, c) the administration of the ERS was challenging because of the physical conditions and the lack of enough versions of tests for more classes, d) ERS had an impact on the lexical and grammatical knowledge of the students, e) ERS should be improved in terms of the question types and version numbers.

In brief, the present study allowed us - students, instructors, and administration – to have an opportunity to collaborate in order to shed light on our decisions for improving our current practices. The students contributed to the research, which aimed at investigating an issue which would shape their learning and development. The instructors, who are always involved in decision-making process at DFL, could articulate specific details regarding ERS, and they made a difference in the planning processes. We, as researchers and administrators, could see normally informally expressed ideas more reliably, concretely and specifically.

**Developments and changes**

The present study revealed that overall ERS practice helped instructors to get the students to read more, which helps to foster the language skills they need to be independent users. However, it is obvious that the practice needs improvement in some aspects.

Considering the responses we got from both parties, instructors and students, the first issue to consider is that the goals of the practice should be more clearly stated to ensure student engagement and increase their motivation. As Grabe (2009) suggests:

> sometimes students do not fully understand the goals for a given reading text or reading task, and perform poorly. The problem may not be an inability to comprehend but a lack of awareness of the real goal for the reading task. (p.19)

We also need to have more test versions so that only few classes will be given the same tests and the risk of question transfer among students is de-
increased. In the meantime, as the number of instructors giving the same tests will naturally get smaller, it will be easier for the instructors to get together to hold standardization meetings and the reliability of the practice will be improved.

Considering the student responses to open-ended questions, another improvement could be done by including different question types. At the same time, some sample questions could be available on Moodle so that the students could have an idea about what is ahead of them.

Last but not least, during the curricular studies to be carried out in summer term (2014-2015), the number of texts that students are supposed to read in 2015-2016 Fall can be reconsidered and decreased.

To conclude, innovations and new practices are usually not welcomed quickly in any context. Hence, with students that found the practice tiring and demanding, instructors need to spend more time helping them to understand the significance of reading skills in both academic and professional life and that improving this skill requires effort, time, and energy.

References


Appendix 1: Frequency analysis of the demographic variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency Exam Score 60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported Vocabulary Competency Good</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported Grammatical Competency Good</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported Reading Competency Good</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Student questionnaire

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXTENSIVE READING STUDIES**

Dear students,

This questionnaire has been prepared to collect your opinions about the application of *EXTENSIVE READING STUDIES (ERS)* in ENG 201-Advanced Communication Skills. Your opinions are very important for us in order to improve our new application and provide you with better instruction.

In Part A, please provide your personal information so that we can have valid data at the end of the research process.

In Part B and C, please respond to the questionnaire by marking the most appropriate option according to your opinions and experiences of ERS.

In Part D, please provide your answers to the open-ended questions.

Thank you for your cooperation.

DPL Administration
PART A – PERSONAL DATA: Please provide the information required.

1. Section: ___________________________
2. Your GPA: ___________________________
3. Your grade in ENG 101: AA __  BA __  BB __  CB __  CC__  DC__  DD__  FD__  FF__
4. Your grade in ENG 101s: AA __  BA __  BB __  CB __  CC__  DC__  DD__  FD__  FF__
5. Your grade in ENG 102: AA __  BA __  BB __  CB __  CC__  DC__  DD__  FD__  FF__
6. Your score in the proficiency exam: __________
7. What is your overall proficiency in vocabulary? Low ___  Average ___  High ____
8. What is your overall proficiency in grammar? Low ___  Average ___  High ____
9. What is your overall proficiency in reading? Low ___  Average ___  High ____

PART B – GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS EXTENSIVE READING: Put a tick (√) in the box that reflects your opinion about each item.

1. To become proficient in English, I should read in English. 
2. Reading English has positive effects on my intellectual development. 
3. Reading English is not troublesome if I do more practice. 
4. I feel good if I read in English. 
5. Reading English is useful for my future. 
6. I feel worried when there is unknown vocabulary in the text. 
7. I can acquire vocabulary if I read in English. 
8. Reading English is useful to be successful in academic environment. 
9. I feel relaxed if I read in English. 
10. I can develop reading ability if I read in English. 
11. Reading English is boring. 
12. I get tired when I read in English. 
13. Reading English is useful to get a job. 
14. Reading English is enjoyable. 
15. I get to know about different values if I read in English.

PART B – EVALUATION OF THE EXTENSIVE READING STUDIES (ERS): Put a tick (√) in the box that reflects your opinion about each item.

1. The ERS texts were easy to comprehend. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. The topics of ERS texts were interesting. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. The instructor provided guidance about the ERS throughout the semester. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. The ERS helped me to improve my reading skills. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. I think the ERS should be integrated into the curriculum of other English courses as well. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. The amount of ERS homework was suitable for me. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. The ERS helped me to increase my reading speed. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. The ERS helped me to read more fluently. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
9. The level of ERS texts was appropriate. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
10. The ERS texts helped me to build up my knowledge of vocabulary. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
11. The ERS texts helped me to build up my knowledge of grammar. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
12. The questions on the ERS tests were easy to understand. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
13. The questions on the ERS tests did not require us to provide too specific answers. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
14. I liked all the procedure of the ERS. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
15. Overall I believe the ERS contributed to my language learning. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

PART D – OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS: Answer the following questions.

1. What were the difficulties you faced during the ERS practice (before/during/after)?
2. What could be done to improve ERS practice?
Appendix 3: Interview questions

1. How useful do you think the ERS practice has been this semester?
2. What kind of difficulties did your students have regarding this practice?
3. What kind of challenges have you faced in the application of ERS?
4. Do you think that ERS has had an impact on vocabulary, grammar, and reading development of students?
5. In what ways do you think ERS practice can be improved?

Appendix 4: Results for open-ended questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>EMERGING CATEGORIES</th>
<th>SAMPLE COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory practice</td>
<td>Nice / enjoyable / good / effective</td>
<td>“At the beginning of the semester, I was not confident about my answers, but after feedback I learned how to answer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating 5 out of 8 was good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved our reading skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gradual skill gaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“At the beginning of the semester, I was not confident about my answers, but after feedback I learned how to answer.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problem / difficulty</td>
<td>Problems with questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult questions</td>
<td>“If we do not understand the question, we get zero points.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not good questions</td>
<td>“There are many alternative answers to some questions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliarity with types of questions</td>
<td>“I did not know how to answer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length</td>
<td>“Some texts are too long.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with texts</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>“They were difficult.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stressful</td>
<td>“Tiring process. We have to read texts almost every lesson.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of the ERS tests</td>
<td>“My concentration was affected.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graded practice</td>
<td>“I couldn’t enjoy reading although some texts were interesting to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unnecessary practice</td>
<td>“We’re engineering students; we have no time to do extra reading.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of the same questions in several classes</td>
<td>“Students from different classes exchange questions. And this makes ERS meaningless.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not reading texts</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
This study aims to investigate how the students perceived the first implementation of the flipped classroom method in an EAP course at the Department of Foreign Languages of Atılım University during the fall term of 2014–2015 academic year. The study revealed that the flipped model was perceived mostly negatively as it was piloted in this context. The results point to the importance of several dimensions of the flipped classroom method, such as how to prepare the material to be flipped, what to require of the students to engage them with their own learning and how to ensure the in-class instructional processes.

Background to the research

The present research was carried out in the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) at Atılım University. It is part of a broader research into the piloting of the Flipped Classroom (FC) which was encouraged by the management of the university. The underlying motive for this was that FC, which has been applied in various contexts, has shown a potential for increasing the quality of learning in many aspects by raising the interest of the students, promoting learner autonomy/self-regulated learning, enhancing higher-order thinking skills and mastering relatively more complex topics under the guidance of the instructor and collaborating with their peers (Papadopoulos & Roman, 2010; Driscoll 2012). As a department which is already employing various educational technologies, we decided to incorporate FC in our program to see what FC had to offer us and how it would work in our context, with the belief that it would provide a variety of ways to address learner diversity and development in the curriculum.

After a collective brainstorming stage as to which courses were more suitable to use the new method, it was determined that the input part of the argumentative writing component in ENG 201 – Advanced Communication Skills course could be used as the content for flipped learning. The rationale for
this decision was that the content to be flipped needed to be something suitable for lecturing so that the students could watch the video lectures outside the class. It was decided that the instructors could prepare videos for theoretical information about how to write an argumentative essay and the students could be asked to watch these videos outside the class.

Obviously, the integration of this innovation into our program would mainly affect two parties: the students and the instructors. We decided to conduct a research into the experiences and attitudes of them regarding FC. As mentioned above, this study, focusing on only students, is part of this broader research, which, we believe, serves as a means to make our efforts to understand the students’ perceptions of FC more structured and systematic.

**What is flipped classroom?**

FC, which has recently gained more popularity among different levels of education and content areas, is an instructional model changing the common sequence “first exposure to content in class - production/application outside the class” (Flipped Learning Network, 2014) in the traditional teaching-learning process. In FC, learners are exposed to the content to be learned outside class first time, and after this exposure, the practice, application, and reinforcement of the related content occurs in class which is just the opposite in the traditional educational models (Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Bormann, 2014).

FC can be basically viewed as situated in the framework of social constructivist approach and activity theory (Fraga & Harmon, 2015). In a flipped class, each learner has a chance to proceed at his or her own pace and step-by-step outside the class, and reinforce what he/she has learnt in class with the help of his or her peers and the instructor, which reflects what Vygotsky (1978) termed as “Zone of Proximal Development.”

The literature on FC suggests that the model can offer important benefits. The most prominent ones are increasing opportunities for more active and autonomous learning, providing differentiated instruction, developing higher-order thinking skills, promoting classroom interactivity, and improving academic performance (Fraga & Harmon, 2015; Hung, 2015). Another important reason for using FC in education is the perception that the emergence of lecture capturing software and video hosting sites (Bormann, 2014) and the ubiquity of mobile learning (Fraga & Harmon, 2015) can facilitate learning outside the class. The youth seem to be spending most of their time engaging with these new technologies (Gomes, 2010, as cited in Snowden, 2012), particularly with Web 2.0 tools such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Vimeo, etc. Although technology is not essential for flipped learning, the abundance and availability of user-friendly new technologies have made flipped learning far more feasible as well as interesting. In relation to the easy reach and use of new technologies, FC has become more time-saving as well in comparison with assigning texts to be read outside the class, which can also be considered as flipped learning since the students are exposed to content first through reading outside the class (Wentland, 2004, as cited in Snowden, 2012).

However, FC is not free from doubts in terms of effectiveness. First of all, its applicability in STEM (i.e. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines is well-reported (Snowden, 2014; Hung, 2015). Yet there is not sufficient support in humanities and language teaching as yet (Hung, 2015), where lecturing is less significant in teaching, since inductive teaching methods are commonly preferred in these fields (Fraga & Harmon, 2015). In addition, teachers have difficulty with this model because the class conditions are not strictly adapted to the pedagogy in mind or it becomes difficult to utilize the class time for meaningful learning when the content to be learnt is removed from the class (Bergman & Sams, 2012).

To sum up, FC seems to promise more space for more interactive and engaging in-class climate while helping learners take control of their own learning out of school context. However, every context has its own realities, and as Bergman and Sams (2012) state, how FC is applied can affect achievement and attitudes of learners. Therefore, to understand the realities of our context with regard to the first implementation of FC, it became essential to investigate the students’ opinions and experiences of FC.

**Methods**

With an awareness of the possible drawbacks and prospects of flipped classroom, answers to the following question were sought:

_How do the students perceive flipped classroom?_

**Preparation & Implementation of FC**

Based on the redesign of the ENG 201 syllabus to utilize FC partially for the teaching of argumentative essay writing, the preparation of the material (videos of the content to be studied by students outside the class) started in the summer of 2014. Several instructors contributed to the script-writing,
PPT preparation, and shooting of the videos. The shooting of the videos was conducted by the Distance Education Center of Atılım University. After the videos (in which the instructors read the scripts from a prompter) were shot, the center uploaded them onto Moodle (a Virtual Learning Environment) so that the students could watch them after they registered for the virtual class of ENG 201. Then the implementation took place in the Fall term of 2014-2015 academic year, with great optimism to have more interactive and engaging time for productive activities in class, such as listing pros and cons properly, outlining, writing introductory, body and concluding paragraphs considering controversies and their refutation.

Data collection & analysis

**Instrument**: In order to collect data about the students' perceptions of flipped classroom, a questionnaire in English was used. It was meant to be short so that it would not discourage the students from responding. The questionnaire consisted of three parts:

1. personal data about students,
2. a 12-item Likert-type scale about perceptions of FC (see Table 1)
3. two open-ended questions about difficulties with FC and suggestions for the next implementation (see Section 3.2.)

**Procedure**: At the end of the Fall term, the questionnaire was applied to 86 students from 8 sections of ENG 201, who were expected to have watched 11 videos on Moodle by that time.

**Analysis**: In the analyses of the quantitative data obtained from the Likert-type scale, SPSS Version 20.0 was used to calculate the frequencies and other descriptive data as well as to run correlation analyses. In order to analyze the qualitative data from the open-ended questions, a content analysis was conducted. An inductive approach was adopted for this analysis. According to Creswell (2007), the inductive approach starts with an open-coding stage, where the utterances are labeled with smaller chunks. Then, the axial coding stage comes, in which several chunks with a similar meaning are grouped together under an overarching label/code. Finally, selective coding was done by putting several axial codes into a theme.

**Results**

As a result of the analyses of the Likert-type scale and open-ended questions, the following findings were obtained:

**Results to the likert-type scale**

The data gathered from the Likert-type scale were utilized to calculate frequencies of responses to each item. The results of the frequency analysis for each item can be seen in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. FC has increased my interest in the lessons.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FC is more motivating than traditional instruction.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I like watching the lessons on video.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I regularly watch the video assignments.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would rather listen to the teacher in the lesson than watch the videos.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel that I can understand the topic better if I watch the videos on Moodle.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When we watch the videos at home, there is no need for the teacher to re-explain the topic.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I think the teacher should explain the topics covered in the videos one more time in the lesson.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. FC helps me to learn in my own pace.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. FC has not improved my learning of summarizing.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. FC has not improved my learning of argumentative essay writing.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. FC helps us save time for more practice in the classroom.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 1, the number of students who reported negative attitudes towards FC (Items 1, 2 and 3) is much higher than those with positive attitudes. While 37 (20+17) students did not agree that FC increased their interest in the lessons (Item 1), the number of students who thought the opposite is 15 (11+4). The similar pattern can be seen for Item 2 “FC is more motivating than traditional instruction”. As for Item 3, the number of students who expressed a disagreement with the statement “I like watching the lessons on video” is 46 out of 86. In addition, for all these items the number of undecided students is also very high, 33, 32 and 24 respectively.

The results for Item 4 “I regularly watch the video assignments” suggest that 38 students reported that they did not watch the videos regularly while only 17 reported that they watched them regularly. In addition, 31 students were undecided. In Item 5, the number of students who expressed a preference for traditional learning over FC was also much higher (N=46) than those who preferred FC (N=17) in total. Also, the results for Items 7 and 8 show that a high number of students reported a reliance on the teacher for the clarification of the content (N=52, N=47, resp.).

In a similar manner, in Item 9, the number of students expressing a sense of self-pacing benefit (N=25) is lower than that of the students who lacked this sense (N=32). The patterns in Items 10 and 11 are similar in that almost the same number of students reported a progress (N=24, N=28, resp.) and a lack of progress (N=22, N=26, resp.). However, an interesting point in these three items is that the number of undecided students is higher than the number of students with positive or negative attitudes (N=29, N=40, N=32, resp.).

The results for Item 12 indicate that the number of students who believed FC helped them save time for more practice in the classroom (N=29) is slightly higher than that of those who thought the opposite (N=27), which is the only case for a positive stance outweighing the negative.

Apart from the frequency analysis, we looked for correlations between perceptions and several other factors, supposing that it could shed light on some underlying reasons for student perceptions. According to the correlation analyses run after the data screening and reliability analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha = .87), there were no significant correlations between students’ perceptions of the FC and their gender or their grand point average (GPA). However, it was revealed that there was a significant correlation between the students’ perceptions of FC and the frequency of their watching of videos in English (r (84) = .37, p < .01). This finding implies that the more frequently a student watched the videos, the more he/she had a positive perception of FC.

Results to the open-ended questions

Based on the students’ responses (about 75 %) to the open-ended questions, which were “What kind of difficulties do you have in Flipped Classroom?” and “What are your suggestions of how to improve the practice of Flipped Classroom?” an inductive data analysis was conducted. We first coded the responses (see Appendix 1 for examples) into labels such as “departmental courses” and “very busy at home” (open coding). Next, we looked for conceptual similarities in labels and we categorized (see Emerging categories in Table 2) them (axial coding). As a result, 5 major themes were identified (selective coding) as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The themes and categories revealed by the qualitative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Emerging categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-related issues</td>
<td>Lack of Time *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habit formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative attitudes (dislike)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concentration problem *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure problems</td>
<td>Connection Failure *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-related problems</td>
<td>Technicality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional/ pedagogical</td>
<td>Waste of class time for promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficulties</td>
<td>Heavy content in the first exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being exposed to the same content second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content already available in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supplementary pack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No enforcement/grade *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of mode</td>
<td>Asynchronism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Face-to-face *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The most frequently mentioned problem categories
As can be observed in Table 2, the analysis of the qualitative data indicate that the difficulties with FC as perceived by the students gather around these 5 themes, based on the categories emerging from the student responses (see Appendix 1 for sample labels used to code the comments about difficulties and suggestions pertinent to FC). The most frequently (around 20%) reported difficulties were not being able to watch videos due to “lack of time”, “connection failure”, and “concentration problem” stemming from being easily distracted when online and shifting to other websites (see Appendix 1).

The theme Student-related issues include sub-categories such as lack of time, availability of resources, negative attitudes and habit formation. The next theme - Infrastructure problems - was mainly related to the video-hosting system on Moodle, which was reported to frequently cause connection failure. As for video-related problems, student responses seem to show both commonalities and diversities in their expectations. They reflect commonalities in that students have expectations in terms of content, organization, and technicalities of the videos. However, what they specifically expect regarding these aspects appears to vary. For instance, some students expect sample essays in the videos, some expect quizzes or exercises, and some subtitles.

The other two themes, Instructional/Pedagogical Difficulties and Type of Mode also reflect such kind of commonalities and differences. Some students complained about the heaviness of the content in the first exposure through the videos. However, one student stated that “When we are exposed to a difficult topic firstly on the video, we do not understand well” and suggested the content be covered initially in class. This is likely to stem from the fact that the students were used to a passive learning style, a lecturer/instructor introducing the topic in class as the students listened to him/her. On the other hand, some students disliked being exposed to the content a second time in class i.e. in-class introduction of the topic by the instructor. Moreover, 15% of the students reported that there was no enforcement/grading for them to watch the videos and they suggested that the students who watched the videos be given a grade. In terms of the Type of mode, there were variant expectations, some expecting the instructor to be online for interaction, and some (around 15%) overtly said, “I prefer traditional/classic way to learn,” implying a preference for face-to-face instruction.

Although these themes and categories are a reflection of the problems verbalized by our students, there were also students who stated that they had no problems with the model (about 13%). These students could be some of those who stated that they watched videos regularly in the closed questionnaire since, in the correlation analysis, it was found that the more frequently a student watched videos, the higher his/her regard was for FC. A noteworthy finding regarding the qualitative data was that most of the students made some suggestions for improving the practice of flipped classroom. The most commonly (about 20%) made suggestions were “flipped classroom should be abandoned” and “the videos must be made more attractive/memorable” (e.g. via some more examples, visuals, subtitles, etc.). The students who were advocating the abandonment of FC are likely to be unhappy because this was an unfamiliar application for them.

It seems that the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions are supported by the quantitative data coming from the Likert-type scale. As can be seen in Table 1 above, more than half of the participants reported that they preferred to listen to the instructor than watch the video (Item 5) and again the majority of the students stated that they needed the teacher to cover the video content one more time in class (Item 8). These results are in line with the responses to the open-ended questions in that the most common responses were about abandoning the FC practice and which aspect of FC they did not like. Both quantitative data and qualitative data indicate that FC did not increase the students’ interest nor did they find it motivating and like it. Moreover, the majority expressed in the scale that they preferred the traditional (face-to-face) way of teaching, that is, the teacher introducing the content in class.
Learning as teachers and researchers

Considering the results of the Likert-type scale and open-ended questions, despite the fact that they are based on a simple questionnaire, the present study revealed that the majority of the students perceived FC negatively. Furthermore, another large group of students (see the frequency analysis in Table 1 for undecided students) indicated that they were not clear about FC. Possible reasons for this negativity and lack of clarity could be as follows:

To begin with, the students were not familiar with the model, and for this reason, it is likely that they did not like the idea of taking responsibility for their learning since they mentioned how busy they were with their departmental courses in their answers to the open-ended questions. Combined with their tight schedules and the requirements of the departmental courses, this might have made FC too challenging for them to adapt to quickly. It was not easy for them to adopt the new model in a short time. In addition, although our students can be defined as "digital natives", that multitasking, a by-product of this identity, tends to be a hindrance for them because they stated that they were easily distracted by the other websites such as Facebook, YouTube, etc. while watching the videos. Moreover, this first implementation of FC in our context was not technically perfect. The connection problems stemming from embedding the videos in Moodle might have discouraged the students as well. While they were waiting for the video to open, they wasted time or the connection failed, which led to frustration and ultimately to them abandoning the task of watching the videos.

As for the video-related negative perceptions, it seems that the type of speaking, namely transaction, was not liked by the students, and they found it monotonous. They also looked for interaction and appealing visual materials. Furthermore, in terms of the instructional / pedagogical issues, the student responses to the Likert-type scale and open-ended questions show that mostly they prefer the instructor to explain the content. However, there were mixed reactions to the in-class revisiting of the topic by the instructor. This might have resulted from the fact that instructors chose their own way to deal with the material when they covered it in-class. There was no standardized methodology in this respect. Therefore, different treatments of the FC by the instructors might have played a role in how students perceived it. It is also understood that some students confessed that they had not watched videos because they were “not required to do so” (15%). In other words, there were no consequences (such as check points, mini quizzes, feedback questions, etc.) to not watching the videos.

Although the instrument used in this research study was simple, it helped us see the perceptions of the students about FC both quantitatively and qualitatively. Despite the limited number of items on the Likert-type scale, it gave us an idea about the attitudes (e.g. interest and motivation levels), preferences as regards the sequences of teaching/learning activities, and sense of progress (their understanding of whether FC helped them learn certain topics). However, for future research, it would be good to have more items and dimensions (e.g. technicality, organization, etc.) on the Likert-type scale because this would allow us to obtain more data to triangulate our results from the qualitative data.

On the other hand, the responses to the open-ended questions guided our understanding of different aspects of the first implementation of FC in our context. This shows us the power of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore and understand individuals and the complexity of the situation better (Creswell, 2007). As supported by Creswell with this statement, the qualitative data allow the researchers to see the phenomena they are exploring from each participant's perspective, as in our data from the open-ended questions where each student wrote the difficulties they personally experienced and provided their own suggestions as to how to improve the FC practice.

Developments and changes

Although the present study revealed negative perceptions on the part of the students, it does not mean that this method needs to be abandoned immediately as the students suggested. Instead, we need to make sure that we do our best to apply FC in its most appropriate form in our context, and then decide whether it is worth continuing or not. Also, the instructors were learning how to teach with FC and how to prepare better videos. Therefore, new and better ways of incorporating FC (e.g. involving students in the creation of new videos) should be explored before abandoning.

It is obvious that there are a number of points to be reconsidered regarding the incorporation of the flipped classroom model into our program. The most prominent and urgent aspects to be improved are making the access to
the video-hosting system easy, improving the quality of the videos (in terms of content, speech, organization, language, etc.), requiring students to do several tasks (note-taking, completing a form, answering questions, etc.) in order to give them a tangible reason to watch, standardizing the general framework of how instructors reinforce the content by classroom activities, ensuring a higher rate of watching videos by grading their contributions and performances during in-class activities. Although it may seem unpleasant to assess the performance of the students on flipped learning activities, that may be the most effective way of getting them to watch the videos, and the way actually suggested by them in the open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Taking all of these results into account, the flipped classroom method was implemented in another course in DFL with different pedagogical and technical decisions. Some research studies were conducted on this second implementation too, and actually now we have more data to compare and contrast with regard to what FC can offer us, and how it can help meet the needs of our students while encouraging them to become more active and independent learners.

However, it is clear that we need to be cooperative and collaborative in understanding, planning, applying and evaluating FC as we experiment with it in our context. Therefore, all instructors, administrators and staff who coordinate the courses, curriculum, testing activities and continuous professional development activities offered at DFL, need to support each other to provide better quality instruction, which will benefit our students and help us improve our job of “teaching”.

References
Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. Eugene, Or: International Society for Technology in Education.


Snowden, K. E. (2012). *Teacher perceptions of the flipped classroom: Using video lectures online to replace traditional in-class lectures*. MA Thesis, University of North Texas, USA.


