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John O'Dwyer, PhD
May 2014

FOREWORD

The conceptualization of teacher professional learning has changed over the past 30 years from a perspective where the teacher was being researched and acted upon to a perspective where the teacher's voice, founded in practice, is accepted as a key contributor to the knowledge base of effective teaching practice.

Practicing teachers add significantly to their own and our own understanding of teaching and learning. We need, therefore, to listen to their voices.

Teachers not only benefit from researching their own practice, but providing them with opportunities to reflect on the practice of their colleagues can also be a powerful force for guiding their own professional learning. The aim of this conference was to:

- Provide an opportunity for teachers, researchers, and teacher educators to listen to one another's voices;
- Encourage teachers to explore their own practice and share their perspectives and conclusions with colleagues;
- Give an opportunity for others to benefit from such insights and potentially apply these to their own practice;
- Explore the principles and practice of classroom-focussed research by practitioners;
- Situate classroom-focussed research within the broader concerns of the teaching profession.

The conference provided a forum for exchange with colleagues in different language teaching contexts both nationally and internationally. Papers in the programme focused in the main on: teacher research, action research, exploratory practice, reflective practice, and classroom-focussed research.

The papers which have found their way into this volume are a testmonmy to the wealth of learning that teachers can bring to the fore as a natural part of their professional practice.

CONTENTS

CREATIVE WRITING: STIMULATING AN INTEREST IN CREATIVE WRITING?

Steven Hobson, Bilkent University School of English Language, Ankara, Turkey

1. Rationale

Although writing is a vital skill for survival in university, the vast majority of the students in our preparatory programme classrooms openly express a fear and dislike of the skill. As an educator and as a lover of writing this raised alarm bells for me and I started to try and think of ways in which I could promote an element of interest, albeit a grudging one, in the skill of writing. I decided to see if the introduction of creative writing into the classroom could be the answer. At the same time, I was acutely aware of the heavy demands of the school curriculum at whatever level I would be introducing creative writing into the classroom and so, although I believed that the stimulation of an interest in writing would help the students in both their preparatory school classes and subsequently in their university departments, I did not want to feel that I was 'wasting the students' time' nor to have the students feel that their valuable and finite classroom and homework time was being squandered on 'frivilous' activities. I therefore hypothesised that the following 'benefits' would serve as adequate rationale. Creative writing would:

- stimulate an interest in writing;
- provide exposure to a different genre of writing;
- serve as an opportunity to explore creativity;
- enhance thinking skills;
- allow the students to receive feedback on their use of grammar and lexis;
- would provide an opportunity to write 'freely' (i.e. a break from the organizational constraints of academic writing).

Finally, creative writing is a form of 'expressivism', in which students are 'encouraged to write freely and personally' and are encouraged to 'explore their identities and writing processes in order to take control of their writing. The idea is that, by writing without thought for the 'rules' of writing (which is, of course, the opposite of what we necessarily teach for academic writing), students can be made to feel comfortable with the 'act of writing' (Nunan 2003). I also saw creative writing as offering the potential for the student to express something of 'self' through their writing. In turn this would, in theory, allow the teacher greater access into the personal lives of their students and help to encourage a mutual bond of understanding and trust between learner and teacher.

2. Planning for a 'mini course' or a 'course-within-a-course'

2.1 Allocation of time

Because of my reservations about how the introduction of creative writing into the normal syllabus would be preceived by the students I decided to restrict the 'mini course' (or 'course-within-a-course') to a maximum of three teaching blocks per week (3x 50 minute slots), plus weekly homework assignments; in terms of classroom time this equates to 12% of the standard course.

2.2 Assessment

In terms of course assessment, two decisions had to be taken: what would be the criteria for assessing outcome and would any grade points be taken from the main course to be used in that assessment. Although a central part of creative writing is, understandably, 'creativity', it is highly subjective and I decided that no attempt would be made to assess just how creative a student had been in their writing, rather I wanted to encourage all students in their attempts. Instead, I focussed formal assessment on the accurate use of grammar and lexis (in exactly the same way that students would be assessed on their academic writing in the normal course). Regarding the question of allocating grade points for the outcomes, it was considered important to do so in order to motivate the students to complete the assignments (which would all be completed as outside class activities). In a normal course students are expected to complete a series of components which comprise a 'Learning Portfolio', the total grade allocation of which is 25%. A decision was taken that for the class in which I would teach the mini course, the students would have 10% of their course assessment points devoted to the creative writing mini course. Most of the assignments were simply awarded either a '1' (=submitted/ complete) or a '0' (= not submitted/ incomplete), but the final assignment (see Section 2.3 Syllabus) would be assessed on a scale of 0 - 5.

2.3 Syllabus

Although the creative writing course represented a relatively small portion of the weekly classroom time, I regarded the planning and development of a syllabus essential for the 'mini course', both in terms of giving the course the best chance of achieving the hypothesized benefits of creative writing (see Section 1.0 Rationale) and to justify my 'experiment' to the Director of the school. A syllabus was also considered important in keeping track of any subsequent changes to that syllabus in the light of classroom experience and to aid in the planning of any such future courses, should the experiment be considered worth repeating. That syllabus included weekly objectives, outcomes and assessment for the entire 8 weeks of the course (running

concurrently with the main course). From personal choice, mainly because I felt that it would lend structure to the creative writing course, I chose the short story as the central element. I was guided by a quotation from the late Canadian short story writer, Don Bailey who summarised the essential and only elements of the short story as, 'something happened to someone, somewhere, sometime.' This I translated into three key areas for classroom input and leading to related homework assignments: character analysis, location analysis and plot analysis. The intended culmination of the mini course was to be a short story using these three areas as input and guidance to support the final written outcome. In order to give the students the opportunity to explore other areas of creative writing and to bring variety to the course, the syllabus incorporated other aspects of creativity and related written output, including: using photographs as an input source for creative writing; exploring the persuasive language of advertising to prepare advertisements; and writing freely to explore the genre of poetry.

3. Assessing course effectiveness

3.1 Background

As an experiment to primarily see if creative writing could promote greater interest in writing amongst our student population, it was necessary to determine whether any increase in interest had taken place at the end of the 8 weeks. It was decided to administer a questionnaire to the students at the end of the course along with a one-on-one interview to as many of the students as time would allow. The questionnaire and interview were specifically probing to see: whether the students had enjoyed the 'mini course'; whether they felt that the course was 'time well spent'; and whether the creative writing activities had helped with other (academic) writing activities in the main course.

3.2 The results

According to the results, 80% of the students enjoyed the creative writing activities and 80% of the respondents felt that their writing had improved because of the creative writing activities. The following questions taken from the questionnaire specifically asked students to identify problem areas that they have with writing and which of those same areas they felt had been improved by the creative writing activities:

What areas of writing do you have problems with? (Please check/tick the ones that apply to you.)

____ Thinking of ideas to write about
____ Organisation of my writing
____ Connecting my ideas in a logical way

____ Use of grammar in my writing
____ Use of vocabulary in my writing
____ Correctly answering the question/prompt

Which areas of your writing has this Creative Writing course helped you with? (Please check/tick the ones that apply to you.)

____ Thinking of ideas to write about
____ Organisation of my writing
____ Connecting my ideas in a logical way
____ Use of grammar in my writing
____ Use of vocabulary in my writing
____ Correctly answering the question/prompt
____ None

The categories were deliberately selected because they are areas specifically addressed by the Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) writing criteria. According to the results, the most common problem areas were: 'accurate use of grammar' (50% of respondents), 'accurate use of vocabulary' (50%) and 'correctly answering the prompt' (33.3%). After the creative writing course students felt that the 'mini course' had helped them most in the following areas: 'generation of ideas' (91.7%), 'accurate use of vocabulary' (66.7%), 'linking ideas in a logical fashion' (58.3%), 'organisation' (50%) and 'accurate use of grammar' (50%). Gratifyingly, it appeared that 2 of the 3 problems areas had been improved because of the creative writing course. The questionnaire also sought to see if the students perceived the creative writing activities as 'a waste of time' compared to what they could have been doing more of in their regular course (i.e. the Opportunity Cost). None of the students felt that the course had been 'a waste of time', although for each of the following categories, 8.3% of respondents would like to have used some of the time for: more academic writing, more listening and note-taking, more reading comprehension, and more grammar/lexis work.

The one-on-one interviews used just 4 questions, designed to better probe areas of the questionnaire. For the first question, 'How do you feel about the creative writing activities that we have been doing in this course?', all of the responses were positive and specific advantages volunteered were: better use of imagination, improvement in writing skills, a chance to not worry about all of the mechanical requirements of academic writing, and a chance to learn new vocabulary. When asked, 'Have the creative writing activities (and assignments) increased/reduced your interest in writing?', 100% of the students felt that their interest had increased. The third question asked, 'Have the creative writing activities (and assignments) helped you in your other BUSEL writing assignments? Why?/Why not?' 75% of the students responded positively, with

the following justifications: 'encouraged to think more', 'opportunity to explore imagination', 'became bored with academic writing', 'opportunity to use grammar', 'learned new vocabulary', 'generation of ideas' and 'creativity will help in my department'. For the 'negative' responses (25%) there were no outright statements against creative writing, rather statements of 'not sure'. A common criticism of the creative writing activities, for example, is that they are not of the same writing genre as those expected in the examinations. Students were not sure if they could see a positive link between creative writing and other forms of the production skill. The final question of the quartet asked 'Have the creative writing activities (and assignments) helped you in your CAT[1] writing exams? Why?/Why not?' Here, 62.5% of the students responded positively and claimed that they were helped in terms of: organisation of ideas, generation of ideas, and vocabulary. 25% of the respondents replied 'no', citing 'stress in the exam' and 'writing topics are different', although they thought that 'maybe' the course had helped with grammar and lexis. The remaining 12.5% declined to answer the question.

4. Changes made to the 'mini course'

Initially, the creative writing 'mini course' was taught in an Intermediate 'mainstream' class in the 2011-2012 academic year and repeated in the following academic year, again in an Intermediate 'mainstream' class. In comparing the two courses there were several differences, both in course planning and student reaction to the course.

4.1 Course planning

One of the biggest problems encountered in the first course was not student receptivity to creative writing or student ability, but an unwillingness to explore the short story in depth. As planned (see Section 2.3 Syllabus) the course would spend a considerable amount of time analysing the short story according to its components of: character, location and plot. In reality the students just wanted to write a story and explore the writing on their own terms. It was realised that a highly structured approach may work in an elective course devoted to the short story, but in the current BUSEL context, especially for Intermediate level students, it is easy for students to become bored with the 'rules' of short story writing and with creative writing in general. Therefore, when the course was reorganized for the 2012-2013 academic year, the syllabus downplayed the short story and substituted other creative writing activities instead. It should also be noted that due to personal teaching constraints I reduced the input

[1] CAT = Cumulative Achievement Test, a mid-course assessment

time from 3 to 2 blocks per week, but still ran the 'mini course' for the entire 8 weeks, concurrent with the main course. In addition to short story input, activities and assignments, the new syllabus included the aforementioned use of photographs, advertising and poetry, along with the use of realia to serve as a source of writing input.

Because the class was academically weaker than the one I taught in the previous academic year I felt that I couldn't justify using any of the grades normally assigned to the 'Learning Portfolio' to support the creative writing course. I also wanted to see how motivated the students would be in doing the creative writing assignments set as homework without the reward/motivation of grades. I did, however, attempt to use an alternative form of motivation in that the writings that I felt were the best for each week were displayed (with student permission) on the 'Teaching Unit' noticeboard for students and teachers to see. Even without grade assignment, assessment and feedback would still be based on the accuracy of grammar and lexis used in the writings.

4.2 Student response

There were some interesting differences and similarities arising from the questions asked at the end of the creative writing courses when comparing those run in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years. In 2012, for example, we saw that 80% of the students enjoyed the creative writing activities, but this dropped to 73% in 2013. In 2012, again, 80% of the students felt that their writing had improved because of the creative writing but in the following year this figure dropped substantially to 64%. In terms of the problem areas in writing identified by the students, the differing responses can be seen in the following chart:

PROBLEM AREAS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS	% OF STUDENTS	
	2012	**2013**
GENERATION OF IDEAS	25.0	18.1
ORGANISATION	8.3	36.4
LINKING IDEAS IN A LOGICAL FASHION	25.0	36.4
ACCURATE USE OF GRAMMAR	50.0	45.5
ACCURATE USE OF VOCABULARY	50.0	27.3
CORRECTLY ANSWERING THE PROMPT	33.3	27.3

The major difference is that in 2012, organisation was not considered an issue, whereas in the current academic year nearly 40% of the students were struggling with that aspect of writing. This very much reflected the weaker

writing profile of the latter class, who were struggling with the heavy demands of the Intermediate level syllabus, which includes formal paragraph writing and tackling essay writing for the first time.

AREAS HELPED BY CREATIVE WRITING	% OF STUDENTS	
	2012	**2013**
GENERATION OF IDEAS	91.7	63.6
ORGANISATION	50.0	27.3
LINKING IDEAS IN A LOGICAL FASHION	58.3	54.5
ACCURATE USE OF GRAMMAR	50.0	45.5
ACCURATE USE OF VOCABULARY	66.7	54.5
CORRECTLY ANSWERING THE PROMPT	33.3	27.3

In terms of the same set of writing 'areas' and the extent to which students felt that the creative writing course had helped them in those areas, there was a noticeable percentage drop (91.7% to 63.6%) from 2012 to 2013 for the generation of ideas, with a similar experience recorded for organisation. Again, this presumably reflects the much weaker student profile of the 2013 class. The other results were fairly consistent between the two academic years. Another difference arising from the questionnaire and the interview is that in 2012, 100% of the students felt that the creative writing had been beneficial, but that figure dropped to 72.7% in 2013. In the latter case a much greater percentage of the students would have preferred to use the time for listening and note-taking; a difficult skill for many of our Intermediate level students. When asked whether creative writing had increased or reduced interest in writing the 100% response from 2012 in support of creative writing had falled to 54.5% in 2013. A similar drop was registered for the question which asked whether creative writing had helped students in their other (academic) writing assignments: 75% to 27.3%. The final interview question (see Section 3.2 The Results) was considered too difficult for the students and was dropped from the 2013 survey.

5. Conclusion

In reviewing the results from the questionnaires and interview questions used in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years and from my observations, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

a) There was overwhelming enthusiasm for the creative writing 'mini course' in 2012 and strong enthusiasm in 2013.

b) All students in both years felt that the creative writing had helped them in some of the areas that are assessed in academic writing at BUSEL: generation of ideas (content), organisation/linking of ideas, accurate use of grammar, and accurate use of lexis.
c) Many students saw creative writing as an opportunity to exercise their imagination and express it creatively through their writing.
d) Creative writing can help the teacher connect with individual students (and vice versa).
e) The student profile, in terms of academic strength, motivation, study habits and their department, affect the receptivity of the students to exploring their creativity through writing. Students who were going to study in departments which rely heavily on creativity (such as Interior Design, for example) were noticeably more creative in their writing and more willing to embrace the opportunity to write creatively.

So, on balance, I feel that the experiment was a success and one that would be worthwhile repeating in the future. It would be especially interesting to repeat the experiment with other levels, particularly at the extremes of Elementary and Pre-Faculty.

Reference

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PAIR WORK AND GROUP WORK: MYTH OR REALITY?

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess students' reaction to a communicative activity, in which a group activity is carried out in a very different manner from traditional group work activities, especially in terms of classroom management and seating plan. This is a qualitative study, which elicited students' feedback on the activity through open-ended written self-reports. The results suggested that students stated preference for this particular activity over traditional pair-work (PW) and group-work (GW) activities. This paper will discuss the extent to which PW and GW activities in a communicative class contribute to second language development, especially as far as accuracy is concerned.

This article is a critical analysis of traditional PW and GW activities, in which the researcher challenges the claim that communicative interaction can drive language acquisition forward. In the proposed alternative activity, as the whole class focus is on an activity carried out by a single group rather than multiple groups, classroom management does not pose a challenge to the teacher because neither the students nor the teacher is distracted by the noise usually generated by students working in pairs and groups.

1. Introduction:

With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the explicit study of grammar and formal properties of language were relegated and replaced by activities such as PW and GW activities which aimed to promote meaningful communication. The assumption was that the teaching of discrete language units did not serve language acquisition; neither did it promote communicative competence. Communicative competence, which in essence was limited to oral communication skills only, was prioritized to the exclusion of linguistic competence.

2. Literature Review

Negotiation for meaning is founded upon the premise that second language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input which is pitched at slightly beyond the learner's current L2 knowledge (Krashen 1982). According to Long & Robinson (1998), learners can make input comprehensible through interactional adjustments, which will require learners to engage in negotiating meaning, and whenever there is a problem in negotiations, problem utterances will be checked, repeated, revised, and ultimately modified. All these steps will

essentially culminate in the clarification of the messages that peers wish to get across to their interlocutors.

2.1 Concerns raised against PW & GW and CLT

Simard & Wong (2004) argue that communicative ESL programs typically lack metalinguistic reflection, an essential component of both language awareness and crosslinguistic awareness (Jessner 2006). Reference to learners' L1, on the other hand, was virtually absent from CLT classrooms since it was assumed that L1 use in the classroom would hinder the acquisition process. This stands in sharp contrast to the most current literature in bilingual and multilingual education which posits that teaching across languages presents a promising didactic tool for both bilingual and multilingual teaching (Jessner 2008).

Skehan (1996) notes that in order to communicate meanings, learners will automatically switch to a cognitive mode which will require a very heavy reliance on comprehension and communication skills. The problem with this is that learners can get across almost all what they wish to say depending on lexis and contextual clues alone (Foster & Ohta 2005). This might be of some concern to teachers because when learners and native-speakers alike rely solely on communicating meanings, they may not worry about the forms they employ (Kess 1992).

Delaying dealing with forms, however, might result in the acquisition of irreversibly deviant language patterns. As Skehan (1996, 46) puts it: "Inaccuracy *could* (emphasis original) impair communicative effectiveness, it could stigmatize, it could fossilize, and finally self-perceived inaccuracy could be demoralizing to the learner". This is precisely why Eskey argues that "rewarding a learner's fluency may, in some cases, actually impede his or her achievement of accuracy" (1983, 219).

2.2 Fossilization

The construct "fossilization" is defined as the non-progression of learning despite continuous exposure to input, adequate motivation to learn, and sufficient opportunity for practice (Han, 2004, 213). DeKeyser (1993) contends that fossilization is an unavoidable product of instruction that does not put sufficient emphasis on treating learners' errors. O'Riordan (1999, 21) asserts that fossilization is the result of "extended period of fluency without accuracy". There is an overwhelming consensus in the SLA research on the fact that adult learners do need their errors made salient and explicit to them in order to avoid fossilization and continue developing linguistic competence **(**Ferris 2004; Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen 2002; Zhang 1998).

2.3 Fluency vs. Accuracy

Foster & Ohta (2005) argue that progress in acquiring the second language system should be seen as manifested not only by increased fluency, but also accuracy. Eskey (1983, 319) contends that fluency in a language is no guarantee of formal accuracy. It is important to note that English proficiency is usually equated with oral English proficiency (Wiley 1990-91). Wong (2005, 32) similarly argues that in many ethnic communities such as Chinatown in Chicago, L2 input tends to be limited to conversational language.

Cummins (2000) suggests that there are significant differences between BISC (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) in terms of their acquisition and developmental patterns. Whereas native-speakers attain native-like fluency and pronunciation at around the age of six, CALP continues throughout lifetime. In the case of non-native English learners, conversational English is usually acquired within two years following the first exposure to English. Conversely, the period required for learners to catch up to their peers in terms of academic English takes at least five to seven years (Cummins 2000). It is thus easy to be misguided by a native English speaker's conversational language proficiency, when actually the same person may well be incapable of producing a well-constructed essay, or even a letter. A preponderant amount of research, in fact, point to native-speakers' shortcomings especially in terms of parts of speech (Borg 2003; Bolitho 1988; Andrews 1994, 1999), which is a consequence of anti-grammar school policies both in the US and UK.

2.4 Input vs. accurate language production

The claim that comprehensible input alone suffices to make language acquisition happen

is problematic for a number of reasons. First, input from spoken discourse accounts for only a very small portion of the whole English language. From an accuracy point of view in particular, input from spoken discourse in English may actually lead a student to malformed sentences that display inconsistencies in terms of subject verb agreement, inappropriate use of singular and plural noun forms, misunderstanding of some contractions, and so forth. The following sentences, extracted from informal spoken and written native discourse, can be heard being produced by highly educated native speakers of English.

a- There**'s** a lot of people in this city (very common in North American English).
b- The **amount** of students is 22.
c- Mine is very different **than** his.
d- There are **less** students in this classroom than the other one.
e- I **ain't** like them.

f- People do have **economical** problems here.
g- **It's** leg is broken.
h- If I **was** there, I would have told him.
i- I would have **took** the train.
j- You do**n't** pay **nothing** else.
k- **If** I **would have known** about the party, I would have gone to it.
l- He **don't care** about me.
m- There car is **their.**
n- **Where**'s it **at**?
o- I **could of** killed him.

To get messages across, one does not need to be accurate. It is very well possible to construct sentences that are devoid of function words. A sentence such as "I would like to see the manager" can well be comprehended even if the speaker said "I like see manager" as function words do not substantially contribute to the meaning of the sentence.

Classroom management

Phipps and Borg (2009) argue that PW and GW activities are very likely to cause classroom management problems and make it difficult for the teacher to monitor students and provide students error feedback.

The conventional approach adopted by teachers is that when students work in pairs or groups, the teachers visits each group for a very short period, checks whether the activity is being carried out properly, and leaves for another group. The more crowded classes are, the less attention students get from the teacher; in most cases teachers do not even have the time to note down students' errors in order to give them feedback following the activity. The moment the teacher moves to another group, it is very likely that the group which the teacher has just observed switch to L1. In PW and GW activities, all we get is noise and in the case of classes that are full of students who share the same L1, a lot of L1 talk takes place, all of which contribute to classroom management problems. Finally, unless students get feedback following the activity, accuracy will not be promoted.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

This is a small scale qualitative study conducted at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The average age of the students was 18. They had to study English for one academic year before being able to embark on their studies in their respective fields. The students' proficiency level ranged between intermediate and post-intermediate. The researcher was the class teacher

himself who had more than 25 years' teaching experience at the time of the study.

Sixteen students participated in the study, and as part of the group activity, students were asked to read a local newspaper article, which discusses unhealthy eating habits of the Saudi society. The article was only one-page long and was highly relevant to Saudi students' daily lives. One day prior to the activity, the teacher asked five students to volunteer to talk about the article and express their views in the activity which was to take place the next day.

Seating Plan

The five students, who volunteered to take part in the discussion of the newspaper article, sat in a small circle in the middle of the class. The remaining 11 students were seated around the five students and formed another circle sitting very close to the students who were discussing the topic. In other words, there were two circles; an inner and an outer one. Students in the outer circle were instructed to listen to the discussion very carefully, identify language problems, offer comments on the topic, and react to the students' comments in the inner circle.

During the activity, every student in the outer circle took notes of what they thought was problematic in the sentences of the students discussing the topic in the inner circle. In this respect, the teacher's aim was to get every student involved in the activity. As for the teacher, he sat immediately behind the outer circle, which allowed him to see and hear each student clearly. During the activity, he listened to the students very carefully and took notes throughout the activity. The seating plan gave him the chance to monitor each student closely.

Following the discussion by the inner circle, the students in the outer circle commented on the activity. Not only did they correct the mistakes made by the students in the inner circle, they also reacted to some opinions expressed by the inner circle. In addition, they made comments about eating habits in Saudi Arabia. In this sense, they actively participated in the discussion. Once the outer circle had completed their comments and provided their corrections on their classmates' mistakes, the teacher provided extensive feedback, especially on grammar and pronunciation. Following the group activity, they were asked to provide their feedback through open-ended written self-reports. They were asked to comment on any of the following sub-headings:

1- Feedback
2- Attention
3- Time
4- Interaction
5- What they learned

4. Design

The literature argues that a qualitative design can better address naturally occurring data (Wolfson 1986; Roberts, Davies & Jupp 1992) as subjects respond to a natural situation rather than a situation that is contrived. The study in question can be regarded as semi-structured in its orientation in the sense that it attempted to elicit subjects' thoughts, beliefs, opinions and reflections immediately following the activity, and asked them to provide their feedback about the activity in the form of open-ended written reports. The prompts that were provided encouraged the students to write their reflections about this new GW experience in a very unrestricted manner, as opposed to those that are structured, and hence constrain students' responses.

The responses obtained from students were analyzed in light of the literature on PW and GW activities. Students' feedback below has been kept original in terms of the grammaticality of the sentences, but their spelling mistakes were corrected.

5. Results

Students' Feedback (S: Student)

S1: It was actually first time and the whole class listened to me, so it felt really good and it made me feel confident. Mistakes: It was very good because students always make mistakes and they think it is O.K. I made many mistakes and the T corrected it for me.

S2: Actually my mistakes that teacher told me about it were very useful for me and I really got improved myself. The teacher was very carefully with me and listened to every sentence I said carefully.

S3: Everyone is listening to the one who is talking. At X (language institute), you get interrupted all the time. And whoever raise his voice get the attention**.**

S4: The teacher's interventions were good. The class was active but quiet.

S5: In this group work I learned a lot. I learned grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. I learned not from my mistakes only. I learned from the others' mistakes too. At X, I did not learn a lot. What I learned is nothing compared with the group work in this activity.

S6: The attention we got from the teacher was very good because he corrected our mistakes after we finished the activity. I learned how to speak in front of others and how to follow them when they talk and take notes.

S7: Students got enough time to correct themselves. Students received great attention from the teacher. The topic was important.

S8: There is a lot of attention from the teacher. It was fun; nice new way to study. Time: perfect. Everyone had the chance to talk.

S9: The other group activity was noisy and boring, there was a lot of free time while teacher is moving from one group to another, but the activity we did was great because all the class was watching the same group and hunting for their mistakes. When the teacher correct my mistakes in front everybody, it will be strong and it will stick in my mind.

S10: In the other group activity, we cannot have attention with all the noise from other groups. The quality decreases with all the disturbance of chatting.

S11: The group activity was great. I had a lot of fun doing it in class.

S12: The feedback was good. The teacher corrected most of our mistakes.

S13: The attention was so good because people loves to catch mistakes. I learned great vocabulary, and learning from a friend actually make me don't forget my mistake. This activity will make the students to bring all what they have from vocabulary and allow them to do some grammar mistake.

S14: It was a nice activity. I enjoyed it. We got enough attention. We learned how to correct our mistakes.

S15: We got a lot of attention from the teacher compared to what we got at X.

S16: I think everyone had attention from the teacher. I guess everyone had his share of time. It was a quiet environment.

Students' feedback justifies the literature in that:

1- Students were happy to get T's feedback.
2- They got attention in terms of their mistakes (accuracy).
3- They got scaffolding from an expert.
4- They did not feel threatened by the teacher's intervention.
5- Students were concerned about noise (classroom management).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Zhou (2009, 34) argues that with the limited and unconvincing empirical evidence we have, it would be unrealistic to claim that communication-oriented instruction results in learning when it is measured by means of free constructed responses (e.g. communicative tasks). Discarding metalinguistic reference to language, eliminating crosslinguistic component of the whole language learning process, and avoiding explicit language instruction does not necessarily result in learning. The claim that CLT is a student-centred methodology and that it creates a comfortable classroom context through students' active participation in PW and GW activities is not well-founded. We cannot possibly make the classroom a comfortable context by removing the

cognitive load off the shoulders of students. A classroom will yield a comfortable atmosphere to the extent the teacher understands students' needs, expectations, frustrations, and challenges caused by the learning enterprise.

I would like to argue that CLT does not promote conscious understanding of the target language system. PW and GW activities, at least in the way they are traditionally implemented, contribute *very little* to accuracy.

Teaching approaches imported from the West do not necessarily correspond to the needs of learners in other contexts. It is high time we discarded methodologies characterized by mono-cultural and monolingual values and norms and embraced cross-cultural and cross-linguistic approaches to language teaching. CLT is seemingly a pedagogical, but in reality it is an ideological orientation to language, which promotes Anglo-Saxon political and cultural values.

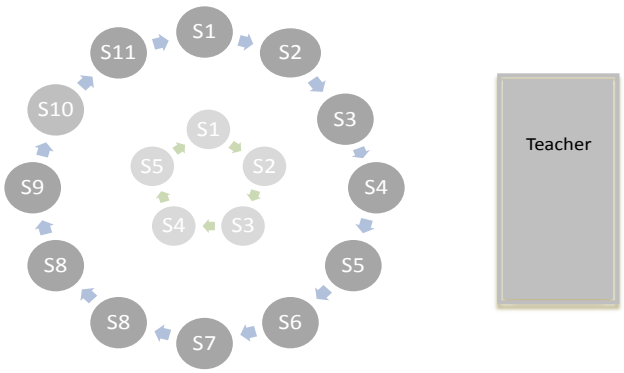
The imposition of CLT as a teaching methodology should be viewed as a tool of domination and subordination. Authority and power are manifested by institutional practices not only around language use (Auerbach 1993, 2), but also around teaching methodologies that are dictated to teachers by parties who desire to perpetuate power as part of their hidden agenda.

I would like to conclude this paper with the following quotation:

> 'Call me a cynic, but it does seem pretty evident to me that it is not a coincidence that native-speaker English Language Teaching has been dominated by monolingual speakers of English who discourage anything other than English in the classroom for reasons that suit them' (Wajnryb 2002, 88).

Appendix 1

Classroom Seating Plan



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MIND THE GAP: FOSTERING MOTIVATION AND AUTONOMY IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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1. Context

Palfreyman quotes a colleague discussing learners, on a Turkish university English language preparation program, "they can't discuss, they can't generate ideas in an interesting way" (2003, p.190)**.** The learners' apparent lack of creativity is perhaps unsurprising, however, following their experience of school - in which learning is teacher dominated, focussing on product and correctness, reinforced through a competitive examination culture where learning is equated with passing tests (Sungura & Senlarb 2009, p.58). Given this background, what is surprising is that many university instructors appear to expect learners to possess these and other qualities considered fundamental to university study – primarily motivation to learn and the capacity for autonomous learning.

A head of teaching also interviewed by Palfreyman recognised the responsibility of the university to ease the transition from school student to university learner in the way they relate to the relative freedom of university life (2003, p.193). Similarly, encouraging the transition to autonomous and motivated learners would seem to be a further responsibility of the university. This paper describes a project aimed at fostering motivation and autonomy in learners attending an English language preparation course at a Turkish foundation university during the 2012-2013 academic year. I was both researcher and class teacher in this Action Research project and the learners were also consenting participants in the research.

The investigation took place during a self-contained, eight-week module of learning for a class of intermediate learners. The innovation in the study was a wiki-based integrated skills project, which sought to place learning in a blended context using the affordances of technology. The project promotes the learning of English through experiential and inquiry based forms of learning, whose attributes are claimed to promote motivation and autonomy. The affordance of technology was used to undertake "teaching methods that past experts have always suggested are the best for learning, but that were largely rejected by the education establishment as being too hard to implement" (Prensky 2010, p.xv).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Motivation

Teachers and researchers regard motivation, a multifaceted area of complex and interconnected factors, as a primary factor in second language (L2) learning (Ellis 1994, 508).

The socio-cultural perspective links L2 learners' motivation to personal and valued goals as well as views of themselves as competent future users of the language reflected in their current learning environment (Ushioda 2011, 201-203).

An idealised L2 learner, from a cognitive perspective, possesses intrinsic motivation to learn. However it is often the case that the motivation is extrinsic (Deci & Ryan 1985, 245) and attempts by teachers to motivate learners extrinsically may be met with "resentment, resistance, and disinterest or alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of the task" (Ryan & Deci 2000, 55).

Learners falling into the second category are also likely to possess positive attributions to learning, displaying high self-efficacy and remaining positive and motivated in the face of repeated failure. Alternatively, the attributions of pessimistic learners, who often have low self-efficacy, may lead them into a state of learned helplessness (Dörnyei 2003, 8; Harvey & Martinko 2010, 149-51; Ushioda 2008, 27).

The Turkish school system (Sungura & Senlarb 2009, 58) encourages performance-orientation, in which learning is equated with externally recognised achievement, passing exams and performance relative to other learners. This does not necessarily equate with deeper learning required of learning a language, associated with a mastery goal-orientation where learners are likely be intrinsically motivated and self-efficacious (Beghetto 2004, Dörnyei 1995, 276; Urdan 2004, 251).

2.2 Autonomy

According to the Bergen definition "Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person." (Dam et al 1990, 102)

Fostering learners' autonomy and personal accountability for learning is an active process in which learners are encouraged to reflect on their learning. It may actually improve motivation and the efficacy of learning (Dickinson 1995, 168). Unlike motivation, which is context-dependent, autonomy can be considered a capacity which, once acquired, can be applied to other learning contexts (Benson 2011, 60, 91).

İneçay & İneçay's study describes the L2 learners a Turkish university as tending to be passive, displaying limited autonomy, wishing to be taught rather than actively learn (2009, 621).

