

**İNGİLİZCENİN YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRETİLDİĞİ
SINIFLARDA BİRİ BİZİ GÖZETLİYOR: ÖĞRENCİLERİN
KONUŞMA YETENEKLERİNİ GELİŞTİRMEK İÇİN KAMERA
SİSTEMİ PROJESİ**

**Big Brother is Watching Efl Classrooms: A Project on Supporting Students'
Speaking Skills with a Monitoring System**

Suna AKALIN

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Atatürk Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi,
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi
sunaakalin@yahoo.com

Özet

Bu makale öğrencinin konuşma becerilerini desteklemek için hazırlanmış bir projeyi açıklamak için yazılmıştır. Kamera sistemi ile bir sınıfta İngilizce'nin sürekli kullanımının sağlanması hedeflenmiştir. Öğrenciler hafta içi her gün öğleden sonar bu sınıfta kameraların kontrolü altında çeşitli aktiviteler sürdürmüşlerdir. Sınıfta kameraların olması, öğretmenin olmasından daha etkili bulunmuştur. Bu proje Atatürk Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Dil Eğitimi Bölümünde uygulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: gizil öğrenme, bireysel çalışma, kamera sistemi, konuşma

Abstract

This article aims to explain a Project on supporting students' speaking skills with a monitoring system. The monitoring system is aimed at controlling the usage of English continually in the afternoons, in weekdays, at a room which is being controlled by cameras. The absence of a teacher in the room is more comfortable than the cameras watching. This is a report of the Project implemented in the Department of teaching English, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey.

Keywords: implicit learning, self-access study, monitoring, speech

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the most recent language teaching methods, grammar knowledge should be reinforced by letting them practice as much as possible. However, the biggest problem our students have in the Department of Teaching English, School of Education, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey, is that they have little chances of practicing English outside of the classes. Speaking classes are in this sense not satisfactory enough since there is time limit and the authority of a teacher's existence hinders students' effective communication. Most of our students complain that they cannot do anything helpful during their free time and that they kill their free time in the

canteen. That's why we have set up a Project in which the students will go to the Speech Room in the afternoons, weekdays, and they will get the chance of using the target language as much as they want. Monitoring the room with cameras is only for the purpose that only the target language should be used in the room. No other intervention is necessary. This way the utmost need in the department of using the target language other than the classes will be mostly provided. Within the same Project, it is aimed that an interactive and flexible atmosphere should help our students learn the target culture and language in a more natural and authentic way. The activities students do and the interaction make it possible for them to know the target culture by means of the recent magazines and books and even newspapers and via the internet in order to get to the advanced fluency in the target language. Again in the same room the activities like teleconferencing with a class from a university abroad help our students get introduced to the target culture by interacting with their peers in that university. The purpose here is to provide a fluency and practicality in the daily language by getting to know better different cultures in a modern atmosphere with universal activities. The project has been offered by the Department of Teaching English, School of Education to the administration of Ataturk University in 2007 implementing a monitoring system of implicit learning, allowing for the provision of more tailored support than had previously been possible. This article tells about the implementation process of this Project and the data gathered from the students about the effective results of the Project.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some pedagogical reasons for considering non-traditional self-access support. Many researchers talk about the need for a bridge between 'public domain' learning as in a classroom, and 'private domain' learning (Reinders, 2007). Although classrooms shelter students from the outside world and provide a safe environment for learning, a more free atmosphere is needed for the potential to make links with the outside world through flexible access to a wide range of (possibly) more authentic materials and opportunities for practice. In practice, however, this does not always happen. In our case we wanted to take up the challenge of integrating English learning more into students' free time activities apart from the classroom activities by making study opportunities available more flexibly. Krashen claims that learners only learn through unconscious acquisition. Learning, he claims, which is conscious, does not lead to acquisition, which is unconscious, and acts only as a monitor (Krashen, 1982). Brown (1987) encourages language teachers to be more innovative by quoting: "*Numerous materials and techniques-readings, films, simulations games, role-plays,*