### Appendix 1: Analysis of qualitative data from open-ended questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Emerging categories</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-related issues</td>
<td>Lack of Time <em>(</em>)</td>
<td>- Departmental courses</td>
<td>-It becomes boring, time-consuming and irritating when constantly reminded and promoted in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Very busy at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Already spend a lot of time on IT and ERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
<td>- No computer</td>
<td>-Covering content in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No internet</td>
<td>- Increase the number of contact hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Internet with quota</td>
<td>- Using videos for revision, not for first exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habit formation</td>
<td>- Easily forgotten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative attitudes (dislike)</td>
<td>- Not beneficial / necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Waste of time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not logical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concentration problem *</td>
<td>- Stopped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure problems</td>
<td>- Distracted by other websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection Failure *</td>
<td>- Video downloads too slowly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Connection fails suddenly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-related problems</td>
<td>Technicality</td>
<td>- Too long</td>
<td>- No need for videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Monologue</td>
<td>Games and good practice activities enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Logging in Moodle is complicated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Videos should be shorter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>- Too fast</td>
<td>- Videos to be watched in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not loud enough</td>
<td>- What about Skype?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not very clear</td>
<td>- What about live video streaming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>- Not memorable</td>
<td>Following videos should not be obligatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Inadequate examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Inadequate exercises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not parallel to the topics covered in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>- Lack of effective visuals / graphs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>- Some words are not understood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Too difficult for some students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not in English completely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The most frequently mentioned problem categories
Main focus

It is almost every teacher’s dream to see their students express themselves fluently in the target language. It usually works in the following way: Teachers do, show, write, talk, and repeat this process several times with the expectation that students will eventually gain these skills. Whether this is as easy as one thinks is certainly a matter of debate. Students actually speak and write in English on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. When it comes to speaking in the classroom, students tend to be shy or reluctant and avoid using authentic language. They usually prefer using classic classroom language, which is far from being natural and realistic. The stereotypical sentence “Fine thanks and you?” is a well-known example of this. Yet, whether this is their fault is debatable since most of the time we teach them the course book language.

For one thing, it is definitely difficult to convey productive skills such as speaking and writing in a country where the target language is not the main language or the second language. Considering the fact that students are not exposed enough to the target language, it might be relatively fanciful to expect students to speak the target language smoothly and genuinely as Larsen-Free- man (1991:337) stated “For most adult learners, complete mastery of the L2 [second language] may be impossible, yet teachers obviously should encourage learners to go as far as they are capable of going in the L2, but teachers should also be realistic in their expectations.” (cited in Burkart, 1998:5) Although it is hard for students to have a competence that is equal to a native’s, they should be able to try their best to communicate as flawlessly as possible. In this context, some of the job depends on teachers since they are the ones who can provide a lot of input, whereas most of the job is on students since they are responsible for their own learning to a great extent. In this respect, it wouldn’t be wrong to say that an ideal student, whom we can expect to speak in class is the
one who, “... takes a (pro-) active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli of the teacher” (Boud, 1988; Kohonen, 1992; Knowles, 1975, cited in Thanasoulas, 2000). This is how this research journey started. Having seen that students in my classes mostly refrained from speaking English no matter how capable they were, I decided to use a different method called “text-based speaking.” As the name suggests, this approach mainly aims improving speaking yet it doesn't only focus on speaking. It depends on textual contexts, uses scaffolding methods and finally requires students to produce output.

**Literature review**

Burns (2006) defines speaking as “… a highly complex and dynamic skill that involves the use of several simultaneous processes – cognitive, physical and socio-cultural” – and suggests that “a speaker’s knowledge and skills have to be activated rapidly in real-time.” She, further, explains that “simply ‘doing’ speaking activities is not the same as learning the knowledge, skills and strategies of speaking.” Thus, we can assume that teaching speaking is not filling the blanks of a lesson with speaking activities; it is rather a process in which students’ awareness of speaking increases and they are explicitly given support and information of how to express themselves. Regarding this, the first thing that can be done while teaching how to speak is to show the differences between spoken language and written language.

Spoken language differs greatly from written language in terms of function as well. Mainly, there are two functions of spoken language. Linguists who analyse spoken discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983; McCarthy, 1991- among others) make a general distinction between transactional talk and interactional talk; in other terms, interpersonally motivated speech and pragmatically motivated speech (cited in Burkart, 1998:5). While the former’s main aim is to get business done and it is message oriented, interactional talk is much more people oriented: its main purpose is to establish and maintain social relationships. Therefore, interactional talk maintains social communication, whereas transactional talk aims to convey message or convey purposeful information. Though we mostly work on teaching transactional language as it is given in course books, students need to learn and use interactional language as well. As Joyce and Slade (2000) claim,

Native speakers are very familiar with the structure of spoken interactions and this makes it possible for them to talk to one another, to predict the kinds of things someone is likely to say and to successfully take their turns at talk. If this knowledge is integral to native speakers participating effectively in social interactions, then it needs to be an integral part of teaching spoken language to second language learners. The nature of casual conversation (xii).

In order to provide students with a chance to get acquainted with interactional language, the participants of the research were introduced to text-based speaking activities. Being common in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore, text-based syllabus can be an ambiguous term for teachers in the rest of the world. As Richards (2012) explains, “text-based instruction shares some features with task-based language instruction, since it focuses on preparing learners for real-world uses of English. Text-based instruction, also known as a genre-based approach, sees communicative competence as involving the mastery of different types of texts”. Burns (2006: 237) suggests “a text is identified, not by its size or form, but by the meaning it makes as a unified whole in relation to the particular context in which it is used. Therefore, an instruction guide to a vacuum cleaner can be considered a whole text, while the opening segment of the speech or one chapter of the book, however, could not be considered to be texts as they are only a part of the whole.” “A ‘text’ isn’t limited to something written down. A text can be a film, an artefact, anything in a language and culture that conveys meaning.” (Foreign Language Teaching Methods: Culture)

Richard (2006: 36) clarifies what texts can be as below:

- Casual conversational exchange with a friend
- Conversational exchange with a stranger in an elevator
- Telephone call to arrange an appointment at a hair salon
- An account to friends of an unusual experience

“Text-based teaching involves explicit teaching of the structure of different text types and an instructional strategy in which the teacher introduces the text and its purpose, features, and guides students through the verbal produc-
tation of texts through the process of scaffolding (Richards, 2006). According to Burns (2006: 237), the two central ideas in a text-based syllabus approach are:

1) how language is used in social contexts
2) how it is structured in relation to those contexts.

Based on this goal, I predicted that I could help my students raise their awareness of speaking by using text-based method as well practicing other skills of the language.

Research focus

Participants

The research involved 58 students from varied levels as A2, B1, and B2. Since the research required whole class participation, all of the students were requested to participate with no exclusion. In addition, two native colleagues were asked to assist the research for preparing ‘the texts’ and observing the process.

Data Collection

The data were collected via three sources as participant observation, survey, and semi-structured interview (limited to one group of participants). I, as the researcher, acted as a participant observer during the activities and evaluated the process and the output; analysed the answers to open-ended questions in the surveys and made use of the comments taken from the interview.

Procedure

The text-based activities which were adapted from two texts that were taken from De Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000, p.96; Burns (2006) (see Appendix B). The texts were causal conversations that involved recounting an annoying event and talking about a movie. The conversations were voiced with the help of native teachers because of the fact that the aim of the activity was to introduce authentic speaking. Moreover, the native speakers were chosen from among the staff of the school where the research took place with the purpose of evoking familiarity and interest.

The activities followed a sequence of four steps as preparation, discourse, language, and interaction. For preparation, students were asked to recount remarkable incidents (preferably annoying) that happened to them initially in their own language, and then in English. Following the discussions on why people tell such stories to each other, the participants listened to the authentic text for the first time. The listening was followed by several discourse activities which involved questions about how the speakers begin and finish the story, how they give feedback to each other, the stages of the recount, sequencing a jumbled event activity etc. After the discourse activities, students did grammar exercises, in which they focused on the tense structures that were used in the text. The third step was revising vocabulary, which involved activities such as finding synonyms, antonyms, building evaluative noun groups, analysing time words and fillers. Last but not the least, the students were given interactional activities. First, they were given the skeleton of a spoken recount and were asked to prepare a similar recount. They prepared and recorded their role-play performance outside the class. In the classroom, they played back the performances and gave feedback to each other. They also evaluated themselves in terms of their competence and ability to speak.

Having completed these activities, students were requested to fill in a survey that included four open ended questions. The same activity was repeated with another class in the following quarter. In the last quarter, the second text (talking about a movie) was used as the starting point. Although the format of the activity was the same, there were some renovations such as recording the activity with a tripod camera and having a semi-planned interview with a sample group. Different than the first two groups, the last group was also asked about their overall comments on the activity.

Results

Overall, the activities were welcomed by the students. Out of 42 students (the first two groups) only one student stated that he had a negative opinion. Role-playing was chosen as the most effective part of activity; yet it was also chosen to be the most challenging. As with the frequency of the study, the majority of students preferred this activity to be a lesson that happens once every week (See Appendix A to see the exact numbers for each question).

The last activity demonstrated some differences and revealed more clues to what students had thought of the activity. With the exception of one student,
they all stated that it affected them positively especially in terms of practicing daily conversation and listening. When it came to their overall thoughts about the activity, 12 students mentioned that it was very influential in terms of group work. Half of the participants put ‘motivation’ in front of the other key words while 5 students claimed that the activity increased the level of sociality in the classroom. One student suggested that it was fun, whereas another found it to be ‘student-centered’. Lastly, one student described it as ‘encouraging’ and another as ‘helpful’ in terms of learning the key phrases of speaking. Similar to the first results, ‘dialog and role playing’ was chosen as the most effective stage of the activity. With regards to the frequency of the activity, students could not find a middle ground. The answers varied from weekly to monthly, even yearly. The interview that was made with a sample group among the participants yielded positive results as well. The students were able to revise what was gained throughout the process and they made positive remarks such as an increase in their self-confidence while talking, and feeling more enthusiastic to engage in a conversation.

As a result, I got plenty of positive feedback about the in-class applications of the research. Mainly, students stated that these activities affected them positively by raising their self-confidence in class and enhanced the sense of collaboration among peers. They also demanded that we should do these activities more often. Integrating various skills, text-based activities obviously raised students' interest in authentic language and gave them some clues on how to speak more genuinely. It was clear from the results that the most appealing part of the activities was creating dialogues, which meant that the text-based syllabus really fostered speaking and gave students a chance to freely engage in a conversation.

Critical reflections

This research affected me and my students positively in many ways. At first, I was hesitant to use a text-based approach since it was ambiguous not only for me but also for my students. However, the fact that I did it several times in various classes made it easy for me to get used to this approach. This was indeed the first positive effect because I tried something new and to some level I and my students managed it successfully. The second effect was seeing my students actively participating in the activities. I cannot say that it created a long term effect on them in terms of improving their speaking skills. Still, I observed that during the activities almost none of them refrained from communicating with each other and this was actually my main goal in conducting this research.

The text-based activities definitely improved my understanding of teaching speaking. First, the activities focus not only on language but also various skills and strategies; therefore, they may improve students’ skills holistically. For example, while a student learns how to narrate an anecdote, he/she also finds a chance to revise past tense forms. Moreover, the fact that the activities can be redone intermittently increases their effect and makes them more memorable. In addition, students gain fluency more easily because the activities can be repeated cyclically and also be expanded with various topics. However, the most important achievement from my perspective is that students have increased their awareness of language with text-based activities. Spending time on discourse activities provided them with the chance of thinking over the language itself, which means that their meta-cognitive skills might have improved. This was actually the first time they questioned what a person had to say in a certain situation. Contrary to their previous classroom activities in which they basically followed the course books’ instructions on what to say, these activities offered them a chance to choose what kind of utterances they could use while speaking.

With text-based activities, students became aware of the fact that speaking could not be dissociated from vocabulary, grammar and context, and more importantly depending on the context, there needed to be a certain genre and discourse to be followed. This way, they could see that they could manage their own speaking provided that certain conditions were met. Not only their awareness of the language and meta-language increased but also they felt more eager to speak in the classroom.

Developments and changes

The first change might be in the way I see my students. As far as the research has showed, once you intend to teach how to speak and make some real effort for it, your students will eventually appreciate it and show more effort in speaking in the classroom. For this reason, exposing yourself as a talker in the classroom is not enough because the input you provide for students during school time may not be enough for them to eventually grasp the language. In this sense, teachers could maintain their teaching lessons more explicitly. In-
Instead of being an over-talker, they can let students regulate and manage their own speaking by explicitly showing them how to speak and then guide them in their speaking tasks. Second, teachers should pay attention to the materials that they use in communicative activities. Ordinary materials that are very course book like might be less interesting in the long run. Once your students develop their linguistic skills, they should be introduced to authentic materials. Since any language is essentially a communication tool for humanity, the activities we run in our classrooms should match to what any language does. Texts (anecdotes, scripts, storytelling etc.) that involve some lifelike language could carry this goal as well as making students retain their knowledge longer.

The way we manage our speaking lessons should also be modified. Assigning students with random speaking activities just to fill in time is not satisfactory; on the contrary, it makes students get tired of the language. Providing them with a purpose and context would help them control what they are learning more easily. They should be given the chance of learning “how to speak,” as well as ‘what to speak.’ Besides, speaking is the core element of language, and it can't be separated from it. Therefore, speaking should be dispersed in most segments of the classroom time.

The problem with the text-based activities I carried out in my classes is that they were not maintained repeatedly in cyclical form. These results and my assumptions are all results of one-off activities, and thus they are short-term results. Therefore, in order to examine the long term effects of text-based activities, it should be performed through a whole module in preparatory school. Furthermore, it should be tried with other types of speaking genres and topics as well. Only these could give us more reliable affirmation and validity with regards to text-based syllabus.

References
Appendix A

The tabulation of students’ answers to survey questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1. How did this activity affect you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2. Which part of the activity was more influential?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3. Were there any parts of the activity that you found challenging?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4. How often would you like to be involved in such an activity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 3rd Group’s Overall Comments on Text-Based Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encourages group work</th>
<th>Motivating</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Socializing</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B—The authentic texts that were used

Recounting an Annoying Event

A: So how was your day?
B: I didn't have a very good day. You?
A: Mmm... Well I haven't had a wonderful day either... I have been forgetting and dropping things all day. However, I went to the library this morning to get a copy of Twilight and when I got there I realized I'd left my list behind and I didn't know the author's name, so I asked the librarian to look it up on the computer and there were literally hundreds of Twilights. I couldn't identify it at all so I went home and called... um... the library in Konak and they said yes we have one copy in Seyrek.
B: Back to Seyrek?
A: So back to Seyrek I went and then I went up to Bostanlı and... There were several things I wanted to do up there and I had a plastic bag with a pair of my wife's shoes in it to take to the tailor... to have the heels and toes done...
B: Right...
A: And when I arrived there I opened my bag and I'd taken the wrong shoes.
A: Oh no... [laughs]
B: So all in all I've had a rather disjointed day.
A: And it's not even Friday the thirteenth!
B: No... [laughs]

Talking about a film

A: Last week I saw a film called 'Good Will Hunting'. It was pretty good. It starred Robin Williams in it. It was... um... I like Robin Williams. He's a very funny actor.
B: Yeah, so do I.
A: And um as I said the thing is the movie was 'Good Will Hunting'. It was a good movie because many of the actors were able to humorise... you know... make the movie...
Main focus

Teaching English in an EFL context often involves students learning from course books, and practicing newly learnt language with peers in order to commit it to long term memory. This form of forced output is also a method that teachers use in order to demonstrate learning. I often question what students feel about being made to talk about topics that they may not have an interest in or familiarity with, and talking for no other reason than to please the teacher; I strive to make language learning a more authentic, meaningful and enjoyable experience. This teacher research aims to explore how producing and sharing videos online about TED topics that are of personal interest to the learner affect learners’ attitudes towards authenticity. For language learners, having a real audience who have a genuine interest in what is being said may make language learning more realistic. Together with allowing students a genuine audience for their spoken output, talking about familiar topics of interest may also make speaking activities more meaningful. As this was a very integrative approach to teacher research, I also invited several students from the class to be present at the 2015 IATEFL ReSIG event and share their story from their own unique perspectives.

After carrying out a general language learning needs analysis for an MA lesson, students reported speaking skills as being of most importance. The results showed that speaking was the aspect of language learning that proved most difficult for my class, and giving presentations in their department was a major need that they felt needed the most development. As part of their assessment, students in C1 are required to give weekly presentations to their peers about a topic related to the content in the course book. These topics are often things like global warming, or the benefits of healthy diet, topics that students are often experts on as they talked about such issues on many instances in the
past. I put myself in the shoes of my students and thought how boring and meaningless such presentations would be, so after negotiating with the class about how to make it more interesting, we came to the decision for students to give presentations about a TED talk of their choice. Having been inspired by several TED talks, I wanted to see if students would also be more enthusiastic about learning amazing things from an authentic context, as opposed to doctored text book input. The whole point in this class is listening and speaking, but we have very little class time to get through the loaded syllabus.

Another issue that I noticed many Turkish students have is a lack of confidence when speaking English in the class. Students often feel anxious about making mistakes at lexical, syntactical or a phonological level in front of their peers and their teachers. I wanted students to get out of their comfort zone, and see that sharing videos online isn't the terrible ordeal that students make it out to be. I wanted to see how students' self-efficacy when speaking in public is affected after recording and sharing videos online.

Background

Now I would like to present some views on speaking, which I have found useful to reflect on while doing research with my learners.

Richards and Renandya (2002) A large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking” (p. 201). The tendency to prioritize the mastery of speaking is also reflected in the tendency of society to make speaking skills as a measure of one's mastery of English.

Gaudart (1992) Learners' passiveness in the classroom discussions is due to a lack of motivation. He further linked this low participation to learners' inability to function in oral communication.

Liu and Littlewood (1997) The more speaking activities in which students engaged, the higher they rate their ability to speak and vice versa, which indicates that students feel confident about their oral proficiency simply because they have had a lot of practice in speaking.

Bandura (1993) Self efficacy can be said to explain an individuals' belief in their capacity to achieve specific tasks, which is believed to have a strong influence on levels of persistence and the choices individuals make regarding which activities to pursue.

Edge (1996) Using authentic sources may help to engage students in authentic cultural experiences.

Bloch (2007) Not only did writing quality improve, but that students became contributors to the knowledge on the Internet rather merely passive users of information.

Speaking

English is a foreign language here in Turkey, and many students want to be able to communicate effectively in it. Yet they often find speaking English such an arduous task. Graves (2008) believes “The purposes of learning a language are to communicate, to improve one's economic prospects, to expand one's horizons both literally and/or figuratively to be a global citizen” (p. 156). In addition to this, Richards and Renandya (2002) offer this response: “A large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking” (p. 201). The tendency to prioritize the mastery of speaking is also reflected in the tendency of society to make speaking skills as a measure of one's mastery of English. In fact, many students consider language fluency to communicate verbally with others as being the most important aspect of language proficiency.

Many English teachers here in Turkey complain about their students not participating enough during speaking activities, so why is it that such a large proportion of students are so reluctant to speak in class? I have often witnessed that during pair or group work, students often speak in English only when I am near, then revert back to L1. This highlights the fact that often, English is spoken only to display production for the benefit of the teacher, usually in order to receive participation scores. Gaudart claimed that learners’ passiveness in the classroom discussions is due to a lack of motivation. He further linked this low participation to learners’ inability to function in oral communication.
In as much as the participants are living in a country where English is not an everyday language, they lack the practice for developing their communicative skills because the classroom is the only place where students can practice speaking English, therefore, they need lots of practice outside of the class. Liu and Littlewood (1997) found out that the more speaking activities students engage in, the higher they rate their ability to speak and vice versa, which indicates that students feel confident about their oral proficiency simply because they have had a lot of practice in speaking.

**Self-Efficacy**

This lack of confidence in English language learners may be due to a lack of meaningful practice, but a low level of self-efficacy could also explain our students’ unwillingness to practice in class. Bandura (1993) first coined the term ‘self-efficacy’ within an expectancy-value framework of motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Self-efficacy can be said to explain an individual’s belief in their capacity to achieve specific tasks, which is believed to have a strong influence on levels of persistence and the choices individuals make regarding which activities to pursue. Self-efficacy has a considerable impact on learning outcomes, with a stronger sense of self-efficacy leading to higher levels of achievement, a greater willingness to face challenges and to exert effort. These three effects of high self-efficacy were to some extent evident in my students throughout the project.

**Authenticity**

Another factor that I mentioned earlier on in determining successful language teaching and learning is the amount of time students are exposed to the target language and culture. Exposure refers to the amount of time a student has contact with a second language in verbal or written form and in either an active or passive role. In Turkey, the amount of English exposure is so insufficient, that language learners hardly ever interact with people from other countries. This makes their English teacher the only source of spoken language and authentic materials, such as films, magazines, newspapers, literature and the Internet resources the only way of exposure to the target language. Using authentic video can be also very beneficial. Authentic video material, especially that which represents what goes on in a non-ELT environment, designed for its entertainment value rather than language teaching, is a rich and exciting source of video for teaching English. Authentic video reflects authentic use of target language and brings extended context which motivates students and they achieve significant gains in overall cultural and content knowledge. Using authentic materials brings the means of learning and the purpose of learning close together and this establishes once again a direct link with the world outside the classroom. Edge (1996) stated that using authentic sources may help to engage students in authentic cultural experiences.

Besides exposure to authentic materials and discourse, students may also benefit by having an authentic audience when speaking or when planning to speak. In his study on blogging in an academic ESL context, Bloch (2007), found that not only did writing quality improve, but that students became contributors to the knowledge on the Internet rather than merely passive users of information. This is one theme that Gavin Dudeney mentioned in a talk during the ELT conference in Malta 2014. He said that being a digital native means not just being able to use IT, but it implies actually having a ‘digital footprint’ on the Net. Similar to writing, students perhaps took greater care when speaking for a real audience on YouTube, when compared to speaking in front of their peers. Students also had the chance to leave their footprint in the digital world, and invite others to comment on what they had to say about the TED talks.

**Research focus**

This research was done, to a certain extent, in collaboration with a group of language learners on a university language preparation programme. The focus of the research revolved around the following research questions. I feel that I must point out, the research didn’t begin with these questions as such. The original question I had in mind was ‘I wonder what is going through the minds of students doing these presentations every week’. The following research questions emerged after my initial set of questions. I managed to collate as much data as possible throughout the study, and then tailored the questions according to the emerging themes. The following key research questions are the focus of this study.

**Research Question 1:** How do students feel about speaking in an open class context?

**Research Question 1.1:** What do students think about the weekly presentations related to the course book?
Research Question 2: What are students’ perceptions about recording their own videos and sharing them online before and after the intervention?

Participants and context
Based on the results taken from a proficiency exam at Gediz University, students are placed in levels according to the CEFR. There are six levels starting from A1-C2. This teacher research was done together with a class of C1 students, of whom 8 have a Turkish background, 3 with an international background all aged between 18-19. They receive 28 hours of instruction from three different teachers. Lessons are separated according to skills. I am responsible for listening and speaking with 6 contact hours per week. Besides fortnightly written tests, students are also summatively assessed through the production of weekly presentations, tasks or role-plays about thematic topics in the course book.

Data collection
As I wanted to explore students’ conceptions about engagement in authenticity, I used a qualitative research paradigm. I began the study by informally discussing the speaking activities they would normally do in class, and then went on to talk about the idea of choosing their own topics. Based on these initial discussions, a series of structured questions was given to the class via a WhatsApp group (Appendix A). Students had a few days to think about the questions before answering.

We then talked about my idea about sharing students’ own recordings online, and I mentioned TED talks as a possible area of interest. Surprisingly, none of the students had ever heard about TED talks! I was really shocked as I thought that teachers would have made use of TED talks to some extent in previous quarters of the prep school programme. So we watched a few videos and I asked for their reflections. I then suggested that students, on a weekly basis, could watch a TED video and share their reflections online. Students were at first reluctant to share recordings of themselves online, so we came to the agreement that students could create a Prezi presentation, and together with screen capture recording software, record their voices while presenting and share this online. Due to this being the final quarter of the prep school programme, and a busy workload, students proposed that they only watch one video and present this at the end of the 8 week quarter. I told students that their videos would not be assessed, and would not go towards their final grades. Students’ willingness to participate despite not being given any extrinsic awards highlights their intrinsic motivations towards the project.

After choosing a video on TED, I thought students would need some assistance to aid comprehension whilst watching or listening to the video, these questions would also help students when creating their own presentations later on. (Appendix B)

Finally, after the process of watching their chosen video, producing a presentation and sharing it on Youtube, students were asked a final set of questions accessible via Google docs. These questions allowed the learners to reflect on the project.

I wanted to integrate this teacher research project with pedagogic activities so that there was a mutual benefit for both myself and my students. Due to the fact that students have a heavily loaded schedule, we decided to do this as an extensive listening project, that is to say that students would watch or listen to the videos in their own time, either on their mobile phones, PDAs or home computers. Over a period of 8 weeks, Students were asked to watch a TED talk of their choice in their own time. This would provide the meaningful input (Krashen 1984) needed to facilitate uptake. However, as I mentioned before, students could watch the video as many times as they liked, whilst taking notes on the key points made by the speaker. The students were also asked to make notes of certain discourse markers used so as to make use of these during their own presentations.

After students had the chance to discuss their notes, they created a 5-10 minute recorded presentation or video of their reflections and posted this on YouTube, thus ensuring an authentic audience for the speaker. As YouTube is a social sharing site, other viewers, who share a common interest in the topic, had the opportunity to post comments and feedback was hoped to be received.