2.3 Fostering Motivation and Autonomy

The integrated skills project was designed to include principles claimed as promoting motivation and/or autonomous learning: group working (Gokhale 1995, 22); setting meaningful, challenging and achievable goals (Oxford & Shearin 1994, 19) facilitated through a well scaffolded learning environment (Jones 1996, p.152); learner choice (Dörnyei 1994, 278-282); and well scaffolded opportunities to reflect (Benson 2006, 28).

2.4 Blended Learning (BL) & Technology

The characteristics of web 2.0 tools such as wikis, make them well-suited to socially constructivist learning (Notari as cited in Parker & Chao, 2007, 59) enabling the promotion of meaningful collaborative and cooperative learning inside and outside the classroom (Seely-Brown & Adler 2008, 18). High quality, experiential collaborative virtual interactions can generate Communities of Inquiry (COI) (Garrison & Kanuka 2004, 99) which can engender transformative learning experiences, including the development of critical reasoning skills, with the result that learners "become self-directed and have learned how to learn." (Garrison & Vaughan 2008, 45)

2.5 Problem Based Learning

Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a "student-centred, self-directed, integrated and contextual mode of learning" (Chegwidden 2006, 642) that "situates learning in complex-problem solving contexts" (Hmelo-Silver 2004, 261). BL provides a natural venue for PBL which, amongst other positive learning outcomes, promotes critical thinking through negotiation, discussion and collaboration as well as encouraging meta-cognitive reflection on the learning process (Savery and Duff 1995, 3-6).

3. Research Methods

This Action Research study was conducted within the paradigm of Complexity Theory (CT) a naturalistic "emerging fourth paradigm in educational research" (Cohen et al, 2010, 33). The learning environment is a complex place where, despite the intentions of the teacher or demands of the institution, learning cannot easily be predicted or prescribed (Tudor 2003, 4). Action Research "confronts rather than minimises the variables present in the research context and attempts to see explanations inclusive of those variables" (Burns 2005, 67).

It therefore presents an appropriate research methodology for CT which recognises the influence and unpredictable interaction of innumerable potential factors, including in this particular context myself as teacher and researcher, allowing for a thick description of the phenomena investigated within its natural context (Cohen et al 2010, 168, 254).

The data generated does not measure quantitative changes in autonomy and motivation. Rather it seeks to identify, notice and tease out data indicative of such changes. In attempting to capture the actions, attitudes and perceptions of participants from different perspectives, I hope to be able to provide a more comprehensive description of the study (Ushioda 2010, 16).

The data was generated in several ways to enable triangulation: a teaching journal I maintained as teacher/researcher; mid-course learner/participant formative written feedback; peer observation of the class by a colleague; discussion of the class with my co-teacher; three learner/participant summative interviews with Alp, Berk and Cem[2].

The acts of analysis and interpretation of the data are personal and unique. In revisiting the data for this paper I am conscious of looking at the data once again through a slightly different perspective, the result of distance from the research, and a more specific focus due to the limitations of space.

4. Data Analysis[3]

The learners in this class were repeating the intermediate level for the third time (having failed to complete the level on two previous occasions). Many learners attended the classes solely to enter to the end of module progression exam. A colleague's peer observation noted that the learners (quite understandably) "have low motivation and some behaviour problems as well".

Attempts to ameliorate this situation included making attendance non-compulsory as well as altering some of the LP project stages, deadlines and crucially opportunities for self-reflection.

The results of a performance-orientated approach to learning were widely observable in apparently well-developed and practiced techniques, such as last minute completion of work with learners often asking for information on task instructions on the eve of a deadline.

Opportunities that had been planned to promote learning become another task just to complete. Alp openly persists in strategies, he

[2] Pseudonyms

[3] The source of data, unless indicated, is the Teaching Journal (TJ)

acknowledges, are for short term convenience rather than long term learning, whereby learners "come only the five minute memorise everything the go and forget everything" (Interview).

Berk saw choice and autonomy in terms of specific rules related to the classroom such as the right to go to the bathroom or drink water (interview). When it came to choice in learning in the classroom he, as did others, seemed clear that teacher-imposed rules were necessary to promote learning "to attend your lessons is actually to be relaxed maybe not much there should also be rules because here is the place we learn something and it should be some rule" (Berk interview).

Such expressions of reliance on the teacher pervade the research and pose a barrier to autonomy. Emine (co-teacher) reported an incident when learners had not prepared for a lesson as requested because they viewed Emine's role as to teach them directly "that's why you are here" (co-teacher discussion).

Indeed when as Alp indicates, learners consider the teacher to be the determiner and arbiter of learning, they abdicate any self-responsibility for learning. This was exemplified in Alp's response to a question about the usefulness of the project "so you are a professional and you said it's a good project and I think it's good" (interview).

Several learners found exercising choice in an educational context challenging. Even the choice of creating their own groups for the project was problematic and at the beginning of the third week I had to intervene to form the final two groups. An open choice of research topics ultimately resulted in topics mirroring *standard academic* subjects such as "The Environment" and "Traffic problems".

Two weeks before the final completion date two of the groups asked if they could change their topic for the final presentation – the ones they had were boring. This suggested that during the course the groups had come to more of an understanding of the choices available and a degree of self-responsibility for learning. I agreed – one group altered their topic yet the other group did not, indicative of self-awareness but lack of action.

The learners who attended the last day of the module reported that they felt their English had improved, generically referring to skills by way of example. According to Alp "we learned everything writing reading listening and not too much speaking" (interview); the learners' also indicated recognition of achievements and learning, which were beyond the formal achievement of exams, and potential indicators of motivation and autonomous learning.

Cem and Berk both identified Prezi, a collaborative-online presentation tool we had used in class, as something they would use in the future. Cem

recognised the utility of the tool “I think the Prezi is the excellent one because you can do presentations on the internet sites” (interview).

Berk’s reaction was much more personal and provides a valuable insight. The day after we had used Prezi in class Berk, enthusiastically, showed me a Prezi document he had created to share information with his friends on topics such as music, films and computer games. Although not connected with learning English, he was clearly acting autonomously perceiving the outcome to be relevant and interesting. This autonomous action stands in contrast to the arena of ‘formal learning’ indicated by his attitude to writing. Berk possessed the self-awareness to acknowledge a need to work on his writing skills yet did not demonstrate the capacity to act on this independently. Through engagement with the project Berk and Cem demonstrated signs of autonomy and motivation to learn beyond their current exam-focussed targets.

Berk described how he worked independently “not only study with your group but also you have to do yourself I can say that I also spent myself at home to do things on project.” (interview). Berk had also identified group working as an important skill to develop for a future career and he, along with Cem, appeared motivated by the collaborative group working element of the project. “I preferred the group one because you can concentrate with your group friend” (Cem interview).

Berk described how the group were able to regulate their working to accommodate fun and task completion “when you study it doesn't mean that there is also strict rules and you have to work…when we are studying we also laughing…kind of jokes…we doing our works in relaxing way” (interview).

Alp, Berk and Cem mentioned using the wiki but did not equate this with any form of achievement, possibly because they could not relate it directly to future utility.

5. Interpretation

The data generated and analysed revealed a spectrum of observations of motivation and autonomy fostered during this module from glimpses to full observation.

Alp, Berk and Cem all reported achievements in improved linguistic ability, academic skills for studying and the use of technology. These self-recognised achievements may lead to positive attributions and enhanced self-efficacy in similar areas in the future (yet may also have found more immediate validation or otherwise in their end of module exams).

Berk and Cem were the only learners who appeared to demonstrate anything approaching a mastery approach to the subject during the module. They appeared to value the learning, apparently motivated by the project tasks

and group working and in reflection recognised their achievement. Both appeared to show signs of taking-responsibility for learning during the project, with Berk explicitly describing how he worked independently to contribute to the group work. This was in relation to a set project and not, however, in support of Berk's individual learning needs. One factor that may be relevant is that they participated actively in the classroom discussion of learning and autonomy, whereas Alp was absent.

All the groups that started the project completed it. Leaving aside the quality of the work and deadlines, the groups exhibited abilities for self-organisation, even if it required the extrinsic push of compulsory completion. Most learners displayed clear performance-orientation, exemplified by Alp who recognised and even explained the performance-orientation strategies he employed and intended to persist with.

This possession of a degree of self-awareness was common and also illustrated through Berk's recognition of the writing skills he needs to develop and the third group's wishes change their topic. Concurrent with this self-awareness was a lack of ability, "willingness" in terms of the Bergen definition (Dam et al 1990, p.102), to act on this self-knowledge. Instead, they demonstrated and expressed an almost universal reliance on the teacher to coordinate learning. Yet Berk's creation of the Prezi document for his friends demonstrates an evident capacity for autonomous action, albeit not connected to formal learning.

On a personal level I was able to engage the learners' transportable identities (Ushioda 2011a, p.206) through normal classroom interaction. However, when it came to what appears to be a perception of the more formal arena of learning, a schemata of the expectation of learning appeared to take effect where activities which are otherwise enjoyable, lose their appeal when put in a learning context. The use of social media, ubiquitously used to communicate with peers (even in class), was not necessarily considered to be necessarily relevant to the learning context.

Quoting Gould out of context the realms of formal learning and 'not learning' appear as "non-overlapping magisteria" (1997, p.20) and these collective schemata (Mason 1992, p.45) appear deeply rooted and cannot be ignored in discussions of fostering autonomy and motivation.

6. Implications

The limited data generated in this research and that generated in the more substantial research of others (Sungura & Senlerb 2009; İneçay & İneçay 2009) indicate that learners entering university in Turkey are primarily, and understandably, performance-orientated with an almost universal reliance on

the teacher. This fact cannot be ignored or wished away and, according to Tudor, should form the basis of a local, ecological approach "by harnessing students' habitual approach to learning, it may be possible to develop an approach to learning to which students can relate in a spontaneous and harmonious" (2003, 9).

As discussed, the data from my study suggest that learners do not, necessarily, equate the incorporation of personal interests with learning or the teachers' perception of their interests. Learning that was perceived as having future utility, in undergraduate studies or professional careers, was acknowledged spontaneously during interviews suggesting that these achievements were seen as rewarding.

Progress in learning English was not viewed in the same terms perhaps indicative of the fact that learners do not have a vision of themselves as an idealised learner of English. It also potentially reflected the fact that their purpose for university study was not to learn English. Rather, this learning appeared as a means to an end, in this case access to their chosen undergraduate studies. Fostering internalised self-determination appears an appropriate strategy here, this entails "accepting and internalising the less attractive facets of life, if you want the freedoms to enjoy life's pleasures" (Ushioda 2011b, 224)

Such motivational self-regulation will not necessarily result from extrinsically-determined proximal goal achievement. However, it may be achieved by acknowledging "personal agency" in attaining the performance-orientated goals, rather than in the extrinsic influence of the teacher (Ushioda 2011b, p.224). A sense of local relevance to learning English would be generated if the long-term goal of future use in undergraduate study, and professional career, rather than in the short-term to pass tests were promoted, reinforced and internalised through relevant learning activities.

I do not feel my study can be used as evidence of the usefulness of PBL or BL due to the nature of the class. However, as evidenced by Berk and Cem's reactions, the forms of inquiry-based learning such as PBL, afforded by Web 2.0 technology, can provide opportunities to situate L2 learning in approximated future real-life contexts, involving choice and decision making, combined with opportunities to reflect, discuss and attribute learning to the self.

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ACTION RESEARCH: WIKIS AS COLLABORATIVE TOOLS FOR WRITING SKILLS

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1. Introduction

This paper outlines and discusses the collaborative use of wikis in language classrooms with a focus on writing skills. Based on the action research model wikis were used with a group of pre-service English language teachers for a semester. The practitioner's observation, student interviews and an online survey for student evaluation were the main data collection instruments. The study concludes that wikis contribute to writing skills in terms of motivation and eagerness, and to the frequency and amount of writing practice.

2. Action Research

The origins of Action Research (AR) date back to the 1930s when Lewin (Adelman 1993) identified its key elements as active participation, exploration of problems, group decision-making, monitoring and keeping track of progress. Since then AR has also been widely utilized in different contexts including English Language Teaching (ELT); for instance, in the form of professional development, as part of an in-service training program, to update the curriculum (Banegas 2011). AR can be observed in numerous disciplines such as science (Bevins, Jordan & Perry 2011) or maths (Gade 2012); however, the term *Educational Action Research* shows its particular importance in the field of education. More specifically, AR in the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been gaining prominence lately as shown in the studies by Carlino (2009) on the use of electronic discussion, or more recently by Geduzne and Gedzune (2013) on the use of Google in teacher education. Action Research which concentrates on writing skills at the primary level, as in Cavkaytar and Yaşar's (2010) study, or at the graduate level as in Carter's research (2012), underlines the applicability of AR to language skills, particularly writing skills.

That said it is essential to point out the challenges for AR practitioners as outlined by Elliott (1991). Initially, teachers are generally reluctant to self-critique their practices. Secondly, they are not clear about how to gather data or what to collect. Additionally, quantitative data is generally preferred when compared to qualitative data which are a fundamental part of AR. Another drawback is sharing data and experiences with peers; most teachers are not positive about it. Last but not the least teachers have trouble finding and devoting extra time for research purposes.

Among the numerous AR cycles available, Elliott's (1991) revision of the action research model of Kurt Lewin will be followed here. Elliot listed the AR

cycle under the following headings: identifying the initial idea; reconnaissance (fact finding and analysis); general plan with action steps; implementing the action steps; monitoring and implementation and effects; reconnaissance (explain any failure to implement and effects); revising the general idea and moving to the next cycle with an amended plan. This cycle continues until a solution to the problem identified is achieved.

3. Wikis as Collaborative Tools

A wiki is a website enabling its users to edit and work on the same page at their own pace. Its interactive nature makes it one of the most commonly used Web 2.0 tools. Moreover, its contribution to collaborative learning (Naismith, Leet & Pilkingtont 2011) has raised the interest of many researchers. A wiki typically offers the following features: editing and adding content, pages and files; adding comments; creating a page; sharing and copying pages; adding tags. Features especially helpful for teachers are: controlling access to pages; tracking activities; viewing and editing page history; receiving notifications of any change; creating classroom accounts; and checking for plagiarism.

For this study, following Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988, cited in Berg 2004) action research spiral cycle, teacher reflection on student attitudes, motivation and achievement levels in the classroom led to a plan of action that included selecting and designing writing materials. At this point, interactive Web 2.0 tools offered a vast variety of options. As the word itself suggests, *wikis* are quick to set up and use and are user-friendly collaborative tools mainly used for writing purposes, or as online classrooms in language classes. The practitioner preferred wikis (http://pbworks.com) rather than commonly used blogs, principally for their collaborative features. Wikis were integrated into the course syllabus as a requirement and a classroom wiki page was created.

Collaboration in this paper refers to the collaborative feature of wikis; not collaborative action research where teachers and researchers collaborate to conduct AR, such as illustrated in the Kuntz, Presnall, Priola, Tilford and Ward (2013) study. Here, the wiki provides a collaborative platform for students to work on the same wiki page with their peers. In fact, collaborative AR as defined by Burns (1999) fits this form of implementation in which different participants or researchers contribute to the process with their differing approaches.

4. The Study

Sixty-two (9 male, 53 female) second year pre-service English language teachers completed eight wiki tasks throughout the semester. The observations revealed that the more collaborative the tasks were, the more interest participants displayed. At the end of the semester, participants completed an online survey

for reflection and evaluation purposes. Further tasks have been planned as an outcome of the implementation.

This study is limited to the number of students in a single classroom in a state university. A further expansion of this study could cover students from different grades and levels. Another limitation is the amount of time devoted for the research with some restrictions imposed by the syllabus and student involvement during the holiday period.

The action research cycle was adopted firstly by clarifying the general idea; teacher observation, student reflection and feedback, along with the discussions about similar problems with colleagues in their classes. The problem identified was the reluctance of students to write; even during free writing activities, practiced along with music and visuals, students kept complaining. Next, the reconnaissance step included a review of literature on action research and teaching writing methodology. The teacher as the researcher kept semester long field notes that could be called 'the diary'. The researcher was a participant observer with the roles of conductor and facilitator (Burns 1999). To focus on the point of the AR, four volunteer students were interviewed to specify the details of the problems with writing. All of the students reported that they were not able to generate ideas without the help of Google and preferred to do writing tasks at home; however, still they easily got bored and distracted. One student emphasized that she saw no particular point in performing writing activities in the classroom; she felt when she had to write during her future professional career, she would eventually write then.

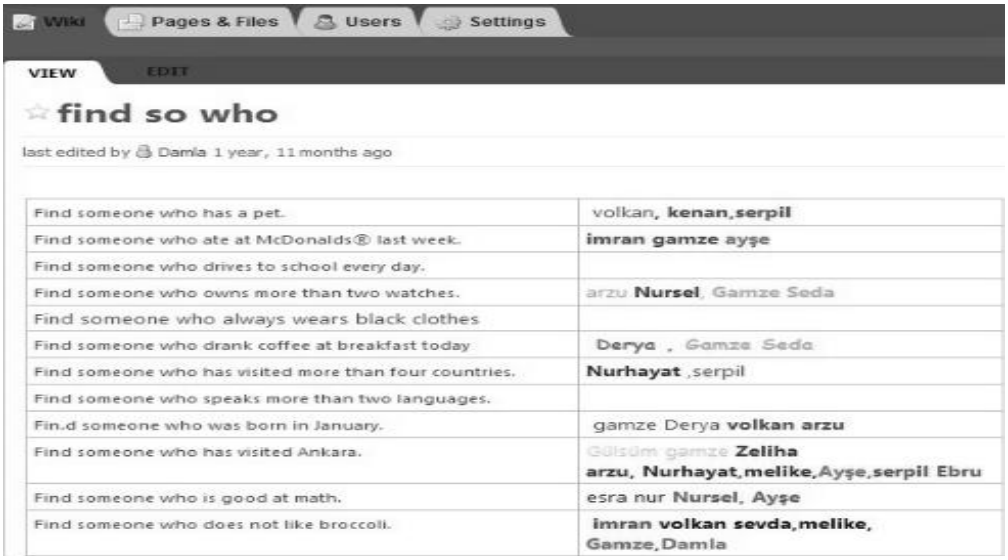
Making a general plan involving decision making about how to approach the problem was the next step followed. The literature review guided the researcher in creating a classroom wiki page that was user friendly and enabled collaborative action. The wiki was then compared to other Web 2.0 tools such as blogs and a conclusion about its effectiveness was reached seeing that the advantages outnumbered the disadvantages. A wiki website was selected after consulting colleagues and reading the recommendations of ICT experts online.

For action step 1, the wiki page was introduced and demonstrated to the class. As a feature of wiki classroom account, slips of papers that had been printed out by the researcher with usernames and passwords were distributed to each student. Action step 2 was grouping the students to collaborate and provide feedback to each other. The groups were formed randomly. Action step 3 included monitoring the process of implementation and receiving feedback from students while addressing problems that arose.

For the purposes of evaluation, students were asked to write a reflection entry as a final task and a survey in the form of course evaluation was administered asking he studentsthe following four open-ended questions:

1. What did you like most about this course?
2. What did you like least about this course?
3. What were the effects of using wikis on your writing skills?
4. If you were the teacher of this course, what would you change about it?

The collected data were then organized, coded and shared on the wiki page for students to view each other's opinions. 50 out of 53 students expressed their satisfaction with the wiki page, while three students complained about not having access to Internet whenever needed.


Wiki | Pages & Files | Users | Settings

VIEW | EDIT

☆ find so who

last edited by Damla 1 year, 11 months ago

Find someone who has a pet.	volkan, **kenan,serpil**
Find someone who ate at McDonalds® last week.	**imran gamze ayşe**
Find someone who drives to school every day.	
Find someone who owns more than two watches.	arzu **Nursel**, Gamze Seda
Find someone who always wears black clothes.	
Find someone who drank coffee at breakfast today	**Derya** , Gamze Seda
Find someone who has visited more than four countries.	**Nurhayat** ,serpil
Find someone who speaks more than two languages.	
Fin.d someone who was born in January.	gamze Derya **volkan arzu**
Find someone who has visited Ankara.	Gülsüm gamze **Zeliha arzu, Nurhayat,melike,Ayşe,serpil Ebru**
Find someone who is good at math.	esra nur **Nursel, Ayşe**
Find someone who does not like broccoli.	**imran volkan sevda,melike,** Gamze,Damla

Figure 1: Users / Find Someone Who Task

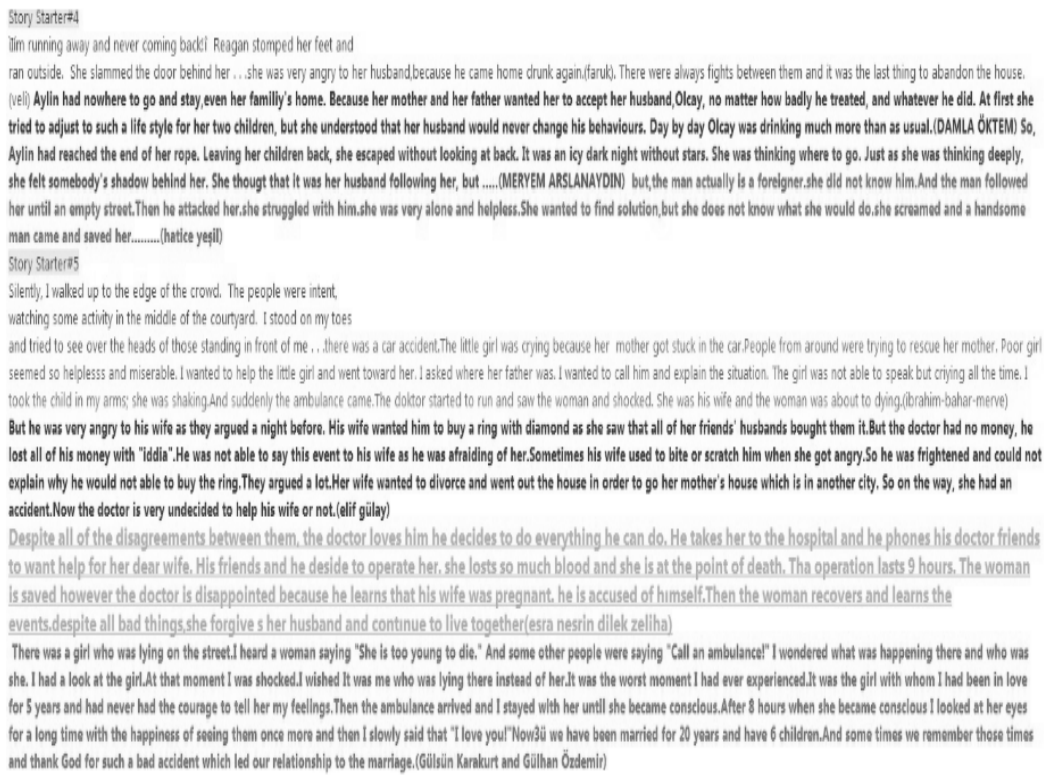
The wiki page was used by students in groups to post their entries and to comment on each other's entry. The wiki tasks completed are as follows:

1. Users/Find someone who
2. Rules
3. Describe the picture
4. Design an ad
5. Question story
6. Keyword story
7. Story starters
8. Reflection

To exemplify the tasks, Figure 1 displays the first task in which students are asked to write down their names and contact information on the table created by the researcher named *Users*, which was followed by a *Find someone who* task.

The students either wrote their names in parentheses or color-coded their contribution. If ever they failed to do so, the *History* feature of the wiki page enabled the researcher to keep track of user actions. The researcher as the administrator of the wiki page was notified of any and every change, such as additions and deletions, on the page via notification emails.

Another collaborative task (see Figure 2) is the *Story starters* in which the researcher started the story with an opening sentence and each student added a color-coded sentence along with their names in parenthesis to complete the story in the most meaningful way.


Story Starter#4

Ilim running away and never coming back!i Reagan stomped her feet and

ran outside. She slammed the door behind her . . .she was very angry to her husband,because he came home drunk again.(faruk). There were always fights between them and it was the last thing to abandon the house. (veli) **Aylin had nowhere to go and stay,even her familiy's home. Because her mother and her father wanted her to accept her husband,Olcay, no matter how badly he treated, and whatever he did. At first she tried to adjust to such a life style for her two children, but she understood that her husband would never change his behaviours. Day by day Olcay was drinking much more than as usual.(DAMLA ÖKTEM) So, Aylin had reached the end of her rope. Leaving her children back, she escaped without looking at back. It was an icy dark night without stars. She was thinking where to go. Just as she was thinking deeply, she felt somebody's shadow behind her. She thougt that it was her husband following her, but .....(MERYEM ARSLANAYDIN)** but,the man actually is a foreigner.she did not know him.And the man followed her until an empty street.Then he attacked her.she struggled with him.she was very alone and helpless.She wanted to find solution,but she does not know what she would do.she screamed and a handsome man came and saved her.....(hatice yeşil)

Story Starter#5

Silently, I walked up to the edge of the crowd. The people were intent,

watching some activity in the middle of the courtyard. I stood on my toes

and tried to see over the heads of those standing in front of me . . .there was a car accident.The little girl was crying because her mother got stuck in the car.People from around were trying to rescue her mother. Poor girl seemed so helplesss and miserable. I wanted to help the little girl and went toward her. I asked where her father was. I wanted to call him and explain the situation. The girl was not able to speak but criying all the time. I took the child in my arms; she was shaking.And suddenly the ambulance came.The doktor started to run and saw the woman and shocked. She was his wife and the woman was about to dying.(ibrahim-bahar-merve)

But he was very angry to his wife as they argued a night before. His wife wanted him to buy a ring with diamond as she saw that all of her friends' husbands bought them it.But the doctor had no money, he lost all of his money with "iddia".He was not able to say this event to his wife as he was afraiding of her.Sometimes his wife used to bite or scratch him when she got angry.So he was frightened and could not explain why he would not able to buy the ring.They argued a lot.Her wife wanted to divorce and went out the house in order to go her mother's house which is in another city. So on the way, she had an accident.Now the doctor is very undecided to help his wife or not.(elif gülay)

Despite all of the disagreements between them, the doctor loves him he decides to do everything he can do. He takes her to the hospital and he phones his doctor friends to want help for her dear wife. His friends and he deside to operate her. she losts so much blood and she is at the point of death. Tha operation lasts 9 hours. The woman is saved however the doctor is disappointed because he learns that his wife was pregnant. he is accused of himself.Then the woman recovers and learns the events.despite all bad things,she forgive s her husband and continue to live together(esra nesrin dilek zeliha)

There was a girl who was lying on the street.I heard a woman saying "She is too young to die." And some other people were saying "Call an ambulance!" I wondered what was happening there and who was she. I had a look at the girl.At that moment I was shocked.I wished It was me who was lying there instead of her.It was the worst moment I had ever experienced.It was the girl with whom I had been in love for 5 years and had never had the courage to tell her my feelings.Then the ambulance arrived and I stayed with her until she became conscious.After 8 hours when she became conscious I looked at her eyes for a long time with the happiness of seeing them once more and then I slowly said that "I love you!"Now3ü we have been married for 20 years and have 6 children.And some times we remember those times and thank God for such a bad accident which led our relationship to the marriage.(Gülsün Karakurt and Gülhan Özdemir)

Figure 2: Story Starters Task

The reflection entries posted at the end of the semester showed how wikis contributed to the writing progress of students. Most of the students (50) valued the integration of wikis despite the problems encountered. Thirty-two students expressed their intention to use wikis in their future profession. A suggestion for the integration process was to start with a few weeks of instruction in a semester, to allow some time for students to work on the wiki features and then to utilize wikis all semester long. This piloting suggestion is

supported by the demand for more detailed demonstration of wiki use, not in a single lesson but with allocation to different time periods. The students expressed a positive attitude to spending time on wikis while collaborating with their peers.

5. Discussion

The wiki project to foster writing skills of pre-service English language teaching students yielded some positive results. However, the researcher suffered from some of the challenges reported by Elliott (1991); for instance, managing the course time to fit the wiki tasks. Students had some technical problems (eg. Internet connection, computer access), which made the researcher devote more than pre-planned time to solve these problems. Additionally, self-evaluation was not without difficulties for a teacher who is not accustomed to concentrating on her teaching as much as the learning process of her students.

Similarly, action research for writing skills (Carter 2012) emphasized its role for fostering these skills in a progressive manner. The students in this study were observed to have spent more time on writing, exchanging ideas, and peer editing than before. Not only the amount of time, but also the quality of their writing was enhanced to a great extent. In addition, as a piece of research supporting the current one, the study by Cavkaytar and Yaşar (2010) aimed to improve the writing skills of primary school students through a balanced literacy approach in the form of AR. It revealed that students made progress; data sources used were researcher observation and videotaping, student videotaping, pre and post-test of composition, interviews. Due to their process-oriented nature, writing skills are highly appropriate for process evaluation procedures and thereby the action research cycle.

As Dobao (2012) concluded compared to individual and pair work, students involved in group work did better in terms of writing fluency, complexity and accuracy. To sum up, the current research is in harmony with the related literature revealing the affirmative influence of student cooperation and collaboration both in the writing and feedback processes.

6. Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from this study are two-fold, viz. research and technology based. Firstly, teachers need to be valued as potential researchers in control of the learning and teaching in their classroom, with the necessary problem identification and solution generating skills. A needs analysis should further be taken as an indispensible part of curriculum planning. Additionally, as a part of the process, teacher as well as student reflection on the learning and teaching process needs to be performed in an organized manner. It should be

kept in mind that collaboration empowers learners in that sharing and moving together during the process of implementation, decision-making and assessment gives the learners power of action and control.

On the other hand, these results suggest that by using wiki participants' interest, eagerness and motivation may increase, as well as the amount of the text produced. Collaborating through wikis added impetus to process and progress. As a final point, we need to integrate ICT tools into activities but not in the traditional form; we need to create new forms of teaching activities that best match our students' needs and interests.

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EXPLORING CLASSROOM CONVERSATION: THE IRE SEQUENCE AND ITS IMPACT

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Abstract

After many years of debate between the Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1985) and Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985), how to make the input more comprehensible to learners and how interactional patterns could help the learners "understand" the input became big concerns. Now there seems to be at least one consensus in English language teaching (ELT): the nature of the input and interaction play a key role in enhancing the learning of a foreign language. Interactional delivery in the classroom also received attention within a conversation analysis framework. Mehan (1979) proposed that classroom interaction is as sequential as conversations, mostly consisting of three parts: Initiation - Response - Evaluation (IRE). In this sequence, if there is asymmetry between the teacher initiation and student response, the teacher recognizes the source of the trouble and takes action accordingly. These actions may include a delayed turn-initiation, explicit evaluation or correction of the student response, or a re-initiation of the IRE sequence (Macbeth 2011). This study explored how the three mentioned actions, which the teacher decides to take, influence the classroom learning as a collective activity. The data the study was conducted on consisted of 300 minutes of recorded lessons of 6 English language teachers. The IRE sequences were analyzed and the asymmetries in the sequences were examined. An investigation of the three actions employed by the teachers in the Evaluation slot of the IRE sequences revealed that classroom talk matches the pattern offered by the IRE sequences; and, of the three actions, Category 2 (self-repair or re-initiation of the turn) seems to facilitate the learning process relatively more as it allows the consideration of student-initiated queries as well, while the other two actions (Category 1 and Category 3) rather play a critical role in providing the balance between interactional control and thematic control.

1. Introduction

The classroom is frequently organized around an Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequence, although this sequence may take different forms due to other instructional dynamics. This study investigates classroom interaction within the IRE framework and examines how teachers' involvements in shaping IRE sequences influence collective learning. The analysis of the data offers valuable insights to all who are interested in teaching as an exploratory practice.

After many years of debate between the Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1985) and Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985), how to make the input more comprehensible to learners and how interactional patterns could help the learners "understand" the input became big concerns. Now there seems to be at least one consensus in ELT: the nature of the input and interaction play a key role in enhancing the learning of a foreign language.

Interactional delivery in the classroom also received attention within the conversation analysis framework. Mehan (1979) proposed that classroom interaction is as sequential as conversations, mostly consisting of three parts: Initiation – Response - Evaluation (IRE). In this sequence, if there is asymmetry between the teacher initiation and student response, the teacher recognizes the trouble source and takes actions accordingly. These actions may include explicit evaluation or correction of the student response, a re-initiation of the IRE sequence, and a delayed turn-initiation, (Zemel and Koschmann 2011). This study explores how the three actions mentioned, which the teacher decides to take, influence the classroom learning as a collective activity.

2. Review of Literature

Koschmann (2011) and Mondada (2011) refer to Garfinkel's (1952) and Wittgenstein's (1953) writings and suggest that understanding is not a "mental process" but rather an action that comes out when we say "Now I know how to go on" and take a next move. Mondada (2011) treats this nextness as sequentiality in conversation and explains that "Understanding is naturally displayed by the fact that, and the manner in which, participants 'go on' within the conversation". This idea of sequentiality and how it is related to understanding was referred to earlier by Moerman and Sacks (1988) and Schegloff (1992).

The concept of sequentiality in interaction and its relation to understanding in classroom discourse was explored by many scholars. For instance, Edwards and Mercer (1987), Mercer (1995), Bearne (1999), Alexander (2000) worked on the classroom interaction patterns and drew our attention to how a classroom interaction sequence is mostly dominated by Ian nitiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) or Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern and how teachers act as decision mechanisms in controlling the stages of the interaction patterns in the classroom.