culture assimilators, 'culture capsules', and 'culturgrams'-are now available to language teachers to assist them in the process of acculturation in the classroom". On the other hand, more recently, **Varnosfadrani (2009)** claims that developmental early features are learned better with explicit correction and developmental late features with implicit correction. To be more moderate, we believe that explicit learning should be supported by some implicit activities in the advanced level and this may not be limited to classroom-limited activities. In our department, formal aspects of language are taught quiet successfully in the advanced level but the informal daily language cannot be fully conveyed to the students. At this point, the implementation of the speech room is of crucial importance.

3. THE SPEECH ROOM

We will now turn to a description of the Speech Room and its services. Our students have always claimed "a language laboratory" in the department and there has always been a demand for a space other than classrooms in which they could move around more freely and self-learn. Hypothetically, it was a great idea to encourage students to use more English and to offer a friendly and fun environment for them to do so using less formal types of language learning materials. Once the Project has been accepted by the administration, a dream has come true! After all the technological equipment was designed, the process of decorating the class with authentic materials has been put into application. It is still ongoing. Some people wouldn't like to be watched by a video, but that is different for everyone. As for measuring the effectiveness of this type of intervention, to do it justice, we felt we would have to have different measures of 'success'. Fluency would certainly be one of them (and we could perhaps find or create a test and compare students who used the room with those who did not, although it would be crucial (and difficult!) to control for external variables, such as their use of English outside the school), but I think we would also want to look at additional factors, such as 1) motivation and/or the students' own perceptions of their learning (e.g. do they enjoy their English learning more in this way), and 2) their autonomy - does using English in this way help them self-direct their learning? So we thought only a multi-faceted approach like this would fully do justice to our intervention. It would be challenging, but worthwhile. One important point to consider was what exactly our 'intervention' would be. Is it the activities the students engage in, in the room? Or is it the 'big brother' monitoring? We chose the latter type of intervention but this would be difficult to investigate. Some people may question the use of this type of monitoring as it seems to conflict with the more autonomy-oriented activities, and seems more like a classroom-type

environment; but it should be emphasized here that the intervention is limited only to warning the students when they use any other language but English! They can chat freely and move around the room as they want unless there is any offensive speech or aggressive action. The intervention is limited only to these two conditions. This also removes the tension of the existence of a teacher in the classroom and makes it possible for the teacher in the monitoring room to control the atmosphere without being actually in the classroom.

3.1 Services offered in the Speech Room

There are five main types of support offered at Speech Room. All weekdays in the afternoons, The students can make use of the Speech Room. The activities include satellite dish broadcasts of TV channels, BBC and CNN. Students enjoy free time by practicing English. Seminars and conferences can be given, students may prepare a subject beforehand to deliver a speech to the rest of the room, watching movies in English, meeting with classes from the target culture universities via the internet, using language learning materials in the room. Not all students make use of all. Many students only come to make use of the materials. Those with more complex learning needs are encouraged to watch movies without translation. There is no predetermined order in which students make use of these services. Some students only come to the movies and never use the materials, some use the materials first before meeting with the other students, and others hardly ever utter a word. Only being the class is enough for some of them.

4. RESEARCH

In measuring the effectiveness of this type of intervention, to do it justice, we felt we would have to have different measures of 'success'. Fluency would certainly be one of them (and we could perhaps find or create a test and compare students who used the room with those who did not, although it would be crucial (and difficult!) to control for external variables, such as their use of English outside the school), but we thought we would also want to look at additional factors, such as 1) motivation and/or the students' own perceptions of their learning (e.g. do they enjoy their English learning more in this way), and 2) their autonomy - does using English in this way help them self-direct their learning? So we thought only a multi-faceted approach like this would fully do justice to our intervention; leaving the quantitative

aspect at a later research, we have limited this study to the interviews with the students attending the room. The following are some samples from the students' reactions to the Speech Room that are more objectively written.