Data Analysis
The findings were analysed using Miles and Huberman content analysis (1994) which assigns meaning to chunks of data, words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs. After assigning themes to students’ comments, I asked another colleague to check my initial analysis in order to ensure inter-rater reliability. This process serves to increase objectivity when interpreting qualitative data.
I then quantified the frequency of occurring themes and tabulated them according to importance.

**Findings**

**Research Question 1.** How do the students feel about speaking in class?

Students appeared to be more comfortable when speaking about things which they had a previous knowledge about. This gave them an increased sense of self efficacy and lowered the affective filter in the class, thus encouraging more output.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Descriptive sentences</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content familiarity</td>
<td>If I have information about the topic, it's easier to talk about</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I have knowledge about the topic, I feel less nervous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlocutor familiarity</td>
<td>Relaxed when speaking with friends</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel comfortable talking with friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>I feel anxious when speaking with friends because I don't want to make a mistake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At first, I feel anxious when giving presentations in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>I want to improve my speaking, so talking in class is a great opportunity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If it's constructive and beneficial, it's better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>I feel good when talking about films, music or that kind of stuff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel bored when talking about lesson things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 1.1** How do students feel about the weekly presentations from the course book?

I wanted to separate students' perceptions about general speaking activities from the speech involved when doing their weekly presentations. The most common theme to emerge was the lack of interest in the issues they are asked to talk about. Their comments reflected what I had assumed at the beginning of the course. I was able to empathise with them as I too was sometimes asked to present things I had little interest in. Some students did in fact seem to be pleased with the things they were presenting, finding them developmental on an academic level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Descriptive sentences</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic disen-</td>
<td>The topics are difficult and boring, too general to talk</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>about.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel boring as the topics always the same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Feel nervous because I want to do the presentation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perfectly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afraid of doing mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>Generally the topics are hard to talk about</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes I don't understand the topics which makes it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>difficult to discuss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive development</td>
<td>I like them usually, especially when they are about</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topics are interesting and good make you think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2.** What are students’ perceptions about recording their own videos and sharing them online before and after the intervention?

The data displayed largely negative perceptions about recording and sharing videos online as can be seen from the descriptive sentences in table 3. I thought students would have really loved the idea to do something like this, as they are digital natives, I thought this was something they would be used to. But I was surprised at the amount of perceived anxiety they shared, with just 2 students displaying a positive attitude towards it.
I was interested to see if students’ perceptions of sharing their videos online had changed after experiencing it. As can be seen from table 4, students felt that they had benefitted from the process in several different areas. Figure 1 goes further by providing a deeper insight into how students felt after they had uploaded their videos onto Youtube.

Table 3. Pre perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like the idea, it will be interesting and a challenge sharing it online</td>
<td>Never tried, maybe I feel worried about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the topic is good I can talk about it</td>
<td>Nervous and boring (bored) if you make mistake, you have to record again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strange, it’s not normal for me</td>
<td>We can record videos and send to teacher, but uploading online is shameful (embarrassing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think people will make fun</td>
<td>I feel nervous about my voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will be nervous and embarrassing because I don’t have the courage to do that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was interested to see if students’ perceptions of sharing their videos online had changed after experiencing it. As can be seen from table 4, students felt that they had benefitted from the process in several different areas. Figure 1 goes further by providing a deeper insight into how students felt after they had uploaded their videos onto Youtube.

Table 4. How did students feel about sharing presentations online afterwards?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Descriptive sentences</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>I have improved my speaking skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felt I was speaking fluently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>I’m not afraid anymore.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel more comfortable when presenting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Students can choose the way they want to learn.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good because we could choose our own topics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>I enjoy it now it is fun!</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>More motivation to practise and learn.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection

This was the first time that I had experimented with involving students in my teacher research, as co-participants to some extent. Although I knew the aim of the research, I wanted to let students choose which roads to take in getting there. The fact that students were empowered throughout the process gave them the intrinsic motivation that is needed for authentic effective language learning, and language use.

Students certainly seem to appreciate being given the opportunity to talk about something of personal interest. It made them feel less like students, and more like adults who were in charge of their own language learning and de-
exploring authenticity in (outside) an efl classroom using TED talks and Youtube

Koray Akyazı

development. But the students also commented on the fact that they learnt a lot of general culture and content knowledge, and hopefully acquired intonation and new vocabulary along the way. As this lesson was a listening and speaking lesson, students had more exposure to authentic listening materials besides the doctored discourse in the course book. Students also commented on the fact that having visual element whilst listening bolstered their comprehension. Moving onto the area of presenting videos online, students were all apprehensive about doing this at first. But after I had shown them my own recorded presentations and several TED talks, they soon came round to the idea that it may be a worthwhile experience. After recording and uploading their own videos, they discovered that it was no big deal and felt a sense of confidence in the fact that they had accomplished something they hadn't done before. This sense of achievement appears to have increased their self-efficacy in terms of recording and sharing a presentation with others outside the classroom. Several students also had the confidence to act as co-presenters of this study at the IATEFL ReSIG event in Izmir, 2015.

All of the students seem to have been deeply affected by the issues discussed in the TED talk videos. Some students said that they had learnt new things about their chosen topics, and had felt the same way as the speakers about some things, but had never heard those opinions expressed before. Others said that their video ought to be viewed by other teachers and students so that they can also benefit from the innovative ideas and their implications in life. The above examples mention being inspired at a much deeper level, about having the confidence to believe in yourself, and follow your dreams.

All the students reported a beneficial impact on their presentation skills after working on their videos. The key themes that emerged were that students improved the practical skills of presenting, and also increased their self-efficacy when presenting in front of the class, and with others.

Critical aspects

I remember my first teacher research paper 'How to teach phrasal verbs' involving a control and intervention group, pre / post-tests etc very academic and scientific. The choice of title highlights this misconception of what teacher research really is, and how liberating and refreshing it can be. In this work, I involved my students in the process as much as possible. Students specified much of the methodology through the negotiation of how many videos to record, the format of these recordings, and how their videos should be shared. Students having more say in what goes on was a really interesting experience for both myself and the students. It made them feel empowered, commenting on how it made them feel less as students, and more as researchers in their own right. The fact that several students wanted to be present at the conference was testament to this. The two students who were able to come had the chance to continue the theme of authentic output by presenting their stories in front of an authentic audience. So in the future, I would like to see students taking a more active role in the teacher research I (we) do.

References


Appendices

Appendix A Preliminary questions

Pre questions

1. How do you feel about the topics are you asked to talk about in the book/weekly presentations?
2. Would you like to have more choice in what you talk about?
3. What do you think about using the Internet to develop your speaking skills? Have you ever tried before?
4. How often do you watch videos (not films) on the internet?
5. Have you ever recorded (audio/visual) yourself and shared it online?
6. How do you think you would feel doing this?
7. Why does the teacher ask you to talk in class?

Appendix B Scaffolding questions

Scaffolding questions

1. What do you know about this topic?
2. What do you think will be discussed in the video?
3. What vocabulary do you expect to hear?
4. Give a basic summary of the key points.
5. What was the most interesting part?
6. What is your reflection of the video?

Appendix C Post question

Post Questions

1. Compare the speaking activity to those we normally do for class tasks.
2. What do you think about sharing the videos online?
3. How did you feel when I first mentioned sharing videos online?
4. How did you feel seeing your video online?
Main focus

Learners have difficulties in using language communicatively in EFL classrooms. Of the difficulties learners face, speaking skills hold a fundamental place. For Hamouda (2013), “EFL learners’ reluctance to speak English in the classroom is a problem commonly found in a foreign language context” (p. 17). Savaşçı (2013) states, “while the students may participate in the activities incorporating other skills such as reading, writing and listening, they are unwilling when it comes to speaking in L2” (p. 2683). In language learning classrooms, students are observed silent and/or reluctant to attend communication/discussion situations (Chen, 2004; Zou, 2004; Liu, 2005). Students most of the times prefer to stay uncommunicative and listen to teacher instruction during class, and tend to give responses/answers when they are asked to (Kurihara, 2006).

As I have observed students’ attitudes and behaviours in my classes for several years of teaching English, one of the most obvious problems seems to be that of students’ tending to see language classes as settings where they should show reaction when they are asked to. They prefer to stay silent. My students seem to be feeling that their duty is to reply to the teacher’s questions when asked; at other times, they tend to stay passive, listen silently, and take individual notes of class content. This is maybe because of the nature of traditional lecture-based teaching which they are accustomed to; or it is because of teacher-oriented classroom atmospheres. However, it is so clear that English classes need to be participative and student-centred. Learners are expected to be interactive and attend classes communicatively.

Silence of students in classroom is referred to as ‘reticence’ by several researchers. Phillips (1984) describes reticence as the avoidance of social situations in which learners feel inept and states “when people avoid communica-
tion because they believe they will lose more by talking than by remaining silent” (p. 52). Keaten and Kelly (2000) suggest a similar definition of reticence by pointing to the avoidance of communication because learners see it better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish (p. 168). Donald (2010) states reticence in classroom is ambiguous and due to the emic nature of condition, and there is an inevitable relation between reticence and language learning.

Following several meetings that we had, my advisor Dr. Kenan Dikilitaş and I came to the conclusion that I could study a particular topic ‘reticence’ in order to investigate the underlying causes of student-silence in my classes and provide possible solutions to this particular problem. My aim was to try to reveal causes of reticence of students and to see whether some different techniques together with pair/group work activities could contribute more to reduce reticence and language anxiety of students. Teaching is not a one-sided affair. Teachers need to understand students’ wants and expectations just as much as they are determined to integrate their own methodological and pedagogical beliefs into teaching.

With these particular aims in mind, I decided to implement some different techniques to engage my students in communicative speaking and discussion activities. To help my students use language in classroom, I tried two alternative techniques, which I named: ‘Take Notes and Speak (TNAS)’ and ‘Think and Speak (TAS)’. The research questions of this particular study were as the followings:

1. What are the causes of reticence in EFL classrooms?
2. What are the effects of the techniques used to overcome reticence of students?

**Causes of Reticence**

Researchers provide a variety of causes of reticence and students’ silence in EFL classroom. The following table illustrates sample findings from researchers on reticence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Researchers</th>
<th>The causes of reticence in language classrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Hamouda, 2013)</td>
<td>- Low English proficiency,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of speaking in front of others,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shyness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of making mistakes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Donald, 2010, p. 44)</td>
<td>- Cultural beliefs on language learning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of losing face,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of being misunderstood,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Instructors expecting learners to communicate before fluency has been achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cutrone, 2009, p. 58)</td>
<td>- Problem with western-style teaching practices,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ritualistic domain,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher’s attitude towards students,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of evaluation by others as a means of a negative influence on learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Liu, 2005, p. 226)</td>
<td>- Low English proficiency,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of familiarity with tasks,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teaching style,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of self-confidence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of making mistakes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Incomprehensible input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Keaten and Kelly, 2000, p. 170)</td>
<td>- Understanding need for communication, but inability to satisfy personal and professional needs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perceived incompetence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feeling helplessness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Anxiety,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Devaluation of communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Focus**

**Context and Participants**

In my classes through a two-month long period, before starting discussion/speaking practices, my students either first took short notes on a given topic.
Overcoming reticence of EFL learners in language classrooms

Hasan Savaş

(TNAS) or thought (TAS) on the topic for a while (thirty seconds, one minute, two/three minutes). The purpose was to let my students think and/or take notes beforehand. When they felt they were ready, they would have discussions in pairs and/or in groups. Accordingly, another purpose was to provide my students stress-free atmospheres in classes, and to avoid silence during speaking activities with the help of the TNAS and the TAS techniques.

For pre- and post-listening speaking activities or for pre- and post-reading discussion practices, for instance, I implemented the techniques together with my students. For almost all speaking and discussion practices, I asked my students to take notes on their notebooks for one to three minutes or similarly gave them a period of time to gather ideas by thinking. In this way, I aimed to help them feel more ready and comfortable. Rather than exposing them to reticence, the techniques helped them to generate ideas beforehand. The speaking practices mostly took place in the form of pair and group discussions. My duty was to direct them with the practices and monitor. I followed this process diligently because my students had reported that the causes of reticence were related to “Low English proficiency and Lack of vocabulary knowledge”, “Fear of speaking in front of others”, “Fear of making mistakes”, “Lack of self-confidence”, “Positive/Negative peer-impact”, “No time for thinking”, and “Lack of content knowledge”. By taking all these criteria into account, I tried to create appropriate settings where my students could avoid reticence; both the TNAS and the TAS techniques played innovative and supportive roles.

Participants

A class of 17 students in A2 (pre-intermediate) level participated in the study. The participants were all English preparatory students studying at a foundation university in Turkey, and their ages ranged from 17 to 20. The language program was modular in the preparatory school starting with elementary level (A1), continuing with pre-intermediate level (A2), intermediate level (B1) and ending with upper-intermediate level (B2). Every level was a two-month term and continued for an eight-week class time and one-week exit examination period.

Data collection tools

In this particular study I collected students’ reports from my students to answer the first research question “What are the causes of reticence in EFL classrooms?” and had semi-structured interviews with them to find an answer to the second research question “What are the effects of the techniques used to overcome reticence of students?” Students’ reports were used to see what my students thought about the causes of reticence in classes. Interviews were the reflections of my students on whether the techniques that we used in classes had had any effect on reticence or not.

Data collection procedures

In order to understand what my students felt about the causes of reticence, I requested them to write about their own experiences on a blank paper as students’ reports. This was at the very beginning of the A2 module during fall term in 2014-2015 academic year. After the last class on a pre-scheduled day, my students agreed to stay 15 to 20 minutes longer in the classroom. Their reports addressed these questions:

• Why do you stay silent in classes?
• What causes you not to participate in speaking activities?
• In what specific circumstances do you prefer to stay silent in classroom?

After the study was conducted for two months, I had semi-structured interviews with eight students. The aim was to see how they perceived the implementation of the TNAS and the TAS techniques. Interviews were held face to face with every student individually and voice-recorded. After classes for three days, I met with the students in a classroom and held the interviews. The interview questions were as the followings:

• What are your opinions about the “Take Notes & Speak” and the “Think and Speak” techniques?
• What do you think were the advantages or disadvantages of those two techniques? Can you explain in details?

Data analysis

For students’ reports written by 17 students in my class, a coding system was created. After the creation of codes, the themes emerged were categorized. For the semi-structured interviews held with eight students; the audio-recordings were transcribed and coded. The themes emerged from the codes were categorized.
Findings

Student reports – initial exploration of the problem

In order to understand what my students expect from me in terms of developing their speaking skills during classroom practices, I collected students’ reports from them. The reports aimed to answer the first research question “What are the causes of reticence in EFL classrooms?” Reticence may occur in the following conditions as reported by my students:

Table 2: Student reports: causes of reticence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ reports</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low English proficiency and lack of vocabulary knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5: My vocabulary knowledge is not enough to speak English.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 11: I cannot recall the right word. I sometimes happen to forget a word that I already know.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>That restrains me from speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 13: I like speaking English. I feel that I am somehow able to speak English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, I have lack of vocabulary knowledge. I need to develop my vocabulary knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 16: I do not think that I have problems with vocabulary knowledge. Actually, I sometimes make</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical mistakes while speaking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear of speaking in front of others</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3: In classroom or in crowded places, I have fear of speaking English and can never remember what</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to say. That makes me excited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5: Even if I have the enough knowledge on the content and language structure, I cannot speak in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the classroom.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 11: First of all, I feel excited when I have to speak in front of others, and I cannot make</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 12: I hesitate to speak when I am with people in a crowded place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear of making mistakes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1: I have fear of making mistakes and do not want to participate in conversation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2: I usually abstain from speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student 8: I sometimes feel that I will make mistakes while speaking.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9: I worry about making mistakes or pronouncing a word wrongly. So reason, I hesitate to speak in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom. But when I manage to do so, I feel happy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10: Most of the time, I have fear of making mistakes. That makes me not attend speaking activities.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 17: During a conversation, I wonder If I am using the correct words. What does he/she understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from my sentences? Am I telling the right thing while speaking? These ideas make me feel unmotivated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of self-confidence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students 4: When I am not with my friends, I have difficulty in speaking. That is because of lack of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-confidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6: I am not confident enough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7: Lack of self-confidence is another cause.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8: It is related to self-confidence, I guess. I don’t want to make mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive peer-impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 11: The aptitude of the person talking to me affects me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If he/she helps me while I am speaking, I feel more comfortable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 12: I do not hesitate to speak when the person that I am talking to is positive and helps me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realize my mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative peer-impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1: I prefer not to speak when the person that I am talking to is sad or disappointed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2: I do not want to speak when English is spoken fluently and effectively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6: The classroom atmosphere is open to ridicule. A wrong pronunciation of a word can cause me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lose face.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7: The classroom atmosphere is open to ridicule.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10: In an atmosphere where English is spoken fluently, I am afraid of making mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 17: If my partner is not willing to speak, I get unmotivated. That affects me negatively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semi structured interviews – overall reflections of the students

With the aim of understanding the impact of the TNAS and the TAS implementations on my students, semi-structured interviews were held with eight students. The aim was to find answers to the second research question, “What are the effects of the techniques used to overcome reticence of students?” The findings and the themes emerged are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Semi-structured interviews – overall reflections of the students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes from Students</th>
<th>Improvement in Fluen</th>
<th>Student 5: When I am asked a question, I have difficulty in replying.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 14: I start to speak in a conversation, but then I cannot go on because I cannot remember the right word. It is not because I do not know the word. Maybe I need some time to think about it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 15: When I am speaking English, especially when I am asked a question, I hesitate to reply back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student 16: I have difficulty in deciding what to say, when to reply or what structure I need to use. I get excited maybe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Lack of content knowledge | Student 1: If I do not know about the subject being discussed, I do not want to speak. |

| Student 2: When I use these methods, I see that I am developing myself. |
| Student 3: At the same time, it helps us to speak more independently and not to make grammatical mistakes. |
| Student 5: On the other hand, I think that these techniques help us develop our note-taking skills. |
| Student 6: I used these techniques to improve my English. I think, “Think and Speak” and “Take Notes and Speak” techniques should be used in our classes because these techniques are very beneficial for me and other students. |
| Student 8: I think that these techniques are important and beneficial for us. |

| Self-Confidence | Student 3: That is necessary for our self-confidence in the classroom atmosphere… I try to use the techniques that you taught us in classes. I feel more comfortable while answering questions. |
| Student 4: I think that I can speak more confidently and I feel more comfortable while speaking. Therefore, these techniques are more effective, in my opinion. |
| Student 7: If I take notes and make sure that I am ready to speak up, I feel more self-confident and can answer questions more comfortably. |
| Student 8: After taking notes I became more confident while speaking. |

| Low Anxiety | Student 1: We should take notes because it is good for confused minds. I am not confused when I look at my notes. |
| Student 4: Without any notes to help me, I do not feel comfortable. I think speaking with the help of my notes arises my readiness. |
| Student 8: I was having difficulty in answering questions because I was getting excited or afraid of making mistakes… I was able to express myself more efficiently. |

| Having Extra Time to Gather Ideas | Student 3: We can think about different ideas before starting to speak… As because we take notes before speaking, we have some time to think. |
| Student 5: I also find the TAS and TNAS techniques effective because they give us some time to think and/or provide us to bring our ideas together before speaking. |
| Student 6: For example, when the teacher is asking about an issue or whatever, this method of thinking helps us to remember. |
| Student 8: I got chance to think more and tell more ideas in English. I was able to express myself more efficiently. |

| Improvement in English | Student 2: When I use these methods, I see that I am developing myself. |
| Student 3: At the same time, it helps us to speak more independently and not to make grammatical mistakes. |
| Student 5: On the other hand, I think that these techniques help us develop our note-taking skills. |
| Student 6: I used these techniques to improve my English. I think, “Think and Speak” and “Take Notes and Speak” techniques should be used in our classes because these techniques are very beneficial for me and other students. |
| Student 8: I think that these techniques are important and beneficial for us. |
Relation to Other Language Skills

Student 2: Also, these methods changed my ideas because I began to understand listening materials more easily. It was good for my other skills.

Student 5: For example, in your classes we would take notes about important details during listening activities and they were also effective and related to these techniques. Taking notes while listening were meaningful. Rather than asking for help from my friend to answer a comprehension question, I looked at my notes and shared my ideas and found answers for questions by myself.

Disadvantages

Student 7: For low-level classes, it is a good technique to take notes, but for other levels it should not be used, I think. While you are learning English day by day, you become more confident, you start to speak more fluently.

Student 8: One disadvantage of the techniques is loss of time while thinking or taking notes.

Critical aspects

The results enlightened me in various aspects of teaching speaking in my classes. One of the featured outcomes is that students give priority to issues such as fluency, low anxiety, and self-confidence in their speech, in addition to their language proficiency. The answers in the interviews show that their concerns are ‘what to say’ and ‘how to say’. Students’ willingness to use the TNAS and the TAS techniques in other language skills also supports this. It is clear that being ready for speaking exercises and generating ideas before speaking in class matter. Students feel more confident when they have something to say.

The study also showed me that personalizing the speaking tasks by taking notes might help students come up with ideas easily and quickly. That might raise their self-confidence. It is also notable that these methods improved their grammar accuracy and vocabulary range together with their fluency in speaking. It is probable that students think they achieve fluency when they are ready to speak and do not worry about making mistakes much. It is possible to say that they are not aware of the mistakes when they are fluent. I realized that readiness to talk is one of the main concerns of my students. General questions like “what is your idea about…” cause anxiety and it becomes more difficult for students to find something to say. Leading a task or discussion with more specific and guiding questions can be more efficient. Asking a silent student questions may not help if he/she is already confused as it may cause him/her to lose attention and be unable to follow the lesson.

Another issue about this study is that spending enough time on activating the schemata about a speaking topic and creating necessary tools (i.e. vocabulary on the certain topic and structures) by taking short notes beforehand play an important role on students’ readiness to speak. Similarly, Donald (2010) delivers suggestions on how to deal with reticence such as having small group discussions and extending wait-time to allow the teacher to promote oral communication on the part of the learners in the classroom.

For my side, this study helped me see that learning and using new communicative techniques in language classes motivate and encourage students to speak. It is good that students are aware of the contributions of such new approaches to their as can be inferred from the semi-structured interview findings. This awareness may help them improve their own metacognitive and critical thinking skills if they begin to search for developing their own techniques. They might be capable of discovering their strengths and weaknesses and finding their own ways of learning. Additionally, trying such new techniques in class motivate students because they can overcome difficulties in language learning by taking their own needs into account.

Taking notes and thinking for a while before speaking are not real-life ways of communication; however, they could be beneficial speaking practices in low-level EFL classrooms. While the emphasis of tasks is on short daily communication/interaction practices in low-levels, giving extra time to students to gather ideas together can be another way to overcome reticence. In pairs and in groups, it may reduce reticence stemming from fear of speaking in front of others.

References


Main focus
As an EFL teacher I have too often experienced the scene where I push my students to speak English but end up hearing barely a few words. Even if my students want to communicate in the target language, many factors including anxiety and lack of self-confidence prevent them from doing so. Throughout my classes I have observed that my students feel unwilling and unsafe during activities such as the picture-description tasks which also form a main part of the oral exam. With this concern in mind, and based on my observations of my classes, I decided to use peer-assessment to help my students overcome the apparent anxiety they experience during picture-description tasks. This action research paper focuses on how a peer-assessment technique affects EFL learners’ perceptions of speaking.

Background
This study took part at Çukurova University School of Foreign Languages, Adana, Turkey. Our school is attended by students who study English in the preparatory classes for one year before they go on with their education at various departments of the university. As well as being a widely used in-class speaking activity, picture description tasks form a main part of the oral proficiency exam students take at the end of the year. My class in which I conducted this action research project consisted of 23 (14 = F and 9 = M) university preparation class students. The age range was between 18-23. These students had 24 hours of English lessons in a week.

Research focus
Throughout the year I had been teaching this class, I found it very hard to get my students to take part in the classroom speaking activities. Particularly dur-
ing the picture description tasks, I observed that they were reluctant and nervous. I videorecorded one of my lessons where I asked my students informal interview questions regarding their perceptions of picture description tasks and speaking in general. Their answers to my questions and their comments during the class discussion revealed their concerns and negative perceptions of speaking English in the classroom environment. The following extracts from the videorecording show how my students felt about speaking English in the classroom:

**Extract 1**

T: How do you feel during the picture-description tasks?

S1: I feel unsafe, because I'm already nervous. Normally I can speak English. I mean I try it at home, but when I come here and when teachers ask me a question, I cannot answer. I'm stuck and I don't know what to say.

**Extract 2**

T: Do you have difficulty in classroom even if it is picture-description task?

S2: Yeah...I mean the classroom environment makes me uncomfortable.

**Extract 3**

T: Do you want to participate in the in-class speaking activities? How do you feel about them?

S4: When I am talking to my pair I feel comfortable and I could remember anything...But when it comes to the speaking exam I forget everything. I feel very nervous.
These extracts show that my students were experiencing many problems and had negative perceptions of speaking in class and picture-description tasks. They reported that they felt unsafe, nervous, uncomfortable and unwilling while trying to speak English in the classroom environment.

Based on my observations and my students’ comments, I asked myself how I can change my students’ negative perceptions of speaking and with this question in mind I decided to use a peer-assessment technique to see if it helps to change my students’ perceptions in a positive way. My research question was:
- How does a peer-assessment technique affect my students’ perceptions of speaking?