In the classroom, when the teacher asks the students a question and receives a response that s/he sees inadequate, this asymmetry might originate from one of two possible conditions: (a) the student might lack the knowledge the query requires, or, (b) the student might misunderstand the teacher's question and supplies an inadequate answer (Mehan 1979). Zemel and

Koschmann (2011) defines the first case (a) as an example of a second-position trouble source (SPT) and the second case (b) as an example of first-position trouble (FPT). Depending on where (in SPT or FPT) the teacher thinks the asymmetry lies, the action s/he takes may differ: (1) explicit evaluation or correction of the student response; (2) a re-initiation of the IRE sequence; or, (3) a delayed turn-initiation (Zemel and Koschmann 2011). Although it is a given that due to the traditional role of teachers in the classroom serving as the authority, such a generalization requires a body of understanding with further research since classroom interaction dynamically unfolds with different interactional patterns that might be invisible in the immediate environment. For example, between-student dialogue (students talking with their peers), or within-student dialogue (student inner talk) might change the interaction sequence and have a determining role in a teacher's evaluation of student understanding and action. Such complexity in classroom interaction raises questions as to: (1) the extent to which classroom interaction is based on teachers' evaluation of students' response, re-initiation of the IRE sequence, and delayed turn; (2) which of these three actions contribute to students' understanding, and in which cases. An exploration of these two focus questions in this study will answer how the three mentioned actions influence collective learning in the classroom.

3. Method

3.1 The data

The data the study is conducted on consists of 300 minutes of recorded lessons of 6 English language teachers at Koç University, İstanbul.

3.2 The three actions in IRE sequences

The three actions that a teacher may take to signal that there is asymmetry between the query the teacher has prompted and the answer the students have produced. When such understanding has occurred, it may appear in the form of an explicit evaluation or correction of the student response, a re-initiation of the IRE sequence and a delayed turn-initiation (Zemel and Koschmann 2011).

3.3 Examples from the data for these three actions.

Although in this section the focus is on the three actions that could be taken when an asymmetry between a teacher's questions and a student's response occurs, starting with an example of a symmetrical situation (see Example 1) in the third (Evaluation) slot in IRE, will help to make the distinction between a symmetrical versus an asymmetrical situation (e.g. see Example 2) clear.

Example 1 (from Instructor 1's video): Evaluation in the third slot (symmetrical)

Context: Number of Students: 15 Duration: 45 minutes

Lesson Focus: Comparisons

Activity Type:

1. One-minute talk (in pairs, with a variety of partners, making comparisons looking at the pictures of, say, cell phones, sports teams, or countries): T provides the instruction and Sts are able to do the activity/meet the requirements of the activity (no comprehension problems) and T provides overall feedback saying "Excellent."
2. T hands out a set of pictures again; this time requiring them to match the pictures with the corresponding countries (US vs. Brazil) and also identify points of comparison as reflected in the pictures (festivals, sports, food, dance, famous people).

IRE sequence at 13:17:

T: Okay, let's take a look. Alright, what do you think for the first one? What are they comparing?
Sts: Rio … Festivals
T: Festivals ... Yeah ... good job … festivals … soo festivals what do you think?
Sts: Brazil
T: yes Carnival … and … thanksgiving
…
T: Next, What's the topic?
Sts: Fight ... Dance, dance..
T: Dance yes Dance
T: What's the dance on the right ... on the left?
Sts: Voices
T: On the left ... Capoeira..
Sts: Capoeira
T: And on the right … ?
Sts: Break dance
T: Yeah break dance …

In this example with both utterances "Festivals ... Yeah ... good job ... festivals ..." and "Yeah break dance …", the teacher shows to the students that she evaluated their response and that the response was what she was expecting. In other words, her evaluation was positive.

Example 2 (from Instructor 5's video): Evaluation in the third slot (asymmetrical)

Context: Number of Students: 15 Duration: 45 minutes

Lesson Focus: Advertising Techniques (Listening & Speaking)

Activity Type:

1. T introduces the concept of critical thinking/analysis and a few additional elements of advertising to consider (i.e. target audience, ethics, how individuals are represented).
2. T views an example advertisement and practices analyzing content based on provided categories.
3. T explains the upcoming task, puts students into groups, and distributes discussion cards for the students to discuss 3 more advertisements she will play from the YouTube.
4. Students take turns leading a small group discussion focused on analysis of example advertisements.

IRE sequence at 8.30:

T: Ok. If you have to choose between the techniques, which one do you find here? Which did they use?
Sts: Humour (in chorus)
T: Humour. First of all humour. You were all laughing. That's good. That means you enjoyed it. That was funny. Any others?
Sts: Silence
T: Did you have any emotions? While you were watching that?
Sts: No, No (in chorus) may be repetition.
T: Ahhhhh. Don't. Don't say no no no. you might get excited by this music. That's an emotion. You feel excited and ready to go. Energized. So?
Sts: (Silence). Yes.
T: What did you say Selim? Repetition. How so? Where do you see repetition? Cracking the nuts. Yes. In the lyrics. But also they are using a popular song gangnam style. That is a repetition.

The first evaluation in this example, "Humour. First of all humour," is a positive evaluation like the one in Example 1. The second evaluation, however, signals an asymmetry and so the teacher replies with a negative evaluation, "Ahhhhh. Don't. Don't say no no no. you might get excited by this music".

<u>Example 3 (from Instructor 1's video): Self-Repair or Re-initiation of the IRE sequence</u>

Context: Number of Students: 15 Duration: 45 minutes
Lesson Focus: Comparisons
Activity Type:

1. T hands out a five-paragraph comparison essay split into five pieces and asks Sts to put the strips into the correct order and pay attention to the connectors while doing this.

2. T gives Sts the whole essay to check their answers (sequencing) against this kind of answer key. There is St-St interaction.
3. T & Sts answer the 5 questions below the essay together. The questions mainly require them to identify whether the essay is about similarities or differences and what words, phrases or signal words are used to link different parts of the essay. This is a whole class activity under the T's guidance, although two Sts are assigned the task of highlighting such phrases.

IRE sequence at 18:24:

T: What I have here ... this is a comparison essay ... We're gonna be analyzing this today ... I want you to work with your partner and put them in order … sentences in order … so, some things to think about are connectors … remember what connectors would you find in a body paragraph … and what connectors for example would you find in a conclusion … what kind of connector would you find in a conclusion …

Sts: *voices* in conclusion …

T: yeah … and what would you find in a body ... use that to help you ... then also it is a five-paragraph essay tell me which paragraph is which ... I give you 5 minutes to put it in order … English English..

Sts: Ma'm, should we use all of them?

T: Yeah all of them … it's … every strip is part of it …

…

T: Start with connectors right? … like finally, in conclusion … right? ... others..

..

St 1: Teacher, did you …

St 2: (*Overlap*) How many essays ... are there?

T: There is one essay, so in paragraph one you might have two parts, you might have three parts in paragraph two ...

St 1: Alright but where is *in conclusion*? We have *in conclusion* and *final* ...

T: Finally does not belong in conclusion belongs in the body

St 1: Hmmm (understanding)

…

T: So if you don't have the connectors, look at the topic ... So what's the topic here?

Sts: (Voices ... unclear)

T: Yes, that's the topic … **but there are three features that they're comparing**

Sts: science ...

T: Yes ... good ... excellent ... that's one ... is one paragraph about that

In this example, based on the students' further queries in response to the teacher's question, the teacher is rephrasing or repairing her question as in "Yeah all of them ... it's every strip part of it."

Example 4 (from Instructor 5's video): Delayed turn-initiation

Context: Number of Students: 15 Duration: 45 minutes
Lesson Focus: Advertising Techniques (Listening & Speaking)
Activity Type:

1. T introduces the concept of critical thinking/analysis and a few additional elements of advertising to consider (i.e. target audience, ethics, how individuals are represented).
2. T views an example advertisement and practices analyzing content based on provided categories.
3. T explains the upcoming task, puts students into groups, and distributes discussion cards for the students to discuss 3 more advertisements she will play from the YouTube.
4. Students take turns leading a small group discussion focused on analysis of example advertisements.

IRE sequence at 5.17:

T: Association of ideas. Do you remember what this was about?
Sts: Chocolate?
T: So association of ideas…. Ok come in quietly please (looking at students coming in)
Sts: *voices* (students settling)
T: There you go (distributing papers)
St: Sorry teacher
T: Don't worry.
T: **Ok association of ideas that … you 're welcome … (looking at the students). So association of ideas was when you associate a product with an idea. For example, a car with happiness or a job with money or many different things. So they are trying to get you to think if you buy this, you will get this in return so it's … it's associating ideas.**

In this example, the teacher initiated a turn from the students by the first query: "Do you remember what association of ideas was about?" However, the sequence which would take place got interrupted by the late coming students. As the teacher dealt with settling the new comers in, she delayed the turn she had initially wanted the students to take and instead took the turn herself to fill in the response. In this example, the Response slot was already filled by the students as a couple of students said "chocolate?" The teacher, however, did not hear the response and therefore decided to delay the turn-initiation instead of asking her question one more time to the students.

4. Analysis of the IRE sequences and the quantitative pattern

The data, the IRE sequences identified in the 300-minute recorded lessons of six English language teachers, were analyzed and categorized based on the type of action teachers took in the Evaluation slot in response to the student response in the Response slot. These actions could appear in the form of an explicit evaluation or correction of the student response, a re-initiation of the IRE sequence, or a delayed turn-initiation. During the analysis, the two researchers first identified samples for each Evaluation slot action independently and then compared and discussed their findings with respect to the samples provided in the related work in the literature (Zemel and Koschmann 2011) to reach an agreement on the analysis scheme.

5. Results and Discussion

The results from the analysis of the IRE sequences in the 300-minute recorded lessons of six English language teachers are summarized in Table 1 below. It shows how many times each action in the Evaluation slot was observed in the IRE sequences in each recording. For instance, in the first instructor's video, it was observed that, of the 72 Evaluation slots in the IRE sequences, 46 were explicit evaluation or correction (positive: 42; negative: 4), 20 were self-repair or re-initiation of the turn, and 6 were delayed-turn initiation.

Based on the categorized IRE sequences above, it can be stated that excluding the IRE sequences in the recording of Instructor 6's lesson, across all recordings, the number of Evaluation slots that involved explicit evaluation or correction were double the number of Evaluation slots that involved self-repair or re-initiation. In the sequences in Instructor 6's video, the number of self-repair or re-initiation cases was slightly higher. As to the number of delayed-turn initiation occurrences in the Evaluation slot, again across all recordings, these cases were relatively limited in number.

The results, based on the IRE sequences that are supposed to frame classroom conversation, seem to shed some light on the impact these three actions have on overall classroom interaction, student understanding and collective learning.

Considering Category 1 in Table 1, in all recordings, the amount of negative evaluation was considerably small compared to the positive evaluation cases, which indicates that overall comprehension was quite high. However, this might be due to some other factors as well. One thing was that except for Instructor 6's lesson, in all lessons, it was not the first time the topic was being introduced to the students and they were building further on some previously learnt material. This might have helped students to perform better. Another factor might be that although the evaluation or correction category allows

straightforward Yes or No answers, some teachers very rarely react to student replies with simple Yes or No; rather, they paraphrase what they have been told, shifting the focus a little bit or rephrasing what is partially wrong, in which case they might be decreasing the number of negative evaluation occurrences while increasing the number of Category 2 (self-repair or re-initiation of the turn) cases.

Video	Lesson Focus	Category 1: Explicit Evaluation/Correction		Category 2: Re-initiation/Self-repair	Category 3: Delayed-Turn Initiation
		Positive	Negative		
Ins. 1	C1 - Writing (Comparison)	42	4	20	6
Ins. 2	B2 - Reading & Vocabulary	35	7	25	10
Ins. 3	C1 - Writing (Argumentation)	28	1	21	8
Ins. 4	C1 - Writing (Comparison)	20	5	14	13
Ins. 5	B1 - Listening & Speaking	24	5	16	7
Ins. 6	B1 - Writing (Argumentation)	27	4	33	10

Table 1: RE sequence and quantitative pattern (*Ins.: Instructor)

The amount of Category 2 occurrences does not only depend on the teacher's negative evaluation though, which is reflected in their considerably higher frequency compared to the negative evaluation cases across all recordings. In fact, teachers are encouraged to repair their initial queries or re-initiate the turn when students themselves, rather than responding directly to the teacher, pose further questions. Obviously, such strategies allow both teacher and students to revise their process of constructing meaning collectively as a teacher, having realized a misunderstanding or confusion on the part of the students, repairs her query by further explaining what she is expecting or not expecting; or, students, having realized a lack of satisfaction with the response on the part of the teacher, revise their response or revise their further queries. It seems that it is mostly the queries or replies that fall into this category that lead to more student contribution, and thus better

understanding and collective learning. Straightforward Category 1 evaluation cases, not leaving much room for elaboration, might remain quite simplistic.

With respect to Category 3, the final category of delayed turn-initiation, the data show that this strategy seems to be a last resort for the teacher as it is simply the provision of the answer by the teacher, which, although it provides the correct answer directly to the students, may not guarantee student comprehension at once. Teachers often avoid it by integrating subsequent questions that aim to ensure student understanding.

Furthermore, from an interactional vs. thematic control perspective (Johnson 2013) as well, IRE sequences are helpful in describing classroom interaction. The teachers in the recordings, when they want to get the students to produce a particular (pre-determined) response, e.g. a specific language structure like comparatives, as in Stimulus-Response pairs, use interactional control and mostly employ the evaluation strategy in Category 1. On the other hand, when they want to achieve a more jointly constructed understanding through classroom interaction, they incorporate thematic control tools to encourage student-initiated queries and comments and they mostly employ the evaluation strategy in Category 2. However, if students, in their relatively free elaboration process, wander away from the subject too much, or if the teacher's elicitation strategies fail upon multiple trials, s/he often interferes with the process switching back to the interactional control tools, this time often applying the evaluation strategy in Category 3 as in Example 5 below:

Example 5 (from Instructor 2's video): Delayed turn-initiation

Context: Number of Students: 15 Duration: 45 minutes

Lesson Focus: Reading & Vocabulary

Activity Type:

1. T shows the pictures of Tanzanian people on the screen and asks questions about the people in the pictures (whole class activity- different students respond randomly).
2. T hands out a text about these Tanzanian people, which provides background information and want Sts to find some words in the text that match the definitions on the screen.
3. T puts Sts into groups and hands out a small piece of paper on which there is either some piece of information or a question. T wants them to memorize whatever is written on their pieces and then put them in their pockets. Then everybody shares the information they have from memory, not looking at their paper.
4. T & Sts go over the Qs and As together.

5. T hands out a piece of paper with 4 questions on it about some sociological research that was conducted on the Hadza people by someone who was doing her PhD and makes them watch a video on that research to answer those Qs (e.g. what is the main goal of this research?).
6. T & Sts go over the Qs and As together.

IRE sequence at 00:35:

T: Can you tell what you think is special about these people? Or do you think they are special? You think they are special? Why?
St: They are always hungry.
St: Are they displaced?
T: No … no, they are not displaced.
Voices
St: Are there lack of food?
T: (Overlapping) What's different about them? What's different from us? For example …
St: Their clothes
T: hmhm
St: Their culture and lifestyle
T: Hmhm … How would you describe their culture and lifestyle?
St: Their life quality
St: They are nomad … (hesitant … some Turkish expressions of hesitation) … nomadic?
T: Actually ... Yes, they are nomadic. Okay ... now … **What's special about the Hadza is that they are one of the last remaining hunter-gatherer societies on the planet …** Do you know the hunter-gatherers? You know the hunter … who hunts … and the gatherer … is someone who …
St: collects …
T: Yeah collects food or vegetables ... aaa … okay now ... I'm gonna give you text ... (good morning, to a latecomer) ... I'm gonna give you a text about the Hadza to read and it will give you some background and …

In this example, the teacher initially wants to expand on student responses to attain a mediational effect on the collective learning process and enable better exchange of ideas, and thus avoids explicit evaluation and correction by rephrasing his queries or posing new questions. Nevertheless, he eventually provides the exact answer using delayed turn-initiation as an evaluation strategy to stop a possibly never-ending prediction game.

An analysis of classroom talk within the framework of IRE can also offer valuable insights as to the significant role of content and the use of language as a communication device in language classes. Content-wise, classroom talk

seems to be dominated by conventionalized language, for example, grammatical or rhetorical terminology, although such structures are provided in-context. In fact, there is additional content (e.g. advertising techniques) to dwell on; however, teachers, while trying to elicit the language structures they have in their minds, have a tendency to lead students to memorize those structures (S-R patterns) rather than using the language for purposeful and meaningful communication.

Compared to other work in the literature with different instructional contexts, for example, the one on a problem-based learning tutorial about the way a particular antibiotic works in a medical school (Zemel and Koschmann 2011), in language classes students feel this pressure to respond to teacher's query in a way that shows their knowledge of the specific language structure under study (using an opinion statement properly), rather than taking it as a genuine question that requires an answer as in Example 6 below:

Example 6 (from Instructor 6's video): Delayed turn-initiation

Context: Number of Students: 12 Duration: 45 minutes

Lesson Focus: Writing (Argumentation)

Activity Type:

1. T asks Sts to brainstorm how to give an opinion and support their opinion. T writes on the board.
2. Sts. complete a dialogue in the book filling in the blanks with modals to give and support opinions.
3. T forms student groups of four and asks them to study the discussion topics listed in the book and take notes of their ideas.
4. T asks the students to organize their notes/ideas and take turns to offer their ideas on the topic in an organized manner.
5. Sts choose one person in their groups as a discussion leader who is responsible to report the members' opinions to the other groups.

IRE sequence at 7.30:

T: how can I support my opinion?

Sts: (silence)

T: How can I say my opinion?

Sts: You can give information from an article.

T: Right, I can give info from an article, but how first, **how do I say**, I just told you "I think, Galatasaray is a better team than Real Madrid", **How did I tell you my opinion?**

Sts: (in chorus) XXX

T: **How did I just tell you** "I think (emphasized), Galatasaray is a better team than Real Madrid", I think right?

Sts: (in chorus) Yes.
T: This is the first part I am asking you. So, (writing on the board) I think. So **how else can I just give my opinion?**

In this example, the teacher wanted to elicit the phrases that can be used while expressing opinions, "How can I say my opinion?" However, as the students' responses show, despite the many alternative ways the teacher tried to get her point across, they took it as a genuine question and treated it that way.

On the whole, although quite reductionist in the sense that the method requires the researcher to reduce classroom interaction to manageable conversational patterns, IRE sequences prove quite fruitful as a framework for analyzing classroom talk and understanding how each move is made sequentially as a conversation proceeds.

6. Conclusion

In this study which aimed at having a closer look at the classroom interaction and the collective learning process, Initiation-Response-Evaluation sequences were employed to analyze classroom talk. Despite the many complexities caused by all sorts of other instructional dynamics, it tried to provide answers to the two main questions: (1) the extent to which classroom interaction is based on teachers' explicit evaluation of students' response, re-initiation of IRE sequence, and delayed turn; (2) and which of these three actions contribute to students' understanding, and in which cases.

In this respect, an investigation of the three actions employed by the teachers in the Evaluation slot of the IRE sequences revealed that classroom talk matches the pattern offered by the IRE sequences, and of the three actions, Category 2 (self-repair or re-initiation of the turn) seems to facilitate the learning process relatively more as it allows the consideration of student-initiated queries as well, while the other two actions (Category 1 and Category 3) rather play a critical role in providing the balance between interactional control and thematic control.

7. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Work

One limitation of the study was the exclusion of student-initiated queries, though they were indirectly considered in self-repair or delayed turn-initiation cases. Combined with the fact that teacher queries often addressed the whole class, rather than individual students, access to a student's meaning construction stages had to be restricted. In this sense, future work might consider examining the classroom talk by shifting the perspective as such.

The scope of this study does not include FPT (first position trouble) cases in which the trouble source is the teacher's initial query itself. Though self-repair cases can give clues about problematic teacher initiations, later work into FPT may provide access to the teacher's understanding of the student understanding.

Since content makes all interaction more meaningful, studies on medicine, engineering or law classes may be conducted to confirm the further validity of IRE analysis.

Finally, the method of IRE analysis is quite reductionist in the sense that all classroom interaction is brought down to conversational moves in sequence. Other complementary methods of interaction analysis might be incorporated in later work to investigate other possible factors that come into play in collective learning.

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CLASSROOM RESEARCH: FRIEND OR FOE?

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Abstract:

Research is as important in English language teaching as in any other domain of study. There are various reasons why it is crucial. Among the many reasons, some could be as follows: research helps teachers to explore solutions to classroom problems; it improves classroom practices, and it keeps teachers up-to-date in the field of ELT. However, most of the time teachers are reluctant to get involved in research mainly due to the workload they already have and going back to academic procedures is both time-consuming and daunting. Yet, there is action research, which is conducted in the classroom by the teachers in their own context. The starting point of the research is a practical problem or area that needs to be improved or intervened.

This particular paper explains why research is crucial in ELT and why teachers usually tend to hold back from it. The paper includes the voices of EFL teachers working at Istanbul Şehir University, English Preparatory Program on the notion of classroom research.

1. Introduction

The very fact that we as EFL/ ESL teachers have to ask ourselves the question whether classroom research is needed in English language teaching seems to be the symptom that shows a lack of interest in the notion that research is important in ELT. Other fields of study do not question the need for research in the same way as we do in teaching. Before we delve deep into whether research is needed in ELT and, if so, why it is needed, we should make a definition of ELT research and more precisely classroom research.

Classroom research can be defined as a blend of the two terms “classroom” and “research”. Classroom research puts ideas into practice for the purpose of self-development, a knowledge increase about syllabus design, teaching and learning. The end product is the development in what happens in the classroom and at large at the educational institution (Ross, 2005). It is a systematic process done by practitioners (teachers) to collect data about, and subsequently improve the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching and their student learning (Mills 2011). More crucially, classroom research is characterized as work done by teachers mainly to study their own classrooms, for instance their own educational practices, their own teaching methods, and their own assessments, and to understand them better and

ultimately to be able to improve their quality (Parsons and Brown 2002). Some of the characteristics of classroom research have been listed by Cross and Steadman (1996, 2-4) as follows:

- Classroom research is learner-centered. It focuses primarily on the improvement of learning.
- Classroom research is teacher-directed. The basic proposition of classroom research is that teachers are capable of conducting research.
- Classroom research is collaborative. It requires the active engagement of both the teacher and the students, in that both parties become partners in the research.
- Classroom research is context-specific. It is carried out to seek answers/ solutions to a specific problem of a particular group of learners of a particular discipline.
- Classroom research is scholarly. It is intellectually demanding. It requires the basic principles of research design.
- Classroom research is practical and relevant. The questions/problems chosen are practical ones that the teacher encounters in the classroom.
- Classroom research is continual. Frequently, a classroom research project brings about new questions leading to more research.

It is inevitable to note that great cooks have seldom if ever utilized the data gathered from research into the chemistry of food; however, this kind of research is critical for the prevention of food allergies or cancer. By the same token, studies done in the field of language acquisition have little value to parents bringing up kids for the first time. Being a good chef or a good mother has very little effect, if any, on research in these domains. It can be concluded that it is doubtful whether ELT research can be beneficial for the classroom teacher. It does not necessarily lead to being a better teacher or leading to better learning results. But obviously the most crucial improvements in ELT theory in the past decades have been the outcomes of research done in the day-to-day practices of teaching/learning English as a second/foreign language. Briefly, the answer to the question in the heading of this article is a profound "Classroom research IS a friend" as it has the power to solve many practical issues in the classroom, and thus empower the profession.

At this point, we as ELT practitioners ask a simple question: Why should we become involved in classroom research, especially with all the tasks expected of us as educators? Some answers to this crucial question have been provided by Mertler & Charles (2011). Firstly, classroom research tries to tackle our own problems: problems experienced by fellow teachers, not somebody else's. Secondly, it gives immediate outcomes that we can use. Thirdly, it

provides classroom teachers and all educators at large with the chance to understand their own classroom applications better and thus improve them. Fourth, classroom research encourages strong connections among co-workers as they will inevitably collaborate and interact during the course of the research. Most importantly, classroom research equips teachers with unconventional ways of considering and handling educational issues and opens up novel aspects in their own classroom applications.

This explanation brings to mind another question: If the advantages of classroom research are so many, why don't all classroom teachers do it? Despite all the benefits of classroom research, why do teachers of English as a second/ foreign language hold back from conducting classroom research? Mertler and Charles (2011) offer answers to this question:

> First, although its popularity has increased over the past decade, classroom research is still relatively unknown when compared to more traditional forms of conducting research. Second, although it may not seem the case, classroom research is more difficult to conduct than traditional approaches to research. Educators themselves are responsible for implementing the resultant changes, but also for conducting the research. Third, classroom research does not conform with many of the requirements of conventional research with which you may be familiar - it is therefore less structured and more difficult to conduct. Finally, because of the lack of fit between standard research requirements and the process of conducting classroom research, you may find it more difficult to write up your results. (Mertler & Charles 2011, 340)

In the light of all the advantages and disadvantages of classroom research, this study was initiated to trigger more interest and enthusiasm in the ESL teachers of a specific institution. The study is a preliminary research prior to the establishment of a Professional Development Unit in this institution and the main point was to gather data regarding what kind of research the teachers needed to conduct, whether teachers are knowledgeable on classroom research and other kinds of research and what motivates them or holds them back from conducting (classroom) research. Therefore, the study whose findings are presented in this paper is a part of a multi-layered, more detailed research project.

2. The Study

2.1 The Method

The method of this study is quantitative. A five-point Likert scale was used to collect data. As in all scaling methods, the first phase was to define what we were trying to measure. Collecting data through a Likert scale is regarding the concepts to be measured are one-dimensional. In other words, the assumption

is that the given statements in the Likert scale are the only statements to generate the desired outcomes. In order to generate the items, first a general set of potential items was devised. In this stage, the director and the vice-directors of the program as well as the prospective teacher trainer and a few EFL teachers were asked to generate questions. After piloting the potential questions on a small group of teachers, and getting their ideas on the questions, the statements to be included in the survey were finalized. Then, the survey was given to 45 EFL teachers working at Istanbul Şehir University English Preparatory Program (SEPP). The data was gathered in March, 2013.

2.2 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What motivates the EFL instructors working at SEPP to conduct research?
2. What refrains the EFL instructors working at SEPP from conducting research?

2.3 The Participants

Of the 52 instructors of SEPP in total, 45 participated in this study. 22 of the participants are native speakers of English and 23 are Turkish. Regarding their years of experience, almost half of the participants (43%) are at the beginning of their careers with maximum 5 years of teaching experience. The ones having more than 16 years of experience are only limited to 5%. All of the participants hold MA degrees, most of which are in ELT or a language related field, i.e. Applied Linguistics. Also, more than half of the overall participants have attended or have been attending a certificate or diploma program in ELT (CELTA, DELTA, etc.).

2.4 Data Analysis

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two parts: the first part questions teachers' motivations for conducting research. The second part is designed to collect data about the reasons that holds them back from conducting research.

The data were gathered using a 5-point Likert scale from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). Number (3) is a neutral choice. Data were analyzed using MS Excel to compute the frequencies and percentages of teacher responses. In the interpretation phase of the study, the frequencies and percentages for *Strongly Agree* (5) and *Agree* (4) were added. The rationale is that the respondents lean more towards one side of the scale. The same was done for *Strongly Disagree* (1) and *Disagree* (2).

3. Findings and their Interpretation

The first research question was the factors that motivate teachers to conduct classroom research. The findings regarding this question are presented in table 1 below.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. It provides a personal challenge, satisfaction and professional growth.	30%	40%	26%	3%	-
2. It provides heightened awareness of external factors that affect the classroom.	35%	45%	20%	-	-
3. It is a chance to contribute to the institution.	14%	52%	29%	5%	-
4. It is a chance to create a network with other colleagues from other institutions.	17%	38%	33%	12%	-
5. It creates better career options for the future.	24%	33%	33%	10%	-
6. It provides opportunities to travel and other benefits.	20%	36%	32%	10%	2%

Table 1: The motivational factors for classroom research

When the overall percentages of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses are added, the highest percentage belongs to "heightened awareness of external factors" with 80%. This is followed by "a personal challenge, satisfaction and professional growth" responses with a total of 70%. This shows that the teachers are in favor of doing research for self-fulfillment and genuine interest. In other words, they are intrinsically motivated for professional development. On the other hand, the chance to create networks with other colleagues from other institutions seems to be the weakest motivator for classroom research. This could be because each institution and its teachers have their own realities and therefore the communication within the institution itself is regarded as sufficient for the teachers. Because the work environment at SEPP lends itself a lot to extensive interaction among co-workers, the ESL

instructors could be satisfied with this and are not in need of opportunities to create a network outside the school. However, this should also be an issue to address as an institution closed to relationships with other colleagues from outside are limited to only the realities of their own school and cannot find opportunities for the growth of their educational practices. Contributing to the institution and opportunities to travel are regarded as other motivational factors. These two are extrinsic motivational factors. The percentage for both of these items adds up to 66. It is concluded that teachers have first intrinsic motivation to conduct classroom research, then extrinsic motivation.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I don't have enough time to conduct classroom research.	34%	30%	23%	10%	3%
2. My schedule doesn't allow me to do classroom research.	26%	32%	30%	8%	4%
3. The school doesn't provide any support for research.	11%	4%	36%	29%	21%
4. I don't know how to do classroom research.	12%	20%	39%	25%	4%
5. I don't have enough training on how to do classroom research.	-	39%	34%	23%	4%
6. I don't think it will improve my teaching practices.	4%	4%	40%	36%	16%
7. It is a waste of time.	4%	4%	23%	42%	27%

Table 2: The hindrance factors for classroom research

As for the hindrance factors of classroom research, the teachers were asked what deterred them from conducting classroom research. The percentages of the responses are presented in Table 2. As seen in the table, factors that refrain teachers from doing research are usually time-related, rather than lack of knowledge or training. 64% of the teachers believe that they don't have enough time to conduct classroom research and similarly, 58% believe their schedule doesn't allow them to do research. Although teachers seem to hold back from classroom research due to lack of sufficient time and many think it will contribute to their classroom practices (52%), it is striking that

many of the responses accumulate in the neutral point, *neither agree nor disagree*. This could be interpreted as the need for more in-depth training on how to carry out classroom research. As literature emphasizes, classroom research does not require much time on top of the actual teaching time and it brings about immediate change experienced by teachers. Teachers think classroom research will improve their teaching practices (52%) and only 8% think it is a waste of time. This is regarded as a positive sign that if teachers are provided with more input on classroom research, they can easily adopt it in their classes.

4. Conclusion

Through its focus on systematic inquiry, classroom research leads us to analyze our classroom practices and discover which is best for the learners. By undertaking such discoveries we can come up with solutions to the problems in our classroom and maximize students' learning. Considering such tremendous outcomes, as practitioners, we should make the best of this great tool, whose benefits outweigh the challenges.

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AN ACTION RESEARCH ON PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY WITH STUDY GROUPS

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Abstract
This small-scale class-based action research on promoting learner autonomy explores the learners' understanding, contribution and evaluation of the activities and responsibilities in a "study group" project carried out for eight weeks in an Upper-Intermediate course. By means of the formative evaluation of the teacher and learner reflection, and learners' exam performance, the study offers an answer for whether study groups can enhance learner autonomy and language competency.

1. Introduction

Since I started my teaching career at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL), lack of learner autonomy has been one of the hotly debated issues and the institution has gone through many changes to cater for this problem. These changes have involved integrating more learner-based tasks in teaching, providing learners with outside-class study materials, integrating blended learning into the curriculum, and so on. Despite their contribution to the learners' language development, none of these approaches or tasks has seemed to fulfill the aim of creating more autonomous learners.

Considering this ever-evolving issue and struggling with teacher-dependent learners, I decided to carry out this action research in search of a solution that would help my learners to accelerate their language competency and boost their autonomy. Holec describes learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (1981, 3) and, in this respect, I executed the study group project in such a way that my learners would be in charge of their own learning by scaffolding each other and contributing to each other's language and autonomy development. This view is also supported by Allwright and Hanks since they put forward "teachers are officially in charge of the practice of language learning in the classroom, but they have to leave the actual practice of language learning to the learners. Only the learners can do their own learning" (2009, 3). Therefore, I assumed that my learners would benefit from the study group project, as they would be actively involved in their own learning in a cooperative environment.

2. Literature Review

As stated by Davis, “students learn best when they are actively involved in the process” (1993, 190) and study groups seem to be one of the most supportive means to work towards meeting this aim. This is because study groups encourage learners to reach their potential as it allows them to have some choice in their selected text, provide small group accountability and responsibility, and promote the building of knowledge through peer dialogue (Shaw 2011). Hence learners who choose what to work on and cooperate with each other to learn as a group not only develop their language competency but also gain autonomy.

Learner autonomy has taken on a growing importance in the field of language education and lack of learner autonomy has always been an elaborate subject; therefore, many theories and approaches have been developed to cater for this gap. To this end, community language learning holds the view that every individual learner is unique and should undertake independent decision-making while learning according to their own needs and learning preferences (Curran 1972). Similarly, autonomous language learning suggests that learners should be viewed as being capable of independent decision-making by developing their own unique ways of learning in a mutually supportive environment (Allwright & Hanks 2009). As another significant theory, social constructivism promotes language learning through scaffolded social interactions with others (Vygotsky 1978). What is common with these theories and approaches is that they consider learners as unique and encourage learner autonomy by holding them responsible for their own learning.

Considering learner autonomy, some other approaches like collaborative and cooperative language learning have emerged, both of which aim at triggering learner autonomy. As the former entails learners working together to achieve common learning goals (Slavin, in Nunan 2003), the latter is comprised of small groups where learners work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning (Johnson et al. 1991). Both of these approaches support learner independence and autonomy as learners work towards development at their own pace with the aim of achieving a common goal by being responsible for their own and peers’ learning.

Another approach that takes the concept of autonomy one step further is liberatory autonomy (Benson in Allwright & Dick 2009). Liberatory autonomy focuses on creating critical thinkers through social relationships by benefitting from the unlimited possibilities offered by online sources and bringing these back to the class for discussion (Allwright & Hanks 2009). In this respect, study groups seem to trigger the development of liberatory autonomy of the learners as it allows the learners to liberate their own learning by studying with the

online and published materials they choose according to their individual and group needs.

As it can be clearly seen, all these theories and approaches seem to serve the aim of this action research on the effectiveness of study groups in increasing learner autonomy since they closely focus on learner autonomy in language learning.

3. Context and Participants

The learners who participated in the study group project were eight-week remedial Upper-Intermediate learners at Bilkent University School of English Language. Studying at an English medium university, they had 25 hours of English instruction per week.

As part of the assessment and evaluation, the learners were required to sit some low stakes exams, such as written outcome tasks, and to take two high stakes cumulative exams which assessed their reading, listening and writing performance. Only the learners who could accumulate 60 points overall by the end of the eight week long course were allowed to sit the end-of-course assessment exam, known as ECA, which again assessed their reading, listening and writing skills.

The learners were highly motivated and willing to pass the level by improving their English. However, a problem I observed with them during the first week of the eight-week course was that they were weak at productive skills and lacked autonomy so almost all of them complained about not knowing how to study by themselves. To this end, I decided to contribute to their autonomy development by carrying out the study group project with them. When introduced to the project, their initial response was highly positive.

4. Methodology and Tools

Despite their desire to improve their language competency and to pass the level, the learners were not aware of the strategies to cope with their weaknesses so they were highly dependent on the instructors. Spotting this as a problem, I decided to carry out this class-based action research as my methodology so that I could work on the problem with my learners and formulate a solution, which could in turn improve their autonomy. By evaluating their performance at certain intervals during the course, I could reevaluate if the project was useful for the learners.

For this purpose, I decided to create some tools and make use of some existing ones to help me evaluate the learners' autonomy and language development. Since I adopted a mixed methods approach, I made use of both qualitative and quantitative tools. As for qualitative tools, I had two reflection

tools. The first reflective tool was a "weekly reflection document" which the learners filled in at the end of each week to reflect on their group studies. In groups, they filled in a chart with information regarding the materials they used, the time they spent, their study focus (i.e. skills, language) and their overall reflection of their performance and the usefulness of the materials. Basically, this document helped the learners to evaluate their own performance so that they could follow their progress and take the necessary action in the coming weeks in order to improve.

The second qualitative reflection tool was a "student-peer-teacher reflection" document, which was filled in by each learner and their peers in the groups. This tool had less specific questions regarding the whole project and was completed in the middle and at the end of the course. It comprised of some key questions like: "What has been the most useful and challenging aspects of working in study groups for you?"; "How do you feel about your own and your friends' contribution to the group?"; "How do you think study groups contribute to your autonomy development?"; and, "How do you feel about the support you received from your teacher?"; all of which helped me find out the contribution of the study to learners' autonomy and language competency development. After reading learners' responses to these questions, I commented on their answers to contribute to their development by reflecting on their performance.

For the third qualitative tool used, I kept field notes on the learners' performance throughout the course and observed their contribution to the project. These were informal notes, which I referred to later to evaluate the project at certain intervals. As I adopted an inductive approach, these notes helped me make assumptions about the learners' performance, contribution and feelings towards participating in such a project.

In order to benefit from a quantitative approach, I referred to the learners' CAT (Cumulative Achievement Test) results, which took place in the fourth and seventh weeks of the course. Each CAT assessed learners' reading, listening and writing competency out of 15 points. Learners' CAT results provided me with the quantitative evidence of whether becoming autonomous through study groups had helped the learners' language competency to improve or not.

5. Stages of the Project

After observing that the learners lacked autonomy and deciding to carry out the study group project, I introduced the project to the learners in week 2. While introducing it, I informed them of the aim and the structure of the project so that the learners could know the rationale behind the project. In order for the

learners' contribution, we brainstormed the possible pros and cons of the project together so that they became fully aware of the benefits and the anticipated problems regarding the project. While doing so, we also had the opportunity to come up with possible solutions to the pitfalls, like lack of learner interest, or irresponsible and misbehaving learners. By involving the learners in decision-making I intended to ensure the ownership of the learners towards the project.

As the next crucial point, I guided the learners through the choice of materials and referred them to *Virtual Campus*, the previously used blended learning tool at BUSEL where the learners could find a list of websites and sources for outside class study. Moreover, we negotiated to allocate 12 hours to study group studies in total. The last thing I shared with the learners was the information regarding the evaluation tools. Similarly, I highlighted the rationale and the significance of each evaluation tool so that the learners could take them seriously while reflecting on the tasks, materials, and their studies regarding their autonomy and language development. As a final step, I informed the learners of their group members. Each of the six groups was comprised of three learners, some weak and some strong, in their language competency and the level of autonomy, so that they could guide and benefit from each others' knowledge and experience.

Starting from week 2, the groups came together and worked on the focus areas that they had decided. Although I closely scaffolded the groups considering the choice of materials and the areas to work on in week 2 and 3, I decreased the level of scaffolding gradually. Until the end of the course, I closely observed the learners and kept field notes, and kept a close eye on their reflection sheets to see whether everything was going well. From time to time, I gave some overall feedback to the learners concerning their improvement in autonomy and language competency.

6. Analysis and Findings

6.1 Weekly Reflection Document and My Reflection

These weekly completed documents required the learners to fill in detailed information regarding their studies and resulted in being a highly useful tool in terms of providing the learners with a reference tool and me with invaluable feedback from the learners.

Examining this document carefully, I found out that the learners benefitted from the study group project to a great extent. As one of the learners, Kübra, said *"It is beneficial to brainstorm ideas together and write a paragraph. We changed ideas about the usages of some vocabulary."* Similarly, another learner, Anıl, mentioned *"Today I underlined the collocations and*

grammatical structures my friends use and tried to use them in my own writing. Then receiving feedback from my friends was very useful." And Tuğçe said *"My friends showed me how I could take better notes while listening."* These quotations show that studying cooperatively in the study group project contributed to learners' language learning by improving their receptive and productive skills.

As well as enhancing their language competency by working cooperatively, the study group project helped the learners gain insight into strategy building since one of the learners, Mert, mentioned *"I am weak at reading. My friends in the group show me some strategies about how I can answer main idea questions."* This quotation also shows how the strong learners could guide the weaker ones and gain more self-confidence while the weaker ones could improve in skills.

Most significantly, it was evident that the study group project contributed to the learners' autonomy development. Most of the learners shared that they felt more confident in identifying their weaknesses, searching for resources and finding more appropriate materials for their needs. Buse, another learner, said *"I always knew my reading was weak but I didn't know what to do. Now I feel safer because I have learnt how to study. My friends helped me a lot."* I also observed that the learners who felt lost at the beginning gained self-esteem and seemed more determined in their studies.

6.2 Student-Peer-Teacher Reflection Document and My Reflection

This reflection document helped me evaluate how the learners benefitted from the study group project. It was particularly useful because peers could share their reflections with each other and I could also contribute to their reflection by making comments. In this way, the learners felt valued and the genuine interaction among them increased.

It was obvious that the majority of the learners enjoyed studying in the project as they commented *"I never got bored as we were active all the time"* (Kübra) and *"I've always benefitted from teaching someone else because it helps me revise so study groups made me revise vocabulary and grammar"* (Metin). Moreover, the learners could learn how to turn challenges into advantages as Ahmet stated *"It was difficult to find materials for listening but it also helped me learn how to search for the right sources."* These quotations show that the learners were involved in the activities actively and learnt better by revising and actively listening, which in turn increased learners' autonomy.

6.3 CAT Results and My Reflection

CAT results of the learners gave me a more concrete idea of their language development as I could compare their initial performance with the mid-course and end-of-course grades. The change in the learners' performance can be seen in the table below. Considering that each section of the exam is worth 15 points, in "students' points" column the point "9" represents the borderline grade, 60%.

	READING		**LISTENING**		**WRITING**	
St Points (Out of 15)	**CAT 1**	**CAT 2**	**CAT 1**	**CAT 2**	**CAT 1**	**CAT 2**
Below 9	5 sts	4 sts	5 sts	3 sts	1 st	1 st
9 to 9.5	2 sts	5 sts	6 sts	4 sts	5 sts	2 st
Over 9.5	11 sts	9 sts	7 sts	11 sts	12 sts	15 sts
Total	18	18	18	18	18	18

As it can be clearly seen on the table above learners' language competency in reading, listening and writing improved. Therefore, it can be concluded that learners' exam results and their daily performance in the classroom proved that participating in the study group project increased learners' autonomy, which in turn triggered their language competency.

7. Limitations and Implications

Despite the seemingly success of the study group project, it still had some limitations. One of them was relying only on th learners' CAT results while evaluating the quantitative results. It was difficult to triangulate the results with another quantitative tool. Moreover, the learners received only 12 hours of input in the project, which was a limited amount of time due to teaching schedule restrictions. Also because I had only 18 learners, the number of subjects was limited. Consecutively, it was not possible to generalize the results of the study to the other contexts.

Looking at the findings, it can be concluded that the study group project ended up a success by enhancing learners' language competency and autonomy. Therefore, an institutional implication is that this class-based action research may be integrated into teaching as a common or an alternative practice. However, as Davis (1993) suggests both the learners and the instructors should be trained and clearly informed of the rationale of study

groups so that each party would get involved in the activity and take it seriously.

Learners' deeply rooted study habits, due to their educational backgrounds, challenged some of them to adopt such an autonomous activity as Turkish learners are not used to being autonomous. Therefore, it is really difficult to change their habits just in one course. For this reason, another institutional implication is that study groups could be extended into all levels across the school, from Elementary to Pre-Faculty.

Although I did not experience serious problems regarding learner participation, one possible way to increase learner involvement is to allocate points to study group activities (Davis 1993). Another approach could be to ask learners to sign written contracts to ensure their participation would encourage learners to fully engage in the activities (Connery 1988).

8. Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study, the study group project helped the learners improve their level of autonomy and language competency both in receptive and productive skills. It was a success particularly because it set up a common interest with the learners, involved them in decision-making through negotiation and encouraged their active involvement in the project. It can be concluded that using study groups school-wide by training the instructors and learners, extending the project all through the year and ensuring learner involvement by signing contracts could be considered in order to boost learner autonomy and language competency.

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ENHANCING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP

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1. Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore whether a n Critical Friends Group (CFG), a kind of teacher development program based on reflective teaching, could contribute to teachers' professional development. Four participants were included in this study, which lasted 8 weeks. The data was collected using diary keeping, the researchers' field notes, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that CFG could contribute to professional development of teachers by enabling them to work collaboratively to improve their professional knowledge and teaching in a supportive and reflective professional community.

2. Introduction

Teachers' professional growth has been a prominent concept in the area of English Language Teaching due to the changes in economy and politics that have swept over education. So as to meet the requirements of these changes, teachers need to get involved in an unending professional development. Whitford and Wood (2010) suggest that schools have to cope with changes in "economy and students demographics." Catching up with these changes requires ongoing learning for teachers.

Villegas-Reimers (2003) defines professional development as the development of a person in his or her professional life. It covers a broad notion more than career development or staff development. Historically, the latter is perceived as the main aim of professional development. Over the years workshops and short-term courses have been used to provide teachers with new knowledge on a specific aspect of the profession. Recently, there has been a significant increase in the implementation of programs aiming to improve the professional skills and knowledge of teachers. The basic tenets of this professional development perspective include several features:

- The constructivist roots of this perspective make teachers more active.
- It is an on-going process since learning occurs over time.
- It is a process that requires a natural context (a school atmosphere) and content (daily activities that take place in classroom settings).
- It is a process that needs support from school and curriculum reform.
- It is based on reflective practice.

- It is a process that occurs in a collaborative atmosphere.
- There is no perfect model of professional development owing to a great variety of dimensions. Hence, the best is the one that meets the needs of a particular situation (Villegas-Reimers 2003, 14).

In this regard, Pettis (2002) emphasizes that every opportunity for professional development needs to stimulate a personal commitment for teachers. Additionally, Fleener (2003, cited in Kelley 2007) states that, given the opportunity, teachers may find solutions to any problems in schools. Overall, teacher development programs require a more teacher-centered approach that gives teachers room to collaborate and reflect on their teaching experiences. Hence, reflective practice such as peer observation, a critical friends group, keeping diaries, and teacher portfolios may be vital stimuli for effective professional growth.

In recent years there has been an increasing amount of literature on reflective teaching. A Critical Friends Group (CFG) is one of the most effective professional development methods founded on reflective teaching and mutual collaboration in a friendly atmosphere. Nolan and Hoover (2010, 201) identify CFG as "small groups of teachers who meet voluntarily on a regular basis to examine their own work and student learning with the aid of conversation protocols. Typically CFG is facilitated by a coach who has been trained to use various protocols". In addition, Zepeda emphasizes that CFG is a satisfying professional development method since,

- it is continual
- it is focused on teachers' own teaching and their own students' learning
- it takes place in a small group of supportive and trusted colleagues within their own school (2008, 226).

3. Methodology

The ultimate goal of the study was to foster a collaborative professional community through ongoing interactions in a small group called a Critical Friends Group (National School Reform Faculty). The research questions that framed the study were:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards Critical Friends Group programs?
2. Does a Critical Friends Group contribute to teachers' professional development?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Critical Friends Group programs?

Four English language teachers working in a private school in Kahramanmaraş participated in the study. The names of the participant teachers used in this study are pseudo names, i.e. Esra, Elif, Filiz and Aslı. The

Critical Friends Group program mainly consisting of action research, peer observation and diary keeping lasted 8 weeks. The participant teachers and the researcher held a meeting on a weekly basis. Each meeting took at least half an hour. They kept a diary including an entry for each week of the program. Each entry in the diary consisted of open-ended questions related to their feelings about each protocol and some questionnaires.

4. Findings and Conclusion

Although not having engaged in a teacher development program, all the participants perceived the value of attending such kinds of programs at the beginning of this program. Similarly, they viewed it as an effective tool to develop a sense professional community throughout the program. The positive and friendly atmosphere is a crucial locus of this professional community. In this CFG program, the participant teachers were already familiar with each other and the environment, which might be of help in generating such a friendly and sincere atmosphere.

One of the ultimate aims of CFG is to create a professional learning community where teachers work collaboratively to look at their practices reflectively (National School Reform Faculty). The general themes in their semi-structured interviews and the diary entries indicated that the participant teachers seemed to embrace the collaborative nature of the CFG program. Feeling a member of this collaborative community, they undoubtedly shared their experiences, which improved their teaching quality.

As for the strengths and weaknesses of the program, the findings reveal that three participant teachers specifically stated that peer observation protocols provided valuable insights for them to reflect on their practices in the classroom. One of them responded favorably to the problem-solving protocol as she received valuable suggestions pertinent to the teaching process in this protocol. One major drawbacks of this CFG program was the frequency of the peer observation protocol. In their semi-structured interviews 3 of the participant teachers recommended that it would have been more beneficial if this CFG program had had more peer observation protocols. They perceived peer observation as a highly functional means to learn from each other. One of the participants recommended that the entries of the participant teachers' diary could have some questions concerning the student reactions to the newly implemented methods by their teachers. Kruse et al. (1995, cited in Roberts & Pruit 2003) highlight that a professional learning community requires "a focus on student learning."

This paper has explained the central importance of CFG in teachers' professional development. One of the most significant findings to emerge from

this study was that CFG programs contributed to the professional development of teachers. It enabled the participant teachers: to develop a sense of professional community working collaboratively; to learn from each other in a constructive and sharing environment; to improve their teaching based on their experiences of CFG protocols; to become more reflective in their teaching; to discover their strengths and weaknesses; and, finally to establish positive attitudes towards professional development, which is a prerequisite in creating an effective teaching and learning environment.

The most obvious implication of this study is CFG programs can encourage teachers working in collaboration and to reflect on their teaching, which makes it possible for them to facilitate their teaching practices. Thus, teachers need to support their own professional development by taking responsibility for it. For instance, they can hold regular meetings, weekly or monthly, to discuss and share their problems related to their teaching practices or their students. If they do not arrange a particular time for these meetings, they may use formal school meetings to share their experiences.

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF VIDEO TUTORIALS

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1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, video-conferencing has been used for student support in distance learning. However, it has received little attention in blended learning where face-to-face tutorials are also possible. This research on first-year students in an English-medium university in Turkey was carried out to examine students' attitudes to video tutorials and evaluate their effectiveness, with a view to adopting them as a supplement to face-to-face tutorials.

In the Faculty Academic English Programme of Bilkent University, tutorials serve a variety of purposes, such as planning essays and presentations, clarifying written feedback on essays, or general chat about the course. Students sign up for tutorials via a scheduler on Moodle. It is often hard to find suitable times for tutorials, especially for group tutorials, which might involve students from three different departments trying to find a time when they are all free. This means many tutorials are held during the lunch hour or early evening, or with some group members missing because they were in class.

Video tutorials, here defined as online tutorials conducted via webcam and (optionally) desktop and document sharing, seem at first glance to offer an attractive solution to this problem. Students and teachers can communicate from home as well as at school at a mutually convenient time. I had already considered the potential of video-conferencing technology during previous courses, but had only conducted one tutorial in this medium. This used Google+ hangouts and worked reasonably well. After looking at other tools, such as Skype, OpenMeetings[1] and WebEx[2], I decided to go ahead with Google+ as the easiest to set up and use.

A problem with adopting any new technology is that it may be chosen for its intrinsic appeal (the "shiny" factor) rather than because it effectively solves a certain problem. While I was enthusiastic about the potential of Google+, I decided that it was necessary to subject this enthusiasm to the cold light of empirical data before sharing it with the world, or even my immediate colleagues. I therefore designed a study to establish whether video tutorials are worth promoting as a supplement to face-to-face tutorials.

The questions posed in this study are as follows:

1. What attitudes affect students' preferences in choosing face-to-face or video tutorials?
2. How effective are video tutorials relative to face-to-face tutorials in terms of
   a) communicating information

b) convenience
c) student satisfaction?

3. What technical problems may decrease the effectiveness of video tutorials?

2. Prior Research

The use of video-conferencing as a way of dealing with large numbers of students via distance learning or on multi-campus universities has been studied since the nineties (Goggin, Finkenberg and Morrow 1997; Freeman 1998), but it is comparatively recently that improvements in technology, notably the widespread adoption of broadband, have made it popular. Smyth (2005) cites the medium's visual richness as making it suitable for a variety of oral activities, including role-playing as well as more traditional tasks such as postgraduate supervision and small-group tutorials, stating that "students involved in these activities have engaged well and have requested more videoconferencing."

Little research has been done on situations where the same students have opportunities for both face-to-face contact and video-conferencing. In a study of students learning German interacting with native speakers, Coverdale-Jones found that video-conferencing was positively regarded by students, but that they still considered it a reduced mode of communication compared to face-to-face communication, and cautions that "communication factors are subject to external influences of technology/medium" (2000, 36). Giouroglou and Economides (2001) consider computer-mediated communication in EAP in contexts where non-native students are studying alongside native-speakers and interestingly conclude that asynchronous, text-based conferencing works better than audio- and video-conferencing.

Taken as whole, research indicates that video tutorials are a valuable tool when face-to-face tutorials are not possible, but are unlikely to be preferred by students over face-to-face tutorials.

3. Methodology

Most of this research took place in the second half of the fall semester of 2012 (involving at least 25 students to varying degrees) and the first half of the spring semester of 2013 (17+ students)[3]. This small sample size is a limitation of the study, and an important factor in its design was the need to establish a degree of credibility with such a sample. I therefore adopted a mixed method approach, since "[b]y using more than one *method* in a research program, we are able to obtain a more complete picture of human behaviour and experience" (Morse 2003, 189), or to put it more practically, the more ways I observe my students, the more I learn about them.

Six tools were employed: utilising previously collected data, a general

online questionnaire, more specific online questionnaires for feedback after tutorials, a teacher's journal, observations of recorded tutorials, and follow-up interviews. With the exception of previously collected data, all data came from the same population and as far as possible from the same tutorials.

First of all, I harvested data on students' purposes in tutorials from existing course evaluation surveys as a way of checking similar data to be collected from my own students. Another existing source was data previously gathered in Bilkent on use of new media, which provided an overview of student attitudes to different communication tools.

An initial online questionnaire on attitudes to tutorials was completed by 31 students (25 from the fall semester cohort and 6 from the spring semester). Post-tutorial questionnaires were completed by 36 students (19 from fall and 17 from spring), and I completed a mirror-image questionnaire after each tutorial to form a mini-journal. All questionnaires provided a mixture of quantitative data (either/or questions and Likert scales) and qualitative data (open-ended questions).

To obtain more detailed data on the tutoring process, I recorded three tutorials and observed them, then compared my notes with those made by two other observers. My method here was to compare my notes with the outside observer's notes and with my journal entry, looking for points of similarity and contradiction. Additionally, follow-up interviews were conducted with five students: four via Moodle messaging and one via video-conferencing.

4. Results

4.1 Students and new media (previously collected data)

From data collected and analysed in June 2012, it was possible to create a profile of a typical Bilkent student's use of new media (Benette, Smoot & Turner 2012). What emerged was a picture of a media-savvy student that corresponded fairly closely to that of young Americans provided by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Zickhur 2010). Some salient points are as follows:

- A typical student first used new technology (computers, smart phones etc.) at the age of 10 (mean and median).
- 70% think they understood computers better than their teachers.
- 90% use social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter etc.).
- 70% think teachers should use social media more.
- The median number of text messages sent per student per day was 20.
- Virtually all students own a computer and/or smart phone and have Internet access at home.

- Students spend several hours a day online (mean 4.2, median, 3).

4.2 Purpose in attending tutorials (previously collected data, general questionnaire, interviews)

Data collected from old mid-term evaluation questionnaires showed that students' main purpose in attending tutorials was to discuss essay drafts, followed by planning essays or presentations. For current students these were also the top purposes, but their order was reversed, probably because tutorials to plan oral presentations are compulsory in this course. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the data.

In interviews students confirmed that that they mainly came to tutorials for planning; some said tutorials were useful for looking at drafts but they didn't need them themselves. One student thought that essay feedback should be given in tutorials; another said that students who were poor at speaking could be put in small groups for speaking tutorials (she did not count herself among this number).

4.3 Attitudes to online tutorials (general questionnaire, interviews)

31 students filled in a questionnaire on attitudes to tutorials. In response to a question asking whether they would consider having a video tutorial, only 6 students (19%) said “yes”. Responses to the follow-up questions “If so, why?” and “If not, why not?” were coded according to whether attitudes expressed concerned communicative, practical or affective issues. Results are shown in Table 2.

Only in the practical category is there even an equal preference for online tutorials, the main reason being that it is not necessary to travel to the campus or stay after classes had finished; in all other categories the results are overwhelmingly negative. The affective category was particularly interesting. Some telling responses were:

- It [a face-to-face tutorial] contains a sense of 'reality' and therefore, is more effective.
- I can't feel comfortable.
- i [*sic*] find it creepy.

In interviews, I asked students who had not had online tutorials if they would ever consider having one. Here the picture was rather different. One liked the idea but was put off trying because her connection was bad; one hadn't signed up because she misread the time as 7 a.m. instead of 7 p.m., but was enthusiastic about the idea, citing the fact that at home she could access anything she needed easily. Another student thought that online tutorials were

a good idea but she would prefer to do them by text chat rather than video because she felt uncomfortable speaking, and also felt strange seeing herself in a webcam.

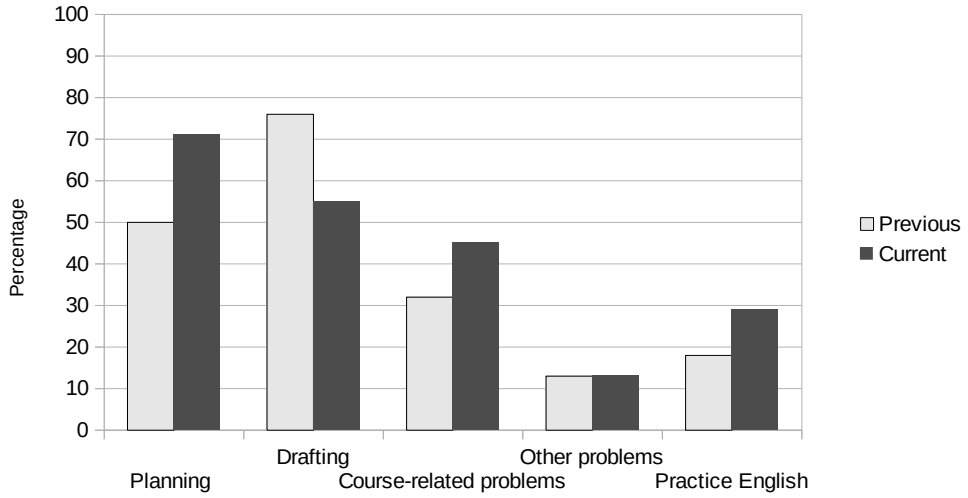

Table 1: Students' purpose in attending tutorials (previous and current data)

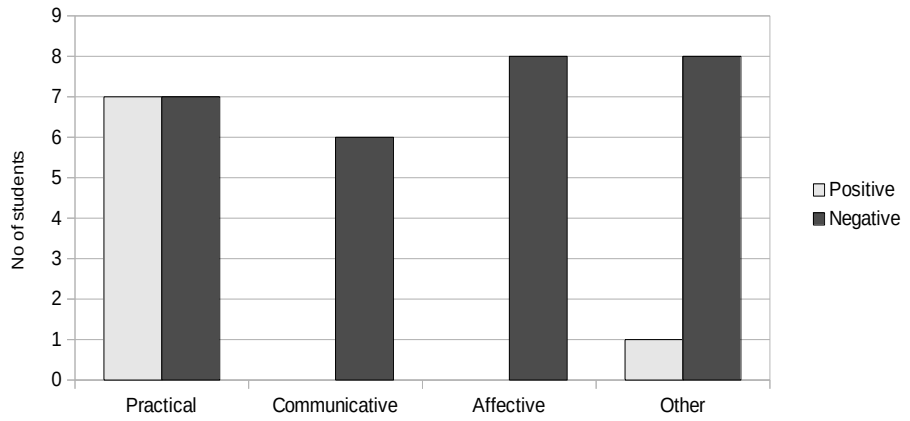

Table 2: Attitudes to video tutorials

4.4 Satisfaction with tutorials (post-tutorial feedback, teacher's journal, observations, interviews)

Analysis of post-tutorial feedback showed little difference in satisfaction between face-to-face and online tutorials. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction from 1 to 5 according to whether they were able to express their ideas, whether their questions were answered, whether the time was convenient and their overall satisfaction. Results are shown in Table 3. In all cases, mean responses were between 4.5 and 5. However, we should bear in mind that the online sample is very small, so it is hard to draw conclusions from their responses.

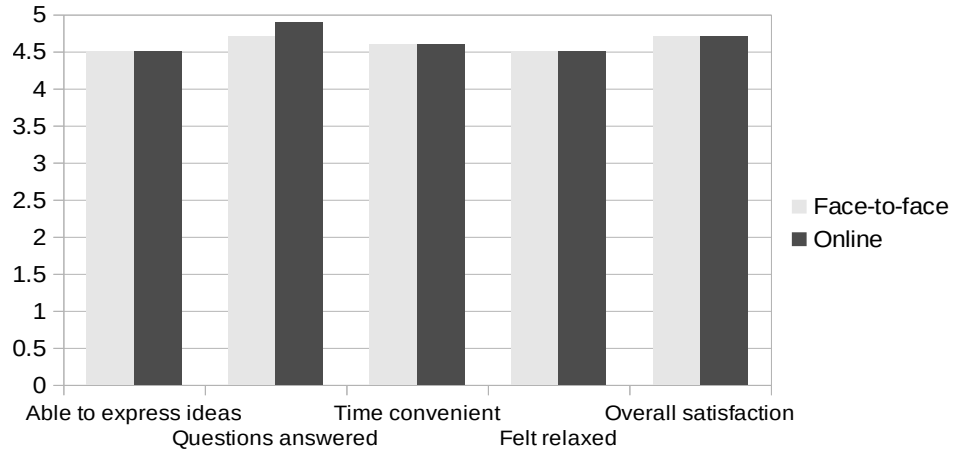

Table 3: Student satisfaction with tutorials

I answered a mirror image of the questions, giving my perceptions of student satisfaction ("I was able to answer student questions," "Students seemed relaxed," etc.). The exception was the question about the tutorial time, where I answered according to whether the time was convenient for me. Results are shown in Table 4. Again there is little difference between face-to-face and online tutorials.

Three video recordings of tutorials were observed, one face-to-face and two online. I compared the notes I took with those taken by the outside observer and marked points where we had noted the same things and where we had come to opposite conclusions.

In the face-to-face tutorial, nothing remarkable was noted by either observer except the large amount of teacher talking time compared to student talking time. This was probably due to the student's poor English, which both observers noted. Despite this, she seemed relaxed and comfortable most of the time; both observers noticed her nodding and smiling. These observations were

corroborated by her interview, in which she said "I was excited [i.e., nervous – Turks frequently get these words mixed up] at the beginning but I got rid of [it]." Nothing was noted that could not have occurred in a video tutorial, so the medium does not seem to be particularly important here; the student commented that she liked the physical environment (as did others), but for a more "intense" tutorial she would prefer somewhere more private.

In the first online tutorial there was some discrepancy in perceptions of the student's level of comfort: I noted that she seemed relaxed and confident, while the other observer pointed out that she seemed rather nervous with the medium at first, seeming not to know where to look and asking questions to fill awkward silences while I was reading her paper, although she became more relaxed and comfortable later. In her interview, she said that she felt nervous *before* the tutorial because she hadn't tried anything like it before, but quickly relaxed and was as comfortable as with a face-to-face tutorial.

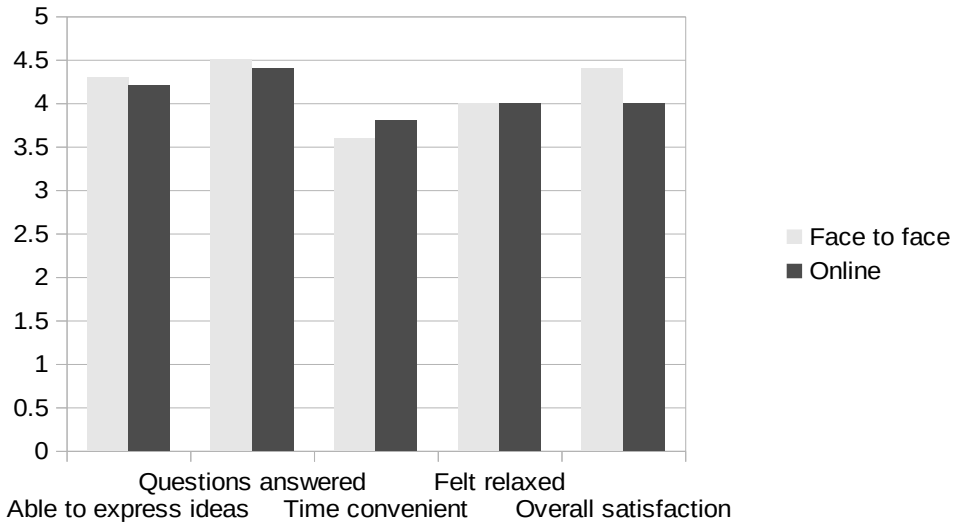

Table 4: Teacher's view of tutorials

The main point both observers made concerning the other online tutorial was that the student did not have a clear idea of his purpose in booking a tutorial, and seemed at first only to be curious about the medium. Although he later asked some questions about a paper he was working on, he did not have the paper to hand, so the assistance I could give was limited.

4.5 Technical issues (post-tutorial feedback, teacher's journal, observations,

interviews)

The post-tutorial feedback form contained an open-ended question, “If this was an online tutorial, did you experience any technical problems?” Three students reported problems with the sound, a frustration I had also noted in my journal. When I interviewed one of these students and asked what he thought about this problem, his response was “it would be perfect if the sound was working, but it was not a big deal.” A different sound problem (reported in my journal) was that in one case there was a considerable amount of noise from the student's family, which made it hard for me to concentrate on what he was saying. Other reported technical problems were connection (3 students), receiving the link for the tutorial late (1 student), and unspecified problems (3 students).