Why peer-assessment?
Peer-assessment can be defined as “an arrangement for peers to consider the level, value, worth, quality or successfulness of the products or outcomes of learning of others of similar status” (Topping, Smith, Swanson & Elliot, 2000, p. 150). In peer-assessment, learners are in a way responsible for each other, and this responsibility helps them to develop awareness and eventually they may improve their language skills. Brown (1998) points out that “giving students the opportunity to evaluate their peers not only gives them an important sense of responsibility for their fellow students’ progress, but also forces them to concentrate on the skills during their own presentations” (p. 67). If implemented in a proper way, peer-assessment can be a very useful educational tool which provides students with different skills. Mok (2011) states that “it (peer-assessment) can facilitate students’ development of various learning and life skills, such as learner responsibility, metacognitive strategies, evaluation skills, and a deeper approach to learning” (p. 231).

The findings of many studies in the literature show that peer-assessment can be a really useful technique to be used in language classrooms. In my study I decided to use a peer-assessment technique in order to see its effects on my students’ perceptions of speaking.

The procedure
First of all, during two lessons I gave my students training about the criteria to assess picture-description tasks. This checklist consisted of accuracy, fluency, vocabulary and organization sections. Each of these sections was worth 5 points, making the checklist 20 points in total. While training my students as assessors, I gave examples of each criterion and showed them how to evaluate a performance. After these two lessons, my students used the checklist to assess their peers over a four-week period. In total, each student was able to perform and assess at least ten picture descriptions. In each picture description task I paired each of my students with a different student, so that at the end of the process they would get feedback from various people. I wanted them to keep the evaluation sheets they got from their peers to be able to refer back to them when needed.

During the process, I observed my students as a teacher-researcher. At the end of this four-week period, I gave all the students (23 in total) an open-ended questionnaire regarding their perceptions of using peer-assessment to practice picture description, and its effect on their speaking performance. After the content analysis of the questionnaire results, I conducted an informal interview with 14 volunteer students regarding their answers to the questionnaire items. The students were also given a consent form at the end of the process to get their permission to use their images and the extracts (see Appendix).

Findings
The frequently expressed gains by the students in the open-ended questionnaire and the informal interview data were: *improvement in performance, awareness in weak and strong areas, feeling safe & self-confident, lower anxiety levels, improvement in performance, willingness towards speaking*. The following table shows the frequencies of the most reported gains in the questionnaire data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently Expressed Gains</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in performance</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness in weak and strong areas</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe &amp; self-confident</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower anxiety levels</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness towards speaking</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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</table>
As can be seen in Table 1, after this study, most of the students reported to have a positive perception of picture-description and speaking English in general. 18 of the students declared that they have observed improvement in their performance, and 17 of them wrote that they built awareness in their weak and strong areas. Also, after this process many of my students stated that they felt safer and more self-confident. In addition, some of my students wrote that they weren’t as nervous as in the past and some of them claimed that they were even more willing to speak English in the classroom environment.

Below are some of the extracts from the questionnaire data:

**Awareness in Weak and Strong Areas**
- P1: After this study, I understood in what fields I should improve myself.
- P3: My friends told me about my weaknesses, and this helped me to be more cautious about those parts and here, and in the highlighted bits below.

**Improvement in performance:**
- P5: I tried to use the various structures that I learned from my friends and I learned new things.
- P12: I realized that I spoke more fluently and I reduced my grammar mistakes.

**Feeling Safe & Self-confident:**
- P10: As a result of this study, I don’t hesitate to speak English and I am not afraid.
- P7: I am more self-confident now and I speak more comfortably.

**Lower Anxiety Levels:**
- P2: I think now I feel less nervous.
- P9: Doing this task again and again reduced my anxiety and fear.

**Willingness towards Speaking:**
- P3: I am more willing to speak and I started to like it.
- P10: I think this task increased my interest in the lesson.

The findings of the informal interview data I conducted with 14 volunteer students show similarities to the findings of the questionnaire data.

As given in Table 2, almost all of the students I interviewed stated that they built awareness and improved themselves by the end of this peer-assessment process. A majority of the students also reported that they don’t feel anxious any more. Some of the students said that they also feel more self-confident and willing to speak English. A few of my students even stated that as a result of this study, they were able to perform well during the presentation speaking exam in their lesson with the other instructor.

Below are some of the extracts from the informal interview data:

**Awareness in weak and strong areas:**
- P8: ... I realized that I always used too limited grammar and vocabulary and that I should improve myself in these parts.
- P13: Since our levels are the same, seeing my friend’s mistakes and their telling me my mistakes were more effective.

**Improvement in performance:**
- P5: I learned new structures and words from my friends and I started to use them.
- P14: Now I can think more quickly and speak more fluently.

**Lower Anxiety Levels:**
- P11: I benefited from this task in that my anxiety level decreased. Now on seeing how confident my friends are I am less nervous.
- P7: At the beginning I used to feel afraid, but not any more.

**Feeling Safe & Self-confident :**
- P4: When I got positive feedback from my friends, I felt more self-confident.
- P9: Now I am less afraid of making mistakes.
Willingness towards Speaking:

P9: I am more willing and fearless.

P3: After this study now I am more willing to speak. I even try to describe it whenever I see a picture or photo at home.

All these findings gathered through the informal interview and the questionnaire data are parallel to what I observed during that four-week period. As the teacher-researcher I observed each pair of my students while they were conducting the activity. It was surprising for me to see that even the most reluctant students seemed eager to speak and more self-confident while speaking English. I was also able to check their performances by listening to each pair during the activity and by checking the evaluation sheets they filled out for each other. I observed a certain amount of improvement in their performances by the end.

Discussion

The findings of this action research project are similar to the findings of other studies in the field. For instance, in my study almost all of my students gave positive feedback on the usage of peer-assessment in the classroom, and in their study they conducted with university students, Okuda & Otsu (2010) also found that the majority of the students gave positive comments on peer-assessment. The students in their study reported that they have learned a lot from each other, and they have found their strong and weak areas. These findings are similar to what I have found. As a result of the questionnaire they gave the students at the end of the process, Okuda & Otsu (2010) found that most of the students perceived benefits of peer-assessment indicating that peer-assessment can be a positive educational tool. However, they were not able to identify how the students felt during peer-assessment tasks and stated that these points needed to be explored in a further study. In this present study, the open-ended questionnaire items and my informal interviews with the students gave me the chance to reveal my students' feelings and perceptions of this task. My students stated that they did not feel as nervous as in the past, they felt more self-confident and more willing to speak English in the classroom environment.

In another study by Orsmond (2000), 80% of the student participants declared that peer-assessment was useful. Similarly, in her case study with four students regarding peer-assessment, Mok (2011) stated that all four participants in her study perceived peer-assessment positively and talked about its benefits in the interview. Peer-assessment was reported to be beneficial especially in enhancing student thinking. It was also stated by one of the students that they would also learn from the peer feedback they gave others, for example by reflecting on others' performances they could avoid the problem themselves. All these findings and comments are parallel to the findings of this action research project. My students also pointed out that they built awareness of their weak and strong areas and they were able to improve their performances based on the feedback they got from their peers.

Limitations

It should be kept in mind that the findings of this study mostly rely on self-report data and this may have some limitations. Some of my students might have reported having a positive perception of speaking English after this task even though it was not how they really felt. With this concern in mind, in future studies perhaps more formal observation techniques and tools such as observation checklists can be used.

Critical aspects

During this action research process, firstly I was able to identify the problems that my students are experiencing while trying to speak in the target language in the classroom environment. We were able to talk about their worries openly and their comments helped me become aware of the fact that they needed extra support to practise speaking and that our lessons lacked required opportunities. I started questioning what I can do to change my students' negative perceptions. In the end I decided to try peer-assessment and give my students some responsibility.

During the four-week period we used a peer-assessment technique in the classroom, I observed that when given the responsibility to assess each other, my students were more willing to participate in the lessons and speak English. Giving them the opportunity to work in pairs and talk about their performances made my students more autonomous.
Looking into the future

My observations helped me see that I should change my lessons from a more teacher-centered nature to a more student-centered one. This action research project showed that when I give my students the chance to assess each other during picture-description tasks, they reported becoming more self-confident and developing positive feelings towards speaking English. The results of this study will guide me in the following years of my teaching.

References


Appendix

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY

USING PEER-ASSESSMENT TO ENHANCE EFL LEARNERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING

The extracts from the data and the photographs taken of you would be used to add interest and exemplify the research findings. For example, they may be used as illustrations in the online and the printed versions of the research paper.

To be completed by the participant:

<table>
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<th>NO</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I understand that I will not be given credit for my appearance in photograph(s).</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I give the researcher permission to:</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- use my photograph(s) and extracts from my interview and questionnaire responses in presentations (e.g. at conferences or seminars)</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- put my photograph(s) on the research paper</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- present my interview and questionnaire extracts in the research paper</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Name of participant: _______________________________

Signature of participant: _______________________________

Date: ___________
Exploring the relationship between speaking activities and student motivation

CeAnn Myers, Yuliya Speroff, Merve Gazioğlu, Buket Tanyeri and Fatma Aksoy

Background to the research

How can we, as English teachers motivate our students to speak? Of all the speaking activities that we utilize in class, which one encourages the most students to participate in class, share their experiences/opinions, and fosters a positive class environment? Is there even an activity that will do all of these things? These are just some of the questions that prompted five teachers at Meliksah University in Kayseri, Turkey to conduct an action research study. As part of the new Action Research Committee at our university, we were committed to learning more about action research and conducting a project to help us better understand our teaching and our students. While most of us had never participated in action research before, we decided to work together to help each other through this process. When we first began meeting to discuss this project, we realized that motivating students to speak with each other was a common challenge in our classes at the English preparatory school. While the preparatory school consists of seven-week quarters, allowing students to change classes and interact with different types of students, we struggled to find activities that fostered genuine communication between students. In fact, many students seemed perfectly happy to get to know each other using their first language during the ten-minute breaks between classes, but showed little interest in speaking in English during the lessons. With students attending classes twenty-four hours per week, we had a beautiful opportunity to develop a keener understanding of what motivates our students and to employ a diverse range of speaking activities in the hopes of encouraging more students to communicate with one another. With these goals in mind, we began our research study.
Context
The participants of the study were 111 students in Meliksah University School of Foreign Languages. The Meliksah University preparatory school consists of both domestic and international students whose native languages are different from English. The school aims to prepare students to successfully continue their university education in English, or develop a basic understanding of English that will help them become global citizens. Students participate in a variety of classes, both integrated and discreet skills, as well as a Project-based Instruction course. In all classes, students are encouraged to speak and communicate in English. Formal speaking assessment includes two oral quizzes in each quarter and a level speaking assessment at the end of each quarter.

The majority of students come from a grammar-translation background and, therefore, need instruction and practice in speaking. They are not motivated to speak in the class and lack self-confidence to speak in English. Some even have a bias against English. Speaking ability is a critical component of language competency and is essential for future university study and to complete the preparatory school at Meliksah University. However, the needs analysis, based on teachers' observations, revealed that the language learners at this school hesitate to produce acquired language orally. In addition to our desire to help students develop this essential skill, we wanted to understand what motivates our students to participate more in communication activities in class.

Research focus
With these objectives in mind, this action research study attempts to answer the question, “What speaking activities motivate students to participate in class?” According to Dörnyei, while motivation is extremely complex, it is responsible for why students do something, how long they choose to continue, and how much effort they are willing to exert (2000). The study focused on in-class activities; therefore, the why is already known: students participate because they are required to. However, our study sought to quantify how long they continued the activity and how much effort they exerted. It is accepted that many of the students in our context lack motivation for practicing English, and for speaking in particular. We hoped to gain insight into our students’ motivation to develop activities that encourage students to learn English and enjoy the process. To this end, we developed three sub-questions:

1. How accurate are teachers’ perceptions of students’ reactions to activities?
2. Do student reactions to an activity change between the first and second experience of that activity? Do their reactions change after experiencing all of the activities?
3. Why do students like or not like an activity?

A teacher's intuition plays a critical role in how they design their classes, why they choose certain activities and how they introduce ideas to students. Bearing this in mind, the instructors wanted to evaluate the accuracy of intuitions when it comes to selecting speaking activities. The second question responds to the knowledge that motivation is extremely complex (Dörnyei, 2000). In order to increase the reliability of our study, we wanted to do the same activity using different content and partners, at different times in the day and during the week. The third question can give us greater insight into students' reactions to activities as well as help us to adapt activities for future use.

Methods
The study included five teachers and over 100 students in a university-level Intensive English Program. All of the students had been identified as B1-level speakers. However, students had been placed into classes based on their performance leading to many highly motivated/proficient students in the higher classes and the opposite situation in the lower classes. Eighty percent of the students in the study were in the lower classes, so the majority of our participants had lower motivation or proficiency.

In order to answer the research questions, the teachers selected four speaking activities and used each activity twice throughout the seven-week quarter (See Appendix A for details of the four activities). In the pre-research stage, teachers predicted which activities would be more motivating for students. Throughout the research, participants completed three types of questionnaire:

1. Teacher Questionnaire: The teachers filled out a short questionnaire right after each activity in order to evaluate the level of student participation. Thus, in total eight questionnaires were completed by each teacher for a sum total of 40 teacher questionnaires. (Appendix B)
Student Questionnaire: Students completed the student questionnaire after each activity to evaluate how much they liked the activities for a total of eight questionnaires from each student. (Appendix C);

3. Final Student Questionnaire: This questionnaire was conducted only once by each student at the end of the quarter. They were asked to rank activities based on their level of enjoyment and to collect feedback on each activity (Appendix D).

In the post-research stage, the instructors provided reflections from their observations.

All of the data derived from the questionnaires was analyzed. The teachers’ pre- and post- research perceptions were then compared to the results from the students providing answers to the first question: How accurate are teachers’ perceptions of students’ reactions to activities? For each activity, the information gathered in the first student questionnaire was compared to the information from the second questionnaire allowing the researchers to answer the second question: Do student reactions to an activity change between the first and second experience of that activity? All students’ comments were coded as positive, neutral, or negative and then coded again based on common themes. This allowed us to answer our third question: Why do students like or not like an activity?

Results

Question 1: How accurate are teachers’ perceptions of students’ reactions to activities?

In answer to our first question, our results indicated that teachers’ intuitions mirrored students’ responses, with some minor discrepancies. Teachers correctly predicted which activities students would enjoy the most and which activities students might find complex. Nevertheless, one major area of surprise came from the PowerPoint Timed Discussion activity. Teachers anticipated that the timed aspect would encourage students to speak and not become bored. However, some students complained that the time limit made the activity more stressful, and thus less motivating: ‘I don’t understand because fast pass time,’ ‘We are in a hurry and we can’t think.’ In addition, teachers had not anticipated that the students would complain about a lack of supervision and individual feedback during pair and group work. As one student commented, ‘It was an efficient activity and can be repeated but not with partners as the whole class, so our teacher can see our mistakes and correct easily.’

Secondly, teachers predicted that students would not find the Question Dictation activity enjoyable and might not see its relevance to their studies. In contrast, students reported understanding a clear link between listening carefully to the questions in the activity and understanding the questions in their exams, making this activity meaningful, and thus, motivational. This student’s comment demonstrates this clearly: ‘I can see if I pronounce correctly when I hear the words. That’s why it can help me understand sentences in oral quiz.’

Question 2: Do student reactions to an activity change between the first and second experience of that activity? And do their reactions change after experiencing all of the activities?

In answer to the second question, unsurprisingly, the data showed that there are significant differences between all three questionnaires. However, before moving on to discuss these results, we need to explain the discrepancies in our figures. Although the overall study was conducted with 111 students, not all students’ responses are accounted for in our results. There are three main reasons for this, which can be regarded as limitations of this study. Firstly, some teachers did not conduct some activities either because of time limitations or the changing dynamics from class to class. Secondly, attrition was encountered because some students were absent when the activities took place. Lastly, even where all students participated in all activities, some either did not want to complete the questionnaires or they were absent that day. Our data, therefore, is inconsistent, but we feel it still offers some useful insights.

Throughout the semester after participating in each activity, students were asked to complete the student questionnaire and give the activity that they had just completed a score from 0-100. Students gave higher scores to the activities that they enjoyed more. Figure I illustrates the score that students gave the Fluency Line activity. As can be seen, students scored this activity much lower the second time they participated in it. Additionally, the student questionnaire asked students if they would like to participate in the activity again in the future. The first time students ranked this activity, 62% of students expressed a desire to repeat it, while only 56% of students agreed after their second exposure.
Figure I. Fluency line activity scores

Figure II illustrates students’ scores for the Question Dictation activity. In contrast to the Fluency Line activity, students scored this activity more highly after the second experience. Moreover, in contrast to the Fluency Line activity, the number of students reporting wanting to repeat the Question Dictation Activity increased. While 83% of students were interested in repeating the activity after the first experience, this rose to 96% after the second experience.

Figure II. Question dictation activity scores

While student scores for the above activities fluctuated, the scores for the Dice Game activity remained fairly stable at around 74 points (Figure IV). Moreover, 84% of students expressed interest in repeating this activity after the first experience which increased slightly to 87% after the second experience.

Student responses to the Timed PowerPoint Discussion activity can be found in Figure III. As with the Fluency Line activity, students scored this activity lower after the second experience and fewer students wished to repeat the Timed PPT Discussion after the second experience. Ninety-seven percent of students reported wanting to participate in this activity again after the first experience; however, only 89% wished to do the activity again after the second experience.

Figure III. Timed powerpoint discussion activity scores
As can be seen by comparing Figures I-IV, student attitudes to the Dice Game remained the most consistent. Additionally, at the end of the seven-week quarter, we also asked students to complete a Final Questionnaire ranking the four activities from their favorite (4 points) to their least favorite (1 point). The results in Figure V show that, while students indicated a preference for the Dice Game activity, there was not a statistically significant difference between the four activities.

Figures I-V demonstrate that students’ feelings towards these activities altered over the course of the seven-week quarter and provided data to answer our second sub-question: Do student reactions to an activity change between the first and second experience of that activity? Do their reactions change after experiencing all of the activities?

The scores students assigned to each activity after the first exposure show that students preferred the Timed PowerPoint Discussion Activity (84 points) followed by the Dice Game activity (73.8 points), the Question Dictation activity (70.3 points), and finally the Fluency Line activity (63.8 points). However, after the second exposure, students ranked the Question Dictation activity highest (80.7 points), followed by the Dice Game activity (74 points), the Timed PowerPoint Activity (70.5 points), and finally the Fluency Line activity (53.8 points). In the final ranking students preferred the Dice Game Activity followed by the Timed PowerPoint Discussion activity, the Fluency Line activity, and lastly, the Question Dictation activity. Because students ranked these activities differently each time we collected data from them, we can conclude that students did not consistently prefer any one of these activities to the others. While students might enjoy certain activities more than others, we
hypothesize that other influences (teacher, day of the week, and time of the day) contribute greatly to how students feel about an activity, as demonstrated by these comments from the students: ‘In the morning students can’t help sleeping’, ‘because Yulia beautiful teach’, ‘Because I like teacher.’

Student comments after each activity and on their final evaluations can provide us with insight into our third question – why students like or don’t like an activity. After checking the comments, a priori coding was carefully done in which the most repetitive ideas stated by students counted. For example, approximately 60 out of 111 students defined activities using positive adjectives such as ‘enjoyable,’ ‘funny,’ and ‘fun.’ These adjectives were categorized under one umbrella term. Then, we followed the same process for creating each theme. Examples of student comments can be found in Appendix E, but some recurring themes presented themselves: students were motivated by activities that mimicked the exams, activities that helped them practice skills that they had recently learned, and activities that grouped them with their friends. Students did not like activities that had complicated directions or that were “boring.” Taking into consideration all of the data, we found that there is not one “perfect” activity which all students found motivating and where teachers saw noticeable increases in student effort and time spent on the activity.

Learning as teachers and researchers
As a result of this study, we, the participating instructors, have gained valuable insight into our teaching, activities, our relationships with our students as well as with each other. Throughout this action research we worked collaboratively to share ideas and create activities, which showed us the incalculable benefits of working together. Additionally, providing students with a consistent way to give us feedback throughout the quarter helped build stronger relationships with the students. While we did not uncover the holy grail of activities, this experience increased our confidence in trying different activities and gave us a few considerations to keep in mind when choosing an activity:

Students have different learning styles. This might seem like an obvious conclusion; however, we were still surprised to find that there was not one universally enjoyed activity. To give an example of this, while some students will enjoy moving around and rolling the dice, others find such activities disruptive. While planning the Fluency Line, the teachers assumed that all the students would enjoy getting up from behind the desks and getting out of the classroom. However, comments like, ‘We don’t need go outside. We should do something in the class’ show that such assumptions cannot be made about every student. The implications for motivating students to speak are that a variety of activities should be used which engage students with different learning styles and allow them to work in different modes.

Useful activities are motivating. Students do enjoy an element of playfulness but, being exam-driven, they are keen to participate when they see a clear link between an activity and their own exam performance. One student reported on the Dice Game that, ‘This activity is perfect because, good questions for oral quiz.’ It is not all about exams though and students also reported enjoying an activity because it provided opportunities for vocabulary learning or revision. As one student said, they enjoyed the Dice Game ‘Because the game was very enjoyable and I kept in mind what we have learned.’

Competitions make practice fun. We found that students in our context are highly motivated by games or competitions. Whether it is because they enjoy posing their skills against their peers, or because competitions tend to be fast-paced, our results indicated that the majority of students enjoyed this and liked participating in these types of activities.

Directions must be simple and clear. Students, especially with lower proficiency might become overwhelmed by the task of not only learning the rules of a new activity but also having to complete a questionnaire afterwards. Therefore, directions should be broken down into multiple short steps and activities modeled by the teacher. In addition, the fact that the questionnaires are anonymous should be made explicit to encourage honest responses.

Planning is key to decrease stress. When running activities in class for this action research, teachers had to juggle several tasks: activities had to be presented and explained, student questionnaires needed to be distributed and collected. At the same time teachers had to complete their own notes on levels of participation. We would recommend printing out the entire set of questionnaires and activity materials before the start of the course and filling out the teachers’ portion of the questionnaires as soon after the lesson as possible as details get hazy after even a few hours. Students don’t always label their questionnaires appropriately so data management is of utmost importance: every set of documents should be clearly marked and put in separate folders.

Through using these five insights gained from our action research study, we are confident that we can provide students with better-prepared and more motivational speaking opportunities in our classes, which will help them to develop their confidence and abilities to communicate in English and succeed in their future.
Appendix A
Speaking Activities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluency Line</td>
<td>• Increased fluency through repetition (same question, different partners)</td>
<td>• Two lines of students facing each other&lt;br&gt;• Time limit&lt;br&gt;• Students shift down the line and change partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question Dictation</td>
<td>• Listening for accuracy&lt;br&gt;• Spelling-sound connection&lt;br&gt;• Asking and answering questions</td>
<td>• Teacher writes 4-6 questions related to the topic/recycling vocabulary&lt;br&gt;• Teachers dictates questions to the class twice at a normal pace&lt;br&gt;• Student write down the questions&lt;br&gt;• Teacher checks accuracy&lt;br&gt;• Students answer the questions in pairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>PowerPoint Timed Discussion</td>
<td>• Asking and answering more complex questions&lt;br&gt;• Giving longer answers, time pressure</td>
<td>• Teacher prepares a Power Point presentation&lt;br&gt;– 1 or 2 questions per slide&lt;br&gt;– 6-10 questions&lt;br&gt;– 2-minute timer&lt;br&gt;• Students discuss their ideas in pairs/groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dice Game</td>
<td>• Asking and answering questions&lt;br&gt;• Recycling and using vocabulary&lt;br&gt;• Following directions&lt;br&gt;• Cooperating/negotiating</td>
<td>• Teacher adds 10-15 questions to the dice game template&lt;br&gt;– Each question focuses on one vocabulary item&lt;br&gt;– The number on the dice determines who answers the question&lt;br&gt;• Students take turns rolling the dice and asking/answering questions</td>
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Appendix B
Teacher Questionnaire

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<td>2. What was the section/group?</td>
<td>3. What was the unit?</td>
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<td>4. What day and class period was it?</td>
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<td>5. How long did it take?</td>
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<td>6. How many students participated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. What was the students’ level of participation?</td>
<td>0% 25% 50% 75% 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
Student Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Name:</th>
<th>Class:</th>
<th>Week:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. How much did you like it? (Put a ✓ over a percentage.)

0%    25%   50%   75%   100%

2. Would you like to do it again? YES NO

2.1. Why? (Explain your reason(s) with a few sentences.)

Appendix D

Final Student Questionnaire

Please help us make lessons more interesting and motivating by answering these questions about class activities.