An issue that both observers noted in the first online tutorial, and which I had also mentioned in my journal, was the screen-sharing format. In an earlier tutorial I had initially tried to do collaborative editing of the student's paper via Google Docs, but this did not work, so I opened the file in my computer and shared my screen. In this tutorial I went straight for the screen-sharing option, but as we noted, this meant that a lot of the time was taken up with my editing the student's work. When I interviewed the student about this format, she was very enthusiastic about it, but agreed that it would be even better if it were possible for us both to work on the document at the same time. In the spring semester, I had more success with file sharing, and it did turn out to be better than screen sharing in terms of involving the student.

A final technical problem worth noting was setting up the tutorials. Probably because both I and the students were new to the online tutorial format, it sometimes took a long time to get the tutorial going, with e-mailing to and fro before we were all together in the hangout. This problem was less in evidence in the spring semester, however.

5. Discussion

Students who have not had online tutorials tend to have a negative perception of them. Video conversations with a teacher may be perceived as less effective, less serious, less “real” or even “creepy”. This is a surprising finding, given most students' high use of new media. The implication is that we shouldn't assume comfort with technology in general means comfort with any particular type of technology in any communicative context: a student may be happy to share their life with their Facebook friends but not like the idea of having their teacher in their bedroom, or may see video chat as fine for socialising but not for serious work. Video may even raise self-image issues, making text chat a preferable medium for some students.

On the other hand, the data on student satisfaction indicate that video tutorials can be as effective as face-to-face tutorials, assuming there are no serious technical problems. While there may be some initial discomfort with the medium, this will probably disappear. Video tutorials can be arranged at mutually convenient times, but technical problems and difficulties in arranging them may offset this. I assume these problems will decrease as the procedure becomes more familiar. Consequently, I decided to continue making video tutorials available but on a fairly informal basis, without pushing students into it. This is a new experience for students, and while some may be enthusiastic about it, many others are reluctant.

It is unwise to make generalisations from a small sample of students in one type of course in one particular university. Nevertheless, I think some conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, as stated earlier, we should not assume that because our students are "digital natives", they will jump at any new media around. For them, there really are no "new media" or "old media"; in their world, these are just media. It makes no more sense to assume that someone who enjoys texting will be happy with video-conferencing than to have assumed a century ago that someone who enjoyed listening to records on a gramophone would enjoy talking on the telephone on the grounds that in those days, they were both new media. What is perhaps different about today's youth is that they are accustomed to a wide choice of media, and consequently, different students employ different media for different purposes. Teachers, then, would do well to offer as wide a choice of communication channels as personal and institutional constraints allow. If a teacher is comfortable with both the technical and social challenges presented by online tutorials, and if there is sufficient interest among students, then it is worth offering such tutorials. However, they should not be imposed on students by teachers, or on teachers by institutions; technology should be adopted and adapted to meet the needs of teachers and students, not the other way round.

Notes

[1] http://incubator.apache.org/openmeetings/

[2] http://www.webex.com

[3] Since surveys were voluntary and anonymous, it is impossible to tell how great the overlap was between students answering different surveys, so we can only assume that the minimum number of participating students is that of the survey with the largest uptake, and the maximum is probably not much higher.

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INSTRUCTING SOCIO-AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS IN EFL SPEAKING CLASSES: DOES IT LOWER FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY?

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Abstract:
This paper reports on an exploratory research aimed to test the possible effect of training English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners on socio-affective language learning strategies (LLSs) and emotional intelligence (EI) skills by investigating the extent to which they reduce learners' foreign language anxiety (FLA) in speaking classes. The participants were 50 EFL students and three EFL instructors at a Turkish state university. The participating students had a five-week training based on the socio-affective LLSs suggested by Oxford (1990) and the skills in Bar-On's (2000) EI model in their speaking skills lessons. As a result, quantitative data analysis from the pre- and post-anxiety questionnaires indicated that there was a statistically significant decrease in the participating students' overall anxiety levels.

Key words: socio-affective language learning strategies, strategy training, emotional intelligence, foreign language anxiety

1. Introduction

Of all the affective variables related to language learning, anxiety is one of the most powerful and mostly experienced emotions in human psychology. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is defined by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope as "the distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (1986, 128). Although anxiety is believed to have both debilitative and facilitative effects on learning, studies on FLA have showed a positive correlation between low grades and high anxiety level. Moreover, it is widely agreed that FLA is mostly experienced when learners are producing the target language and communicating verbally, which indicates that language classes focusing on oral skills are the places where the feeling of anxiety is mostly observed (Baki 2012; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert 1999; Liu & Jackson 2008; Woodrow 2006).

A stress-free and positive classroom atmosphere was viewed as the key to overcome learner anxiety in most of language teaching methods like Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Community Language Learning. On the other hand, the 1990s had a turning point in language education as the methods of language

teaching lost importance due to the fact that they failed to take into consideration individual learners' needs, different intelligence types, and personal learning styles and strategies. The impact of different language learning strategies and intelligence types on anxiety was thereafter investigated widely.

Since the early 1990s, analyzing and categorizing the strategies that good language learners use when learning a second or foreign language have been the focus of many researchers (e.g., Brown 2002; Cohen 1998; O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990; Wenden & Rubin 1987). Learner strategies are mainly classified as memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies (O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990). Socio-affective strategies as a sub-category of language learning strategies were first mentioned in a longitudinal research that O'Malley and Chamot (1990) conducted in an ESL setting. Socio-affective LLSs are the mental and physical activities that language learners consciously choose to regulate their emotions and interactions with other people during their language learning process (Griffiths 2008; O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990). Oxford (1990) listed three affective strategies as a) lowering anxiety, b) encouraging oneself, and c) taking one's emotional temperature; likewise, the social strategies are classified under three headings: a) asking questions, b) cooperating with others, and c) empathizing with others.

Similar to LLSs, Emotional intelligence (EI), emerged in the early 1990s introducing a new intelligence type in the field of psychology. EI is "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, 189). Goleman (1995) in his best-selling book entitled "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ" supported the idea that that one can develop his/her EI through education, and learners of different subject areas can be trained to achieve a higher level of EI. Another prominent EI researcher, Bar-On (1997), introduced the widest classification of EI skills under five broader categories namely a) intrapersonal, b) interpersonal, c) adaptability, d) stress management, and e) general mood and further listed sub-skills of EI for each broad category.

The two concepts of socio-affective LLSs and EI have been separately related to learner anxiety in the literature. Lists of techniques to overcome speaking anxiety in foreign language classrooms have been examined widely, and various socio-affective strategies have been suggested (e.g., Foss & Reitzel 1988; Young 1991; Wei 2012; Williams & Andrade 2008). Likewise, the relationship between EI and FLA has been reviewed in survey studies in the field of language education suggesting that EI training may be effective to eliminate

learner anxiety while producing the target language (e.g., Birjandi & Tabataba'ian 2012; Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham 2008; Ergün 2011; Mohammadi & Mousalou 2012; Rouhani 2008; Şakrak 2009). As a result, a combined training of socio-affective LLSs and EI can be regarded as a possible solution for FLA that many students experience during their language learning process, especially when speaking the foreign language.

The importance of communication skills is however increasing in the world as English language is becoming a world language; therefore, many language programs in the world, including university foreign language preparatory programs in Turkey, are putting emphasis on the oral skills of English and adding speaking courses and assessments into their curricula. Nevertheless, students, especially the ones whose language learning backgrounds are based on just learning the grammar of English, find these courses too demanding and do not know how to cope with their speaking specific anxiety during the lesson hours.

This study aims to explore the possible effects of explicit teaching of socio-affective LLSs combined with EI skills on foreign language learners' anxiety levels in speaking classes. The research questions addressed in this exploratory study are:

1- How does explicit teaching of socio-affective LLSs combined with training on EI skills impact EFL university students' FLA in English speaking courses?
2- Which socio-affective LLSs do EFL university students prefer to use before and after the training?
3- What are EFL university students' and teachers' attitudes towards training on socio-affective LLSs and EI skills?

2. Methodology

2.1 Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages at a state university in Turkey, where students at three different proficiency levels (elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate) take five different language courses: 1) listening/speaking; 2) grammar; 3) reading; 4) writing; and 5) vocabulary. The number of hours for each course per week varies according to the level of students; however, the class hours allotted for the listening/speaking courses are more than the other courses. Three elementary classes whose overall anxiety levels are high have been selected as the sample group. There were 16 participants in the first class, 25 in the second, and only 9 in the third class. In total, 50 students and three teachers were the focus of the present study.

2.2 Training

The training was conducted in the speaking skills classes in the second semester of the language education program. The activities that were used during strategy and EI training were selected after reviewing the literature, the published books, and the Internet sites related to EI and socio-affective LLSs. There were in total 25 activities, each of which ranged from five minutes to fifteen minutes. Before the treatment, the researcher had a meeting with the participatory teachers with the aim of giving information about the study and the training. The concepts of socio-affective language LLSs, EI, and FLA were explained and their relations were emphasized. Later, the researcher explained the training activities one by one, and the skills or strategies they address were clarified. The teachers' possible questions were also answered.

2.3 Research Design and Instruments

A mixed-methods research model which uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single research study was used in the current study. Figure 1 presents the research model of the study along with the data collection instruments that serve the function of this model.

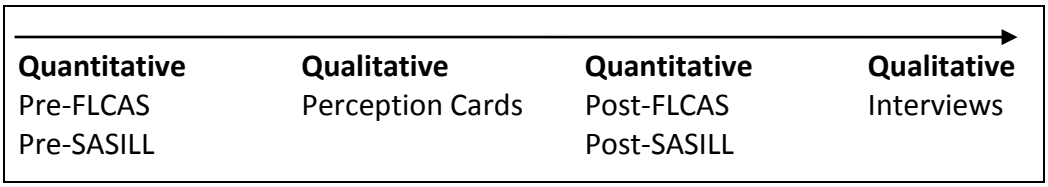

Figure 1: The Research Design and the Instruments

Four different research instruments were used in the present study. First, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, et. al. 1986) was used as the pre- and post-questionnaires to evaluate the learners' anxiety levels before and after the treatment. Second, the adapted version of strategy inventory for language learners (SILL), developed by Oxford (1990), was also administered as pre- and post-questionnaires to see if students' perceptions related to socio-affective strategies differed after training. Third, perception cards to be filled in after every training week were prepared and given to the students by their speaking instructors so as to get the participating students' reflection on the individual strategies and skills. Finally, the last instrument used for the study was semi-structured interviews which were conducted at the end of the treatment period. Six students and three teachers initiating the training contributed to this qualitative part of the study.

3. Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-and post-questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data from the perception cards and interviews were evaluated qualitatively using first color-coding and then thematic/content analyses.

3.1 The Results of the FLCAS

There has been a decrease in the number of the students with high anxiety according to the results of pre- and post-FLCAS. The post-anxiety questionnaire results revealed that the number of students with high anxiety was only 8 after the training, whereas according to the pre-questionnaire results, this number was 15. In order to see whether this decrease in the foreign language anxiety levels of the participating students is statistically significant, a paired-samples *t*-test analysis was also run on SPSS (See Table 1).

Table 1

FLA across pre- and post-training period

Questionnaires			T-test		
	$\bar{x}$	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Pre-FLCAS	3.12	.63	49	3.55	.001
Post-FLCAS	2.90	.56			

$\bar{x}$ ‹ 2.50 = low, $\bar{x}$ › 3.50 = high, $\bar{x}$ 2.51 and 3.49 = moderate

As indicated in Table 1, there was a statistically significant decrease in the participants' FLA levels. In light of these data results presented in this section, it can be inferred that explicit teaching of socio-affective strategy training combined with EI might be effective in lowering EFL university students' anxiety levels in speaking courses.

3.2 The Results of the SASILL

With the aim of determining the participating students' overall perception of socio-affective language learning strategies before and after the training, SPSS descriptive and a paired-samples *t*-test analyses was conducted with the overall mean values of the participants (See Table 2).

As shown in Table 2, the difference between the overall mean scores of the pre- and post-strategy questionnaires was low; that is, even though participants' post-SASILL scores were a little higher, the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 2

Perceptions related to the use of strategies across pre- and post-training period

Questionnaires			T-test		
	$\bar{x}$	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*P*
Pre-SASILL	3.11	.74	11	-1.25	.23
Post-SASILL	3.22	.64			

$\bar{x}$ ‹ 2.33 = negative, $\bar{x}$ › 3.68 = positive, $\bar{x}$ 2.34 and 3.67 = neutral

In addition, a follow up analysis was run in order to explore if there was a difference in the participants' perceptions about different strategies across pre- and post-training. There were two affective strategies that had a significant change in their mean values: "rewarding yourself" ($p < .001$) and "lowering your anxiety" ($p < .05$), which implies that the participating students preferred to use these strategies more after the treatment they received.

3.3 The Results of the Perception Cards

According to the perception cards, the activities reported as the most liked by the participating students were: *give and receive compliments*, which was focusing on the "interpersonal relationship" competence of EI and the LLS "cooperating with others; *be flexible*, which aimed to teach the EI skill of "flexibility"; *know your strengths* with the main focus on another EI competence of "self-regard"; *give yourself gifts* focusing on the LLS of "rewarding yourself" and the EI skill of "optimism"; and *set your own goals,* which aims to instruct the other EI skills of "independence" and "self actualization". On the other hand, the activities *get help from experts* focusing on the socio-affective LLS "cooperating with proficient users of English" and *use the system of ABCDE*, which aimed to address the affective LLS of "lowering your anxiety" and the EI skill of "impulse control" were the least preferred activities. It can be inferred from these results that the participating students liked the activities that focus on creating positive feelings among themselves.

3.4 The Results of the Interviews

The participating teachers and students reported similar attitudes towards the training. Three major themes emerged from the participants' responses related to the positive sides of the training are being *beneficial in general*, being *helpful*

in diagnosing anxiety, and being *enjoyable*. First of all, the participants mentioned about the benefits of the treatment:

S1: There were the ones [training activities] that contributed to us a lot. The people who approached them seriously gained a lot, I believe. I think they were beneficial in general.

T2: It [training] may be useful to decrease anxiety, I think. Maybe they [students] can start to use them [strategies] as they are exposed to them more… For example, *work together* and *find a study partner*; I believe these can be beneficial.

Moreover, some of the participants reported that with the help of the training, students were able to diagnose their anxiety.

S6: Of course, they [training activities] were helpful. We saw the things we couldn't admit to ourselves; we understood when and where we were anxious and when we weren't.

T3: They [strategies and skills] were beneficial for sure. Even mentioning about this made some students confess about their anxiety.

It can be concluded from these statements that with this training, the participants reported that they started to think about the sources of their anxiety. In addition, all the participants reported that they enjoyed some of the training activities in particular:

S4: I liked the compliments I received. It was nice to hear good things about ourselves. *Show Empathy* was also nice. There were good ones [activities].

S6: The most beautiful one was when we wrote down a bad memory and then threw it away. It was very nice.

T3: They [students] liked especially some of them [strategies] very much… There were nice topics… They [students] adored this one, *make compliments*. It lasted like 20 to 25 minutes.

As can be seen from the interviewees' statements, participating students enjoyed applying some of the strategies and skills in their classes.

4. Conclusion

After the treatment, it was observed that the participants' overall anxiety mean score and the number of the participants with high anxiety decreased significantly. This was also supported by the findings from strategy questionnaire; the results showed that two affective strategies were reported to be used significantly more: "lowering your anxiety" and "rewarding yourself". Application of these strategies might have helped the participants lower their high anxiety. Moreover, during the interviews, all the students who experienced a decrease in their FLA levels reported the benefits of the training. In the light of these findings, it can be concluded that the training on the socio-affective LLSs

and EI was successful in lowering the EFL learners' foreign language anxiety that was mainly experienced in speaking classes.

These findings initially support the arguments that many researchers put forward related to the importance of socio-affective strategies in language classes (Habte-Gabr 2006; Hamzah et al. 2009; Hurd 2008). The importance of feelings and supportive social relations in language classes have long been the focus of many studies, and it was stated by several researchers that the strategies to eliminate the negative feelings in language classes were not used enough by language learners (Hurd 2008; Oxford 1990). Writers, and researchers need to give more attention to socio-affective factors in language learning since different from other disciplines, learning a language involves not only cognitive or metacognitive practices, but also the other factors that compromise the whole person (Habte-Gabr 2006; Hurd 2008).

In addition, the data support and clarify the previous findings of the survey studies in the literature which stated that EI correlates with FLA negatively. Most of the research conducted in different EFL settings found a negative correlation between FLA and EI and suggested that EI training may be effective at eliminating learner anxiety while studying and producing the target language (e.g. Birjandi & Tabataba'ian 2012; Chao 2003; Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham 2008; Ergün 2011; Rouhani 2008; Şakrak 2009). With the help of the present study, it was shown that instructing EI competencies in language classes can help reduce learners' high anxiety which may hinder their learning and practicing the target language. As a result, EI skills can be instructed in language classes as socio-affective strategies and help to reduce the debilitating effects of the language anxiety that is aroused especially in language classes that focus on oral skills.

The results of this exploratory study have pedagogical implications for language learners, teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum developers, school administrations, material designers, and course book writers. If the skills and the strategies that were the focus of this study were provided for students by these stakeholders, language learners with high anxiety may try applying these tactics when experiencing high tension during their language learning practices. As a result, learners can find the best strategies and skills suitable for themselves to ease their language learning process and lower their high FLA.

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HUSH, THE TEACHER IS SPEAKING

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1. Introduction

"Teaching Speaking" has been an area of neglect at the Pre-Intermediate level, evident upon observing Pre-Intermediate classes in the 2011-12 academic year as a level coordinator. The course was designed on a lexical- grammatical basis being a threshold level in which we take students from A2 to B1 level according to the Common European Framework of References in Languages. However, in Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL), the skill has started to be formally assessed as of Course 1 in the 2012-13 academic year, due to the need raised by instructors and course designers. Here, I explore this area to find out the reasons for the neglect, referring to the literature as well as my own action research on instructor and student views with the aim of outlining the need for the design of a structured speaking strand. I will also offer some classroom tasks which I have found to be useful in getting students to speak.

2. Literature Review

According to Krashen, who developed the Input Hypothesis, learners can develop their second language knowledge mainly in two ways: acqusition and learning. The term "acquisition" refers to picking up the second language through exposure, while "learning" is used to refer to the conscious study of a language (Ellis 1985, 6). When learners are consciously taught the language needed **in** the task as well as the language **for** the task as, Folse (2006, 23) states in the "Art of Teaching Speaking", they will definitely be more competent and successful in a speaking task. The explicit teaching of language that is needed for the task, such as agreeing, disagreeing, turn-taking and negotiating meaning, in addition to teaching functional language such as speaking gambits and linkers, will help learners become better speakers. "Students who can handle turn taking better or initiate more turns get more opportunities to interact in the target language and to practice target skills" (Rivers 1987, in TSOU 2005, 48).

In addition to the input given for language competency, we cannot deny the role of "pushed output" which helps language learners test their hypotheses about language in communicative situations. Swain and Lapkin (1995) state that learners carry out some restructuring that impacts on and pushes their interlanguage. Unable to communicate effectively, learners can rethink their utterances and change them if there is a need. The more comprehensible input given through listening and reading materials, the more

our learners will contribute. The effectiveness of input will increase the value of output.

3. Information about Pre-Intermediate level expectations

In Bilkent University School of English Language, one of our course goals is to encourage students to continue their whole person development by encouraging them to:

- become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand and tolerate differences and different views of individuals around them;
- feel confident in their ability as learners, having the courage to take risks, applying what they have learned to making appropriate decisions in their lives;
- develop the habit of inquiring and become caring individuals who help to create a better and more peaceful world.

To this end, through speaking tasks, we aim at meeting the aforementioned objectives by encouraging whole person learning.

In terms of skills development, we would like learners to:

- engage in oral discourse where they need to analyze, negotiate, manage conversational direction and make decisions.

In terms of language development, we would like learners to be able to:

- give specific and vivid details about the points raised in spoken English;
- make detailed descriptions to achieve text coherence;
- express comparisons, contrast, reason, purpose and condition;
- describe situations and report opinions.

The 8 week Pre-Intermediate course in our institution aims at equipping students with all the objectives stated above, with a stong emphasis on language and vocabulary development. As there is a lot of emphasis on language and vocabulary, the speaking skill has always been a challenge for both learners and instructors.

4. Background to the action research

In addition to being the Head of a Teaching Unit (HTU), I also had the responsibility of being a Level Coordinator HTU in the 2011-12 academic year. Within this period, I had the chance to teach Pre-Intermediate level. I also had the opportunity to give central speaking tutorial. By observing learners, in addition to the feedback that I received from instructors during update and teaching unit meetings, I decided to explore the reasons why teaching speaking was largely neglected. To this end, I gathered some information both from the instructors and the students assigned to my Teaching Unit.

5. Instructor beliefs on "teaching speaking"

In the teaching unit and regular update meetings that I held with instructors, I inquired about the balance between spoken and written production in class time and the time instructors focused on the speaking skill. However, I received some concerns about teaching speaking. The first comment was on the difficulty of sparing time to teaching speaking as the Pre-Intermediate course is a loaded course with lots of language expectations. The second concern raised by the instructors was that there was an inadequate speaking strand in most coursebooks and, even if there was one, it was never enough. Thirdly, instructors stated that it is an undeniable fact that students place emphasis on speaking only when the skill is assessed. And finally, to teach speaking, we need to teach pronunciation, which most of us, as language teachers, find difficult and scary. For all the reasons stated above, speaking has become a neglected part of teaching, often the last resort when you have no place to go to.

6. Learner beliefs on the speaking skill

The students that I taught and met stated that they wanted to have 50 minute speaking lessons in class. They do not regard the pre or post reading or listening activities executed in class as speaking activities that target the skill. Secondly, they are aware that when they graduate, they need to be fluent speakers for their careers, but some students are afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers so they avoid speaking in class. Finally, the most interesting and common belief among the instructors and learners was that speaking is regarded as a very important skill, but instructors do not prioritize it in class.

7. What a structured speaking strand entails

Based on the literature review that I carried out on the skills as well as the analysis of the course packages that we have used for Pre-Intermediate courses, I came up with a list of salient points to consider if we are aiming at teaching speaking to improve our students' ability in this target area.

Giving input on form as well as content, i.e. guidance for vocabulary and grammar, are the first points we need to consider if we are aiming at teaching speaking. This is valid for all levels, not just Pre-Intermediate. Secondly, we need to teach communication strategies explicitly. These comprise time gaining strategies such as teaching fillers, false starts or repetition. Raising students' awareness of circumlocution, which means the use of more words than necessary to express an idea, is also necessary. Explicit teaching of the use of back channelling words like "really'', "no'' and "what?", and discourse markers such as "well'', "oh'', "so'', "but'', "now" are also essential.

In addition to teaching communication skills, we also need to teach interaction strategies. This involves teaching socio-cultural skills such as turn taking, interrupting and hedging the language by using words like “actually”, “sort of”, “quite”. And finally, we need to teach pronunciation with special emphasis on difficult sounds, stress and connected speech. This will improve students’ speaking ability in both the short and long terms.

In designing a speaking strand as part of a curriculum, the arrangement of the teaching materials should be designed carefully to enhance the effectiveness of learning, which is a crucial part in the planning stage of a lesson.

8. What makes a speaking activity successful?

In real life when people speak, it is mostly due to need, or an information gap between or among the speakers. It is for this reason that we, as language instructors, should center our lessons around creating this need and also the context, as without an existing context, there is no need for communication.

In addition to the areas mentioned above, we also need to be tolerant about the preparation time given to learners. While some activities expect learners to speak in “real time”, some should encourage them to plan beforehand.

Creating a non-threatening environment to relax learners, especially the less confident ones, is also necessary in getting all to speak. As regards correcting the mistakes, we should give structured feedback rather than correcting learners while they are producing their utterances, especially when the aim is to get them to speak. The feedback can be given in the form of whole class feedback without mentioning individual students’ names. This will diminish the worries about making mistakes in front of their peers, a common concern of learners. By also giving credit through such quotations as: “just as X said...” students will feel that their ideas are valued. It also shows that the message of their utterance is paid attention to.

Finally, we should vary the interaction patterns to bring variety to class as well as catering for all students’ needs. This can be in the form of organising pair or group work activities for more frequent and insightful communications.

In the rest of my paper, I would like to share with you some activities that I find useful in getting our students to speak especially at PIN level.

9. **Some sample speaking tasks** (the ideas are from Scott Thornbury)

Task 1: “One way of finding out where English is needed is to have a look at a record of everyday life, i.e your local or international newspapers which are an

inexhaustable source not only of authentic materials but also of authentic situations" (Golebiowska 1990, 2).

To this end, I find using the weekly bulletin of Bilkent University, entitled "Bilkent News", as a valuable resource. By getting my students to talk about what they read each week, they not only improve their language skills but also broaden their horizons with the aim of learning about the activities taking place at university such as conferences, seminars, or music concerts. Through sharing what they read in the "Bilkent News" weeky with their peers, students carry out an authentic transactional task. The task involves reading authentic language at the same time, so we kill two birds with one stone.

Task 2: "Asking learners to talk and answer questions about an object or image of significance to them works well for all age groups" (How to Teach Speaking, Thornbury).

Students find themselves driven by a strong desire to communicate things that are of personal significance to them to another person or to the entire class, especially in the first few weeks of the course, because it enables learners to get to know each other in more detail. I require them to talk about an object, monument, a statue or something specific to their hometown.

In order to prepare the language input for the task, students listen to a video on the history of Scottish bagpipes and how a Scottish bagpipe is produced[1]. After checking students' understanding of the content, we start analysing the audio script for language and vocabulary in class. The analysis of the text provides a systematic support for students in the learning process through scaffolding. Explicit teaching of speaking through analysis of model spoken texts raises students' awareness of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and gambits used. Then, students are assigned a similar task as homework in which they describe an object, monument, statue or a historical place of interest specific to their hometown.

The task has many benefits for students. To begin with, this transactional task helps to lower the students' affective filter and creates a relaxing and non-threatening atmosphere in class. Students learn about their friends' hometowns as well. Next, the use of an authentic video helps to increase their motivation and, since the context is already there, you as an instructor do not need to create a context. Students also learn about other cultures. Finally, the fact that it is also asynchronous helps students to view the video in their own time if they want to.

Task 3: "Narration has always been one of the main means of practising speaking in the classroom ... Recently, the value of encouraging learners to tell

their own stories has been recognized and now coursebooks include personalized narrating tasks, whether monologic or dialogic." (Thornbury 2009, 96)

In a "guess the lie" activity, students report an event or an incident that has happened to them. However, it includes a lie and their peers try to find out which information reported is a lie. They also have to give the reasons why they think the information is a lie. When learners talk about a personal story or anecdote, their peers are more interested in listening and this decreases the chances of a possible classroom management problem of getting everyone to listen to each other. I remember my students talking about their best or worst birthday and everybody was interested to hear why that day was good or awful for their classmates.

Task 4: Classroom discussions are popular activities for students. However, when we assign a topic, such as "should smoking be banned in public places or not?", students are usually reluctant to speak as they find it to be a cliche. One way to eliminate this boredom is assigning certain roles to students when discussing the same topic. The roles can be as simple as "you are a doctor who is against smoking", depending on your class profile and strengths. Assigning roles to students makes the task more challenging because it requires students to think critically. The last time I executed a discussion lesson in class, students worked in groups and were given some preparation time by assuming the following roles. We had heated discussions in class and the discussion even extended into the break.

Role 1: A 17 year old teenager who has just started smoking.
Role 2: Minister of Health who has just passed an anti-smoking law.
Role 3: The owner of Cafe Crown who has got 20 chains in the country.
Role 4: The spokesperson of the "Quit smoking, live well" group.

Notes

[1] http://www.ehow.co.uk/video_2388796_learn-history-scottish-bagpipes.html.

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OVERT REACTIONS TO MISCOMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract
This classroom-focussed research was conducted to find out how teachers and students overtly react in cases of miscommunication, and which communication strategies they use to convey meaning in such a situation. For the purposes of the study, the data was collected qualitatively and video-recordings were implemented in 5 different elementary level classes at the preparatory school of a private university in Ankara, Turkey.

1. Introduction

Communication is crucial to language learning and is an indispensable part of a language classroom. The means of instruction and the content to be learned are the same. This makes mis-communication more probable, and also more significant in that it might cause a failure to learn the target language. Therefore, a deeper understanding of what happens in cases of mis-communications in the language classrooms is necessary.

This study aims to find out how teachers and students react in cases of miscommunication and how they fix this situation. The operational definition for 'mis-communication' is the time when the message intended by the speaker (a student or a teacher) is understood in a different way by the listener(s) (the teacher or student(s)). This study will categorize and describe the ways how students 'overtly' react when what they have said is not understood, or is misunderstood. In addition, it is also intended to find out the 'communication strategies' used to convey meaning in cases of mis-communication.

2. Literature Review

Shannon and Weaver (1949) define communication as the transmission of a message from an information source to a receiver in the form of a signal, which is sometimes distorted by a noise source in the transmission system. This is called the "mathematical model of communication". This definition is significant in presenting a very basic model for communication, but it lacks a psychosocial perspective. Anolli, Ciceri and Riva (2002) maintains that although communication is a linguistic phenomenon, psychosocial relationships between the subjects involved in it affect it as well. This brings up the idea that communication does not only mean sending messages from one person to another.

In their book Nonverbal Communication in Close Relationships, Guerrero and Floyd (2006) talk about three different types of communication and how all these forms of message exchanges shape the perceptions and emotions within relationships. According to their process-oriented perspective (Guerroero and Floyd 2006), types of communication are: successful communication (sent intentionally and decoded accurately); miscommunication (sent intentionally but decoded inaccurately); and, accidental communication (sent unintentionally but decoded accurately).

Similarly, Marsen (2006) claims that mis-communication occurs when the message that the sender intended is not the same as the message that the audience received. It often takes place when the speakers and listeners use different discourse systems. Different age, gender, ethnicity, education level, occupation, income, and personal histories all have an effect in people's drawing inferences about meaning (Scollon and Scollon 2001).

Learning is a social phenomenon and it takes place mostly in social interaction. (Vygotsky 1978) Therefore, rather than 'meaning' being the property of the speaker, both speakers work together to construct meaning (Thomas 1995, as cited in Basturkmen 2002). Similarly, Hall & Walsh (2002) suggest that learning at schools is primarily accomplished by classroom interaction. There are three different routes of communication in a classroom: a. initiated by the teacher targeting students; b. initiated by a student targeting the teacher; and c., initiated by a student targeting another student. Depending on the route of communication, the communication strategies the students use change. Although Miller and Hylton's study (1974) failed to show any significant relationship between teachers' communication patterns and student failure, it clearly shows that there are different patterns of communication in the classroom. In addition, in a quite recent study on children's interactions with teachers, peers and tasks (Boreen, Downer and Vitiello 2012), it is claimed that there is a difference in the attitudes of children towards their teachers and peers in different contexts.

Figure 1: Speaker Strategies (Students)

Abandonment Strategies

1. Message abandonment – The speaker gives up conveying the message and avoids conversation because of difficulties.

Achievement Strategies with the Target Language

2. Repetition – The speaker repeats whatever he/she has just said.
3. Circumlocution – The speaker describes, defines or exemplifies the target word or expression.

4. Approximation – The speaker uses an alternative term or a synonym of the target word or expression.

Achievement Strategies with Nonlinguistic Means

5. Use of bodily or facial expressions – The speaker uses bodily or facial expressions to demonstrate the action, or to create an image in the listener's minds.
6. Use of sound imitation – The speaker imitates the sound of an animal, object or the sound that is produced when doing an action.

Code-Switching to L1

7. Partial L1 usage – The speaker keeps on speaking in the target language, but uses L1 words from time to time.
8. Switching to L1 – The speaker switches to L1 completely.

Appeal for Help

9. Appeal for help from the teacher – The speaker asks for help from the teacher.
10. Appeal for peer help – The speaker asks for help from a classmate

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In Dörnyei's (1995) study named "On the Teachability of Communication Strategies", communication strategies are defined as systematic techniques employed by a speaker to convey the intended meaning when faced with some difficulty (Corder 1981, as cited in Dörnyei 1995). In the current study, this difficulty will be the occurrence of miscommunication. Based on traditional conceptualizations, Dörnyei (1995, 58) classifies communication strategies into three categories:

1) Avoidance or Reduction Strategies (Message Abandonment, Topic Avoidance);
2) Achievement or Compensatory Strategies: (Circumlocution, Approximation, Use of all-purpose words, Word coinage, Use of nonlinguistic means, Literal translation, Foreignizing, Code switching, Appeal for help);
3) Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies: (Use of fillers/hesitation devices).

Figure 2: Listener Reactions (Students)

Abandonment Strategies:

1. Avoiding the conversation – The listener ignores what is being said and puts no effort to understand the intended message.

Achievement Strategies with the Target Language

2. Asking for Repetition – The listener asks the speaker to repeat what he/she has just said.

3. Asking for Circumlocution – The listener asks the speaker to describe, define or exemplify the target word or expression.
4. Asking for simplification – The listener asks the speaker to simplify what he/she has just said by using an alternative term or a synonym of the target word or expression.