1. Please put the numbers 1-4 next to the activities below (1 = most enjoyable, 4 = least enjoyable).

   - Dice game
   - Fluency line
   - PowerPoint timed discussion
   - Question dictation

2. What were some good and bad things about each activity? (E.g. Did it help you improve your speaking or listening? Was it too easy or too difficult?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Good things</th>
<th>Bad things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dice game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint timed discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question dictation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E
Example Student Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency Lines</th>
<th>Question Dictation</th>
<th>PowerPoint Timed Discussion</th>
<th>Dice Game</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This activity is improving my English grammar and speak</td>
<td>It was so good, enjoyable and it developed our brain, our memory and our vocabulary.</td>
<td>It was an efficient activity and can be repeated but not with partners as the whole class, so our teacher can see our mistakes and correct easily</td>
<td>Because very enjoyable group. Mustafa is this group. We learn new vocabulary. This game really, certainly funny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun game because we socialize with friends</td>
<td>I like it. Because a good way to understand the question.</td>
<td>This activity is important for oral quiz. I want to practic. Maybe you should be good this activite</td>
<td>This activite is perfect because, good questions for oral quiz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it is confusing, couldn't reach its goal</td>
<td>I can see if I pronounce correctly when I hear the words. That's why it can help me understand sentences in oral quiz.</td>
<td>We are in a hurry and we can't think</td>
<td>It would be better if we didn't use dice because it is illicit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like another place, I like different partner. So I like this act.</td>
<td>It's simple activity. I don't want to again. We can do more hard exercise.</td>
<td>I don't understand because fast pass time</td>
<td>Because the game was very enjoyable and I kept in mind what we have learned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers’ Own Development
Developing my understanding of my own L1 use practices

Ceylin Özünlü

Main focus
I am an English teacher in my 6th year in the field. So far I have dealt with all ages; from 6 to 60. I have an MA degree in English Language teaching, with my thesis on “Vocabulary education with visually impaired students and teachers”. I have always preferred to find a variety of different possible techniques to adapt in my classes. It is my first year as an instructor at the university and we are always asked to speak English in our lessons. For this reason, in this study, I will be discussing “My L1 use in the classes”.

Examining my own teaching process has always helped me look deep into the right choices of actions during the lessons. This year, I was given a chance to study my own teaching processes by action research. I believe a study occurs when the researcher realizes that there is a struggle in the process. With the necessity to speak English in the classes, I felt the need to figure out how to avoid Turkish in my classes. In my opinion, the more I could reduce my L1 use, the more my students were going to be exposed to L2 and also learn it. The first idea of choosing to study my L1 use in my classes occurred to me when I found myself struggling how/when/where/whether to use L1 in my instructions.

Background
While questioning the use of L1 in my classrooms, I encountered researchers who had the same question in mind seeking for some answers to whether to use it or to what extent to use it. While Bruhlman (2012) seeks reasons/results for the same issue by pointing out that L1 use may be seen as unprincipled and uncontrolled by some authorities. Meyer (2008), on the other hand, suggests maximized use of L2 because of the need for the exposure to L2, while supporting L1 use only when developing understanding of certain L2 concepts. Some of the ideas coming from teachers disagree with reducing L1 in L2 classroom as much as possible. In a research conducted in the University of Puerto Rico, the
The best way to understand what was really going on in my lessons was to help myself to understand what kind of a situation I was in. Firstly, I needed to observe myself in main course classes. I mostly worked with slow learners who find it hard to believe that they could speak English someday. In order to start from somewhere, I only determined my research questions and what else was needed for collecting data. Yet, the reason for me taking notes of every single moment was encountered after certain examinations on the diary. At the end of a two-month period, I turned back to what I had written down and tried to categorize the information I had. I came to the conclusion that there were times I used L1 consciously or unconsciously. After this moment, I recorded my experiences in my diary accordingly. In the third month, I kept the record of my conclusions on whatever I wrote. I was able to record them by the help of brainstorming with my supervisor, my colleagues and even with my students.

**Research focus**

**Participants**

So far I have taught A1, A2 and B1+ levels. Through my study, I have finished 4 quarters (8 weeks for each) and in each quarter I had 16 hours of main course classes. I also had grammar and writing classes but I could only have a chance to observe myself in main course classes. I had 18 to 22 students in a classroom. I mostly worked with slow learners who find it hard to believe that they could speak English someday.

**Data Collection**

At the beginning of the study, after I decided the research questions, I first helped myself to understand what kind of a situation I was in. Firstly, I needed to get some information about how/when/where/why I used L1, already. The best way to understand what was really going on in my lessons was to record one of my main course lessons. It took 45 minutes. Later I transcribed it with both the students’ speech and mine.

I actually had decided to keep a diary. I wrote randomly, sometimes every lesson, sometimes once in two days. I was always careful about keeping the little notebook with me so that I didn’t forget the moment I used L1.

One month later, I began to write not only the process in the classroom but also some notifications related to those moments, the outcomes after I read what I had written, the pieces of brainstorming with myself, the brainstorming with my colleagues and most importantly the pieces of information my supervisor and I shared during the meetings. I did not have any criteria for taking notes. One reason for that is I hadn’t determined or presumed the outcomes of the study. I just took notes of the change I experienced. It is a case study and one can tell that case studies are unpredictable till the end. Another reason is that I did not want to limit my choices of researching. In order to start from somewhere, I only determined my research questions and what else was needed for collecting data. Yet, the reason for me taking notes of every single moment was encountered after certain examinations on the diary.

At the end of a two-month period, I turned back to what I had written down and tried to categorize the information I had. I came to the conclusion that there were times I used L1 consciously or unconsciously. After this moment, I recorded my experiences in my diary accordingly. In the third month, I kept the record of my conclusions on whatever I wrote. I was able to record them by the help of brainstorming with my supervisor, my colleagues and even with my students.

**Data analysis**

**In which situations do I use Turkish?**

Transcribing the lesson records was the first step of analysing the data collected. In order to examine what were reactions, responses, explanations given in Turkish by the teacher, two aspects were determined: comments on the use of Turkish, and the speech acts of the use. By the comments, one can understand the intention behind Turkish usage. Speech acts, on the other hand, help us to figure out the examples of L1 on the functional basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Functions (speech acts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
<td>Göremiyorum hocam.</td>
<td>Excuse making/complaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Teacher: | No. You should start writing. You can come closer, here if you want. You can come near Efe… (After she sees that one student is taking a photo instead of writing down) Ben neden bilgisayarından yansımıyorum arkadaşlar, önceden hazırlayıp? Niye acaba? | I needed to make some points very clear. | Complaining / clarifying/
However, my first realization and first note taking started with a student comment; we were in the main course lesson and I suddenly started speaking Turkish. The reason for that was my anger towards demotivated students. Right after that, one of the students said “Look, she is speaking Turkish because she is angry!” And that helped me with my first reflection on practice. By this memory, I not only took notes but also tried new behaviours every time I walked in my classes.

Analysing the Diary

One can say that it was not a regular period of time. Rather, it was a circular system developed to come to best conclusions. After the first analysis, the need for some other written recordings was evident. At that time, I realized that following a certain pattern and ending the research was going to be insufficient for a qualitative study. Accordingly, note-taking, analysis and self-reflection were done one after another (See the circle on the left). As I understood, I needed to write about nearly everything that happened in the class related to my L1 use. Furthermore, I generally took necessary notes during the lessons and that led to some confusion when I started reading them after two months (January the 6th). I had written about the sentences I used, the reasons of me switching languages, the things I had felt while using L1, and so on.

Critical aspects

The questions I formed at the beginning of the study were about the situations I use Turkish in, the ways of reducing L1 and a classroom language list of L2.

As anyone can see, as a teacher I had been supporting the idea of using no Turkish but English only when I taught at whatever level. For this reason, these questions were set for me to minimize L1 use and maximize L2 use. Yet, as the study moved on, I had some other expectations too. I stopped focusing on minimizing L1 use; instead, I started to find some ways to control using both languages. At that time, I needed to add more questions to my study about the ways I use L1 beneficially and the ways to make the students use both languages controllably.

In accordance with these questions, two instruments were chosen to examine the data I collected: recording the lesson and keeping the diary. These contributed in the study first as separate items. However, at some point, they overlapped each other and gave me close outcomes to come to conclusion with.

Understanding my use of L1

As I mentioned above, diary keeping formed the biggest part of information I got to reach considerable data analysis. I started talking to my colleagues about this issue and what I found and believed at that time was that I had to use English all the time so that my students could use English more often. That was the most valuable idea that initiated this study.

To develop my understanding of my own practices about using L1 or L2 in my classrooms, I decided to record one of my lessons and transcribed Turkish use instances selectively. In the meantime, I started to keep a diary to keep track of instances of L1 use systematically over a period of 2 months. I also kept a written account of my comments on what I realized from the discussions I had had with my supervisor and other colleagues. This way of recording both justified the lesson transcription I recorded and helped me find necessary categorizations for the little pieces of information I write about every lesson.

Lastly, during the realizations, L1 use was a fact which I had always tried to avoid. This outcome is one of the most helpful I got in this period of time.

What my diary speaks

What are the ways of reducing L1?

The next stage was to start the analysis of what I recognized. With the help of brain-storming, reading the diary over and over again and finding the common parts in L1 use, I came up with
For 2-3 weeks, I examined some “Classroom Language” lists by which I was going to encounter gathering the groups, categorizing the pieces of information some parts that are essential to put in this written report: firstly, whether I am conscious or unconscious. At that point, despite the difficulties I was going to encounter gathering the groups, categorizing the pieces of information seemed like a fruitful idea of seeing the whole picture. I figured that conscious/unconscious use of L1 was on the stage (See the arrows below).

The arrows presents the analysis of the diary that has been kept for about 8 weeks. I have tried to take note of the reasons for myself to turn to L1 use in the classroom. I have read the diary several times as a pre-coding activity and tried to find out major reasons for L1 use. It was after I decided that I needed a categorization. I figured out that I used Turkish not only unconsciously, but also consciously. I realized that there are times that I intentionally choose to speak Turkish (see cloud 1).

The quality/quantity of Turkish I used was not the only piece of information I recorded into my diary. I also did a sudden categorization about me using L1 on purpose or not. It was 6th of January, 2015 when I was now aware of the fact that I was continuing to use L1 intentionally or unintentionally.

What is the ideal list of classroom language I can use?

For 2-3 weeks, I examined some “Classroom Language” lists by which I was going to find suitable fixed expressions in L2 for the equivalent L1 classroom language I generally used (See a part of a list contributed to the study below).

![Diagram of conscious and unconscious L1 use]

- **Conscious L1 use**
  - Saving time (not to hinder the fluent ongoing of the lesson)
  - Talking about something really serious (warning)
  - Out-of-the-lesson issues (problems that occur during the lesson but not about the lesson)
  - One-to-one grammar explanation (metalinguage can be hard to understand in L2)
  - 1-2 minutes relaxation (They speak English when it is time for them to speak English)

- **Unconscious L1 use**
  - No patience
  - Angry over the same question
  - Answering an L1 question in L1 in return

Today, I used Turkish on purpose to tell how an activity works because the activity was based on translation. (Cloud 2)

Ending the lesson; that’s all for now/today, let’s stop now, you can go now, put your books/things away, see you on Monday, have a nice weekend, etc.

With the beginning of the 3rd quarter, I decided to speak only English at first because I believed that once the students hear me speak Turkish, they would never use English in the lessons. With this in mind, I created my own list of classroom language. After that, I started speaking English with the last class of A2 students who had repeated A1 previously. I was aware of the times I spoke L1 and it also helped students to use Turkish effectively. Unnecessary chats and conversations in L1 were over. L1 was used only when necessary. In addition, the students and I also understood the fact that Turkish is
an essential part in a language lesson only if one knows how to combine it very well with the learning & teaching processes.

Discussions with the supervisor

**In which ways can I use Turkish beneficially?**

When I told my supervisor that we were in the middle of the study and my research now required extra questions as I was encountering different answers, my supervisor answered as on the left. Initially, I set out to eliminate use of L1 but as I went on with my research, I figured it wasn't possible. As you can see below, too, I used L1 consciously as much as I use it unconsciously. For this reason, the state of the study changed from reduction of L1 to control of L1. While having this conversation, I was also asked the rationale behind my L1 use. As we kept our dialogue going, I realized my beliefs were simply changing. Observing myself and discussing the details afterwards provided me with the real reasons; I used L1 to communicate, to enforce learning, to teach how to use L2. At the end of this meeting, I had to face the fact that for my own benefit as an instructor, I needed L1 with my Turkish students.

In another meeting, with the question asked on the right side, I tried to go deeper and decided I couldn't have enough job satisfaction; because then, I wouldn't be able to reach each and every student, would lose slow learners and lose control in teaching how to learn. That was when I noticed that I should have had a control over my L1 so that I would have put it into use beneficially.

**How can I make the students speak English or Turkish in a more controlled way?**

The opportunity of being exposed to L2 is unfortunately dismissed when we provide the circumstances below. Then we would be teaching about English but not teaching how to use/practice English. So I decided both languages are needed for teaching and learning English. Not long after that day, while I was brainstorming with one of my colleagues (Merve Sarpkaya), I decided to use one of the materials she had gave me; a toy duck (see picture). At the time of speaking, she suggested we use it in the classroom to control uses of languages for the students. The most essential aim here was to make students speak whatever English they have.

One month later, it was clearer that every new trial outranged the old one and this situation is the same with the classroom list and the duck. By the time I tried the duck in my lessons, I had the opportunity to see that it wasn't about the language I used through the lesson but it was the time that should be settled both for the students and the teacher. With the duck in the lessons, now we had a trigger to use L1 or L2 and both the students and I knew we weren't going to answer a question asked in one language with another language. Here are some expected or unexpected moments that occurred when I used the duck in my classes;

- The students avoided unnecessary Turkish.
- They said they are more focused on the lesson because Turkish conversations were gone.
- They tried to learn some fixed expressions in English to use in the classes such as; “What does _____ mean?” “Can I speak Turkish?!”
- When the duck quacked for the second time and the students were free, they used L1 on purpose to benefit from the lesson. They asked the things they didn't understand through the lesson. (Turkish on purpose)
- The students felt the authority of a duck (!). It was only to control/limit the use of both languages.

**Reflection**

I have started this study with the hope of raising my own awareness towards my L1 use in my classes. Through this period of time, I have learned that even the data collection questions may change according to the course of events and moments inside and outside the classroom. While try-
Developing my understanding of my own L1 use practices

Developing skills for giving oral corrective feedback in my grammar lessons

Gülşah Terçan

Main focus

This chapter includes the general background to the study, the role of corrective feedback (CF) in language learning, corrective feedback strategies, aim of the study, and research questions. The analysis of findings are presented in relation to the research questions. In addition, my general feedback and the impact of this study on me are presented.

Background

I realized during my classes that one of the biggest problems in language learning is students are unable to talk accurately although they have learnt a great amount of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. They make many errors that hinder them from producing the accurate forms of the target language. I sometimes felt I wasn't giving them enough feedback to correct their errors. Because of the difficulty I had during my grammar lessons while giving feedback I chose this research focus about the types of oral corrective feedback. Additionally, I was interested in learning about current practice and developing my practical skills related to CF because errors which must be avoided have always been regarded as negative in the second language teaching and learning process (Maicusi et al., 2000). In the light of many studies that come up with the same thought, error correction has been studied by researchers for years due to the importance of it for second language acquisition (SLA). Table 1 presents some views of researchers about errors.

References


Table 1: The views of researchers related to errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Views of errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chu (2011)</td>
<td>Errors are 'common characteristics of language acquisition and learning'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candling (2001)</td>
<td>Learners' errors are important to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purwati et al. (2012)</td>
<td>Errors are the natural and indispensable part of using English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladday (2012)</td>
<td>Errors show the progress of learners in language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If errors are an inevitable part of efficient learning, we need to deal with them carefully so that students can have opportunities of learning during the implementation of CF strategies.

The role of corrective feedback in language learning

CF is one of the critical aspects of the learning process in that it provides a focused opportunity for learners to monitor their language production and improve their learning when they are actually learning. Different researchers argue its importance as seen in Figure 1.

Table 2: The importance of CF according to the researchers

Corrective feedback strategies

Table 2 shows the strategies of dealing with learners’ errors. The samples have been received from the actual classroom dialogues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback types</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example dialogues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Recast**       | The teacher uses to reformulate all or parts of a student’s incorrect utterance minus the error. (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) | Student: He went to home.  
Teacher: He went home.  
Student: He went home. |
| **Repetition**   | Repetion carries the teacher’s repetitions of the errors by putting stress on them. (Ellis, 2009) | Student: He isn’t play golf now.  
Teacher: He isn’t play?  
Student: He isn’t playing. |
| **Clarification requests** | Some questions that show the teacher has not understood are asked the students. (Ellis, 2009) | Student: I’ll going to be at home.  
Teacher: Sorry?  
Student: I’m going to be at home.  
Teacher: How did you break your leg?  
Student: I fall down.  
Teacher: No. It must be ‘fell down’. |
| **Explicit correction** | The teacher corrects the error by saying it explicitly that the student has said something incorrect. (Lyster, 1997) | Student: The children is at the beach.  
Teacher: The children are plural.  
Student: The children are at the beach. |
| **Elicitation**   | Repeating the learner utterance until the erroneous part by using tone of voice to get the learner complete his/her utterance again. (Ellis, 2009) | Student: She is going to in Alsancak.  
Teacher: She is going to? |
| **Metalinguistic feedback** | The way to get the student find the correct utterance by commenting, asking questions or giving more information. (Lyster, 1997) | Student: The children is at the beach.  
Teacher: The children are plural.  
Student: The children are at the beach. |
| **Paralinguistic signal** | This feedback type carries questions or facial expression showing the utterance of the student has been ill-formed. (Ellis, 2009) | Student: We already see the film.  
Teacher: (Teacher shaking her hand to emphasize already)  
Student: We have already seen the film. |

Figure 1: The importance of CF according to the researchers
Developing skills for giving oral corrective feedback in my grammar lessons

Gülşah Tercan

So I want to answer the following research questions;

RQ1: Which corrective feedback types do I use?
RQ2: What are the practices that I do differently from the literature?
RQ3: What corrective feedback strategies do my students prefer? Why?
RQ4: Do I need to develop my corrective feedback strategies? If yes, how?

Research focus

The aim of this research is to recognize the role of different kinds of feedback types, and develop my ability to use them effectively in order to improve students’ speaking skills and promote their language learning. In this study, not only the needs of students but also the suggestions of literature in relation to the usage of CF types are focused on. I conducted this research in my own classrooms with a total of 49 A2 level preparatory class students (27 female, 22 male). They voluntarily participated in the study.

I collected both qualitative and quantitative data. First, I recorded my 10 classes to categorize and quantify the frequency of my current CF practices. Second, I used a self-designed questionnaire as a data collection method to find out my students’ preferences for CF strategies. In the first part of the questionnaire, I asked questions to learn about their background information. In the second part, I included 7 examples of CF strategies to learn their preferences and get the percentages of them. Thirdly, semi-structured interviews were done to enable content analysis related to the students’ CF preferences. Finally, voice recording was done again after post-CF practice in order to transcribe and categorize the errors and feedback strategies I used according to the students’ preferences and the suggestions of literature. Finally, the frequency of the practices was obtained. Table 3 shows data collection tools and analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Data Collection tool</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Pre-CF practice recordings and transcripts</td>
<td>Categorizing and quantifying frequency of the practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Percentages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Post-CF practice recordings and transcripts</td>
<td>Categorizing and quantifying frequency of the practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Data collection tool and data analysis

Critical aspects

During data analysis, first I explored how I implemented oral corrective feedback by analysing the transcripts of the records and then categorized and quantified them to see the variety and frequency of the feedback types I use. I thought this would tell me which CF types I use and help me understand my own practices in a clear way before CF practice. I aimed at learning students’ preferences of CF types that they want to have by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. After my studying on literature related to CF types, I started to practice with all types of CF and I recorded my classes to see the difference and improvement in my practice by analysing the transcripts of the records, categorizing, and quantifying them again. My research questions are answered in the light of the findings.

RQ1: Which corrective feedback types do I use?

The analysis concluded with the categorization of 55 examples of feedback obtained under categories according to their common characteristics. Table 4 displays the percentages of these categories and use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback types</th>
<th>N (55)</th>
<th>Perc %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recast</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification request</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit correction</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicitation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic feedback</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliciting metalinguistic explanation from learners</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking confirmation from the class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering multiple choice correction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the analyses of 10 lessons’ records, 55 examples of feedback were recorded. ‘Metalinguistic feedback’ and ‘eliciting metalinguistic explanation from learners’ had the highest percent of all (18.1 %). The lowest percentage score is of paralinguistic signal since that feedback typed wasn’t used (0%).
It can be said that I gave mostly explicit feedback to the students by giving and asking about more grammatical information while I wasn’t aware of para-linguistic CF.

RQ2: What are the practices that I do differently from the literature?

I identified three different practices from the literature related to CF. These are eliciting metalinguistic explanation from learners, seeking confirmation from the class, multiple choice. I felt during my lessons that when I asked a question to a student he/she wasn’t sure about the answer but they tried their luck in finding the answer or they heard the answer from their friends. Therefore, I wanted to make the answer clear by talking about its reason and I elicited metalinguistic explanation from the students. Additionally, I sometimes gave multiple choices to get the students find the answer and I wanted to engage all the classroom in the lesson by asking confirmation about an answer that a student gave. In doing so, I aimed at increasing students’ awareness and knowledge about the language while speaking. Here are some examples from the classroom dialogues:

1) **Eliciting metalinguistic explanation from learners:** I asked the reason for their answers to have a metalinguistic explanation from the students.
   
   **Student:** Were your sister there?
   
   **Teacher:** Why?

2) **Seeking confirmation from the class:** I asked about the opinions of the other students in order to see confirmation from the class.

   **Student:** Yesterday at six I prepared dinner.
   
   **Teacher:** Do you agree?

3) **Multiple choice:** I asked multiple-choice questions for students to find out the correct form.

   **Student:** Are you need?
   
   **Teacher:** Are you need or do you need?

RQ3: What corrective feedback strategies do my students prefer? Why?

Table 5 shows 49 students’ preferences for CF types with their percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF types</th>
<th>N (49)</th>
<th>Perc %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recast</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification request</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit correction</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicitation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic feedback</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistic signal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results, ‘recast’ was the most preferred CF type (77.5%). The second most preferred CF type was ‘repetition’ with 51.02%. ‘Explicit correction’ and ‘paralinguistic signal’ were less preferred types (32.6%) after ‘metalinguistic feedback’, and ‘elicitation’ (40.80%, 34.6%, respectively). The least preferred CF type was ‘clarification request’ with 20.4%.

Table 6 shows qualitative comments from students about their reasons to prefer recast. They were mainly about developing awareness and better learning. Additionally, their ideas in relation to longer retention and self-confidence were reflected. Students think that if the teacher uses recast to correct their errors, they’ll learn and keep the correct version in their mind and gain more self-confidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We’ll learn better.</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn about my errors.</td>
<td>awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn what is correct.</td>
<td>and better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’ll make learning faster.</td>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’ll be permanent learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ll notice where we made an error.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ll understand better where we made an error.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’ll be better to keep it in my memory.</td>
<td>Longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won’t forget about my error.</td>
<td>retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We won’t repeat the same error again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll stick in my mind.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can affect our talking positively.</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll trust myself and I’ll try to speak more.</td>
<td>confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won’t lose my self-confident.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be anxious if the teacher asks me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As displayed in Table 7, the reasons of students about why they prefer repetition to be corrected is mainly about developing awareness & better learning, longer retention and being more attentive. They think that they can spot the error they’ve made easily and they can be more careful for the next time to not repeat the same error.

**Table 7: Analysis of students' justifications for repetition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students' responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>We can't understand if you don't repeat.</td>
<td>Developing awareness and better learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10, S35, S39</td>
<td>We'll understand and remember what’s wrong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5, S48</td>
<td>I can understand better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2, S21, S22</td>
<td>I won't repeat that mistake again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13, S47</td>
<td>I can correct my error and learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>It'll be catchier then.</td>
<td>Longer retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>I'll be more careful for the next time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S29</td>
<td>Sometimes it's hard to find the error.</td>
<td>Being more attentive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the statements of students who prefer clarification to be corrected. Under the themes of self-correction and longer retention, students think that if they correct the errors they made on their own they’ll learn better and more permanently.

**Table 8: Analysis of students' justifications for clarification request**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students' responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Our correcting the error is better to understand.</td>
<td>Self-correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10, S34</td>
<td>We can learn better if we correct ourselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S46</td>
<td>I'll keep it in my memory easily.</td>
<td>Longer retention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments from students about explicit correction are exemplified in Table 9. The students think that explicit correction will develop their awareness and teach them better while getting them to be more attentive.

**Table 9: Analysis of students' justifications for explicit correction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students' responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S2, S14</td>
<td>I'll understand better.</td>
<td>Developing awareness and better learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>If you don't correct I can't understand where I did error.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8, S46,</td>
<td>I can notice and correct my error easily.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S48</td>
<td>I can keep it in my mind better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S18</td>
<td>It'll make me learn permanently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11, S12</td>
<td>I won't repeat the error again.</td>
<td>Being more attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S45</td>
<td>I'll be more careful for the next time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 demonstrates the reasons of the students to choose elicitation as CF type. According to one student, it makes them more engaged in the classroom while other students gave explanation about the benefits of self-correction and their increased awareness to learn better.

**Table 10: Analysis of students' justifications for elicitation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students' responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S4, S39</td>
<td>I'll understand better.</td>
<td>Developing awareness and learn better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11, S26, S49</td>
<td>It can help us remember.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S35</td>
<td>It'll be instructive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12</td>
<td>I won't repeat the error again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13</td>
<td>I'll be more active in the class.</td>
<td>More engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S14</td>
<td>It'll better to correct the error on my own.</td>
<td>Self-correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S27, S31, S47</td>
<td>I can learn better if I deal to correct myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 is related to the comments from students about paralinguistic signal. The students think that being corrected by paralinguistic signal allows them to manage self-correction and it leads them to being more attentive so that they won't repeat it again.
Table 11: Analysis of students' justifications for paralinguistic signal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students’ responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S5, S28</td>
<td>I’ll tell again correcting, which is good.</td>
<td>Self-correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S40</td>
<td>I’ll think to correct myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S43</td>
<td>I can answer easily.</td>
<td>Being more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>I won’t make the same error again.</td>
<td>attentive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 gives the reasons of students to prefer metalinguistic feedback which makes them learn better, correct themselves and be more attentive. It is seen that giving grammatical explanation is wanted by students since it enables students to learn easily.

Table 12: Analysis of students' justifications for metalinguistic feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Students’ responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>It’s better for us to if you correct our grammar. Learning better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>It’s good to learn the form of the sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S15, S44, S49</td>
<td>Knowing the correct grammar will help me learn better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9, S45</td>
<td>I’ll learn better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S19</td>
<td>It’ll ease my learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S25, S29, S38, S48</td>
<td>It’ll be permanent learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13</td>
<td>It’ll help to correct myself.</td>
<td>Self-correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S31</td>
<td>I’ll understand better where I made an error Being more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and I’ll try to not repeat it.</td>
<td>attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S20, S26, S47</td>
<td>I won’t repeat my error again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ4: Do I need to develop my corrective feedback strategies? If yes, how? According to the analyses of 10 lessons’ records, Table 13 shows the feedback types that I used after the research.

Table 13: CF practices after the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CF types</th>
<th>N (108)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recast</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification request</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit correction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicitation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic feedback</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistic signal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliciting metalinguistic explanation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking confirmation from the class</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering multiple choice correction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is seen from the findings, I modified my corrective feedback strategies in line with the students’ preferences to minimise the mismatch between what I, the students and the literature prefer. After the research, the percentage of recast, clarification request, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback and paralinguistic signal increased as the students preferred. The percentage of repetition and explicit correction decreased. While I could give 55 pieces of feedback before research, I gave 108 instances of feedback after the research. Thus, it can be implied that I was more aware of using different kinds of CF types after studying the literature and improving myself with this. One of the most striking differences is the decrease of my using explicit CF after the research, but I increased my metalinguistic feedback and eliciting metalinguistic explanation because I think correcting by using these CF types gets students to think and question their answers more. Therefore, these aren’t exactly like direct explicit CF that some studies are against using in language teaching.

Looking into the future

As this was my first experience of doing teacher research, I was unsure how it would progress, but it was really rewarding to me. This research enabled me to further recognize the importance of giving different kinds of CF towards students’ errors in order to promote their language learning and speaking skills. Besides, I developed myself professionally as a teacher while enhancing students’ learning because it impacts the practice in the classroom directly. The other sig-
nificant impact of TR on me is also personal development since I feel more aware of my knowledge and confident about my practices in the classroom.

I finally found an opportunity to develop this section almost 9 months after I completed the study, so I had ample time to practice in the classroom. I can say that I have realized that I improved my teaching skills related to error correction. I can use all kinds of CF consciously, respond to my students’ oral production effectively by giving specific CF and monitor the process of uptake by my students or how they internalize the corrected error and use it in the later days. That’s why, I believe that I and my students have benefited from my research in different ways. I have developed my understanding and practice of giving immediate oral feedback and the students developed awareness towards how they can benefit from the teacher feedback. I feel that my research has been an influential experience on my development of setting up an interactive instruction by which I negotiate with students on their verbal language use.

References
students who work most in a class. Thus, a teacher should make the students do the talk in a language class. Also, unlike the idea that assumes more teacher talk will help the students learn better, more student work and engagement in the learning process prove to be more effective. In some studies, it is also indicated that dominance of teacher talk in class hinders students’ listening and communication skills.

Moreover, it is important to note that not only the quantity but also the quality of the teacher talk plays a significant role in the class. Nunan (1991: 198) states that teachers need to pay attention to the amount and type of talking they do, and to evaluate its effectiveness in the light of their pedagogical objectives.” Thus, teachers should be aware of the content while they talk and the time they allocate for teacher talk to provide more opportunities for student talk. The more students have the chance to practice the language, the more effective the lesson will be. However, this is not to say that teacher talking time should be minimized. Teacher talk should be controlled not to hinder students’ talk. If the quality of teacher talk is appropriate for the level of the students and provides interaction between teacher and student, it will help the students’ learning more effectively.

Methods

This research focuses on reducing my teacher talking time in class by using certain strategies and tasks with the aim of increasing student talking time. Through voice recording in several lessons and a written survey answered by students, the effectiveness of the strategies and tasks is discussed for further implications in teaching. The participants are 18 A1 level students from Gediz University, Izmir. Before applying the tasks and strategies, I collected written feedback from the students about my teacher talk. Throughout the quarter which lasted for 8 weeks, I applied the tasks and strategies, which I researched about and created myself, to reduce my TTT and increase STT and recorded 3 of my lessons by voice recording. After collecting all my data, I listened to all of my records and counted the amount of teacher utterances and students’ utterances. I created tables consisting of different categories of the contents of my teacher talk. Also, I counted the student talking time in terms of individual, pair and group work time. I compared the figures to see if I reduced my teacher talk and increased student talk and if the strategies worked or not.

Also, one of the coordinators observed one of my classes and I made use of her notes and comments about my lesson. Having finished the applications, I gave the students an online survey which asked what the students thought about the new activities and strategies I used in the class.

Learning as teachers and researchers

Findings

1st cycle: Identification of my current teaching

RQ1: “What are the characteristics of my talk in the classroom before the project?”

To answer this question, I recorded my talk in the classroom and analyzed the transcript. The following categories were grounded from the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My language functions</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error correction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoing</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the same transcript, I also analyzed the student talk and induced the following 10 characteristics.
How to reduce teacher talk in order to increase student talk

F. Nur Demirel

Table 2: Distribution of characteristics of student talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of student talk</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving comments</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating the teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Utterances</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amount of talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair talk time</td>
<td>7 m. 2s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group talk time</td>
<td>No act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent active time</td>
<td>8m 24s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2nd Cycle: Reflection and Modification cycle

From the data, I have determined my weaknesses in terms of teacher talk and student talk and I reflected on these as follows:

- I tend to tell and instruct all of the tasks by which I assume I teach or help them learn. However, this only means I dominate the class as a teacher and give students less opportunity to talk.
- I read all of the sentences or the paragraphs in the exercises myself which also contributes to increasing.
- I ask many questions while teaching for various purposes such as introducing the topic, asking for information or concept checking. This makes the students more passive as only recipients of the questions in terms of questions.
- The lesson is quite interactive because it goes through teacher–student communication but I can be less active as a teacher to encourage student–student communication and act more as an observer.
- Because the lesson is Main course which consists of various skills at a time, the exercises demand a lot of instructions which also adds up to the amount of instructions given by the teacher.
- Students do not have the opportunity to generate questions to ask each other.
- Although there is enough time spared for pair talking time, there is no activity for group work. I need to provide activities for group work
- To reduce clarification by the teacher, peer check can be encouraged which can also increase student feedback and comments
- There is no need to echo the students’ answers, students can repeat their answers if not understood.

RQ2: What strategies and tasks can be done to reduce teacher talk and increase student talk?

Considering the weaknesses I discussed in research question 1, I have discovered that I need some tasks or strategies to reduce my teacher talk. Therefore, I searched for some strategies and techniques, and modified them in accordance with my purpose. Also I produced some tasks myself which are as follows.

The strategies

1. Use ICQs and CCQs to reduce instructions
2. Ask strong students to help and explain to the weaker students
3. Encourage pair work and group work
4. Lead them to use their dictionaries
5. Make use of more pictures
6. Encourage peer checks and peer discussion
7. Encourage self-checks through online books

Table 3: Tasks and techniques developed from the first cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2</td>
<td>Pair talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3</td>
<td>Comparing ideas with a partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 4</td>
<td>Summary with a pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique 1</td>
<td>Flying object for student nomination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique 2</td>
<td>Use of ICQs (strategy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For detailed information about the tasks and techniques (See Appendix A)

3rd Cycle: Practice Cycle

RQ3: What are the characteristics of teacher talk and student talk after the modifications?

After I formed some strategies, tasks and techniques, I recorded my lesson again. I analyzed the transcript and reached the following information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My language functions</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error correction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoing</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Characteristics of teacher talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of student talk</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving comments</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating the teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Utterances</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Distribution of characteristics of student talk

4th Cycle: Reflection and Re-modification

When I analyzed the data grounded from the second record, I realized that I made some progress and reflected on the data as follows:

- The number of utterances for error corrections were fewer than the first record. Correcting each error is not necessary all the time, so it is sometimes more useful to ignore some unimportant errors. Also the students often correct each others' mistakes which also helps the teacher correct less or tolerate more.

- In the second record, I deliberately tried not to read the statements or the paragraphs aloud myself because I discovered that it is not always necessary. Thus the number of instances of reading aloud decreased.

- Similarly, echoing has decreased as I avoid repeating the students’ statements and instead, I let the students repeat their answers if not understood clearly.

- For the clarification category, it seems that I managed to decrease the number of my utterances. I led students to look up in their dictionaries if they don’t understand a word and to ask their partners if they need clarification for an exercise.

- However, in terms of instructions and asking questions, I could not make any progress. In fact, the number of instructions increased, which can be attributed to the frequent use of exercises in the book. Therefore, I decided that I should focus on these parts more and create more tasks to reduce the amount of utterances in these categories.

- In terms of student talk, it is clear that there is a significant progress. Students ask more questions both to each other and the teacher. They intend to answer more as they become more confident with group work and pair work activities. The time allocated for silent student work decreased because of less individual activities, which gives students more opportunities to talk.

Discovering these, I formed other tasks relating to my purposes and modified teaching with the use of these tasks.
Table 6: The tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1</td>
<td>Picture on the screen with questions to discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2</td>
<td>Hidden Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3</td>
<td>Follow-up questions by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 4</td>
<td>Brainstorming in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 5</td>
<td>Post-it questions on the walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Visual symbols for instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For detailed information about the tasks and techniques (See Appendix B)

5th Cycle: Practice

After the re-modification of my teaching, I recorded one of my lessons again to see if the tasks work or not. The tables below show the data of the practice.

Table 7: Characteristics of teacher talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My language functions</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error correction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoing</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Distribution of characteristics of student talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of student talk</th>
<th>N of utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving comments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating the teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Utterances</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amount of talk

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair talk time</td>
<td>5 min 33 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group talk time</td>
<td>9 min 47 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent active time</td>
<td>6 min 41 s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection

After analyzing the data of the 3rd record, I figured out that the number of instructions decreased to a certain extent. However, there isn’t a significant change in numbers as a result of the fact that the lesson is Main course lesson which is inclusive of all the four skills. Also, the frequent use of the book exercises results in using a lot of instructions. Thus I can say that I may choose from the exercises which are useful and skip others and do more group or pair activities instead. Furthermore, the level of the class can be another reason for using more instructions as they are introduced to new topics and exercises. This class was one of the lowest ones in A1.

Obviously, the use of some strategies and tasks worked and the number of questions I asked decreased by nearly fifty percent (helped by post-it questions, pictures with questions). One of the most important achievements of this project was the formation and use of tasks aimed at groups and pairs.

When I look at the total number of utterances by me, I can see that it decreased to a reasonable amount. Moreover, the number of utterances by the students increased, which suggests that I attained my goal.

In terms of the categories of student talk, I can deduce that by encouraging pair work and group work, the number of instances of student feedback...
and comments increased. Also, students’ answering teacher’s questions also increased significantly. As the time allocated for pair work and group work was extended, the length and variety of student talk was enhanced as well. There are more activities for group work and pair work, so more student talk and less teacher talk was obtained as the tables suggest.

**Developments and changes**

**Impact of the Project on my Development**

It was a rewarding experience, as with this study I have been able to focus on a kind of long-lasting weakness in my teaching. Though for years I have been aware of my excessive talk and dominance over the students and the lesson in general, I could not investigate this until last year. However, the waiting time helped me identify the problem better and encouraged me to make it the focus of research I can do in my classroom. I haven’t been able to address this weakness only by reflecting upon it. Investigating it gave me different insights to think about and design materials and tasks to try out and develop my skills in using my own talk in an efficient way. It has definitely contributed to my idea of how to design my lessons with the aim of more student talk. To achieve this, now:

- I plan my lessons with more pair work and group work activities. I gained valuable insights into the quality and quantity of teacher talk in class.
- I consider the amount and characteristics of my talk and try not to hinder student talk.
- I create various tasks and materials to increase student talk which could encourage students to feel more confident and learn easily and participate more during class.
- I feel more open-minded and can reflect on my practices in class.
- I create for myself opportunities to act in various teacher roles which I did not use before.
- I help my students learn and speak English without being very dominant as a teacher; I am an observer and facilitator instead.

I feel I have developed confidence to use my talk efficiently enough to allow for greater student talk because I identified a great deal of redundant and repetitive talk in my lessons. I will be monitoring my teaching from this aspect and continue to find alternative ways of developing learner-centered classroom interaction.

**References**


**Appendix**

A. Explanation of the Table 3- Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To increase student talk (less stressed in a group talk rather than talking individually)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I created</td>
<td>I chose a topic related to the topic of the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I applied</td>
<td>I wrote the topic and a question on the board and gave them some time to talk with their groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Role</td>
<td>Active participant, team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Role</td>
<td>Organiser and evidence gatherer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to reduce teacher talk in order to increase student talk

F. Nur Demirel

Task 2: Pair talk

**Purpose:** To increase student talk

**How I created:** I used the pictures in the book

**How I applied:** I asked them to discuss about the situation and what people are doing in the pictures with their partners.

**Students’ Role:** Active participant, generator

**Teacher’s Role:** Organizer, feedback provider

Task 3: Comparing ideas with a partner

**Purpose:** To encourage peer check and discussion

**How I created:** -

**How I applied:** After some activities, the students compared their ideas with their partner and discussed the reasons for their answers.

**Students’ Role:** Feedback provider

**Teacher’s Role:** Evidence gatherer

Task 4: Summary with a pair

**Purpose:** To encourage pair talk and summarize the lesson

**How I created:** -

**How I applied:** After the teaching has finished, the students make a spoken summary of the topic they learned by talking their pairs

**Students’ Role:** Creator, feedback provider

**Teacher’s Role:** Feedback provider, evidence gatherer

Technique 1: Flying object for student nomination

**Purpose:** To reduce teacher talk for nomination

**How I created:** I generally find something like a ball or a light object to toss around the class. In that particular lesson, there was a lemon in the class, so I used it

**How I applied:** I started the activity by throwing the lemon to a student and then he gave the answer to the exercise and threw the lemon to another friend in the class to give the next answer and it went on like this until the exercise finished.

**Students’ Role:** Active participant, initiator, responder

**Teacher’s Role:** Organiser, feedback provider

Technique 2: Use of ICQs (strategy)

**Purpose:** To decrease the number of instructions

**How I created:** -

**How I applied:** Instead of giving instructions I led students to read the instructions of the exercise in the book and later asked them “What do you think you are going to do?”

**Students’ Role:** Generator, responder

**Teacher’s Role:** Facilitator, editor
B. Explanation of Table 6- Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 1: Picture on the screen with questions to discuss</th>
<th>Purpose: To reduce asking questions students individually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I created:</strong> I prepared a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and symbols about the topic and had written several questions on the pictures for students to discuss with their pairs.</td>
<td><strong>How I applied:</strong> I projected the picture on the smart board and encouraged them to answer the questions with their pairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Role:</strong> Active participant, generator</td>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Role:</strong> Organiser and evidence gatherer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 2: Hidden Resource</th>
<th>Purpose: To encourage and increase student talk in a group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I created:</strong> I prepared and cut out some photos on the topic adapted from the Internet</td>
<td><strong>How I applied:</strong> I gave a set of photos to a student in each group. Then the student with the photos explained what is happening in each picture to the other group members. The one who guesses correctly wins that card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Role:</strong> Active participant and team member</td>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Role:</strong> Organiser and evidence gatherer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 3: Follow-up questions by students</th>
<th>Purpose: To increase the amount of questions asked by students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I created:</strong> Instead of asking mine, I asked students to write their own questions about a reading passage.</td>
<td><strong>How I applied:</strong> After reading a passage, students wrote 3 questions about the passage and asked these questions to each other and gave feedback if the answer is correct or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Role:</strong> Initiator, feedback provider, generator</td>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Role:</strong> Prompter, feedback provider, evidence gatherer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 4: Brainstorming in groups</th>
<th>Purpose: Encourage student talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I created:</strong> I wrote main topics of the lesson on separate sheets so that students can discuss and do brainstorming about those topics in groups. Also I prepared another two sheets on which I wrote ‘I did’ and ‘I would like to do’.</td>
<td><strong>How I applied:</strong> I divided the class into 3 groups and gave them the brainstorming sheets. They worked on those for 5 minutes and changed their sheets with other groups until they discussed about all of the topics. Then I put those sheets on various walls in the class with the ones I did and I would like to do. Later the students walked around the class and chose from the brainstorming lists and wrote activities they did or they would like to do with their names next to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Role:</strong> Generator, team member</td>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Role:</strong> Organiser, Evidence Gatherer, Editor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Task 5: Post-it questions on the walls

**Purpose:** To reduce the amount of teacher questions

**How I created:** I wrote questions on post-it papers about the topic and put them on the walls of the class.

**How I applied:** I asked them to stand and walk around the class and write an answer to each question and write their name next to their answers.

**Students' Role:** Active participant, Responder, Creator

**Teacher's Role:** Facilitator, evidence gatherer and resource

### Technique: Visual symbols for instructions

**Purpose:** To reduce the amount of instructions in class

**How I created:** I drew some symbols and pictures on pieces of paper which were of different colours and fastened them on some small sticks.

**How I applied:** At the beginning of the lesson, I introduced the symbols to the students and made sure they understood what to do when they see them. E.g. work as a pair, work as a group, read, write. Throughout the lesson, instead of telling instructions, I showed those signs to students.

**Students' Role:** Passive role, recipient

**Teacher's Role:** Controller and prompter
Main focus

The aim of this research is to understand how participating in a Facebook Group influences vocabulary practice in B1 level students. Our further aim is to conclude whether Facebook is a promising teaching tool or not. In order to obtain our goal, we are planning to form a Facebook group that consists of volunteer students. They will be given five different words for four days and expected to produce twenty original sentences and will be asked to provide written peer feedback for one another. The students will be monitored in terms of the quality of discussion and benefits they gain from the process. To assess the impact of Facebook use on vocabulary learning, the students will be asked to compare traditional classroom instruction with the Facebook experience.

Briefly stated, in this research, two B1 level classes will be trained and monitored in terms of using the vocabulary they have learnt in the classroom. The participants’ discussions will be recorded and analyzed. Discussions of the participants on the group page will be monitored by the two instructors.

Background to the research

Often termed as a social networking site, Facebook is an online communication tool allowing users to construct a public or private profile in order to connect and interact with people who are part of their extended social network (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Since its introduction in 2004, Facebook has more than 864 million active daily users worldwide (Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook). It was initiated as a social networking site; however, it offers the potential for learning and teaching. Social networks have the potential to offer better support for self-governed, problem-based and collaborative learning processes (Dalsgaard, 2006). McCarthy (2010) reported positive student feedback for its integration into the learning environment. Thus, mostly
used by university students, Facebook can facilitate interactive learning. Facebook has the capacity to support course management activities, enhance the provision of information and resources to students, as well as engage and motivate students through interactivity and collaboration (Irwin, Ball, Desbrow, & Leveritt, 2012). Nowadays, in Turkey almost every person has an active Facebook account. Facebook is also widely used among students. We can see many students using technology on campus. Therefore, teachers need to integrate and use technology as a teaching tool into their curriculum. Software programs, CALL, distance learning are now among significant teaching methods. However, Facebook is increasingly being used in language classes. By integrating Facebook into language teaching we might promote L2 learning and acquisition. Facebook offers unlimited collaboration and communication. Also, using Facebook for collecting and sharing information has been positively correlated to academic performance (Junco, 2012).

**Developing vocabulary learning through facebook**

Improving L2 acquisition depends on vocabulary learning. Producing new sentences with newly learnt vocabulary involves both semantic elaboration and output. According to Barcroft (2004):

> It involves semantic elaboration because a learner must retrieve the meaning of a word and the contexts in which it can be used to a sufficient degree in order to be able to write the word in a sentence. It involves output because sentence writing by its nature requires production on the part of the learner.

Some researchers argue that writing sentences with semantic elaboration should be facilitating the learning of new words. It is an issue which was raised initially by Long (1998) and later many researchers have developed this idea. They believe that teachers can present materials for better understanding in the classrooms in three ways: explanation, simplification, and elaboration. It has been extensively accepted among second language acquisition (SLA) researchers that exposure to the target language input is a necessity for SLA. Moreover, input needs to be comprehended by second language (L2) learners for subsequent language acquisition processes to take place (Chaudron, 1988). Therefore, it is of importance to inquire how input and output is made comprehensible to learners with limited L2 proficiency. Therefore, integrating Facebook into teaching might enhance student learning. Moreover, using Facebook as a tool for vocabulary teaching can remove the boundaries of limited teaching time in the classroom. Facebook might give students the opportunity to practice what they have learnt in the classroom. As it is an online tool, students can have the chance to interact wherever and whenever they want without having time and space constraints. Observing what they can produce outside the classroom via an online tool can aid teachers and researchers to develop more ideas about using Facebook as a teaching tool.

The purpose of this research is to understand the effectiveness of Facebook usage in second language learning in terms of sentence production by giving students target words taught in the traditional classroom. A total of twenty seven students participated voluntarily to this research. All the participants were informed about the study and asked to participate voluntarily and their consent was gained. In order to protect the participants’ confidentiality and privacy, their names will not be used in this study. The data tools include a public Facebook page and the target vocabulary taken from the course book of the students since the students are required to produce original sentences regarding the vocabulary they were taught in the classroom by using Facebook platform. In addition, an online ten-question survey was given to the students to understand their perceptions regarding the relevant study.

In the traditional classroom, every teacher combines several methods to teach vocabulary. However, it is not possible to teach every word and allocate time for practicing each newly learnt item of vocabulary. Within this regard, our aim is to understand how Facebook can be used as a supportive tool to facilitate vocabulary learning and their perceptions about using Facebook for vocabulary acquisition.

The present research has practical implications for English language teaching by using Facebook. One of the most significant implications was that Facebook allows teachers to practice newly learnt vocabulary. Therefore, using Facebook can enhance the learning process and students have the chance to produce more output where they might not have the chance to do so in a traditional classroom.

For further study, the researchers might increase the number of participants and provide post-testing to check the effectiveness of using Facebook on sentence production.
Research focus

Research Questions

RQ1: How does using a Facebook platform for using known vocabulary influence B1 level students' sentence production skills?

RQ2: What are the students' perceptions about using Facebook for vocabulary acquisition?

Participants

The participants aged 17-21 are 27 B1 level EFL students who are studying English at the Preparatory School of Gediz University which is a private university in Turkey. The preparatory school system is based on CEFR, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The Preparatory School of Education program at Gediz University is based on a module system which lasts four eight week periods. Every module lasts two months. During the action research they were studying at B1 level. The learners received 28 hours of English weekly. The module lasted two months. The participants were informed about the research purpose and they were invited to the Facebook page created for this on a voluntary basis.

Data collection

Vocabulary Tasks on Course Facebook Page

At the beginning of B1 level, a Facebook page was developed by the instructors and the volunteering students were informed about the research study and instructed to use it as a learning platform. The students were given twenty words and expected to write original sentences for each word. For five days, they were given four words which were taught in the classroom during the day and assigned to write one sentence for each word. The words were chosen randomly from the target vocabulary of their course book. (See Appendix 1 for the vocabulary list.) After writing their sentences, the students were asked to comment on at least two different students' sentences regarding meaning, grammar and spelling mistakes. They were asked to comment on each other in Turkish or in English so that they could feel more comfortable. In order to sustain participation, students were given a deadline for each task. Student engagement with the page and interaction with one another were monitored by the instructors. After finishing writing sentences, students were asked to rank the benefit of this activity on a Likert scale and make some comments regarding how they felt as they explored lexical knowledge of particular words and how their learning was affected during this online process.

Each word was posted by the instructors. The students were not asked to explain the meaning of the words as the words were taught in the classroom. Students were asked to comment on any post on the Facebook page regarding meaning, grammar and spelling or any other issues which they would like to highlight. The words they were provided with were random words chosen from their course books’ target vocabulary list. As researchers, to ensure how students produced sentences with the words they learnt in the classroom, we deliberately gave them adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns. Student discussions were monitored by the researchers to assure the correct use of lexical meaning. Students were encouraged to collaborate and participate in the discussions.