Achievement Strategies with Nonlinguistic Means

5. Use of nonlinguistic means to show communication failure – The listener looks, sounds or acts in a way that shows the speaker that the message intended is not received.

Code-Switching to L1

6. Request for L1 usage – The listener explicitly asks the speaker to say it in L1 or translates the message he/she has understood to receive confirmation.

Appeal for Help

7. Appeal for help from somebody else – The speaker asks for help from somebody present in the classroom.

For the purposes of this study, an adaptation of these aforementioned strategies by Dörnyei (1995) has been used. As the focus of this research is not only speakers who use these strategies but also the listeners, these strategies have been divided into speaker strategies (See Figure 1) and listener strategies, which will be mentioned as listener reactions (See Figure 2) in this study.

The research questions are:

a) How do instructors and students react in case of a mis-communication in EFL courses in a university level English preparation year at a private university in Turkey?
b) Is there a difference between the reactions of students when the mis-communication occurs with the teacher and when it occurs with a classmate?
c) What kinds of communication strategies do students mostly use?
d) What kinds of communication strategies do teachers mostly use?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 245 elementary level English preparatory year students, and 21 English language instructors at a private university in Turkey. There were 16 classes in total with 20 to 25 students in each. The students had 30 periods of English lessons (15 periods of main course, 10 periods of reading & writing, and 5 periods of listening & speaking) every week.

Each period lasted 50 minutes. The same lesson plans and the same teaching materials were used in all of those classes. The data for this study were collected during main course and listening speaking lessons.

3.2. Data Collection Tools

The data were collected in a qualitative way. Video-recordings of the lessons were implemented. Among the 16 elementary level classes, a representative sample (five different classes) was selected. Two teachers who were teaching in these five classes agreed to video-record their lessons. They were not provided with any information related to the focus of the study until the very end of the data collection process. The teachers were provided with a camera and a tripod so that they could start and stop recording. Assistance with the equipments was provided if they needed it. The total length of the video recordings was 197 minutes.

4. Results

4.1. Listener Reactions and Speaker Strategies

There were two research questions related to listener reactions in case of miscommunications in the EFL classroom (a and b). In addition, two other questions (c and d) were asked about the strategies speakers use to fix mis-communications. To be able to answer these research questions, video recordings were implemented and selectively transcribed. In total, there were 197 minutes of lesson time subjected to analysis. The occurrences which were overtly recognizable were categorized in terms of the directionality of the conversation, the listener's reaction and the communication strategy preferred by the speaker.

The directionality of the conversation has three different forms in the EFL classroom. One of them is when the teacher is speaking and the listening party is the student(s) (T => S). Second form is when the student is speaking and the listener is the teacher (S => T). Finally, there is a type of conversation which takes place between two or more students (S => S). At all these levels, there is a chance for mis-communication which is defined as the time when the message the listener receives is different from the message the speaker intends to convey or is not received at all in the current study. This can also be stated as a communication breakdown. In such a case, two issues come up to be studied as the main components of the study: "the types of listener reactions" and "the types of conversation strategies adopted by the speaker to fix this miscommunication". The numbers of overt (observable) listener reactions to mis-communication occurrences transcribed from the video recordings in terms of their categories and their directionality are given below in "Table 1".

Table 1: Overt listener reactions in case of a miscommunication

Listener Reactions	S <= T	T <= S	S <= S	TOTAL
Asking for Repetition	4	2	4	**10**
Asking for Circumlocution	7	5	1	**13**
Asking for Simplification	0	0	0	**0**
Avoiding the Conversation	0	0	0	**0**
Use of Non-Linguistic means to show communication failure	2	9	1	**12**
Appeal For Help	3	0	1	**4**
Request for L1 Usage	11	0	1	**12**
TOTAL	**27**	**16**	**8**	**51**

Table 2: Speaker strategies in case of a miscommunication

Speaker Strategy	T => S	S => T	S => S	TOTAL
Message abandonment	0	1	1	**2**
Repetition	7	9	4	**20**
Circumlocution	7	2	0	**9**
Approximation	4	0	0	**4**
Use of bodily or facial expressions	5	0	0	**5**
Use of sound imitation	0	0	0	**0**
Partial L1 usage	1	0	0	**1**
Switching to L1	3*	4	3	**10**
Appeal for help from the teacher	NA	0	0	**0**
Appeal for another student's help	0	0	0	**0**
TOTAL	**27**	**16**	**8**	**51**

* These switches were done by other students in the classroom, not the teacher himself/herself.

5. Conclusion

Some conclusions that can be drawn from the transcribed data of video recordings are:

a) In the interaction where the student is the speaker and the teacher is the listener, the teachers tend to use "non-linguistic means to show communication failure" (9 times), which results in an increased number of repetitions (9 times) in the students' speaker strategy use. Dialogue 36 is just one of the occurences:

S: Röportaja interview mı diyorduk? [Do we say "interview" for "röportaj?]
T: **Huh?**
S: Röportaja interview mı diyorduk? [Do we say "interview" for "röportaj?]
T: Interview, uh huh. [T expresses confirmation.]

b) The most common student listener reaction is observed to be "asking for L1 usage". On the other hand, teachers do not tend to use L1 in class. Instead, they tend to prefer the use of "repetition", "circumlocution" or "approximation". Sample 23 and 24 gives an example of this.

T: [T calls out the S's name.] Please choose someone. [T wants the student to call on another student to read the next item.]
S: **Devam mı edeyim?** [Shall I go on?]
T: **Please choose someone.**
S: Huh [expressing understanding], birini seççem. [I'll choose someone.]
-
T: What is surface?
S: **Yüzey miydi?** [Is it "yüzey"?]
T: [T touches the surface of a table.] **The surface of the table,** [draws and iceberg on the board and points to the part above the sea level.] **the surface of an iceberg.**

c) There doesn't seem to be any "request for L1" in student – student conversation in the data. The reason is that the students are already speaking in Turkish to each other almost at all times. Therefore, they don't usually need to ask their friends to use L1. See dialogue 45:

S1: **Condition ne demek**?
S2: **Şart, koşul, durum**. [S2 lists the counterparts of "condition" in Turkish.]

d) The students tend to help each other when one of them is having trouble communicating with the teacher. Even when the student (the one in the listener's position) appeals for help from the teacher, this help comes from his/her friends before the teacher. See the following dialogue (dialogue number 2):

T: [T says the S1's name.] Please choose somebody who hasn't read yet.
S1: Read yet mi? [read yet?]

S2: **Okumamış birini**. [Somebody who hasn't read.]
T: Who hasn't read?
S1: Hee. [a remark of understanding]

6. Discussion

The main aim of this research was to find out how students and teachers react in cases of mis-communication and which communication strategies they prefer in order to fix these mis-communications. Answers to all research questions have been answered in the university, elementary level, English preparatory year setting, with the implementation of qualitative (video-recordings) as research tools.

On the other hand, there are some implications for further research in the field of conversation strategies and mis-communications in the EFL classrooms. The scope of this current study was limited to elementary level EFL classrooms. However, a comparative study could also be carried out in order to find out whether the communication strategies or the listener reactions differ at different proficiency levels. Moreover, the implications of these strategies can be further studied to serve language teaching purposes.

7. Limitations

There might be a few limitations to this study in spite of its strengths. Firstly, the presence of a video camera in the classroom during lessons might have affected students' behavior in a positive or negative way. They might have been more self-conscious and more careful about their language use, causing less occurrences of mis-communication than they really do, or they might have attempted to talk less than they usually do, which again causes less occurrences of mis-communication than the average. Also, as the researcher was not present during all recording sessions, some samples might have been neglected during transcription.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON WRITTEN INDIRECT CODED FEEDBACK AND DIRECT FEEDBACK AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA IN TURKEY

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Abstract

This study has been conducted for the purpose of investigating the improvement in students' writings in a prep-school of a private university in two intermediate level classes and two error correction types are used by two instructors to measure the effectiveness of each one on students' writings and their exam results. For this purpose, the student sample of the research consists of twenty, half of whom are from a B level class receiving indirect coded feedback and the other part involves ten students from another B level class getting direct feedback on their writings. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, which were a questionnaire, pre-test and post-test. The qualitative data came from 'think-aloud protocols' and 'stimulated recalls' gained through students' weekly writing assignments.

Key words: **Feedback, improvement, students' attitudes, error types**.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study & Literature Review

Research on foreign and second language writing has mostly been based on why and how to give feedback on student writing. (Bulut & Erel, 2007). Research study on error correction in L2 writing classes shows that that students improve in accuracy over time upon the treatment of errors in their writings (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).Even if some researchers suggest that error correction helps language learning, some others (Truscott, 1996) claim that error correction does not help students improve their written accuracy, and it is ineffective and has harmful effects for students' writing ability.

How to give feedback is a bigger concern than whether to give feedback or not. Different kinds of feedback types have been used and there has been quite a high number of research about this issue. The main purpose of this research paper is the distinction between direct and indirect coded error correction. Direct error feedback is provided when the correct form is written on student's paper while indirect coded error feedback is given if the teacher indicates the location of the error indirectly on the paper by a symbol representing a specific kind of error (T=verb tense, Sp=spelling) (Lee, 2004). Moss (1999) points out that it is better to supply the students with the correct version when students do not have the necessary knowledge and the skill. What is more, Corpus 'study illustrates that direct feedback is preferable at the

beginning of the language course and it is mostly used when the students are not ready for the production stage. However, Mahili (1994) and Enginarlar (1993) suggest that direct corrections are not useful. (As cited in Tümkaya, 2003)

The studies also varied in the result that there is no significant difference between the performances of students receiving different kinds of feedback. Robb's (1986) longitudinal study, Eylenen (2008) at TOBB University of Economics and Technology and the research conducted by Ferris and Roberts (2001) showed that various feedback types did not cause any different results in students' writing performances. Despite the results pointing out that there is no crucial difference among various types of feedback, some researchers argue that indirect coded feedback is more beneficial than direct feedback. To illustrate, Chandler (2003) analyzed two ESL undergraduate students getting either direct or indirect error feedback. The results showed that indirect error feedback helped accuracy more than the direct one. Likewise, in a study conducted by Dokuzoğlu (2010) at a private university, most of the teachers preferred to use error codes while marking the mistakes because they thought that the codes were useful since they led students to think about their mistakes more and correct them. Although the findings of the previous studies point out some results, they lack in some basic points because of methodology part. The researchers should look more deeply to the details and observe student improvement more closely. Thus, in order to fill this research gap, this study is an attempt to compare the direct and indirect coded feedback in Turkish EFL context with different research methodology which is introspective techniques used in qualitative research. That is to say, in this study, apart from an attitude questionnaire, *think aloud protocols* and *stimulated recalls* are used to gather data.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

1. To what extent is there improvement in indirect coded feedback group writing performances in terms of accuracy and uptake?
2. To what extent is there improvement in direct feedback group writing performances in terms of accuracy and uptake?
3. Which group of students will score better during the final writing exam in terms of accuracy and general success?
4. What are the students' perceptions regarding the feedback type they were given in terms of how effective they believe these methods were to improve their writing during the writing process?

2.2 Participants

This study was conducted exclusively on university students from two different B level classes from the English preparatory unit of a private university. The student sample of the research consisted of twenty students, half of whom are from B7 class, which received indirect coded feedback. The other part involved ten students from B8 class, which got direct feedback. Two instructors participated in this study. The instructors of two groups were the writing teachers of those classes.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In this study, five data collection tools were used. A pre-test, post-test and questionnaires are the tools for quantitative data. Introspective methods which are think aloud protocols and stimulated recalls were used.

2.3.1 Pre-Test & Post-Test

A pre-test was used to determine whether two groups were similar in terms of their writing performance before the research was conducted and a post-test was used to get information about the students writing proficiency. They were prepared by the testing unit of the preparatory school. As a result, they were not examined for its reliability and validity by the researcher. Students were supposed to write a well-developed descriptive paragraph in pre-test. As for the post-test, students wrote an advantage or disadvantage paragraph. The paragraphs were evaluated by instructors assigned by the testing unit and second marking was made use of by another instructor. The average of the two instructors was taken if the discrepancy between them was not higher than 15 points out of 100.

2.3.2 Questionnaires

In the student questionnaire, attitudes of the participants towards given feedback type and students 'background information related to English were gained.

2.3.3 Think Aloud Protocols

Think aloud protocols were used with indirect coded feedback group. After students got their feedback, in the same week, they wrote their second drafts during think aloud protocols. The researcher was the observer during this process. The conditions were suitable and the classroom used for think aloud protocols were silent.

2.3.4 Stimulated Recalls

Stimulated recalls were used with direct feedback group. In this group, students corrected all the mistakes and she did not use any coding letters. As a result of this, think aloud protocols could not be conducted with this group because if they had been conducted, there would not have been any valuable results. Students would have copied all the corrected errors to the second draft. For all these reasons, stimulated recalls were used with this group. The researcher

used some prompts during this process. After the student read his or her error, the researcher asked 'Why do you think so? Why did the teacher correct the error in this way?' If the student did not give the right answer after the first prompt, the researcher went on asking questions regarding the error. In some cases, the students could not correct the errors**.**

3. Results And Discussion

3.1 Analysis of Introspective Methods

After think aloud protocols and stimulated recalls were conducted, they were transcribed by the researcher. Selective transcription was used in this process.

3.2 Results of Think Aloud Protocols & Stimulated Recalls

The findings provided an obvious answer to the first research question which revealed the improvement in students' writing performances during the process. First drafts of students' writings showed that most of the errors from both classes were related to grammar.

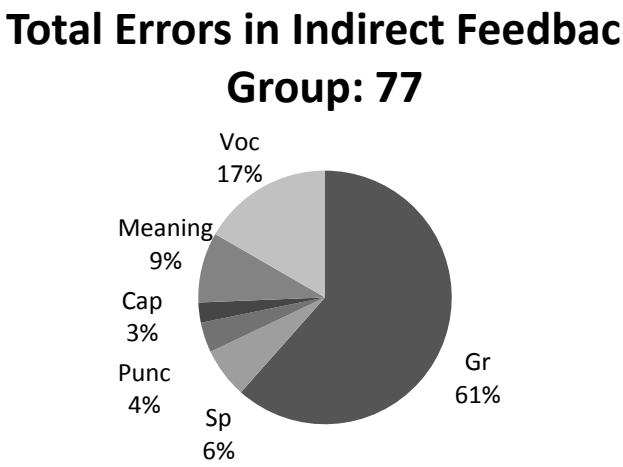

Figure 1.1 Total Error Distributions in Indirect Feedback Group

Vocabulary errors were the second largest group for both feedback groups and inappropriate word usage had a high rate in vocabulary part. Spelling and punctuation errors had the similar results for both groups and they were corrected easily. These results confirmed the article Truscott (2001) and he states that orthography errors are not tied to UG and they can be corrected through feedback.

The qualitative data obtained through think aloud protocols from B7 class using indirect coded feedback indicated that this group has corrected more than half of the errors with a percentage of 56.7. An example from current

study is given in (1) and the student has made three errors in singular –plural form (33.3% within the group) and changed them.

(1)If you look at the computer more than two hour, the instructor said that there was a grammar mistake here. Let me read it again. More than two hour, I found it , it should be more than two hours. Two needs plural nouns.*

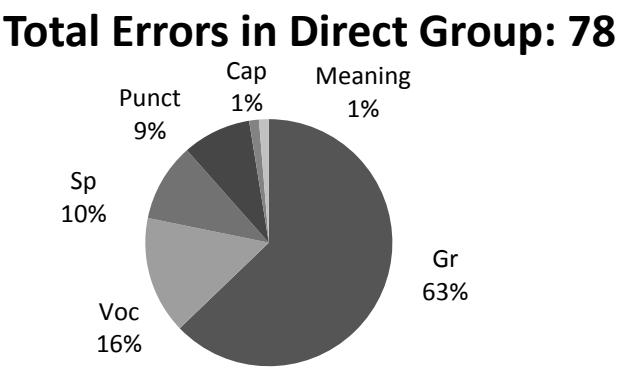

Figure 1.1 Total Error Distributions in Direct Feedback Group

When total preposition and article errors are compared to uptake ones, it can clearly be stated that students could not acquire even half of these kinds of errors. This may arise from the fact that these types of errors need to be analyzed more deeply because of being separate items and they differ from the articles and prepositions in Turkish language. What is more, it was found that only 36.3% of inappropriate word uses were corrected.

Another result of this study quite different from the previous studies on this issue is that there were some errors (11.1% out of total errors) which were forgotten to be checked by the instructor. Students had two reactions to these kinds of errors. 32 % of these errors were fixed by students by stating that the instructor must have forgotten to correct it. On the other hand, 62.5 % of these errors could not be changed by students because they either think that the instructor did no correct them and they were correct sentences or they even did not notice them at all. It can be easily said that students trust on their teachers' feedback and they sometimes did not question it on their writings.

Students also had not fixed errors on their papers. The results separated these errors into two categories; one of which is noticed but not understood, and the other one is not noticed and not understood errors. (38.7% not noticed no uptake and 61.2% of these errors are noticed but no uptake). In that sense, notice is another point to be discussed. As discussed before, students did not

sometimes become aware of their errors although they were corrected on the paper. The sample is seen in (2):

(2)*If you go for long destinations*. Actually, I have some mistakes, grammar and vocabulary, but I am not sure. I have to ask them to the teacher*.

As for noticed and no uptake of errors, grammar prepositions and vocabulary inappropriate word elements are the errors which students find most difficult as it is discussed before. The example is given in (3):

(3)You can transport with planes and cars. There is a vocabulary mistake here, transport is a verb. I suppose it should be transportation (The student changed the word form instead of using another appropriate word.)*

Another further issue including think aloud protocols is the strategies to deal with the errors. Students used computers and dictionaries for only spelling mistakes. Moreover, most of them preferred to ask their mistakes to their teachers if they could not correct them. This situation may result from the fact that the instructor used codes in this group and students tried to think about all grammatical points all at once during protocols.

The qualitative data provided by stimulated recalls from B8 classroom using direct feedback indicated that this group has corrected most of the errors (82.5%). Furthermore, students understood most of their errors with a percentage of 81.2 after the first and second stimulation. Compared to indirect feedback group, direct feedback group has more uptakes. This result may spring from the nature of stimulated recall methodology, as it is known, the participants in this group had cues and stimuli provided by the researcher. The methodological difference between think aloud protocols and stimulated recalls played a crucial role in this uptake difference between these two groups.

An example related to uptake of an article element is seen in (4):

The student: I made a mistake in this sentence. To learn a (corrected by the instructor) foreign language is difficult.*

The researcher: Why do you think that the instructor added 'a' before foreign?

The student: It is a countable noun and I talked about any foreign language, I did not mean a specific one, so I should put 'a' before foreign language.

Furthermore, vocabulary inappropriate word and grammar article errors were the most difficult errors for direct feedback group. These findings showed that students from both groups have more difficulties in articles and inappropriate word usage. As discussed before, Turkish students may have these kinds of problems because of the usage differences in these elements between Turkish and English.

The result of the second research question is similar to the ones that are explained in the literature review. This study is quite parallel to the studies of Robb & Ross (1986) , Ferris and Roberts (2001), Tümkaya (2003) and Eylenen

(2008) which say that there is no statistically major difference in the performance of different kinds of feedback group. The results of post test showed that changes between the kinds of feedback did not result in a significant difference on the writing performances of the students. At this point, a question should be taken into account, if such treatments do not result in statistically significant differences, should corrective feedback be left? The ideas, as stated in literature review, are divided into two parts. Truscott's (1996) review article claims that teachers should abandon grammar correction because it does not succeed its goal. On the other hand, Ferris (1999) argument written as an answer to Truscott says that we should continue giving error correction. Upon analyzing the results of this study conducted with introspective methods, it can be obviously stated that students depend on their teachers to improve their writing skills and when errors were not corrected, most of them did not notice them, so it can be maintained that abandoning correction should not be a debate at this point, we should be even more careful while giving feedback.

The findings gathered from quantitative data provided an answer to the third research question which revealed the opinions of students about different types of feedback. The data obtained from type of feedback scale indicated that most of the students from both groups believed feedback was sufficient and guiding for them. Related to this topic, the influence of feedback on students' writing performances was analyzed and both groups think that feedback given plays a significant role in their exam results and writing performances. Lastly, both indirect and direct feedback group seem to be satisfied with the type of they are given, but 30% of indirect feedback group want the instructor to correct all the mistakes most probably not wanting to analyze codes and searching for alternatives. The most striking result is that both groups want oral direct feedback from their instructors, that is to say, students prefer to obtain oral feedback after being giving written one. This situation may arise from the fact that students really depend on their teachers.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions and Implications

The fact that there is no significant difference between writing performances of two groups does not say that every teacher can use every kind of feedback. To illustrate, some students in indirect coded feedback group preferred to obtain direct feedback. Therefore, the instructors can give information about the feedback types to the students and they can conduct questionnaires for their preferences at the beginning of the term. Another point that should be taken into account is that errors in both groups are similar to each other, especially grammar articles, prepositions and vocabulary inappropriate word usages and

students yearn for oral feedback from their teachers. Thus, it can be said that the instructor can focus more on these types of errors with oral feedback. Oral feedback plays a crucial role according to the results because even if some students have stimulations by the teacher to correct their errors, they could not fix them. That is to say, written corrective feedback is only one of the steps on students' writings and student-teacher session can be carried out to get more accurate results. That is to say, teachers can give feedback to the students one by one if the conditions are suitable. What is more, self-correction can be integrated to the curriculum because results show that students really trusted on their teachers' feedback even without questioning them. Instructors can also be informed about the feedback issue in detail.

4.2 Limitations & Recommendations

The recommendations will be useful for a similar study in the future. Firstly, similar methodologies can be used to make a better comparison. After think aloud protocols, stimulated recalls can be used for the same group. The number of students is not so high, so it can be increased for better generalizations. Furthermore, the same instructor who have two reading writing class may use different kinds of feedback and this case can be analyzed because in this study, there are two different instructors and their teaching style can also be a factor to be examined. Lastly, this study was conducted only within one term and future studies can be carried out in a longer time and more than one paragraph types can be used for them.

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THE EFFECT OF SINGLE-SENTENCE CONTEXTS ON VOCABULARY RETENTION: A CORPUS STUDY

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1. Introduction

Most scholars seem to agree that, except for the first few thousand most common words, vocabulary learning predominantly occurs through extensive reading, with the learner guessing at the meaning of unknown words (Huckin and Coady, 1999). Past studies (Hulstijn, 1992; Jenkins *et al*., 1984; Nagy *et al*., 1985) have revealed that incidental reading tasks enable learners to gain knowledge of meaning and form. On the other hand, there are researchers (Webb, 1962; Prince, 1996; Dempster, 1987; Knecht & Postman, 1983) who found out in their studies that contextualised vocabulary instruction did not lead to as much recall as expected.

2. The Study

2.1. Aims

The study was designed to investigate: (a) the effects of a single sentence context on two aspects of vocabulary knowledge: part of speech and meaning; (b) what discriminates between successful and unsuccessful learners with regard to word use; (c) the effect of these single sentence contexts on the use of word categories: noun, verb, and adjective; (d) whether there was a parallel relationship between the success of the learners and the effectiveness of the single sentence contexts, determined by other teachers.

2.2. Methodology

A *practical* action research with a quasi-experimental design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) was employed. Quasi- experimental design was employed because the participants were not randomly chosen. In this particular study, 44 students were taught 30 words by using two different instructional methods.

2.3. Participants

A total of 44 students (21 female and 23 male) participated in this study, 21 of them were in the *experimental* group, and 23 were in the *control* group, as a part of the quasi- experimental design. The students' mid-term scores were used to prove that both of the groups were in the *same proficiency* level[4].

[4] An independent-samples *t*- test and the alpha level of 0.05 were used. The control group had a mean of 10.95 with a standard deviation of 2.45. The experimental group had a mean of

2.4. Target Words

A number of 30 words selected from the regular course book, *face2face* (Redston & Cunningham, 2006.) The words were introduced in a *thematic* arrangement (Waring, 1997). The target words selected from units 11 and 12, in order to prevent the possibility that the learners might see the target words in other contexts. There were 11 nouns, 10 verbs and 9 adjectives in the group. Nouns and verbs were chosen because they are the most common parts of speech found in natural text (Kucera and Francis, 1967). The third category, namely the adjectives, was included because the students were to write a story which requires *creativity*; adjectives were included in order not to limit the students' creativity.

2.4. Procedures for data collection

The first step to the study was choosing the target words. All of the target words were real words to increase the ecological validity (Nagy *et al*., 1985).The students who took part in the study were given a list of 35 words, asking them about the meanings and the parts of speech of the words. The words that were known by the majority of the students were eliminated from the list.

Next, a handout was prepared for both of the groups. In the handout, the words were put in three sets, sets of 10 words, randomly. Redman and Gairns (1986) suggest as few as eight to twelve new items may be appropriate (eight for elementary, twelve for advanced) per sixty-minute lesson for truly productive learning to take place. Considering this, the words were *taught and practised* in 10-word sets

In the handout, next to the words information about the part of speech, definitions in English and Turkish meanings were provided. Both groups, the control and experimental, got the same information about the words, but the experimental group were also given model sentences, as single contexts. One model sentence was given for each word. After the teaching sessions, the students were given the writing quiz, which required them to write a story.

2.5. Sentence Contexts

In the *experimental group*, the students were given model sentences with the target words underlined; one sentence was provided for each word. The sentences were not meant to define the target words but to represent typical sentences that learners are likely to encounter when reading (Webb, 2005). Sentences were selected from British National Corpus considering the fact that

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13.09 with a standard deviation of 2.79. This mean difference was *not found to be significant*, t (42) = -2.7, $p > .05$, two-tailed.

corpus provides opportunities to promote communicative competence and to see how native speakers use corresponding structures/words under various conditions (Conrad, 1999). *Two factors* were taken into account when selecting the sentences: the number of the words in the sentences and the ease in comprehending the sentence (Webb, 2007). Long sentences were not chosen because long sentences would take a lot of time to comprehend, on the part of the students. In addition, easily comprehensible sentences were chosen so that the students were able to understand them *quickly*. Three students who were *moderately* successful in the midterm exam and who did not take part in the study were asked to think aloud when they read the sentences chosen. The sentences that these students did not have problems in comprehending were included in the study.

2.6. Evaluation of the vocabulary quiz

A target vocabulary item was scored as correctly used if it was correct in meaning and part of speech according to Laufer's (1990) taxonomy of components of "knowing a word". The students got two grades out of 15; one for part of speech, and one for meaning, and one total grade out of 30. It was especially difficult to keep the rubric standard for the *meaning* grades, but a general principle was employed to realize this: a word used by the student got 1 full point if the student was successful enough to show his or her knowledge of the word he or she used, and a native speaker was consulted to decide whether the word was correctly used.

2.7. Data Analyses

The analyses for each research question are summarized in Table 1.

Research Question	**Analysis**
(a) the effects of a single sentence context on two aspects of vocabulary knowledge: part of speech and meaning	Independent-samples *t-test*
(b) what discriminates between successful and unsuccessful learners with regard to word use	Descriptive statistics (top and bottom students)
(c) the effect of these single sentence contexts on the use of word categories: noun, verb, and adjective	Wilcoxon signed-rank test
(d) relationship between the success of the learners and the effectiveness of the single sentence contexts, determined by other teachers	Wilcoxon signed-rank test

Table 1: Data Analyses

3. Results

The results of the study are summarized in Table 2.

esearch Question	Short Term	Long Term
(a) the effects of a single sentence context on part of speech and meaning	**No** significant difference between experimental and control groups	**No** significant difference between experimental and control groups
(b) successful and unsuccessful learners with regard to word use	**Top Group:** verbs and nouns are better used than adjectives **Bottom Group:** Nouns are better used than adjectives and verbs.	**Top Group:** verbs and nouns are better used than adjectives ***There were more students from the experimental group.*** **Bottom Group:** Adjectives are better used than nouns and verbs.
(c) the effect of these single sentence contexts on the use of word categories	Significant difference between the experimental and control groups ***only*** in verb use in favor of sentence contexts.	Significant difference between the experimental and control groups ***only*** in verb use in favor of sentence contexts.
(d) relationship between the success of the learners and the effectiveness of the single sentence contexts	There was ***a partially parallel*** relationship between teacher ratings and the success percentiles of the words	there was ***a partially parallel*** relationship between teacher ratings and the success percentiles of the words

Table 2: Summary of the Results

4. Discussion

Regarding the success of the success of the teaching methodology, the results suggest that context may have little effect on gaining vocabulary knowledge supporting the findings of Dempster (1987), Prince (1996), Knecht and Postman

(1983) and Webb (2007). No significant differences were found between the scores of meaning and part of speech in student writings. Despite the similarity between the scores on the short term retention, it was surprising that the contextualized learning *did not* promote significantly larger gains in long term retention. This is partially due to the subjects' ability to make large gains in the corresponding aspects of vocabulary knowledge through the word pair task. In addition, this result might be attributed to the proficiency levels of the subjects. Intermediate learners may make use of linking L1 meaning or part of speech with L2 equivalents as a methodology to gain vocabulary knowledge (Webb, 2007).

With regard to the words the learners *preferred* to use, firstly it should be noted that if learners cannot use a word correctly or access it freely for production does not mean they do not know the word; it only means that they have not achieved adequate control over word access. (Henriksen, 1996, cited in Laufer and Paribakht, 1998, p. 367). They state that the learners' P (passive), CA (controlled active) and FA (free active) vocabularies develop at different rates; the development of active vocabulary is slower and less predictable. The findings of the present study, concerning the second research question, are in line with these arguments. First, regarding both short-term and long-term retention results, it was observed that the learners both in the top and bottom groups used *nouns* most successfully, then *verbs* and *adjectives*, considering *part of speech* criterion. These results support the argument indicating that certain grammatical categories are more difficult to learn than others; nouns seem to be the easiest, adverbs seem to be the most difficult; verbs and adjectives are somewhere between (Laufer, 1989). This order was the same for *meaning* scores in the short-term retention. However, the meaning scores in the long-term retention showed unexpected results; in the *top* group the learners used verbs more successfully and the learners in the *bottom* group used adjectives more successfully than nouns and verbs.

To examine the second research question, what discriminates the successful learners from the unsuccessful ones, it is worth mentioning the number of the learners from the experimental and control groups among the *top* and *bottom* learners. In short term retention, this number was almost equal; however, in long term retention this number was strikingly different in favour of the experimental group. Thus it is possible to say that sentence contexts helped the successful learners to *recall* the target words better.

The third research question concerning the effect of sentence contexts on the use of word categories, namely nouns, verbs and adjectives, has been partially discussed above. To start with, it should be noted that the results of this study can only be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive as the

number of the target words was small. The results showed statistically significant difference between the success percentiles of the words taught only in word list and with model sentences. The difference was both in terms of part of speech and meaning, in the short-term and long-term retention respectively. This significant difference was in favour of the presentation with model sentences. Considering the argument that indicates *verbs* are difficult to learn, presenting the words with model sentences would be a promising alternative to foster retention. In addition, this finding might be an answer to the question of which cue procedure, to help the learner guess the meaning, is most effective (Hulstijn, 1992).

Interestingly, when looked at the success percentiles of the nouns and adjectives, it was observed that the word category whose retention the sentence contexts could not foster was the adjectives. In the experiment group, the success percentiles of the adjectives *challenging, undercover* and *glamorous* were below 30, meaning that they were *very difficult* to use for the learners (Coombe *et al*., 2007). First, this might be, attributed to the same argument mentioned above, which indicates that certain grammatical categories are more difficult to learn than others; nouns seem to be the easiest, adverbs seem to be the most difficult; verbs and adjectives are somewhere between (Laufer, 1989). Second, this may be explained by multiplicity of meaning non-existent in L1 in that this may result in the learners' *reluctance to accept* a meaning additional to the already familiar one (Laufer, 1990). Considering the adjectives that were too difficult to use, it is possible to argue that it may be *enough* for the learners to say "good job" instead of "glamorous job"; "difficult job" instead of "challenging job"; or "secret agent" instead of "undercover agent".

With regard to the last research question concerning the relationship between the teacher ratings of the sentence contexts and the success of the words, firstly considering short-term retention, it is possible to conclude that there is a *parallel* relationship between them, except for verbs' part of speech. This parallel relationship meant that the sentences that the teachers found more successful led to better retention. Interestingly, considering the verbs' part of speech percentiles and the teachers' ratings, it was observed that there was a statistically significant difference, and this difference was in favour of the students' success. This meant that even though the teacher did not find the sentence contexts successful enough, the students might have benefited from them to use word successfully.

Second, considering the long-term retention, it was observed that there was a *parallel* relationship between the part of speech success percentiles and teacher ratings. This meant that the more successful the teachers found the sentence context, the better retention they led. Considering the meaning

criterion; however, it was not possible to say that there was *parallel* relationship between the success percentiles and teacher ratings, except for verbs. There found to be statistically significant difference, and this difference was in favour of students' success percentiles, meaning that even though the teacher did not find the sentence contexts successful enough, the students might have benefited from them to use word successfully. This result may be attributed to the fact that the possibility of *forgetting*, or the other factors that have been mentioned that affected the use of words.