When writing twenty sentences for each word and commenting on each others’ posts, they were asked to rank ten questions on a Likert scale to understand student perceptions about Facebook (See Appendix 2).
Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through quantification of qualitative data and was evaluated by three researchers to have inter-rater reliability. The analysis was completed in two parts. The first part was to analyze students’ sentences written for each word. We counted how many sentences were produced and how many of them were correct and incorrect to understand the effectiveness of Facebook use in sentence production. In addition, the collocations generated by students in conjunction with the target words were categorized to show the depth of meaning that students were able to grasp. Furthermore, their discussions on the ‘wall’ were commented on briefly in order to understand the scope and nature of feedback exchanged among students. With regard to the second part of the analysis, students were given a ten-question survey to rank on a Likert scale. Their rankings were calculated according to the number of students’ votes. We gathered survey questions under ten key themes and prepared a bar graph regarding the rankings of the students. By multiplying how many students answered strongly agree, agree, not sure, strongly disagree, disagree to each question on the Likert scale by the number of students we answered each question and we took in the average out of 5.

Findings

Table 1 shows the number of sentences produced, the number of wrong sentences and the number of students who did not respond to that specific word. The number of the total sentences to be written was 500. By taking this into consideration, the percentages were also calculated and are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of target words</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sentences to be written</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sentences written</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct sentences</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>64 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of wrong sentences</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>33.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total comments</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>39 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the numbers of the sentences produced, we can see the number of sentences written is 331. The students were asked to comment on at least two other students. However, the total number of the comments made by the students is just 129. Table 1 also shows that not every student responded to each target word. According to the table, the total number of students who did not write sentences is 169. The evaluation criteria for the correct use of sentences were regarding the lexical meaning and collocation use. Therefore, grammatical mistakes were not taken into consideration. To find these numbers above mentioned, each wrong and correct sentence of the student was counted.

Table 2 shows the collocations students used while producing their sentences for the given target vocabulary. The wrong collocations used were not taken into account as they did not cause any loss in the meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>collocates with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>extinct</td>
<td>Animal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endangered</td>
<td>Species, animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common</td>
<td>Animals, species, features, in common, seasoning, values, sport, language, disease, illness, transportation, problem, question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cruel</td>
<td>People, man, companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fatal</td>
<td>Error, effect, action, animal, disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasonable</td>
<td>Ideas, information, explanation, plan, request, price, person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horrible</td>
<td>Things, news, mistake, dream, experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ashamed</td>
<td>Of, talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belong</td>
<td>To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habitat</td>
<td>Of animals, natural habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prey</td>
<td>Brutally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancient</td>
<td>cars, time, city, people, necklace, brooch, radio, sword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhibit</td>
<td>Skill, painting, car exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compulsory</td>
<td>Service, subject, for, clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considerably</td>
<td>More, difficult, important, influence, considerable risk, fewer, beautiful, polite, developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempt</td>
<td>To +verb, second attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issue</td>
<td>Big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effective</td>
<td>Medicine, painkiller, facts, behavior, way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selection</td>
<td>Of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirement</td>
<td>First, minimum, no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common, considerably and ancient are the words that students made collocations with. However, extinct, prey, attempt and issue are the words which students had difficulty in finding collocations. Table 3 shows the frequency of the collocations used with mostly used words to the least ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Collocates with</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>common</td>
<td>Animals, species, features, in common, seasoning, values, sport, language, disease, illness, transportation, problem</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considerably</td>
<td>More, difficult, important, influence, risk, fewer, beautiful, polite, developed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancient</td>
<td>Cars, time, city, people, necklace, brooch, radio, sword</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prey</td>
<td>Brutally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extinct</td>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempt</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issue</td>
<td>Big</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were able to find many different collocations for some words, whereas they could only write just one collocation for “extinct, attempt, issue”. This may be regarding the context they have learned the word from.

Research Question 2: What are the students’ perceptions about using Facebook for vocabulary acquisition?

In order to evaluate student perceptions about this research, we gave them a ten-question survey on Facebook. The students were required to vote for questions on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. We posted that the numbers from 1 to 5 refer to as follows; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

We classified the questions under ten key themes according to the ten survey questions as shown in Figure 1.

Looking into the future

Number of sentences practiced

According to Barcroft (2004), all activities for L2 instruction can be designed to be engaging and meaningful. In this research, the students were exposed to 331 sentences totally. Therefore, there is peer-generated vocabulary use input. This is not possible to achieve in the classroom due to the time for teaching and learning. Even though there are some wrong sentences produced, still it would not be possible to produce so many sentences during classroom time. Via blended learning, we gave the students the chance to practice the words...
they were taught in the classroom without limiting how much input and output they can produce for themselves and for their peers.

**Use of a variety of collocations**

The students used many collocations while producing their sentences. Although they were given an adverb, they changed the category into an adjective while writing their sentences. To illustrate, the given word was considerably, and one of the students wrote he is a man of considerable influence. This shows that such free activities gave them opportunities to use all lexical knowledge they possessed. They were first presented with these words in the classroom as input and they had the chance to process the words and encoded new word forms by using Facebook as a supportive tool for practicing new vocabulary.

**Student Perceptions on the activities**

As shown in Figure 1, the students enjoyed being engaged in the activity. According to the results of the survey on student perception, the students felt motivated during the activity. This may be due to the activity’s being performed outside the classroom with no time and place constraints. They also stated that they found the chance to practice what they had learnt in the classroom and being engaged in such an activity was useful for learning and practicing new words.

**Length of sentences**

Almost every sentence is written shortly. As the students wrote short sentences, the sentences lack depth of meaning. We believe that this is due to their limited L2 knowledge. The students were not able to produce semantically elaborated sentences; they just used the sentences within an appropriate context. As researchers, we did not want to force the students to write semantically elaborated sentences as this might have inhibited the students’ ability to comprehend new words and word-forms.

**Limited number of comments**

During the activity, the students were informed to comment on at least two other friends’ posts. However, the number of comments made is low (See Table 1). This may be due to the lack of critical analysis skills and grammatical competence. When comments were analyzed, we saw that only half of the students made comments. They only wrote short sentences as “very good sentence, you have a spelling mistake”. They just wrote comments regarding metalanguage. Also, rather than meaning their comments focused on grammatical mistakes or spelling mistakes.

**Decreasing Performance**

As there are twenty sentences, they had to produce four sentences for five days. Thus, the students might have had fatigue. Also, their motivation might have decreased due to a novelty effect. More time should be allowed and the words can be given in greater extension. There is a sharp decrease in the student participation. At the beginning of the activity, most of the students were actively engaged in the production of sentences. However, for the last four or three target words, we can clearly see that the students averagely wrote eight or nine sentences instead of twenty.

**Student Perceptions on peer-correction**

Regarding the survey given at the end of the activity, students did not find peer-correction useful. This may be the result of their affective filters. They stated that they did not want to be corrected by the other students with whom they had little acquaintance. Furthermore, when they were asked about the continuation of the study, half of them responded negatively as they expressed that they were too busy with their assignments in other classroom tasks and assignments.

**Reflection**

Using Facebook gave us several opportunities for reflecting on our classroom practices of vocabulary teaching. For example, it allowed us to practice newly learnt vocabulary with students outside the class time. However, it was not easy to apply new technologies in EFL classes. We had concerns about it at the beginning of this project, yet upon finishing, it was obvious that it made the vocabulary teaching process interactive and personalized. Considering these alterations in our teaching we feel that as teachers, sometimes we need to go beyond the borders of the classroom and try out new practices of teaching. Therefore, we realized that using Facebook can enhance the vocabulary teaching and learning process and students had the chance to produce more input which they would not have the chance to in the traditional classroom environment.
References


Sturgeon, C. M., & Walker, C. (2009). Faculty on Facebook: Confirm or Deny?. *Online Submission*. 
Students’ and teachers’ perceptions of English Central as a CALL tool

Semra Değirmenci Mutlu, Koray Akyazı, Tuğçe Karaulutaş

Background to the research

The teaching of pronunciation is viewed differently by instructors. While some pay special attention to it, having separate lessons focusing only on pronunciation, others prefer to integrate it with other skills. Additionally, students often afford great importance to pronunciation; in fact, many of our learners learn English in order to be able to speak the language with a ‘good’ accent. However, based on our observations, we can say that our students make a lot of pronunciation errors. As their instructors, we correct them but because of the high frequency of mistakes, after some time they become demotivated. Therefore, the question arises - how can we develop the pronunciation of students in and outside the classroom? In order to find a solution to this problem, it is possible to make use of technology, which is an indispensable part of our lives. With this in mind, İzmir University School of Foreign Languages has decided to direct its attention to ‘English Central’, a platform set up for educational purposes. It is a paid web tool which is created for students to practise vocabulary, listening skills and pronunciation. It combines the web’s English videos and creates online exercises to practice pronunciation of words or chunks. Basically, it focuses on vocabulary, listening and pronunciation (http://www.englishcentral.com/videos).

Therefore, the focus of the research is based on searching for ideas and perceptions of the users of English Central i.e. students and teachers at İzmir University, and trying to measure if there is a difference between the ideas of students and teachers before using English Central and after using it. Our aim was to understand whether English Central has really been beneficial to our students in terms of improving listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills.

To be able to reach this understanding the following research questions were formulated:
1. How do teachers perceive English Central in terms of improving listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills?

2. How do students perceive English Central in terms of improving listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills?

Methodology

Setting

This study was conducted in the prep division of Izmir University School of Foreign Languages. The prep school division aims to produce autonomous learners who can use English effectively, think critically and demonstrate academic skills. Students are instructed to acquire English language and academic skills which are necessary for their departments and career. The educational philosophy of the school is inductive teaching; that is students have the opportunity to learn through self-discovery. Moreover, a collaborative and cooperative approach is at the centre of the learning process. To illustrate, students do projects, work collaboratively, and share their ideas through presentations or written reports. Skills are practised in an integrated way. The course program consists of 6 proficiency levels: Beginner, Elementary, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and Advanced. At the beginning of the year, students take a proficiency exam and are placed at the relevant level in mixed score classes. Students have one Computer assisted language learning (CALL) class every week and in this class, they use only 'English Central'.

Students have an account which allows them to watch authentic videos, practise new vocabulary, listen to the pronunciation and repeat it. Also, students record their voices and the system gives them scores. In this way students are able to listen and repeat until they achieve the correct form of pronunciation. The program also allows them to develop at their own pace; and they can focus on their personal weaknesses. For all the benefits mentioned above, we decided to research the ideas and perceptions of its users- students, and teachers who give guidance to learners during CALL classes.

Participants

The data were collected from students studying at all six different proficiency levels. One class from each level was selected randomly. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. On average, there are 20 students in each class and 2 students who were high achievers and engaged were chosen. 12 students aged between 18 and 24 participated in the study. They were 6 male and 6 female students, all from Turkey. The same methodology was used for selecting the instructors. Six instructors who guide students during CALL were selected purposefully. They are teachers who generally observe their students carefully. There were 4 female and 2 male participants. They are all from Turkey and aged between 30 and 40. They have a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 10 years’ teaching experience. Two instructors have a CELTA certificate.

Case study as a research design

The present research was designed as an exploratory case study. A case study is defined as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and uses multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p.23). As we understand it, case studies can be conducted for the goal of eliciting understanding. Therefore, gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation is a primary concern in case studies. In order to analyze case studies, one has to apply their knowledge and critical thinking abilities to the situation. Also, it can be emphasized that our research design is based on qualitative data collection. The research paradigm is interpretive as it is based on descriptive explanatory and contextual sentences taken from interviews with teachers and students who are regular users of the online language learning programme, ‘English Central’.

Data collection instruments

The study was based on a research design because of the approach used to collect data. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions of the students and teachers about the efficacy of ‘English Central’, interviews were held with students and the instructors separately. Anderson (2010) says that qualitative research is collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended. Small numbers of people are interviewed in-depth and/or a relatively small number of focus groups are conducted.
Student participants were given a form containing 9 questions two days prior to the interview (See Appendix 1). This allowed the participants to think about what they would like to say, in order to obtain richer data. One of them was a general question about ‘English Central’. The remaining questions were designed to gain insights into how effective the program was in developing vocabulary, listening, pronunciation and speaking. Participants were also asked questions about the implementation of the program in CALL classes. To ensure understanding, the questions were translated into Turkish and participants replied in Turkish to enable them to share their feelings freely without being inhibited by language barriers. The voices of the students were recorded and transcribed. During data analysis, transcriptions were translated into English by the researchers.

The structured instrument used to interview the instructors included 8 questions (See Appendix 2). One of them was a general question about ‘English Central’. Other questions focused on the effectiveness of each component – listening, speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary learning, and finally, the implementation of the program in CALL classes. The questions were given two days before the interview so that they could think about their answers. The instructors replied in English and the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

**Data analysis procedures**

During interviews, teachers and students stated their perspectives. After collating all the data, we prepared for analysis, transcribing all the interviews and translating the data gleaned from student participants from Turkish into English. The transcriptions were analysed by the three researchers individually and then cross referenced to see how many overlapping themes evolved. This debriefing was done in order to increase inter-rater reliability as it leads to less subjectivity in the analysis. After that the data was coded and grouped, thus making the major emerging themes more salient to the researchers.

**Findings**

Figure 1 shows that the teachers’ perceptions of ‘English Central’ and its components are based on positive adjectives. Most frequently used is ‘good’ followed by ‘useful’ and ‘authentic’. Another interesting finding here is the frequency of ‘fun’. While it was mentioned 11 times by students, it was mentioned only twice by instructors.

**Teachers’ perceptions**

![Figure 1: Frequency of adjectives used by teachers to describe ‘English Central’ and its components](image)

Table 1 clearly shows that the teachers who were interviewed have a positive viewpoint of ‘English Central’ as a whole. Student engagement is the most often mentioned theme. Teachers reported that students participated more actively in the computer laboratory than in the classroom, and enjoy using the program. Teachers also commented on how ‘English Central’ increases their students’ range of vocabulary through interesting videos and recycling. Speaking was the third most popular theme. Teachers spoke about how students are encouraged to speak while using the tool whereas they would not feel comfortable doing this in the class. Phonology is a major sub-theme of speaking and teachers noticed improvements in pronunciation, intonation, and sentence stress. Teachers perceived ‘English Central’ as being beneficial due to the use of authentic input thus supporting learning through contextualized content. Listening development, was also mentioned as benefiting students.

As for the negative themes, it is clearly seen in the table that ‘technical problems’ are the main issue. There are also institutional problems such as working in an overcrowded lab. Speaking in a ‘non-interactive’ environment, which is related to the website content, is also perceived negatively.
Table 1: Emerging themes from teachers’ perceptions of ‘English Central’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Example sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>o It’s fun, especially when they are speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Even weak students like participating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary facilitation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>o Great for vocabulary learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o An effective way to learn vocabulary and spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking facilitation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>o Unique approach to speaking with scores given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o I like this part the most because students can check pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>o Listening improves due to authentic speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Listening and vocabulary exercises are authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening facilitation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>o Listening is the most useful part due to different accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Listening with videos is the best part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner autonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>o Students can go at their own pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Students can measure how well they speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum integration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>o Appropriate for our teaching program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Matches our syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical problems</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>o Poorly implemented due to technical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Problems with headphones and microphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking non-authentic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>o It’s not interactive as it lacks dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Speaking is artificial, just one way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional problems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>o Overcrowded lab, students sharing computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Students weren’t familiar with the program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ perceptions

Figure 2 shows the frequency of adjectives used by students to describe ‘English Central’ and its components. As seen in the table, the most frequently used word is ‘good’, which is an interesting finding as it indicates equivalence between the teachers’ and students’ perception of the website. Another interesting finding to be discussed is the second most frequently used adjective. Unlike teachers who commented on the ‘fun factor’ indirectly by saying that the website is ‘engaging’, students described the website explicitly as ‘fun’.

Table 2 shows the students’ perceptions about ‘English Central’. As can be seen clearly from the table, students are mostly positive about using ‘English Central’. Out of 12 emerging themes, only 3 are negative. Overall, it can be said that students like all components of the website. However, they agreed that vocabulary learning was the most beneficial tool for them due to the visual content. They agreed on the fact that they were able to learn different kinds of vocabulary in context. Moreover, practising new words provided opportunities for them to increase the number of words they know. Thus, they were able to become familiar with the new words they encountered. They stated that they were able to recognise the words they learnt.
from videos. They were of the opinion that recycling of the vocabulary and visuals helped them to memorize the words. Additionally, they reported that they learnt the pronunciation of vocabulary as they frequently listened to the sounds on the website.

Also, they added that they had the opportunity to practise speaking in an engaging way. They appreciate the way they are able to record their voices and try hard until they reach the ideal. Furthermore, they feel positive because of hearing different accents which in turn improves their self-confidence and self-expression during the discussions in the classroom. When it comes to listening, the big advantage is the fact that the students can listen to different kinds of accents. Moreover, they pointed out that they could hear native accents and authentic materials which are not artificial as in the course books. They can also integrate listening and speaking. The website features this by enabling students to watch the videos and imitate the speaker afterwards. This is a practice to improve listening and speaking, especially pronunciation. Although this is a tool used in a computer lab during scheduled class hours, students believe that it is good for self-study and it improves learner autonomy.

When considering the negative viewpoints of the participants, students focus mostly on problems related to content rather than external factors such as technical problems, mentioned only 3 times. The issue with the content had two dimensions. One of them was the complex definition of the words. The website enables students to look up the definition of the words they are not familiar with while watching the videos. However, if the meaning is not simple enough, it does not help students to give definitions by clicking on it. Another problematic aspect of the content is that the program does not detect the voice and keeps asking to repeat the same sound again and again.

### Table 2: Emerging themes from students' perceptions of English Central

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Descriptive sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>o Watching videos with subtitles makes vocabulary learning easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Good to be exposed to different vocabulary items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>o Having fun while practising the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Videos including the themes that appeal to everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking development</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>o Good for pronunciation development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Positive impact on in-class speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>o Providing authentic videos which are not artificial like the ones in the course books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Being exposed to different accents and getting used to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>o Improving self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Ideal for self-development and practising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening developement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>o Helping to improve listening skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Listening to foreign music and TV programs easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills integration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>o Practising speaking and listening is beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Good for listening and speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner autonomy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>o Self-assessment- the feature of the website which provides to see one's own progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Good for self-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>o Trouble at understanding the meanings of unknown vocabulary because of complex dictionary definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o The program does not detect the voice and keeps asking to repeat the same thing again and again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional factors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>o Implementation problems in the lab makes speaking difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o The lab is noisy especially during speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective factors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>o Feeling shy to speak when everybody is around in the CALL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning as teachers and researchers & future developments

We like the fact that we were asked to reflect on how we personally developed as a result of this study as opposed to writing about the implications of the study for others. We think that this focus on teachers doing research to learn is a key difference to academics doing research to inform others. We, as researchers, are currently studying on a MA TEFL program and we have carried out this study to gain more understanding of how to conduct a qualitative study as well as exploring the learning process of our students. It seems that each study related to language learning makes a contribution to teachers’ knowledge in the field. Therefore, there is no doubt that we have learnt a lot from this research.

As part of the research, we had interviews with teachers and students. Although people volunteered to participate in our study, they were not used to answering questions in detail. Therefore, it was a bit difficult to reach the saturation point when we interviewed them. They generally repeated the same answers or they did not give much detail. As we had already anticipated this problem, we decided to hold semi-structured interviews by asking follow-up questions when needed, which helped to gain deeper insight into their perceptions.

After the interviews, we analysed the data we had collected. Although it was a painful process, we were glad to see the fruits of our labour. With regards to how we had developed as a result of this particular study, we would say from a student point of view, as this was a more exploratory study, there may not be a direct implication for the participants involved. However, the administration may take note of the findings and make alterations and improvements to the programme for the following year.

We have gained some insights not only in developing this particular study but also to develop our qualitative research skills in general. If we could replicate this study, we would modify the data collection procedure. We would, for example, observe the students while they are using the tool whilst taking field notes. The conclusion we have made for future research is that transcribing data and identifying emerging themes require expertise. So the amount of time spent on analysing qualitative data needs to be taken more into consideration. Luckily, one of the researchers did have some previous experience in qualitative data collection and analysis which lightened the load, but it was still a very time-consuming process.

In terms of our teaching skills, we now try to integrate research into the language learning process more. Getting feedback from the students after we try something different in the classroom has become part of our teaching style. It is vital to listen to what our students say and what their expectations and understandings are. Their perceptions may be quite different to how we as teachers perceive things. This study allowed us to gain further insights into what our students thought about using an online platform in a computer lab. We suggest that teachers conduct small scale research to explore their learners’ needs, interests or concerns both before, during, and after using computer-assisted learning packages.

Table 3: Statements by researchers about their learning and future developments

| Pre-data collection | Semra: “It was challenging to ask appropriate research questions”
|                     | Koray: “It was not so easy to identify data collection instruments”
|                     | Tügçe: “Making an action plan for research helped us identify the research procedure”
| While collecting data | Semra: “Asking the right questions to get their perceptions is not as easy as it seems”
|                     | Koray: “Participants need to be interviewed more than once to obtain rich data”
|                     | Tügçe: “Participants tend to answer interview questions briefly”
| Post-data collection (analysis & interpretation) | Semra: “Translation of the student transcription needs to be cross checked”
|                     | Koray: “It’d be better if we could get final exam scores to compare their perceptions”
|                     | Tügçe: “Identifying emerging themes needs experience and ability of interpretation”

We, as teachers and researchers, have become more aware of how important it is to understand the learning process of our students. We have also come to understand that research is a process that requires patience and effort.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you think of EC in general?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What feature(s) of the website do you like most? (listening, speaking, vocabulary learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is it fun and motivating or is it boring to use the website?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you think EC contributes to your vocabulary knowledge / learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you think EC contributes to your pronunciation? How? / Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think EC contributes to your classroom speaking, practice and confidence? How? / Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does EC help you understand when listening to songs in English or watching TV? How? / Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you think EC contributed to your listening development in classes? How? / Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think it is effective to use this programme in a computer lab? Why / Why not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you think of EC in general?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What feature(s) of the website do you like most? (listening, speaking, vocabulary learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you think students feel when they use the website? Is it fun &amp; motivating or is it boring to use the website for the students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you think it is effective to use this programme in a computer lab? Why / Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have you experienced any challenges while using EC? How have you overcome these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How do you feel about English Central as a tool for speaking development? Which subskill can be developed more via the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How do you feel about English Central as a tool for vocabulary learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How do you feel about English Central as a tool for listening development?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main focus

The purpose of this study is to examine EFL learner interactions through collaborative asynchronous and synchronous computer assisted written communication. It aims to observe and identify various interaction types as well as any differences there may be between the two types of computer mediated communication methods. Furthermore, the present study focuses on the learners’ perceptions of the communication types. Using the asynchronous platform Wikispaces, and the synchronous platform of Google Hangouts chat, two groups of fifteen intermediate (B2) EFL students enrolled on the English Preparatory Program at Gediz University participated in the study. The results of the study suggest that synchronous communication helps learners in developing their critical thinking skills and is more preferable among students due to its immediacy.

Background

In this modern age, technology has become an integral part of our lives. It has been an inevitable aspect of both our professional and personal lives, especially when we aim to seek support in order to overcome certain challenges. With no surprise, the advances in technology have also infiltrated into the educational context. To be more specific, the development of technology has proven to not only be greatly useful, but also quite frankly impossible to ignore in the field of education. While we may have been taught in relatively traditional methods, as educators, we have realized that using technology appropriately in the classroom can offer a variety of advantageous results for not only the learners, but the instructors as well.
This said, technology can be used in a variety of ways. For example, in today’s world, there are a vast number of distance language learning programs, which provide learners with the opportunity to learn from a teacher thousands of miles away. Via a single tool, learners have access to the different resources and are able to learn various skills and grammatical rules and vocabulary. While our institution does not offer such programs, we are fortunate enough to have access to a wide range of technological devices, which we are able to freely use within the EFL classroom. Since we were all used to using technology in the classroom, we all wanted to explore an area where we thought we could truly help our learners. We had noticed that many of the learners were having difficulty in thinking creatively when brainstorming for essays. Furthermore, even if they were given the opportunity to collaboratively work in groups while brainstorming, it was noticed that they often lacked the motivation. Once the problem was identified, we decided to use a different platform through which students could communicate and share ideas with each other. While the end result was for the students to produce well thought out and creative essays, it was not the main aim of the study.

The purpose of the present study concerns the careful examination of learner interaction patterns using two different computer mediated communication (CMC) tools. Although various studies have been conducted in regards to the usage of such tools, there seems to be a lack of those that take an in-depth approach at examining the way in which learners’ differing interaction patterns take place through asynchronous as well as synchronous computer-mediated tools, and how these tool may benefit the learners’ writing development. In this study, the asynchronous Web 2.0 tool, Wikispaces, along with the synchronous chat tool; Google Hangouts is used as a medium through which learners collaborate on various written tasks. Understanding the ways in which learners interact during collaborative activities can provide insight into the effectiveness of such activities for the advancement of a learner’s L2 writing skills.

With a perspective of collective scaffolding, the help that peers give to one another through a variety of communication methods (Donato, 1994), the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What patterns of interaction are observed using wikis (asynchronous computer mediated communication) and what patterns are observed using chat (synchronous computer mediated communication)?
- What differences are observed between wikis (asynchronous) and text-based chat (synchronous) student to student interactions in terms of interaction patterns?
- Which type of interaction (synchronized chat / asynchronous wiki) do students and teachers perceive more effective for collaborating and improving students' writing tasks?

Along with the investigation and analysis of participant interaction patterns, the study intends to inspect the implications of these interactions on language learning.

Expected limitations and possible problems

The major limitations of the study are the lack of participation and motivation to participate as well as the lack of devotion to the amount of time spent in front of a computer. While time management may not be of concern to participants using Wikis, those using Google Hangouts may find some difficulties in arranging synchronous discussions. In addition, participants may not be interested in technology, so this study may prove to be a burden on some. Finally, as the present study focuses on interaction in collaborative groups, motivation of the students has a crucial effect on their participation.

Literature review

Online Interaction and Collaborative writing

Research on student interaction and collaborative writing has often been viewed through what Ellis (1997) frames as two perspectives: the interaction hypothesis and the sociocultural theory. The interaction hypothesis comes from the original notion that face-to-face communications offer substantial benefits to learners by focusing their attention to both spoken and written language, especially in the midst of communicative mishaps (Blake, 2008). The sociocultural perspective is adapted from the Vygotskyan view of language learning through interactions via broad social and cultural contexts. It centres upon the value of aid provided by the interlocutor in order to achieve negotiations of meaning in language; promoting a learner’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) explains ZPD in terms of the promotion of collab-
orative learning through social interactions of both student-to-teacher and student-to-student as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (cited in Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 86).

In the studies presented, the various benefits of collaboration between learners of second languages have been debated. (Bruce, Peyton, & Batson, 1993). Context, tools, as well as the atmosphere in which learning takes place can all have a crucial role in the mediation of collaborative learning. Kessler (2009) describes that via collaboration, students’ exposure to external comprehensible input is enhanced (Vygotsky, 1962), production of high-quality output is supported (Oxford, 1997), and efficient linguistic feedback can be provided for all participants (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the act of collaborative writing can be enhanced through the vast opportunities that technology can provide.

Asynchronous and synchronous communication

The issue of collaboration in the language learning process has long been a topic of research. As Blake (2008) highlights, talented classroom teachers look for ways to make their students take part in collaborative interactions. He further adds that “teachers can create the same opportunities for interactions within the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), whether in real time (synchronous, SCMC) or deferred time (asynchronous, ACMC). Asynchronous communication takes place outside the real time. Email, electronic mailing lists, online discussion boards, wikis and blogs are tools for asynchronous communication. Using these tools as a part of classroom instruction provides many opportunities for learners. Brannon and Essex (2001, p. 36) state that “asynchronous communication can be helpful for encouraging in-depth, more thoughtful discussions, communicating with temporally diverse students, holding ongoing discussions where archiving is required and allowing all students to respond to a topic.” As well as the advantages, it also has some drawbacks such as lack of immediate feedback, not checking often enough, students feeling a sense of social disconnection (Brannon & Essex, 2001).

One prominent study conducted by Brannon and Essex (2001) compared the two models of collaborative learning; asynchronous communication and face-to-face communication. Computer conferencing system and text based discussion were used as a medium of asynchronous communication. The results revealed that “a technology-supported collaborative environment is an effective means of learning and conducting complex group work. However, it also shows us that people prefer to interact in a face to face manner due to the slow process of social change” (Brannon and Essex, 2001).

To sum up, it is evident that asynchronous communication in the context of computer-mediated communication provides opportunities for collaboration and that language learning has gone beyond face-to-face interaction. Moreover, computer-mediated communication has been measured as a facilitator of interactive communication for language learning, therefore making it all the more important for EFL settings such as ours, where a communicative approach to English language teaching is adopted.

Related to the results of previous research, we noticed that there have been a variety of constructive effects of CMC revealed on language performance in the CMC environment. Some of the researchers in the field (Beauvois, 1998; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996) emphasize that learners produce more language output in synchronous CMC discourse than in the face-to-face environment and their discourse is lexically richer and more complicated than in oral communication. Synchronous CMC occurs in real time, it is similar to face-to-face conversation, in which interrogator can expect immediate responses from another. Internet chat-rooms and other online chat systems can be given as an example of this type of communication. It was found that learners tend to produce more target language output in CMC than normal classroom settings, and even shy students who did not want to speak much in class joined more in synchronous CMC settings. According to Smith (2003) although Synchronous CMC includes reading and writing, participant’s output is considered in terms of speaking and writing as well.

Therefore, with the many advantageous effects that both asynchronous and synchronous computer mediated communication can have on the development of learners’ language skills, we thought it best to explore these methods with our own students.

Wikis, Google Hangouts and language learning

Technology has been used in a variety of ways to enhance students’ collaboration and interaction. After some thought as to which communicative
tools would best suit our setting, we decided that such tools as Wikispaces and Google Hangouts would prove to be advantageous, as they don’t rely on the social constraints that come with face-to-face interactions and are readily available to our students. Unlike many of the preceding studies which have focused on either asynchronous or synchronous tools separately, with this study, we aimed to establish an integration of both the asynchronous tool Wikispaces, and the synchronous text-based chat tool Google Hangouts in the examination of small group interaction patterns and learners’ perceptions of the use of these tools.

**Research focus**

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach as it examines the interaction patterns that are observed during asynchronous and synchronous communication. In this sense, data was triangulated to focus on incorporating various elements of methods of data collection to implement not only a reliable, but also valid set of results. The study is classified as an action research since we used our own classes and students to conduct the study. Furthermore, as we all acted as administrators of the groups, we also acted as guides throughout the study, scaffolding when necessary.

**Participants**

The participants were chosen through a qualitative method known as purposeful sampling. The students were selected from two intermediate level EFL classes of an English Preparatory Program at a Turkish university. As higher level students are able to communicate in the target language with greater ease than those at a lower level, these students were chosen to participate in the study. We needed students who could express their ideas, share their thoughts and think creatively in collaboration with their classmates, thereby making the results more meaningful. The subjects of the present study consisted of two sets of students with fifteen students in each set. One used the asynchronous platform of Wikispaces, and the other used the synchronous platform of Google Hangouts. A limited number of students were chosen to participate in the study as large groups of students participating in such ‘projects’ had proven to be problematic and ineffective in the past. Therefore, by limiting the number of students to three per group (five groups in each set), not only were the students able to work collaboratively, but we were also able to monitor their progress more effectively.

**Setting**

The study took place within a virtual environment using the Web 2.0 tools: Wikispaces and Google Hangouts. The two groups of fifteen students carried out their weekly discussions and subsequent essay submission through individual group ‘Pages’ and ‘Discussion’ forums. The remaining groups that used Google Hangouts carried out all of their weekly discussion through individually created group chats.

**Data collection procedure**

The present study aims to triangulate data by the use of two collection tools. The first set of data was collected from the five small groups that participated in Wikispaces. The second set of data was obtained from the remaining five small groups that engaged in discussions through Google Hangouts. A one-week orientation was administered prior to the study in order to familiarize the students with the CMC tools. The orientation consisted of introducing the tools to the students, demonstrating the use of the tools and piloting a discussion. Following the orientation, weekly essay topics along with approximately five questions for student to consider and discuss were loaded onto each platform. The students were given the freedom to decide the day and time of when their discussions would take place. At the end of the three week study, the group discussions that took place on Wikispaces were obtained through the history pages and printed. A similar method was administered in obtaining the group discussions that took place on Google Hangouts. In the final step of the study, we collected the students’ perceptions of using the Web 2.0 tools using specifically tailored questionnaires.

**Data analysis**

The data was analysed deductively by the application of pre-set language functions. These functions witnessed in student discourse included such functions as agreements, suggestions, and apologies to name a few. After identifying the language functions used by the students, the functions were cross-referenced with Bloom’s taxonomy of verbs that illustrate orders of critical thinking in order to determine higher forms of thinking in language functions. Furthermore, the responses received from the students on their perceptions of the two CMC
tools were analysed by identifying a variety of themes and categorizing them according to positivity and negativity.

Findings

The data indicated that the two sets of groups demonstrated distinct patterns of interaction in terms of language functions, critical thinking skills and overall talk volume. While shifts in interaction patterns is possible, the data showed that all groups presented a consistent pattern of interaction throughout the study.

The Findings of the Synchronous interaction patterns

Research Question 1: What patterns of interaction are observed using wikis (asynchronous) and what patterns are observed using chat (synchronous)?

As seen in Figure 1, the most recurrent pattern of interaction demonstrated in the synchronous CMC tool was expressing opinions, at 111 observable units. We noticed that there was a steady decline in the use of the subsequent language patterns, with students displaying only two units per language function: predicting and sequencing.

The Findings of the Asynchronous interaction patterns

Research Question 2: What patterns of interaction are observed using wikis (asynchronous) and what patterns are observed using chat (synchronous)?

The chart displays that the most frequently witnessed interaction pattern in the asynchronous CMC tool was expressing opinions. Out of the 94 units of language functions counted, 22 of them belonged to this interaction pat-
tern. The least frequent language functions that students demonstrated were expressing likes/dislikes, plans/ intentions and hopes, and explanations.

**Comparison of the Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC tools**

Research Question 3: What differences are observed between wikis (asynchronous) and text-based chat (synchronous) student-to-student interactions in terms of interaction patterns?

Figure 3 presents a comparison of the most frequently used utterances in terms of language functions for both asynchronous and synchronous CMC tools. As can be clearly seen, Google Hangouts (111 units) was more efficiently used to express opinions than Wikis (22 units). As it can clearly be seen, using Google Hangouts, counted at 111 units, was more efficiently used when compared to Wikis; at 22, in the function of expressing opinions.

Critical Thinking Skills of Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language functions</th>
<th>% of language functions (sync.)</th>
<th>% of language functions (async.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. sequencing</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. predicting</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. persuasion</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. expressing likes and dislikes</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. talking about recent changes</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. cause and effect</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. contrasting</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. summarizing</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. talking about personal habits</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. clarifying</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. expressing plan, intentions and hopes about the future</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. expressing a preference</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. explaining</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. comparing</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. suggesting</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. speaking in general</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. greeting people/introductions</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. asking questions</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. giving reasons for opinions</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>15.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. agreeing and disagreeing</td>
<td>15.21</td>
<td>13.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. expressing opinions</td>
<td>25.58</td>
<td>22.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 illustrates a comparison of the percentage of language functions used in the asynchronous and synchronous discussions with the identification of individual functions in relation to the Bloom’s Taxonomy critical think-
ing verbs. While ranking relatively low in Bloom’s critical thinking skills, the language function of expressing opinions made up the majority of the utterances in both synchronous and asynchronous discussions, at 25.58% and 22.68% respectively. Students who used the synchronous CMC tool produced significantly higher critical thinking skills related to language functions than students in the other Web 2.0 tool.

**Perceived collaborative and learning experiences**

Research Question 4: Which type of interaction patterns (synchronized CMC or asynchronous CMC) do students and teachers perceive more effective for collaborating and improving students’ writing tasks?

Post-task questionnaires generated intriguing insights into the perceptions of students regarding their collaborative and learning experiences of the asynchronous wiki-mediated and synchronous Google Hangouts-mediated writing tasks.

**Table 2: Students’ responses to synchronous CMC tool: Google Hangouts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sts</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>• I was very enjoy while I was using Hangouts.</td>
<td>Expressing likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I exchanged my views with friends and evaluated their ideas.</td>
<td>Exchange of ideas/peer-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayça</td>
<td>• Hangouts increases collaboration.</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think it should continue.</td>
<td>Motivation to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merve</td>
<td>• Hangouts improved my vocabularies.</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This brainstorming improved our essays.</td>
<td>Developing Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sueda</td>
<td>• It is very difficult for us.</td>
<td>Negative Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I speak English better than before Hangouts.</td>
<td>Development in speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murat-</td>
<td>• I’m happy with that project.</td>
<td>Positive Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>• Upgrade our presentation skills.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 2, a majority of the students expressed positive perceptions of their experiences of the Google Hangouts-mediated collaborative discussions.

**Table 3: Students’ responses to asynchronous CMC tool: Wikis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sts</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Büşra</td>
<td>• Discussion part is the best for me.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wiki is complicated to use or upload.</td>
<td>Negative Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ege-</td>
<td>• I could not get used to wikispaces.</td>
<td>Negative Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>han</td>
<td>• Wiki spaces usage is not hard.</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think wikispaces is a good program for studying.</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zehra</td>
<td>• We did not use it efficiently.</td>
<td>Negative Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone thought just their grades.</td>
<td>Test Centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilay</td>
<td>• I like this program but I did not make a discussion.</td>
<td>Mixed Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This program is very practice and funny. I can offer this program.</td>
<td>Brainstorming for writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur</td>
<td>• Wikispace is beneficial for students.</td>
<td>Positive Stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This will be helpful for future.</td>
<td>Future benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss unnecessary but it can be helpful for us for future, I don’t know actually.</td>
<td>Mixed Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buse</td>
<td>• In my opinion, discussion part is the best.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wiki helps us for improving our English writing skill</td>
<td>Improved Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This group of students acknowledged that the wiki-mediated collaborative discussions provided some learning opportunities, however, they also addressed the fact they didn’t utilize the tool much.

**Discussion**

In reference to the research questions presented above, the aim of this study is to find the emerging interaction patterns in Synchronous and Asynchro-
nous communication in the language learning process. The results of this study show that during synchronous communication students become more active than they do during asynchronous communication. Learners produce more language output in Synchronous CMC. The results of the study also suggest that when collaboration needs to be immediate and spontaneous, students prefer synchronous communication. Learners can solve their problems systematically while using Synchronous communication. Secondly, we found that communication via synchronous communication tools allows students to develop their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Bloom's taxonomy, which promotes higher forms of thinking in education, also supports the communication while analysing and evaluating the data. Bloom's action verbs are ranked in an order of importance from the easiest one to hardest in cognitive domain as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

The study indicates that types of interaction in language learning influence learners' perceptions. Firstly, synchronous communication is preferred more by the students as it boosts interpersonal communication. Secondly, due to the different learner types, despite various benefits of synchronous communication, some students have a tendency to benefit more in asynchronous communication as they feel themselves more comfortable because of having more time to think. Thirdly, students engaged more in synchronous communication due to its immediacy. Fourthly, students got familiar with CMC as a part of their learning instruction. Finally, this research has put emphasis on emerging interaction patterns in synchronous and asynchronous communication and has provided an insight for language instructors and researchers, and although this study is limited to a small group, it forms a basis for further research.

Reflection and modification

As Anderson stated (2004) learning takes place through the interactions between student, teacher and content. Both asynchronous and synchronous communication tools promote language learning cooperatively between the groups.

The data that we have collected from this study reflects the effects of computer assisted learning on writing skills. As stated earlier, in asynchronous communication, our learners had more time to comprehend the specified message. However, when communicating synchronously, the learners had limited time for the response but we had chance to observe the learners’ real reaction to the message. Furthermore, it would also appear that learners feel more motivated and active than with asynchronous communication. In synchronous tools one to one communication is the most useful method; however, by using asynchronous tools learners have a chance to communicate one to many. In this sense, they can work collaboratively. On the other hand, synchronous learning provides immediate feedback which make the learners active.

We conclude that both asynchronous and synchronous communication tools can be used simultaneously for our future classroom practices. As in both communication tools, instructors and students have chance to collaborate with each other and exchange information. In addition, we are also planning not to limit our educational setting only with classroom or school, and we are eager to use synchronous and asynchronous software to enhance learning. In conclusion, instructors might like to or need to take advantage of technology in today’s world particularly for developing learners’ skills to practice language functions through virtual communication.

References


Main focus
Over the last decade, the use of mobile devices such as smartphones and portable media players has spiked tremendously. This phenomena has brought with it new and exciting ways for individuals to improve their listening and speaking skills in a second language. MP3/MP4 players are no longer just a medium for music, but also an aid for language learners wanting to enhance their aural and oral skills. Owners of these devices can access and download various audio learning materials through content management software such as iTunes. Due to the abundance of audio material available online, a novel approach to perfecting listening skills, known as “podcasting” (a portmanteau of the words iPod and broadcasting) has emerged (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė 2009:28).

The definition on Wikipedia (December 2012) states that a podcast is a type of digital media consisting of an episodic series of audio radio, video, PDF, or ePub files subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer or mobile device. Since podcasts use Really Simple Syndication (RSS), subscribers have them automatically downloaded to their MP3 players or other devices when new content is available. Rosell-Aguilar (2007:481) explains that “having audio or video online is not new, but what is innovative is to provide it as stand-alone items for independent learning delivered direct to your computer or portable media player.” Podcasts provide learners with opportunities for independent learning and to study anytime, anywhere with audio educational materials that could help create a new pedagogical approach in relation to developing Turkish learners’ listening and speaking skills.
Background

National Context

It is a well-known fact that English language teaching/learning is problematic in Turkey (Aktas, 2005; Isik, 2008; Oguz, 1999; Paker, 2007; Tıflarılgılu & Ozturk, 2007, in Kızıldag 2009:189). The English proficiency level in Turkey is considerably low when compared with other developed countries. According to the English First English Proficiency Index, a report published by EF which ranks countries according to their average level of English language proficiency, Turkey is ranked 50th out of 70 countries represented. On the EF EPI website, Turkey is categorised under ‘Very low proficiency’.

Due to deficiencies in the Turkish Education System, most of the students are true beginners when they enrol in English preparatory schools at the age of 18. There is a vividly clear contradiction between their proficiency levels when compared to the amount of years they have spent in an English language class. In many cases, Turkish students begin studying English language as early as primary school and most continue into colleges, yet still often never gain fluency or comfort in speaking.

In the university English preparatory schools, their course books start with pre-elementary level and then change to elementary and intermediate very quickly, but the majority of the students’ levels remain constant. The course book itself is not enough for students to improve their English. Students need extra materials, especially authentic resources to aid their learning. Since pre-elementary and elementary students are true beginners, podcasts could be of more help to intermediate students. However, if the teacher simplifies the task and uses scripts, elementary students can also benefit from podcasts. According to Field, “an eclectic approach to text authenticity accepts that for novice listeners a mixture of small-scale practice activities and scripted recordings may be appropriate, but it stresses the importance of early exposure to authentic recordings” (2008:281).

As the English prep course is compulsory, students are generally unmotivated and grammar-based English instruction creates even more boredom among them. Turkish students mostly have difficulty in understanding real speech and productive skills, especially speaking.”It should be kept in mind that students would like to communicate in the target language instead of learning it all the time” (Kızıldag 2009:190). Podcasts could help them to develop their communicative competence and increase their motivation by providing a variety of subjects. For example, the BBC offers a wide range of podcasts in which students can find any subject they are interested in. Field notes “the BBC received positive feedback from learners about the motivating effect of exposure to authentic language” (2008:278). Turkish students could take the advantage of podcasts as they can be immersed in authentic contexts enabling them to study at their own pace.

In addition to listening practice, podcasts can also be used to enhance students’ speaking skills. Podcasts can help with the development of speaking skills as students can generate their own podcasts, an activity which could offer many benefits such as motivation, improvement through practice and rehearsal, attention to accuracy, collaboration through group podcasts (Man & Sze 2006:122). Therefore, Podcasts have the potential to foster both the aural and oral skills of students.

Research focus

This study aims to explore the role of podcasting in speaking skills and discover the students’ perceptions on the use of podcasts by addressing the following questions:

- How can podcasts aid learners to improve their speaking skills?
- What are the students’ perceptions of podcasting?

The research was conducted with a group of 16 students (14 Turkish, 1 African and 1 Taiwanese) at B1 level for the duration of one quarter (8 weeks). First, a Facebook group was created and a model podcast recorded by a native speaker was uploaded each week. Then, students listened to them and generated their own podcast using a voice recorder called Vocaroo. The teacher assigned topics that were similar to the model podcast. Students created five podcasts. Below are the topics:

1st week: Introduce yourself, family and talk about your hobbies.
2nd week: What are your future plans?
3rd week: Talk about an interesting/exciting event that you had in your life.
4th week: Talk about any subject that you like.
5th week: Reflection podcast. What are your thoughts about this project?
Finally, students uploaded them, listened to each other’s podcasts and commented on at least three of them. After each podcast, the teacher gave feedback regarding fluency pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

Data collection & analysis

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to students in order to find out their perceptions of this study. The data coming from open-ended questions were applied to content analysis and emergent themes were listed (see Chart 1). To validate the data, students were asked to record a reflection podcast at the end of the study. At this stage, they expressed their thoughts and feelings about the project without any direction and intervention. Another questionnaire was administered to the students, it was a self-assessment and they were asked to rank their initial and final speaking levels, the quality of the podcasts they recorded and their interest in speaking. As seen clearly from the figures below, students were positive towards podcast technology. They remarked that they had made progress in developing their speaking skills. They also noted that their interest in speaking increased with the quality of the podcasts.

As the scores noted above were all indicative of the students’ perceptions, a further study should be conducted in order to obtain more precise data. This study’s primary aim was to find out the students’ perceptions and explore whether podcasting would have any type of impact on student learning. It does not assess their progress; pre and post-tests would be useful for this assessment in future studies. Having analyzed the open-ended questionnaires and student reflection podcasts, some salient themes emerged:
Podcasts - A novel approach to enhancing listening and speaking skills

Esin Yüksel

Out the students’ perceptions and explore whether podcasting would have any type of impact on student learning. It does not assess their progress; pre and post-tests will be useful for the further studies. Having analyzed the open-ended questionnaires and student reflection podcasts, below are the salient themes that emerged from this study.

Chart 1: Emergent themes

- Speaking
  - Fluency
  - Anxiety
  - Pronunciation
- Listening
  - Getting used to different accents
- Feedback given by the teacher
  - Be more careful when recording
- Social development
  - Getting to know their friends better
- Other language areas
  - Writing, grammar, vocabulary

Qualitative data analysis (open-ended questionnaires) revealed that students hold positive perceptions towards the use of podcasting. They believed that their speaking skills improved in terms of fluency and pronunciation as they practiced it before recording. Podcasting helped to reduce their speaking anxiety and less confident students felt more comfortable as it is “a behind the scenes” performance. Students also stated that their listening skills were enhanced and they started to understand more of the different accents at the end of the study. Since feedback was given after each podcast, they were more careful when recording. They stated that they did lots of practice before recording and so they learnt new vocabulary and their pronunciation improved. Some of them perceived that they were also socially developed because the podcast experience helped them get to know each other by making comments on the posts. Finally, students valued the use of podcasting as they believed it accelerated their learning, not just in speaking and listening, but also in other language areas such as writing, grammar and vocabulary.

Critical aspects

What are the students’ perceptions of podcasting?

As indicated in the chart below, learners’ thoughts about podcasts are categorized and analyzed in terms of their content. This data depicts the students’ reflections at the end of the study.

Chart 2: Students’ perceptions about podcasting

Motivation: Students liked the idea of creating their own podcast and enjoyed listening to each other. They noted that it was a fun activity. As one of them commented, “It is not a task or homework, it is like a game where we can discover each other and learn many things about different people.” They also said that they wanted to record their own podcast because they wanted to get feedback from the teacher and learn from their mistakes while speaking.
Where students create their own podcasts because this is actually what Turkish students need. Before conducting this research, I always thought that podcasts could be a great tool to enhance listening skills; however, this study also made me aware of its role in speaking. I would definitely assign more projects where students create their own podcasts because this is actually what Turkish students need.

This study helped me gain a different perspective on the use of podcasts. They are learning English as a foreign language and they do not have immediate communication needs to practice the language outside. Due to the portability of the devices, the ability to develop a podcast created more opportunities for students to engage in speaking activities outside of class. We, as teachers, should create a learning environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities and meaningful tasks and I think podcasts serve best for this aim. What I have also gained from this study is that students are more actively engaged in projects when technology is integrated in teaching. We need to take technological developments into account that address our learners’ needs in order to facilitate their learning process. Being aware of this, I would use podcasts or other technological tools as supplementary materials to support language learning. Last but not least, I will continue doing action research as it has a positive impact not only on my teaching practices but also on my professional development. It gives me a way to reflect on my practices and a space to analyze the needs of the students and explore them for better improvement. Thus, it helps me to grow as a professional teacher.

Looking into the future

Podcasts provide learners with opportunities to listen to real speech and practice their speaking which all of the students need because there are few native speakers working at the university and students do not have immediate communication needs to practice the language outside the classroom. It is especially crucial for the institution to take Turkish students’ needs into consideration and adopt an appropriate pedagogical style to enhance their aural and oral skills since most of the students are not aware of audio educational sources that they could easily access through their MP3 players or mobile devices. Low and O’Connel (2006:4) suggested that “teachers provide the structure and framework for learning to take place, where learners use mobile devices to interact with each other and the world around them; collaboratively navigating and connecting information”. Listening and speaking, like all other...
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Esin Yüksel

skills, can be improved if teachers provide appropriate sources addressing learners’ needs. Kukulska–Hulme explains that “If language learners’ preferences and needs can be allowed to have a bearing on what is learnt and how, mobile technologies have a clear role to play in realizing such an objective” (2009:164). Having examined the Turkish context, it is clear that the most important need of Turkish students is being exposed to the real language more and podcasts could meet that need by providing a wide range of authentic materials. Breen and Candlin (1987) suggest that “learner needs and interests, their approaches to language teaching, the teaching/learning process in the classroom should be taken into consideration in determining the course syllabus”. Therefore, the institution should develop the curriculum by taking technological developments into account that address learners’ needs in Turkey. Teachers can encourage students to create their own podcasts or listen to them but they cannot force them to do so and as they are unassessed, students will not practice regularly. Thus, the institution needs to support the teachers’ efforts to integrate podcasting into the curriculum that is most importantly, providing authentic sources and stimulated environments that can be used to practice the language.

References
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