5. Conclusions

This study showed that both learning word pairs and learning sentence contexts are effective methods of learning vocabulary. The results showed that both tasks promoted large gains in knowledge of meaning and part of speech. Considering the criticisms to learning vocabulary in word lists in that the number of words to be learned is too big to cover (Nagy *et al*., 1985) and the possibility of inferring wrong meanings in incidental learning, there is little reason why sentence contexts cannot be incorporated into vocabulary learning methodology together with incidental learning tasks.

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF FORMAL PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTION

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1. Introduction

The study I carried out aimed to explore students' perceptions of pronunciation being a formal part of the BUSEL curriculum with specific focus in the classroom and in the assessment cycle. Curriculum designers at BUSEL have recently decided to change the existing curriculum with a new one, the main implications of which are focusing on general English instruction in lower levels before moving on to academic English, and integrating pronunciation as a separate skill in the curriculum. The decision on formal pronunciation instruction was based on the weaknesses observed in students' speaking and listening skills and the feedback received from teachers. The curriculum change has started to be implemented since the beginning of this academic year, receiving different reactions from the teachers. As there already are formal and structured ways of getting teachers' feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of the new curriculum, I wanted to carry out this research project to find out how students feel about having pronunciation lessons. I believe now that pronunciation is a formal part of BUSEL curriculum, learning students' perspectives on pronunciation instruction is crucial to evaluate the new curriculum at the end of the year and shape classroom teaching according to student needs to increase quality of learning and teaching. In other words, I hope my study will help shed light on student perceptions of pronunciation as a part of language learning process and the way lessons are conducted in order to improve instruction in the institution and add to the existing pronunciation teaching literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pronunciation

Pronunciation in many language classrooms has long been like the 'elephant in the room'; mostly ignored or unaddressed despite its relation to successful listening and speaking skills as well as mostly apparent problems in students' speech and comprehension of spoken language. Harmer (2001) suggests this may be because some teachers are nervous of dealing with aspects of pronunciation such as sounds and intonation; others may think it is possible for students to acquire reasonable pronunciation skills without a formal pronunciation syllabus and specific pronunciation teaching. This neglectful attitude towards pronunciation has undergone a change, though, with the emergence of communicative approaches and increased focus on discourse,

which highlights the importance of both producing and receiving language (Hedge, 2000). In his discussion on why it is important to teach pronunciation, Kelly (2000) gives examples of students' inaccurate use of segmental and suprasegmental elements and how they cause miscommunication. Therefore, a focus on pronunciation in the classroom is a must to support the learning process in terms of both reception and production, and to help students achieve the goal of improved comprehension and intelligibility.

2.2 Pronunciation in Educational Research

Despite this clear importance of pronunciation, it is surprising that research putting pronunciation into teaching context to explore practices and student needs is insufficient. This lack of research has been mentioned in studies such as Brown (1991 as cited in Deng et al. ,2009) and Deng et al. (2009). Brown examined four well-established journals, namely International Review of Applied Linguistics, Language Learning, TESOL Quarterly, and the ELT Journal, between the years 1975-1988 and found out that the percentage of pronunciation-related articles ranged from 4.6% to 11.9%. To carry this study further, and explore whether the issue changed after Brown's study, Deng et al. counted the number of articles with an ESL/EFL pronunciation focus in 14 academic journals between the years 1999-2008 to see the range was 0.8% to 7.3% in the total of 2912 articles they analyzed. Derwing& Munro (2005) criticize this in their paper and call for empirical, replicable studies to inform pronunciation instruction. In his paper, Gilakjani (2012) also mentions increased pronunciation research as one of the goals of English pronunciation instruction.

Among the studies carried out in the field of pronunciation and teaching, Burgess and Spencer (1999) address the relationship between teaching and learning pronunciation in a second or foreign language; as well as the study of pronunciation-teaching and phonology in the training and education of language teachers. They argue for strong links between the fields of pronunciation-teaching and language-teacher education and training. Some studies focus on classroom instruction and explore teaching methods and materials employed for pronunciation; including Hismanoğlu and Hismanoğlu (2010) aiming to find out pronunciation teaching techniques preferred by language teachers, and Jones (1997) examining whether recent research findings are reflected in pronunciation teaching materials. In her recent study exploring connections between teacher values and classroom practice in relation to pronunciation-oriented techniques, Baker (2014) highlights the frequent use of controlled techniques with less communicative value as opposed to guided techniques. Otherstudies analyze some teaching methods and suggest new ones, like Couper (2011) with his study testing the

effectiveness of using socially constructed metalanguage (SCM) and critical listening (CL) techniques while teaching pronunciation. In her case study, Rajadurai (2001) investigates the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation to Malaysian TESL studentsand illustrate the benefits of L2 pronunciation training for young adult learners. From a more general perspective, Derwing and Munro's paper (2012) aims to help instructors select features of pronunciation to teach to enhance students' listening development and Jenkins (2002) propose a sociolinguistics-based pronunciation syllabus considering the shift in English as an international language.

2.3 Exploring student perceptions

Research regarding the importance of students' perceptions and how they affect learning has been carried out in different fields of teaching and various aspects of learning. In her study to explore the impact student perceptions of learning could make on the quality of their learning outcomes, Varnava-Marouchou (2011:121) concludes that "the acknowledgement of the existence of students' perceptions of learning by educators, have (sic) the potential to influence positively the way in which academics approach their teaching and thus influence the way students learn". Similarly, Wang & Leland (2011) claim that learning about students' perceptions help teachers understand developmental stages in students' learning and organize teaching materials and activities accordingly. In his comparative study of teacher and student perceptions of effective teacher behaviours, Brown (2009) highlights the importance of having a firm understanding of student perceptions for the improvement of teachingand student learning and achievement. Acknowledging the relationship between student perceptions and learning behaviour, Könings, Brand-Gruwel and J.G. van Merrienboer (2011:439) state that"the students' perspective deserves a more prominent place in the educational design process".Chae& Gentry (2011:104) emphasize that considering students' perceptions "may improve classroom qualities and satisfy students' learning needs, which can positively affect motivation and achievement".Similar ideas are shared and supported by research from the area of language learning as well. In their study intended to explore EFL students' perceptions of learning vocabulary collaboratively with computers, Lin, Chan and Hsiao (2011) point out how studies investigating learning effects or outcomes should consider learner perceptions, which have a vital role in their attitudes to learning.

2.4 Perceptions Regarding Pronunciation

Studies combining pronunciation and perception have been conducted both with teachers and learners. In their study, Fernandez and Hughes (2010) present the opinions of 189 student teachers on the effectiveness of procedures commonly employed to practice pronunciation in the language classroom. Underlining the little attention paid to second language students' own perceptions of their needs regarding pronunciation, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) report on adult immigrants' perceptions of both their pronunciation difficulties and the strategies that they use when they encounter communication breakdown. Kang (2010) identify adult ESL learners' perspectives of pronunciation studies and demonstrate students' expectations of their pronunciation lessons and their attitudes toward instructors'accent varieties, with results suggesting that "students' perceived needs should be better synchronized in ESL contexts".

In BUSEL context, there have been two studies exploring issues related to pronunciation so far: Board (2009) explored three teachers' perceptions regarding teaching pronunciation in her case study and Yüzbir (2012) investigated student perceptions of phonemic activities in her action research. Board's findings show that although teachers think that pronunciation is an important area to focus on in the classroom, they usually lack confidence and knowledge about how to integrate pronunciation to everyday teaching. Yüzbir's study shows that students are generally aware of the importance of pronunciation for accurate and fluent speech, and they enjoy doing pronunciation activities in class. At this point it needs to be stated that although this study replicated Yuzbir's findings of students' regarding pronunciation as an area worth studying, the findings also indicate a significant dissatisfaction with the way pronunciation lessons are executed and a clear mismatch between students' understanding of why pronunciation has been made a part of the new curriculum and the curriculum designers' intentions to do so.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The questions I attempted to explore by this research are:

1. How do students feel about pronunciation lessons?

1.1 If students find pronunciation lessons enjoyable, especially what kind of activities do they like?

1.2 If students do not find pronunciation lessons enjoyable, why not?

2. How do students feel about the contribution of pronunciation lessons to their learning?

2.1 If students think pronunciation lessons contribute to their learning, in which aspect do they think they improve more?

2.2 If students think pronunciation lessons do not contribute to their learning, why not?
3. Do students say they pay more attention to pronunciation (while speaking, while learning new words) because they have pronunciation lessons?
3.1 If yes, especially when do they say they pay more attention to pronunciation?
3.2 If not, why not?

3.2 Context and Participants

The research was carried out in BUSEL, the English preparatory school of Bilkent University. Students at BUSEL preparatory program study English to be eligible for their undergraduate studies as Bilkent is an English-medium university. The participants (3o in total) were from my twoupper-intermediate level classes.At the time of the research they had been receiving formal pronunciation instruction for 4 months at BUSEL as a part of their previous courses. The questionnaire was administered to all students in the classrooms. Among those, ten were chosen for the interviews. The interviewees were chosen to express different perspectives; both studentswho are in favour of and the ones who are against the pronunciation strand in the new curriculum were interviewed. In other words, there was no sampling of participants in the questionnaire stage, but purposive sampling was used in the interview stage to ensure the variety of perspectives.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Two data collection instruments, questionnaires and interviews, and both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used in this study. First of all, I used a questionnaire (see app.1) to get the opinions of all participants since questionnaires “permit the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data in a simple, cheap and timely manner” (Anderson 1998:170). They are also a quick and simple method of getting large amounts of information from students by asking specific questions related to an aspect of teaching and curriculum (Hopkins, 2008). The questionnaire used had three sections. Section one aimed at getting students’ general attitude towards the different parts of the curriculum, and included two Likert scale questions. Section two was specific to pronunciation strand and had an open-ended question as well as five statements to be reflected on according to a Likert scale. Section three was to gather information regarding students’ favourite pronunciation activities. The questionnaires were administered in the classroom and students who did not wish to participate were given the permission.

The follow-up interviews were semi-structured, and the questions in the interviews were shaped by the questionnaire answers as the aim was to explore the answers given to the questionnaires further. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the questionnaire answers was carried out before doing the interviews. I believe this cyclical approach in which data analysis and data collection inform each other helped me probe into students' insights and feedback more in detail. The interviews were mainly driven by the answers to the following three questions:

- What is your general feeling regarding pronunciation as a field in language learning?
- Have you started to pay more attention to pronunciation as a result of pronunciation lessons?
- Can you comment on the way pronunciation lessons are executed in BUSEL?

The interviews took 5-7 minutes and were done in the school after class hours. They were conducted in Turkish to ensure conveyance of meaning, and recorded to be analyzed and translated into English (see app.2 for a sample interview).

For the analysis of the questionnaire data, the three-step process suggested by Munn &Drever (2004): data preparation, data description and interpretation was used. This stage required both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results. For section one, mean scores for each item was measured. For the open-ended question in section two, categories emerging from the answers were identified and frequency distribution was measured by coding the categories. Frequency distribution was also used for the Likert scale question in the same section, and for section three.

After the interviews, to ease the analysis of the qualitative data, I used an interview summary form including details about the participants, content and emerging themes (Dawson, 2002). When all the interviews were completed, selective transcription was used and the relevant sections from the interviews were translated into English. After all the data was brought together, inductive analysis was carried out by coding and categorizing the data. After the categories were defined, I wrote a short description of what each category refers to, and included participant comments to exemplify in order to double check the accuracy of the data analysis. I also used respondent validation after the qualitative data was analyzed (Cohen et al.,2007).

3.4 Ethics

In order to make sure the study is ethical, the participants were informed of the study and its aims, and a letter of informed consent (see app. 3) was obtained from each participant (Borg, 2010). Any data gathered was kept confidential

and participants' identities remained anonymous, by using pseudonyms when they are referred to while discussing the results. The participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study any time they want without offering any explanation.

4. Results

4.1 Research question one

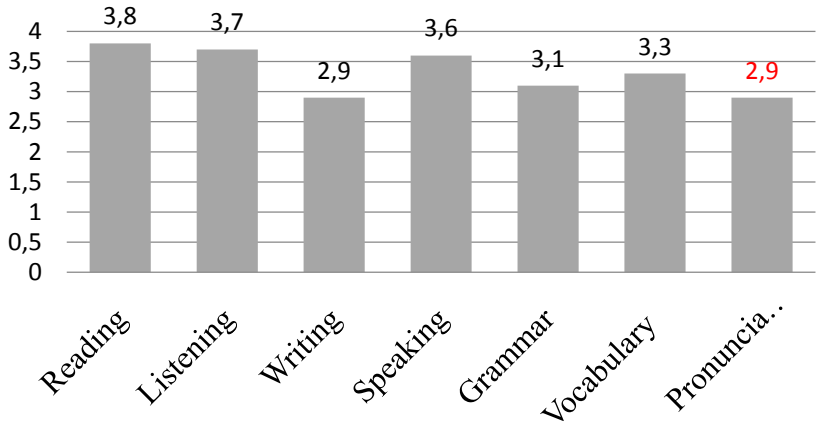
How do students feel about pronunciation lessons?

- If students find pronunciation lessons enjoyable, especially what kind of activities do they like?
- If students do not find pronunciation lessons enjoyable, why not?

4.1.1 Attitudes towards pronunciation

The first section of the questionnaire aimed to find out students' attitudes towards pronunciation in relation to the other aspects of the curriculum and had two questions. The

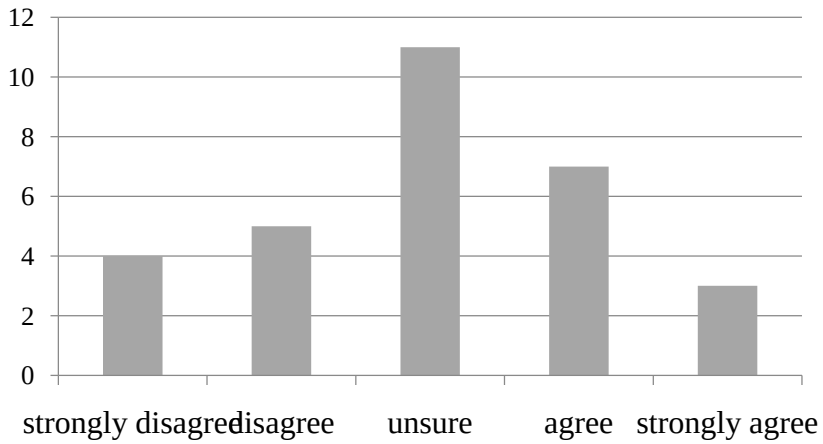
Figure 1: Most enjoyable part of curriculum



one which required students to compare different parts of the curriculum depending on how much they enjoy them came out with the following results: (5 – very enjoyable, 1 – not enjoyable at all). Figures show that students place pronunciation at the bottom end of the enjoyment spectrum. Pronunciation cohabitates this space with writing, a skill many view as boring.

The first statement in section two/B of the questionnaire also asked students whether they enjoyed pronunciation lessons, using a Likert scale. The frequency distribution for that statement was as follows:

Figure 2: Enjoying pronunciation lessons

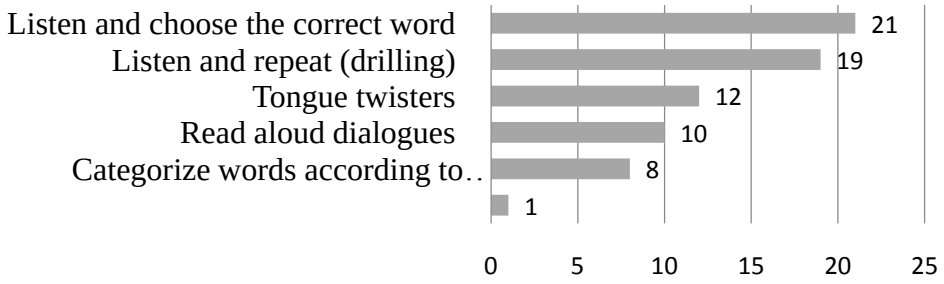


Answers were divided equally at this point, with nine students disagreeing, ten agreeing and eleven stating that they were unsure.

4.1.2 Pronunciation activities

Section three of the questionnaire aimed at finding out which pronunciation activities students enjoyed the most. It came out with the following results, which show the frequency of each activity selected by participants.

Figure 3: Most enjoyable pronunciation activities



Listening-integrated classroom activities were mentioned the most as being enjoyable whereas phonemic symbol work was considered enjoyable by only one student.

4.1.3 Further comments

When the interviewees were asked about why they do not think pronunciation lessons were enjoyable, the main responses indicated a general dissatisfaction with the way lessons are conducted and the books, as well as a belief that pronunciation was not necessary and therefore not enjoyable either. Some of the student comments were as follows:

I don't enjoy the lessons; it is no different from a grammar or listening lesson as we cover a book. (Ati)

I do not find it enjoyable at all. I get bored in the lessons; it is very difficult for me to endure pronunciation lessons. (Blacken)

Two students among the ten interviewed said they enjoyed pronunciation lessons, giving the following responses:

It is more enjoyable than other lessons because sometimes you learn something you have never heard before. (Mystery Rose)

I like talking so I enjoy pronunciation lessons. (Furki)

The analysis of the data above shows that students find pronunciation less enjoyable when compared with the other parts of the curriculum. Interviewees were also requested to comment on whether they enjoyed pronunciation lessons. Once again, most participants commented that they found the lessons boring.

4.2 Research question two

How do students feel about the contribution of pronunciation lessons to their learning?

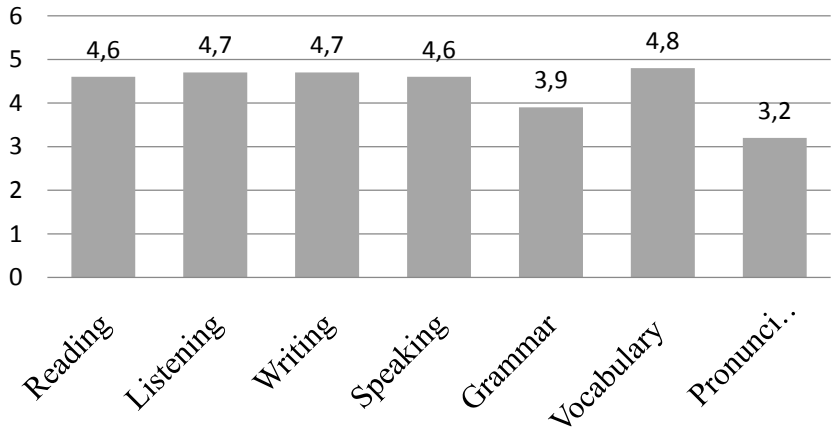
- If students think pronunciation lessons contribute to their learning, in which aspect do they think they improve more?
- If students think pronunciation lessons do not contribute to their learning, why not?

4.2.1 Benefits of pronunciation

One question in section one looked at how important students find pronunciation as a part of their language learning process, in relation to the other parts of the curriculum. The results were as follows:

(5 – very important, 1 – unnecessary.)

Figure 4: Most important part of curriculum



Pronunciation was considered the least important skill. There is strong correlation between these results and those obtained for enjoyment. This correlation was not apparent for the writing results, which suggests that the participants were able to distinguish between boring but necessary versus boring and not necessary.

Students finding pronunciation either completely unnecessary or less important compared to the other aspects of learning English was one of the major themes that emerged in the interviews as well.

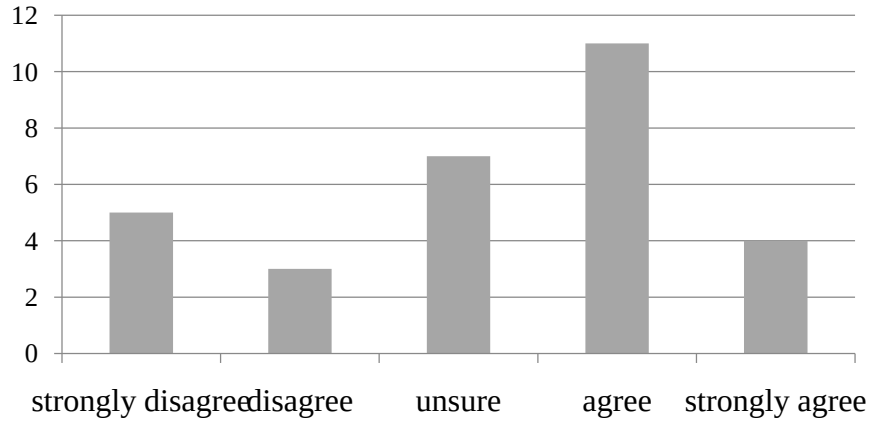
In general, I do not learn anything in pronunciation lessons that I wouldn't be able to learn by listening to something or talking to someone. You learn things by listening, you don't need to go to a pronunciation book or check the phonetic alphabet to learn the correct pronunciation of a word. (Ati)

We learn English to continue our academic education and as far as I realize we will be mainly writing academic papers and listening to teachers so these are more important compared to speaking and pronunciation. (Furki)

4.2.2 Pronunciation and speaking

Section two of the questionnaire also had questions regarding whether students think pronunciation lessons help them improve their speaking and/or listening skills using a Likert scale. The answers to the question which aimed to explore the perceived connection between pronunciation and speakingwere as follows:

Figure 5: Pronunciation benefits speaking



According to the results, 50% of the participants agreed that pronunciation lessons help them improve their speaking skills.

Pronunciation lessons being important for speaking was a theme emerged when answering the open-ended question in section two/A of the questionnaire as well, with a mention frequency of eight times. Students' comments included:

"If you make pronunciation mistakes while speaking you cannot prove your English skills to others".

"Pronunciation lessons are a must if we want to be able to communicate with foreign lecturers in our departments" (translated by the researcher).

This theme was further highlighted during the interviews, with student comments such as:

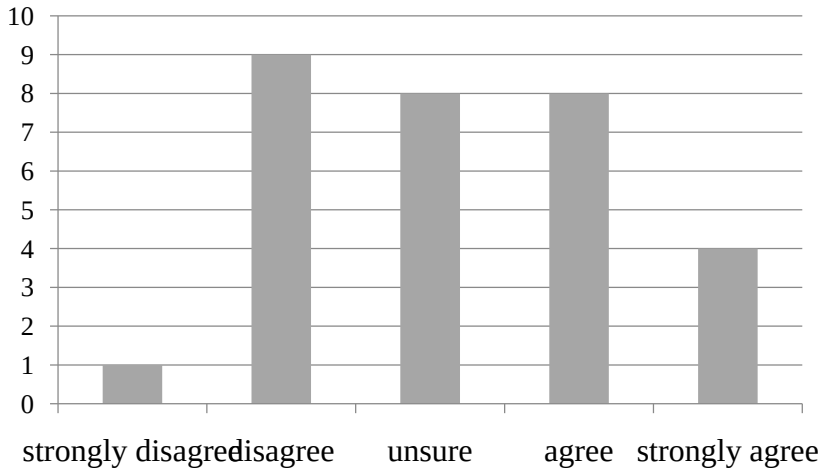
I definitely think it contributes to our learning as it is very important for speaking. We use pronunciation while speaking, and it is the most important aspect of communication so I find it very important. (Furki)

It helps me especially in speaking because even if you hear the correct pronunciation of a word, if it has sound that you do not know you can still pronounce them incorrectly. That's why it is important to learn them in pronunciation lessons. (Katniss)

4.2.3 Pronunciation and listening

The answers to the question which aimed to explore the perceived connection between pronunciation and listening were as follows:

Figure 6: Pronunciation benefits listening



The agreement rate was not as high this time, with 40%of participants thinking pronunciation lessons benefit their listening. Pronunciation lessons improving listening skills was still mentioned while answering the open-ended question in the same section, though this time with a frequency of four times, with comments such as:

"Understanding differences between words like lick / leak in pronunciation lessons is important for listening".

"Pronunciation lessons should be seperate because we should learn about the sounds that Turkish does not have" (translated by the researcher).

Similar comments from the interviews included:

It is beneficial to my listening skills because sometimes it is difficult to distinguish sounds and words but since pronunciation lessons I have been able to understand different words better. (Mystery Rose)

It helps us make connections between spelling and pronunciation so I find it beneficial for my listening skills. Now I can hear a word and try to guess the spelling by focusing on the sounds I hear. (Melinda)

4.2.4 Dissatisfaction with pronunciation lessons

The students who commented that they did not think pronunciation lessons contributed to their learning process did so on the open-ended question of section two/A under the following themes:

Theme	Frequency	Student Comments
Dissatisfaction with the way lessons are executed	10	*"There is no standard among teachers in pronunciation lessons, some think symbols are important and some don't, every time we change classes we have a different approach"* *"Some teachers do not seem qualified enough to teach pronunciation"*
Possibility of integrating pronunciation to other lessons	8	*"Giving importance to pronunciation during speaking, listening and reading lessons would be more beneficial to us"* *"The teacher can focus on pronunciation during other lessons"*
Dissatisfaction with the book.	4	*"Not all the activities in the book are useful for us"* *"We buy an unnecessarily expensive book but only do a couple of pages from it"*
Pronunciation lessons being unnecessary.	4	*"I can learn pronunciation by listening and speaking but the other areas of English are more difficult for me"* *"English is a world language now so trying to learn a certain accent is useless"*

(translated by the researcher)

Dissatisfaction with the book and the way lessons are executed, as well as the possibility of integrating pronunciation into other lessons were themes that appeared in almost all interviews, with comments such as:

I don't find it completely unnecessary but I don't think it needs to be done separately. It can be integrated to other lessons and done in the natural course of the lessons rather than in isolation with a different book. (Mimi)

I think pronunciation lessons are done just for the sake of doing. We don't cover the book completely, we don't practice enough, and it is like we do it just because it is in the curriculum. If we're not going to do it properly, we shouldn't do it at all. (Blacken)

Another theme mentioned regarding the way pronunciation lessons are executed was regarding phonemic symbols, and how unnecessary students found learning them:

With the advancements in technology, learning phonemic symbols has become unnecessary.

I find the lessons that we focus on sounds more beneficial. (Ada)

I don't think I will need to know the phonemic symbols at any time in my educational life. (Ati)

Only one student disagreed:

When I see the transcription in the dictionary, I can pronounce words correctly even if I don't hear it. I find learning about those letters beneficial. (Katniss)

An overall analysis of the sections related to research question two shows that the link between speaking and pronunciation is more evident to students than the link between listening and pronunciation. The main reasons why students think pronunciation lessons are not beneficial are lesson execution, including teacher methodology and course books, and the idea that pronunciation lessons are not necessary to begin with.

4.3 Research question three

Do students say they pay more attention to pronunciation (while speaking, while learning new words) because they have pronunciation lessons?

- If yes, especially when do they say they pay more attention to pronunciation?
- If not, why not?

4.3.1 Attention to pronunciation

Two questions in section two/B of the questionnaire indirectly sought answer to this question by asking students whether they think correct pronunciation while speaking and checking the pronunciation of newly learned words was important respectively using a Likert scale. The frequency distribution of answers was as follows:

Figure 7: Pronunciation important in speaking

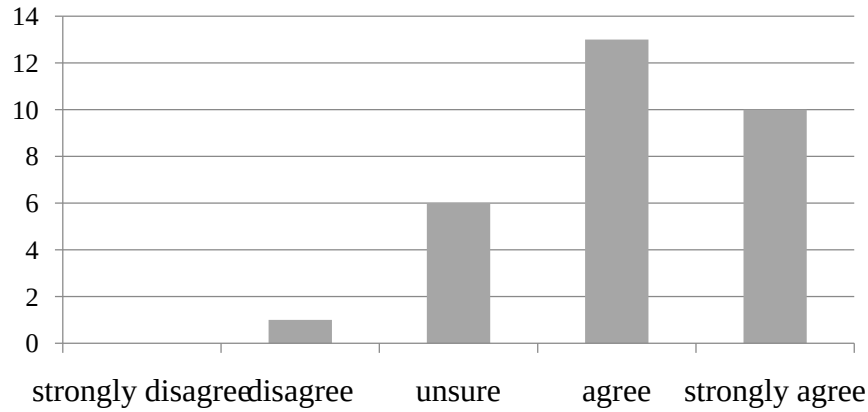
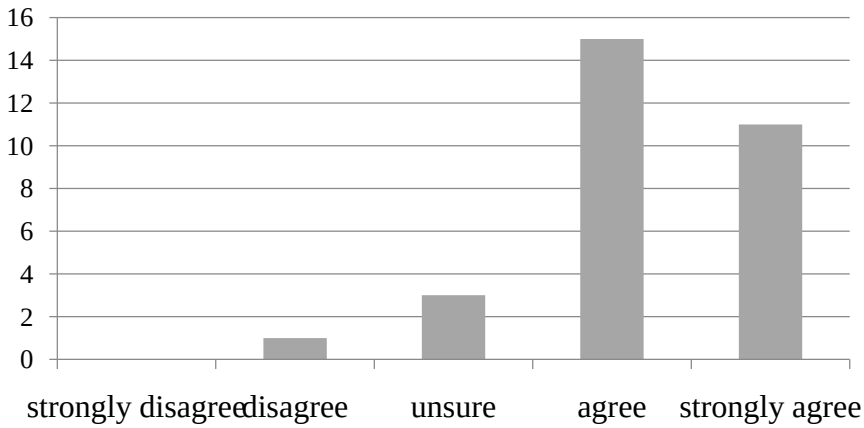


Figure 8: Pronunciation important in vocabulary



Both figures demonstrate a strong agreement, with twenty-three students agreeing on the importance of correct pronunciation while speaking and twenty-six students agreeing on the importance of checking the correct pronunciation of newly learned words.

4.3.2 Contribution from pronunciation lessons

When the interviewees were asked whether having pronunciation lessons has had an effect on their attention to pronunciation while speaking or learning new words, all disagreed. Their reasons were various:

I wasn't paying attention to pronunciation anyway, and after I saw it wasn't beneficial it didn't change anything in my perception. (Atarlı)

I try to pronounce words correctly all the time but it is not related to having pronunciation lessons, it is a part of learning English. (Mystery Rose)

Even if we didn't have pronunciation lessons we would pay attention to correctly pronouncing words not to sound funny. Learning how to pronounce words in pronunciation lessons does not change our pronunciation, we still say words the way we used to. We do not start speaking like those people in the CDs. (Mimi)

We can conclude that although most students state that they pay attention to correct pronunciation both while speaking and learning new words, pronunciation lessons in the curriculum does not seem to have contributed to this attention.

Lastly, the Likert scale question in section two/A, which did not directly answer any of the research questions but was aimed at receiving student feedback on the pronunciation strand of the new curriculum, thirteen students said they agree with the idea of having separate pronunciation lessons and seven disagreed with it. Ten students were unsure, and the comments they have made revealed that even the ones who agreed with the statement had problems with the way pronunciation was integrated into the curriculum, which was a major theme during the interviews as seen in most of the previous comments.

5. Discussion

The results of the study show that pronunciation has not made its way into the new curriculum completely yet. Pronunciation is the least enjoyed part of the curriculum together with writing, which has usually been notoriously boring for learners of English. When asked whether they enjoyed pronunciation lessons, most of the participants indicated that they were "unsure", which could be explained by their answers to other questions which reveal a dissatisfaction with the way lessons are executed and a lack of standards among teachers in pronunciation lessons. Some even commented that they thought "some teachers are not qualified to teach pronunciation", which supports the findings by Burgess & Spencer (1999) that there must be a strong link between pronunciation and language teacher education. Among the pronunciation activities, the least favourite, which was preferred by only one participant, is "matching words with phonemic symbols". This 'hatred' towards phonemic symbols emerged during the interviews as well, most of the participants mentioning how they found learning those symbols unnecessary. Mostly preferred activities included "listen & choose the correct word" and "listen & repeat", which I believe show how students prefer activities which have a direct link to their speaking and listening skills, and thus which make pronunciation lessons more meaningful for them.

When participants were asked about the importance of pronunciation compared to other parts of the curriculum, it came out with the relatively low score of 3.2, which also indicates the rationale behind including pronunciation into the curriculum has not been passed on to students. The results show that although students can see the link between pronunciation lessons improving their speaking, there is a misunderstanding that pronunciation lessons aim to make them sound more like native speakers. Moreover, while most of the participants find correct pronunciation while speaking important, they do not think pronunciation lessons are necessary to achieve that. The link between listening and pronunciation lessons is less clear. As the possibility of improving

listening skills was one of the main reasons that pronunciation was integrated into the new curriculum, it is highly important that students are made aware of the rationale behind having pronunciation lessons. As supported by the projects carried out by Varnava-Marouchou (2011) and Chae& Gentry (2011), we need to acknowledge the misperceptions by students regarding the place of pronunciation in the curriculum to match our approach in teaching pronunciation with student needs and increase student motivation and achievement.

Participants' answers also revealed that they do not think pronunciation lessons have any effect on them in terms of paying more attention to speaking correctly or while learning new words. Although they mostly agreed that they should check the pronunciation of new words and that correct pronunciation while speaking was important, they think pronunciation lessons do not have an effect on their behaviour. This, I believe, is highly related to the dissatisfaction participants expressed related to the lessons and the pronunciation book, and how most suggested to have pronunciation integrated to speaking and listening lessons rather than being covered as a separate lesson.

All in all, the results of the study replicate those in Kang (2010), calling for a better consideration of student needs and perceptions while designing and delivering a curriculum.

5.1 Limitations

The main limitation of the study is size and context. The sample group consisted of 30 questionnaire participants and 10 interviewees studying at the preparatory school of an English-medium university in Turkey. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised without a significant risk of error. The fact that students were upper-intermediate level may have affected their opinions regarding the necessity of pronunciation; students at the beginning of their language studies may express different opinions. Lastly, the participants were all in their first year at BUSEL, which means they could not compare the curriculum from last year, which did not have the pronunciation strand, with the new one. Such a comparison could reveal more about whether the pronunciation-integrated curriculum has been more helpful.

6. Conclusion

Having carried out this study, I have gained in-depth insight into the way students perceive our teaching decisions and methods, and how a misperception could affect student attitude and behaviour in the learning process. It is crucial to provide students with the rationale of why some things are done in the classroom and help them notice certain things that they may

not be able to, given their inexperience in learning a language. This would make specific lessons and the learning process as a whole more meaningful, thus lead to improved teaching and learning.

One thing that emerges as an implication of this study is how the way pronunciation lessons are delivered needs to be changed. Considering student comments, this requires revisiting decisions made about using a pronunciation book versus integrating pronunciation into regular teaching, and giving training to teachers to execute pronunciation lessons to a higher quality. Another major implication is to make students aware of why we have pronunciation lessons, and help them see the benefits more clearly as it is obvious that some links between pronunciation and other skills is missing in students' perspective. Creating this awareness would also make students more responsible for their own learning and increase autonomy.

In conclusion, the study reveals important reflections on the pronunciation strand of the new curriculum for the institution, which could lead to further research to investigate other changes in the curriculum and how they have affected student learning. Although the study focuses on a specific context and a limited number of participants, I believe it adds to the existing literature on teaching pronunciation and serves as a good example of the perception of formal pronunciation instruction in a non-English speaking environment and how integration of pronunciation in the curriculum affects students' perceptions. These could be researched further in the wider ELT world.

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APPENDICES

Name: .....

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

Student Perceptions of Pronunciation Lessons Questionnaire

Dear Student,

I would like to learn your opinions on the pronunciation strand in the curriculum for my study as a part of my MA course. Please answer the questions on your own to express your honest opinion. There is no correct or incorrect answer; I am only interested in your opinions. Thank you for your time.

Section 1: The curriculum

1. Please give each part of the curriculum a number depending on what you feel is most important in learning English; 5 – very important, 1 – unnecessary. You can tick (✓) the same number more than once.

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading					
Listening					
Writing					
Speaking					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					

2. Please give each part of the curriculum a number depending on what you feel is most enjoyable while learning English; 5 – very enjoyable, 1 – not enjoyable at all. You can tick (✓) the same number more than once.

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading					
Listening					
Writing					
Speaking					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					

Section 2: The pronunciation strand

A) To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Underline ONE answer.

"Pronunciation should be a part of our curriculum with a separate book and lessons".

Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

Please comment on your answer. If you agree, you can explain why you think pronunciation should be a part of the curriculum. If you disagree, you can explain why you think pronunciation is not a necessary part of the curriculum.

B) Please give your opinions about the sentences below by ticking (✓) ONE answer for each.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I enjoy pronunciation lessons.					
2. Pronunciation lessons help me improve my speaking skills.					
3. Pronunciation lessons help me improve my listening skills.					
4. Correct pronunciation is important while speaking.					
5. When we are learning new words, we should check their pronunciation.					

Section 3: Pronunciation activities

Here is a list of pronunciation activities. Tick (✓) the ones you enjoy doing. You can tick more than one answer.

____ Listen and choose the correct word
____ Listen and repeat (drilling)
____ Categorize words according to their sounds
____ Read aloud dialogues
____ Tongue twisters
____ Match words with phonemic symbols

Appendix 2 – Sample Interview

Simge: Now I already have your answers for the questionnaires here but I will ask a couple of general questions. First of all how do you feel about pronunciation lessons in general? For example, do you find them enjoyable, you can consider the question from this aspect, plus do you think it contributes to your learning? It doesn't matter who starts.

Melodi: I think pronunciation is important because for example when I try to do speaking in class, I don't know the pronunciation of some words, so I think it is necessary but I mean ... I think this book is not beneficial at all.

Simge: OK...

Melodi: I mean we don't cover it that much in class anyway.

Simge: How the lesson are conducted will be my next question but for example which aspect of your learning do you think benefits from pronunciation lessons most?

Melodi: You know, when speaking it helps me I can say.

Simge: You mean pronouncing words correctly?

Melodi: Yes.

Atarlı: I agree with Melodi, actually it is a necessary subject, very necessary, it teaches you how to speak, speak and listen, it helps with especially listening but I think we bought those books in vain because OK it is fun when we cover it but we did it only once or twice so unnecessary I mean I think the book is unnecessary but apart from that I think it should be covered.

Melodi: You know maybe the teacher can do it without the book.

Simge: I was just about to ask that. I mean do you think there needs to be separate pronunciation lessons, but not from this book, using another method?

Atarlı: Yes.

Melodi: I think so. I think there needs to be a separate pronunciation lesson once or twice a week but not from this book. The teacher can bring extra materials, or it can be integrated into speaking or listening but using this book...

Atarlı: or if we bought it, we should at least cover it properly.

Simge: I see. I want to ask you, well you were not here last year, we didn't have it last year but this is a new curriculum. So I want to ask just because we have it as a separate subject, like you cover it in class and it is tested in the exams and so on, do you feel like "as a result of this I pay more attention to pronunciation more while speaking or while learning new words", did it have any effect like that on you?

Melodi: No.

Atarlı: I don't think so.

Simge: I mean is that because you were already paying attention so you continue doing so or you never paid attention and pronunciation lessons did not change that?
Atarlı: I mean we were not paying attention and after we saw it wasn't beneficial anyway...
Melodi: We usually asked the teacher how to pronounce a word and the teacher gave the answer and I usually wrote the Turkish pronunciation next to word, when I had difficulty with the pronunciation, I wrote the Turkish pronunciation and that's how I learned.
Simge: I see, so the lessons did not change anything in your perception.
Melodi: No.
Simge: One last thing, I will ask something related to the book not being covered issue, we talked about pronunciation as a subject in general but can you comment on the way the lessons are executed?
Melodi: I think time should be spared once or twice a week for it, and the teacher can bring extra materials or like Atarlı said, if we are buying the book, we should cover it thoroughly, writing on every page, completing every exercise, we didn't do that so much. Since the beginning of the year...
Atarlı: The first week...
Melodi: Since the beginning of the course we did it once or twice...
Atarlı: Once or twice and then tossed the book. It's a shame considering the money we paid for it as well.
Simge: What about the other courses?
Melodi: The same things...
Atarlı: exactly...
Simge: Was this the case in all the courses?
Atarlı: I think there is a specific problem.
Melodi: Yeah we experienced exactly the same things. In the previous course we were in the same class as well with Atarlı...
Atarlı: Is it because of the teacher, or us, I don't know...
Simge: I mean teachers have different teaching styles, just like any other subject like reading or listening teachers may have had different approaches to teaching pronunciation. But in general you agree with each other that the book is not useful?
Melodi: Yes.
Atarlı: I think pronunciation of words is actually the first thing that should be learned about a language but... I mean this doesn't work here.
Melodi: Yes.
Atarlı: In the classrooms.
Simge: So we can improve this. OK thank you very much.

Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Form

Dear Student,

I am starting a research project on students' perceptions of pronunciation strand in the curriculum. In order to conduct this study, I need to work with BUSEL students and therefore I am asking for your permission to conduct the study with you.

The study involves a 20-minute questionnaire and a 10-minute audio recorded interview. If you agree to take part, let me assure you that it will not take up a considerable amount of your time or involve you in lengthy written response. The interviews will be conducted in school and your contributions to the research will be oral.

I hope that the project will benefit you by providing opportunities to reflect on your understanding of pronunciation lessons and the BUSEL curriculum.
Your contributions will be treated with the strictest confidence, and all reports of research findings will preserve the anonymity of participants. The research will be carried out according to strict ethical guidelines.

If you are willing to participate in the research, please sign the form below. I would like to stress that your participation is purely voluntary, and you may decline to participate or withdraw at a later date without explanation, if you wish to do so.
Thank you.

Simge Gülaç

Consent:

I have read and understood the above form. I understand that I can ask further questions or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in the research study.

……	……	……
Signature	Name	Date

PEER FEEDBACK IN THE WRITING CLASSROOMS OF AN OMANI UNIVERSITY: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE

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1. Abstract.

Arab learners are often characterised as encountering significant difficulties when writing English-language academic compositions. This is especially the case in those tertiary-level contexts in the Arab world where English acts as a medium of instruction. While, traditionally, many instructors have sought to address this issue through the adoption of a teacher-centred, product-based approach to academic writing, recently more learner-centred approaches have gained favour across many parts of the region. One way in which writing classrooms can become more learner-centred is through the use of peer feedback. However, research into learners' use of, and attitudes towards, peer feedback from the Arab Gulf has often reported contradictory results. For this reason, the current research explored 36 Omani university students' perceptions and practices of peer feedback in their English writing classrooms. Results indicate mostly favourable views of peer feedback, although a number of limitations were identified as impacting upon its effective implementation. In order to address these issues, several steps for making peer feedback more effective in Omani university writing classrooms are offered.

2. Introduction.

Writing in a foreign or second language is perhaps the most complex skill that ESL/EFL students engage with. Considerations in creating a coherent piece of academic writing in the English language are many, and can be said to include factors as diverse as idea generation, an understanding of purpose and audience expectations, content relevance, clarity, text organisation, syntax and word choice (Al-Nafiseh 2013). It is perhaps in acknowledgement of the range of these concerns that authors such as Ahmed (2010a; 2010b) describe writing in a second or foreign language as an enormous challenge and one that is frequently encountered in those Arab learning environments where English operates as a medium of instruction (EMI) (Ezza 2010).

Within this context, Arab learners are often described as likely to struggle more with writing than any of the other core English language skills. Arab university students' writing has been characterised by a number of scholars as typically lacking cohesion and coherence, employing "inappropriate" rhetorical functions, being prone to grammatical errors, and employing a limited range of

vocabulary (Ahmed 2010a; Ahmed 2010b; Al-Khatib 2001; Ezza 2010; Zaharna 1995). Moreover, Arab learners within EMI tertiary environments have also been reported as displaying dissatisfaction with, and even resentment towards, their English writing classes (Al-Nafiseh 2013).

In order to address this issue, a number of English-language instructors in the region have sought to improve their learners' writing abilities through various methods. While many of these have traditionally been associated with product-based approaches, those more often described as supporting "process writing" have recently gained more popularity in the region as many schools and universities increasingly seek to promote learner-centred classrooms. Al-Hazmi and Scholfield (2007) offer what they describe as the three most common techniques associated with a more learner-centred approach to writing: writing multiple drafts, employing a writing checklist for revision, and using peer-revision.

Research focusing on the utility of this final technique in improving Arab learners' English-language writing compositions, in addition to these learners' attitudes towards peer feedback itself, is still relatively limited in the Arab Gulf. This may be due to a traditional teacher-centred, product-focused, approach to writing in the region, with learners often more interested in obtaining high grades through the memorisation and reproduction of a given model than in mastering the writing process itself. Moreover, many of the Arab Gulf studies that have been conducted in the area often report conflicting results. For these reasons, the current study sought to examine Omani tertiary students' perceptions and practices of peer feedback in writing classes through the use of a 12-item, predominantly open-ended, questionnaire that was distributed to 36 Sultan Qaboos University students in the academic year 2012/2013.

3. Literature Review.

Kasanga (2007) states that peer feedback appears under a variety of names in the literature, including peer evaluation, peer response, peer critiquing, peer correction, and so on. The author notes that, while some authors use these terms interchangeable, others offer more specific definitions that seek to delineate the boundaries between them. For the sake of the current research, the term peer feedback will, following Hansen and Liu (2005), be defined as the process of employing learners as information sources that assume the responsibility of critiquing each other's work that is usually performed by classroom teachers or tutors. Hansen and Liu state that this process should ideally move beyond simple feedback on grammar and style to incorporate comment on content, rhetorical issues, organisation and so on.

Jun (2008), summarising the work of Keh (1990), Mangelsdorf (1992), Caulk (1994), and Mendonca and Johnson (1994), states that the main benefits of peer feedback in L2 writing instruction include developing a writer's sense of audience, developing learners' reading and analytical abilities, providing an explicit focus on intended meaning and idea development, and helping both students and teachers view writing as a process and thus allowing them to more accurately gauge a writer's progress through various drafts of a text. Other authors have added to this list of potential benefits: increasing learner motivation and confidence, raising student awareness of general issues with their writing, encouraging a sense of ownership of writing, assisting learners with deciding whether to accept or reject reviewers' suggestions, and building classroom cohesion (Hansen & Liu 2005; Jahin 2012; Mittan 1989; Tsui & Ng 2000). All these benefits, Jahin (2012) contends, contribute to the ultimate goal of encouraging L2 writers to make revisions that result in better quality writing.

Within the Arab context, a number of researchers have studied the potential value of peer feedback in the writing classroom with often contradictory results. For example, Mangelsdorf (1992) explored the effects of peer feedback in two classes of forty high-level students. The author reported that, even though student participants were interested in the process of peer feedback itself, weak students did not benefit from it and their comments were often without use to their peers. However, despite this potential limitation, the researcher did, nonetheless, maintain that peer feedback allowed learners to become a "real" audience for their peers which resulted in improved writing and editing when learners were reminded of the technique's collaborative, rather than competitive, nature and purpose.

Kasanga (2004) examined learner responses to both peer and teacher feedback of around 250 students in an Omani university. Through the use of pre- and post-peer review questionnaires, the author found a preference among participants for teacher, rather than peer, feedback. Moreover, respondents were also found to place greater emphasis on teacher feedback and to subsequently incorporate more of it into their revisions. However, despite this, Omani learners still displayed high levels of interest in peer feedback, even if this preference leaned more towards acting as a reviewer rather than the receiver of feedback. Kasanga concluded by suggesting that teacher and peer feedback can play complementary roles in Omani writing classes.

Al-Hazmi and Scholfield (2007) investigated 51 third-year male students at Saudi Arabia's King Khalid University to determine if peer feedback lead to improvements in participants' writing drafts. The researchers employed an intervention in the form of training the experimental group in both using a

feedback checklist and in providing oral feedback. Results indicate that the use of peer feedback only had a small effect on the level of improvement between the first and second drafts participants produced in terms of mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, organisation, and content. Moreover, final drafts either only improved marginally or actually deteriorated across these measures.

In the United Arab Emirates, Shine (2008) conducted a case study of the attitudes towards peer feedback of three Emirati learners. Results obtained from interviews, focus groups, and email exchanges revealed that participants had little faith in peer feedback and, like Kasanga's (2004) learners, placed far greater value on their instructors' comments. Despite this preference, Shine noted that participants also often struggled with their instructors' written remarks and concluded by stating that alternative forms for providing feedback need to be explored.

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Nafiseh (2013) investigated the effect of collaborative writing and peer-editing, in addition to attitudes towards peer feedback, in Department of English students at King Saud University. The researcher collected data through questionnaires, a sample of student drafts, and teacher observations. Al-Nafiseh found that the combination of in-class collaborative writing and peer feedback increased learner interest, motivation, and classroom interaction. Moreover, unlike Al-Hazmi and Scholfield's (2007) findings, peer feedback was also reported as improving the quality of participants' writing through an increased appreciation among participants of the choices they made as writers.

Studies into the practice of, and attitudes towards, peer feedback in Arab Gulf writing classrooms, therefore, have revealed a number of contradictory results, with this perhaps being due to the traditional dominance of teacher-centred classrooms in the region and a subsequent lack of familiarity with the nature and purpose of this technique. In relation to Oman, however, recent educational reforms across all levels of the country's education system have placed greater emphasis on learner-centred classrooms in which in which peer feedback, according to Kasanga (2004), can be assumed to play a vital role. For these reasons, the current research sought to explore Omani tertiary students' practice and perceptions of peer feedback in their writing classes.

4. Methodology.

4.1 Participants.

The sample consisted of 36 Omani university students attending Oman's only public university – Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Participants were recruited through a process of snowball sampling, with the second author explaining the nature of the research to a class of English majors and asking for volunteers.

Those students who expressed interest were asked to identify one or two of their colleagues they believed may also be interested in participating. Potential respondents were then contacted and asked if they would like to join the investigation. In all cases, students were reminded of the voluntary nature of the research and of their confidentiality and anonymity if they chose to participate. Moreover, everyone contacted was assured that their decisions about participation would not in any way affect their social or academic standing at the university.

Of the 36 students that volunteered to participate, 24 were female and 11 were male (one participant did not indicate gender). Participants were drawn from a variety of colleges and specialisations, although most were from the colleges of education (n=12), arts (n=8), and science (n=6). Other colleges represented included: commerce (n=3), nursing (n=2), medicine (n=2), and engineering (n=1), with two participants not indicating their colleges. Eighteen participants also did not report their specialisations. Of those that did, the majority were English or English literature majors (n=13), with one student each specialising in science, math, translation, nursing, and early childhood education.

Participants had been studying at the tertiary level for between 1 and 5 years, with a mean length of 3.15 years. In that time, they had attended between 0 and 7 writing courses (M=3.58). Finally, 16 participants rated their English-language writing abilities as “average” and 14 rated themselves as “very good”. Interestingly, no students believed their writing abilities to be either “good” or “excellent”, while 6 participants did not indicate a response.

4.2 Questionnaire and analysis.

As very few studies have been conducted about Omani university students’ perceptions and practices of peer feedback in English writing classes, an English-language, predominantly open-ended, questionnaire was employed to encourage participants to express their opinions without the kind of pre-determined restrictions often associated with exclusively closed-item questionnaires, even if this approach did run the risk of receiving more invalid responses (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar 2003). The questionnaire featured 12 items based on themes that emerged from the literature. Seven of these items were open-ended, with five items inquiring into how often peers provided correct and valid suggestions, the strategies used to convey this feedback, and the areas both peers and participants focused on when giving feedback, being closed in nature. All responses to open-ended questions were analysed thematically, with responses that indicated similar ideas highlighted and grouped together in a separate file before being examined for further areas

of convergence and divergence. Responses to closed-items, on the other hand, were tallied. Findings were then compared to other responses across the data and from the literature.

5. Results and Discussion.

In order to gauge participant practices and perceptions of peer feedback, results are presented in relation to each of the 12 questionnaire items below.

1. What is your opinion of peer feedback?

Overall, the vast majority of respondents held positive views of peer feedback. A number of participants claimed that it was a technique that encouraged learners to recognise their mistakes in the areas of spelling and grammar. Moreover, respondents also believed that peer feedback exposed them to a greater number of writing styles including different presentation of ideas and opinions. This was one of the potential benefits of peer feedback offered by Jun (2008). Responses here included:

> Peer feedback is beneficial since it helps you recognise some of your mistakes and gives your friend an opportunity to get exposed to different writing styles. Peers usually can help in figuring out grammatical mistakes, spelling mistakes, and sometimes they can give advice on how to improve the organisation of ideas and the connectivity of thoughts.

And:

> I like peer feedback because my peer can notice some errors that I cannot notice. Also, she gives me comments if she does not know what I mean in my sentences. Sometimes, she discuss with me how can I improve my sentence.

Despite this overall level of positivity, a number of participants maintained that peer feedback was only useful when their partner had a good command of English, understood the purpose of providing and receiving feedback, and was prepared to listen to suggestions. For example, one respondent, echoing Mangelsdorf's (1992) finding that low-level students tended to offer feedback that was limited in instructional value, stated that, "It helps sometimes but not always, especially if the classmate has a low writing ability". While another, reflecting another of Mangelsdorf's contentions about the importance of collaboration over competition, replied:

> The peer has to take in mind that the purpose of his correction and feedback is to help his mate not to show off or to see him/herself as a best one. He/she must seek to benefit his mate. Moreover, the writer must break any sensitivity in this regard. He/she should accept the

correction as a chance to improve and not consider the feedback as a way to underestimate his skill.

2. *How knowledgeable about language were the peers you worked with? What was the nature of the feedback you received from them?*

Given the diversity of the sample in terms of specialisations and number of years spent at university, it was quite surprising to find that most participants indicated their peers provided clear and useful feedback that incorporated comments on grammar, spelling, organisation, and ideas. For instance, one respondent stated, "They have a good knowledge about the essay and grammar - I received a lot. But I have more learning from them about the look and order of the essay". While another noted:

> Some of my peers were excellent in writing. I remember working with a friend who specialized in translation who was always very deep in thinking about what I wrote. In addition to pointing out the grammatical and spelling mistakes, she was always helpful in improving my introductory paragraph and concluding paragraph and the development of the topic in the body paragraph. She was amazing.

While most participants agreed that their peers provided useful feedback, a small number pointed out that the feedback offered was often misleading as it suggested revisions that were grammatically incorrect. Moreover, several respondents also stated that, "Most of the feedback was about surface structure". While a focus on the surface features of a text was offered by Al-Nafiseh (2013) as a potential benefit of peer feedback, it should be noted that Hansen and Liu (2005) state good peer feedback should move beyond a simple focus on these points to include comments on content, rhetorical style, idea development and so on.

3. On which of the following areas did your peers focus on when giving you feedback?

Seemingly in support of participants' claims that peer feedback too often focused on the surface features of a draft, grammar (n=24), spelling (n=23), and vocabulary (n=17) were the most frequently mentioned areas that peers focused on when offering feedback. The only surface level feature that was not mentioned with any level of frequency in response to this item was punctuation (n=5), which may be a result of participants' struggles with this quite complex part of syntax. Responses relating to the organisational level of a written text, on the other hand, including stylistic concerns and coherence, were less likely to appear with any frequency in response to this question. These included organisation (n=12), meaning (n=10), style (n=9), content (n=5), coherence

(n=4), and cohesion (n=2). These results are in line with Flynn's (2011) finding that students often find surface features of a draft easier to address in peer revision than issues of coherence and cohesion which they are often poorly-equipped at recognising.

4. How often did your peers provide you with correct or valid suggestions?

One of the closed-response items on the questionnaire inquired about how often peers provided correct or valid suggestions through their feedback. As suggested by responses to item two, participants believed that their peers either sometimes (n=18) or often (n=15) provided them with valid and correct feedback. While three participants did not respond to this item, it is important to note that no participants believed their peers either never or rarely offered correct feedback, which somewhat contradicts findings by Kasanga (2004) and Shine (2008) that peer feedback was often seen as having little value by Arab learners.

5. How effective is peer feedback?

The next questionnaire item focused on how effective peer feedback was. Again, like responses to the first two items, respondents maintained that peer feedback was effective as it highlighted mistakes, supported collaborative learning, focused on both surface level errors and essay structure, and improved language skills across all four core skill areas – all of which have been posited as potential benefits of peer feedback in the literature (Hansen & Liu 2005; Jun 2008; Tsui & Ng 2000). Replies here included, "It is effective since the reader will try to avoid the mistakes that his peer has made or at least be careful and aware of some mistakes that occur frequently in students' writing", and, "It gives us a suggestion for our writing and provides ideas for improvement".

On the other hand, a handful of respondents believed that peer feedback was only somewhat effective because it either depended on the language abilities of a partner or tended to only focus on surface features of a text. For example, two participants maintained that, "It depends on the students I'm working with. If s/he is good, then I will feel it's valid", and, "They don't comment on content, organisation and style. Sometimes I feel embarrassed when they tell me that my essay is not good". This point again relates to the minimal level of English proficiency demanded by peer feedback, and the danger of feedback being counterproductive if a learner's level is too far below the level of their peer (Hazmi & Scholfield 2007).

6. What strategies do your peers use to convey their feedback to you?

Participants indicated that the most commonly employed strategy to provide peer feedback was explaining the feedback orally (n=24). This was followed by underlining errors or areas of concern (n=16), writing down suggestions for improvement (n=14), and explaining potential areas of doubt or concern even if they cannot accurately identify the nature of the problem (n=13). Despite the belief of a number of authors that the use of correction symbols is central to the process of peer feedback (Maarek 2009), this was the least favoured method by participants (n=9) which suggests a potential lack of training in this technique either by students or their instructors.

7. When you give feedback to your peers, what do you often focus on?
Like responses to item 3, participants stated that they often focused on the surface features of grammar (n=24), vocabulary (n=22), and spelling (n=21) when providing feedback to their peers. Moreover, participants also stated that of all surface features of a written text, punctuation (n=4) was an area that they seldom highlighted. On the other hand, the levels of organisation (n=13), meaning (n=13), content (n=11), coherence (n=7), cohesion (n=7) and style (n=6) all featured less frequently than these surface areas.

8. What strategies do you use to convey feedback to your peers?
Like responses to item 6, participants claimed that they were most likely to convey their feedback orally (n=21) to their peers. This was followed by writing down suggestions (n=14), underlining errors (n=13), and explaining their doubts about any parts of a draft they were unsure about (n=11). Again, the use of symbols was not favoured by participants (n=11), although one respondent did claim to use all of these strategies when providing feedback.

9. In what ways have you benefited from peer feedback?
Participants highlighted a number of ways in which they have benefited from peer feedback. These included improvements in the surface features of grammar and spelling, the expansion of learners' vocabulary ranges, improved structure, organisation and coherence, and the ability to express the same idea in different ways. All of these have been offered by authors as among the potential advantages of peer feedback (Hansen & Liu 2005; Jun 2008; Tsui & Ng 2000). However, an interesting addition to this list was one participant's belief that peer feedback had improved their ability to apply problem-solving skills to their written work. This implies that the development of higher level critical thinking skills is a potential outcome of using peer feedback in writing classrooms. This is a connection that has been implied by Luca and McLoughlin (2002) in their belief that peer assessment and problem solving skills are

essential professional skills, though ones that could perhaps benefit from more explicit examination.

10. How do you feel about, or react to, your peers' feedback?

Most participants claimed to be satisfied with their peers' feedback, with many pointing out the opportunity this feedback allowed for developing a greater understanding of various aspects of their drafts. For example, one participant stated that, "I try to understand it first and then I may discuss it with them if I am not convinced by it. Finally, I try to apply their feedback next time", while another claimed that, "Very often I accept what they say, especially if they are very good at writing. Overall, I change what they say are errors".

Of those participants that felt negatively about their peers' feedback, some believed it to focus on areas that were not of significance to their drafts, while others felt disappointed with their own writing efforts. Examples here included, "Sometimes I don't like it since they focus on unimportant or unserious problems like spelling and punctuation and they perceive them as very critical", and, "Sometimes I'm disappointed that I had not written my work perfectly". Another respondent even highlighted the danger of a lack of objectivity in peer feedback by stating, "I accept it but I usually feel disappointed because they sometimes don't tell me the truth, they just flatter me". This is an issue that has been explored by a number of authors in relation to peer review and peer assessment, with training in appropriate techniques and an understanding of the purpose of the feedback often posited as ways of addressing this concern (Wood & Kurzel 2008).

11. How can peer feedback be improved?

In terms of ways of improving the use of peer feedback, many participants agreed with researchers such as Berg (1999) and Wood and Kurzel (2008) that specific training in applying peer feedback techniques, in addition to exposure to a greater variety of methods for conducting the peer feedback process, would be most beneficial. Typical of responses here is: "Having the teachers train students on how to give effective feedback, at least by writing on the board the aspects they should focus on when discussing their peers' writing such as coherence, and organization". This is a course of action that has also been supported by a number of Arab studies including Al-Shafie (1990), even if Al-Hazmi and Scholfield's (2007) findings raised questions about its effectiveness in the Arab context.

Other means of improving peer feedback offered by participants included emphasising its importance and goals, providing places on-campus where students can meet to evaluate each other's work, and performing it in groups

as opposed to pairs. While the importance of the first of these suggestions has been highlighted by Mangelsdorf (1992), the final suggestion is one that directly relates to the debate about optimal group size for peer feedback, with some claiming groups of three or four to be the most beneficial (Zhu 2001) and other supporting the strict use of feedback pairs (Hu 2005).

12. Please add your personal reflections on peer feedback.

The final item asked participants to add any further reflections on peer feedback that they believed were important, with most responses reinforcing participants' stances on whether feedback was a positive or negative technique. As largely predicted from the pattern of responses reported above, most participants highlighted the positive nature of peer feedback. Comments included "Feedback is very important. I used not to care about getting feedback from others, but after I studied the intensive courses, I have realised how important it is". While another participant stated that, "Most of the feedback we did was in credit classes. It was a helpful and interesting method at the same time. It encourages cooperation and communication between students in the classes and it makes it interactive".

However, from an opposing perspective, one respondent recalled how:

> In the last session when we reviewed our peer essays, I felt irritated by the feedback my peer gave me. She claimed that the essay I wrote was poorly written just because of some spelling mistakes. She ignored the content of the essay, the organization and the paragraphing which were perfectly done.

This concern again highlights the importance of training students in peer feedback techniques in order to allow them to move beyond strictly surface concerns (Hansen & Liu 2005).

6. Conclusion

Participant responses to questionnaire items indicated overall positive perceptions of peer feedback and a belief that it was mostly a beneficial technique that helped learners develop a greater understanding of various aspects of the writing process, improve their drafts, and gain different perspectives about idea generation and text structure. Despite this level of positivity, however, a small but significant number of participants claimed that peer feedback was only as valuable as the language level of their peers, and that this feedback too often focused exclusively on surface features of a text. Following these findings, a number of steps to make peer feedback a more valuable technique in Omani tertiary-level writing classrooms have been offered:

1. Ensure all students are aware of the purpose and goals of peer feedback, with a special focus on feedback as a collaborative, rather than competitive, process (Mangelsdorf 1992).
2. Ensure peers have similar levels of English-language proficiency (Hazmi & Scholfield 2007).
3. Introduce explicit training in peer feedback including guidelines, checklists, feedback, correction symbols etc. (Berg, 1999; Wood & Kurzel 2008).
4. Set aside regular class time to focus on peer feedback while also making consulting rooms available on-campus where peer pairs and groups can meet.

Implementing these steps will not only reinforce the value of peer feedback in contributing to the development of Omani tertiary-level students' English-language writing abilities, but will also help to directly address a number of concerns that some of these learners may have with this technique. In this way, Omani university students can continue to develop their writing skills in an environment in which they gain support from their instructors, universities and, perhaps most importantly, peers, thus helping create a community of learners that constantly seeks to improve itself through the collaborative building of knowledge.

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HOW TO EMPLOY METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY TRAINING FOR EAP READING

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1. Introduction

This training on metacognitive strategies was carried out at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) in order to help students with inferring meaning from academic reading texts. It provides an overview of the implications of adopting one of the metacognitive strategies - monitoring comprehension - in an upper-intermediate level EAP class.

2. My Aim

This exploratory teaching practice aimed at training students in learning metacognitive strategies to help them better comprehend academic texts in the target language. 15 Upper Intermediate students received training for 8 weeks on how to monitor their own reading comprehension via making inferences and paraphrasing.

3. The Tools Used

SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) and think-aloud protocols were used in order to collect data for needs analysis, to give training and evaluate the implications of the practice. CALLA (Cognitive Academic Learning Approach, Chamot and O'Malley,1996) was adopted during training. At the end of the course, the training had some implications on students' affective domain as well as their ability to cope with linguistic problems they encounter in texts.

The Implications on Learning

After the students received training and practice on monitoring comprehension, they realized the importance of focusing on meaning and the message in text. Rather than dealing with structures and lexis in isolation, they started to read between and beyond the lines by noticing the importance of relating sentences to each other using contextual clues. Until then, they would easily be intimidated by complex grammar structures and unknown words. Thus, they felt more confident and motivated to read. However, most of them still had difficulty in reformulating the information in the target language, thus they will need more training and practice in paraphrasing. Metacognitive strategies could also be practiced to improve other skills in order to see their long-term effects. Furthermore, training could be given to more students with different profiles to have a better idea of its effectiveness.

4. Why Metacognition?

It is an effective strategy that leads learners to be more self-directed and autonomous by helping them to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses (monitoring) and take action accordingly (self-regulation). When employed appropriately, it helps to increase fluency as well as creating more self-confident learners with increased motivation. As Kummin and Rahman say (2010) " Students with high achievement in English use more metacognitive strategies than students of low achievement in that language" by referring to a study by Wafa (2003). He continues "her findings show that high achievers are highly aware of their needs and seek more opportunities to practice English."

5. The Feedback I Got from the Members

The idea to use think-aloud protocols both as a training and evaluation tool to enhance inference skills was well received by the members of the audience. One of the members suggested that one alternative to live protocols could be to have students record their think-alouds if they are too shy to do it in the class in front of the teacher and their peers. A question that came was about whether the students were pre-taught the necessary morphological knowledge (such as referring to affixation as a guessing meaning strategy). Undoubtedly, students need to be equipped with adequate lexical awareness to be trained for metacognition as an aid to inference. Another important point discussed was that we need to bear in mind that inferencing can be one of the objectives for higher level learners such as upper-intermediate and pre-faculty and it is a strategy that might not be possible to be applied at lower levels or with young learners because metacognition requires higher-order thinking skills, which develops in later years. Also, leaners need to have and adequate amount of L2 knowledge before they can be trained to deduce meaning from context.

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