4.1. Students' Reactions

Student 1

Speaking is the most demanding and fundamental skill in learning a second language. And we can only acquire this skill while practicing it in the classroom. Because students in our country find little chance to practice it except in the classroom atmosphere. So, speech rooms constitute a great chance to for us to develop our ability in speaking.

Our country has undergone a radical change in language field for 20 years. It has been emphasized to us the importance of learning a second language, especially English, so as to we can earn our life and gain a prestige in front of others.

It has been crucial for us to see this room in our department. We develop a sense of self-confidence by participating in activities and speaking with each other without using our native language. One of our big problems is that we lack of self-confidence and we are afraid of making mistakes while speaking or conveying our feelings to the other side. A feeling of nothing to say and cannot get starting our speech constitutes a big problem in us and this feeling causes us to choose staying silent in speech activities and to ignore our feelings and thoughts while conversation taking place among them. In order to overcome this problem, we must make our involvement in speech room and we should participate in all activities took place there. We can only cope with this problem by practicing our target language not only in class but also some places such as speech rooms. During our stay in speech rooms we can get useful information and we must pay attention to our pronunciation as well while making sentences.

To sum up, unfortunately we haven't much more alternatives that we can develop our speaking but the existence of such places as speech rooms makes us feel comfortable and provides us a better education and ability in speaking.

Student 2

Speaking and listening are very important skills for language teaching. These are basic elements. We know all grammar rules. We solve the difficult questions. We can write whatever we want. But we cannot speak fluently and we do not understand what an English man says.

Before speech room, we could not practice. We hardly ever could watch a film. But now, we can speak in target language whenever we want. And we can watch films. Because of this, our speaking ability is improving too. In addition to this, we are improving our listening ability.

Speech room is one of the biggest chance of our faculty. But we cannot use it effectively. To my opinion, speech room should not be used as

a class. It is used for speaking and listening.

We should prepare some different activities:

Conversation clubs

Movies day (it is used now)

Discussion topics

Practicing activities

Phonetic aims

Student 3

I think that language departments are special departments and they should include special elements like listening rooms, videos, tapes, and speech rooms like our speech room that utilized in our department.

In fact a speech room includes all these elements; a tape, a video, microphones etc. In this room we may watch programs that are presented in Received Pronunciation, we may listen news that we listen news every day. So we may listen to the news in the target language and develop our listening skill. And we watch films in target language in this speech room on the other hand it is a good point that films are includes bottom – writings in the target language. So we can broth hear the pronunciation of words and see the words. So we can understand them easily.

And according to my knowledge our speech room has a satellite system. So there is a plan like watching the lessons of English native speakers. It will be very useful, interesting and enjoyable if this plan turns to real.

Student 4

In speech room, firstly we watch the BBC which is the news channel, so that we listen the language through the people whose mother language is English. Speaking Turkish is not allowed and this is good for us as felling compulsory to speak English. In my opinion, if we feel that we have to speak English, we improve our skill. We use the knowledge of vocabulary or grammatical rules so this makes ourselves feel improved. Listening skill is improved by watching the BBC channel that we can tell our friends what we have listened from the channel so we see how much we understand, also we can use the words that are used by the speaker so this means we can learn new vocabulary from there. We feel in the speech room as if we are in England and the friends, who are around us, are foreign people as all of us speak English. What makes us feel comfortable is the appropriate environment. We can speak while drinking tea. We can talk about what we did yesterday or what we heard from the news or else. We can use daily life language or formal language. Using daily life language, we can show how to use informal speech to our friends as we do not generally

learn the daily life language. For example, we listen to everyday life language from a movie, which we have watched, we use it comfortably. Or we can use the language formally as we have learnt from our teachers. We can share our feelings in English and that improves our language and makes us think in English. This is a fact that speech room is useful for us for improving our language and the room will be useful for the other friends.

Student 5

It is one of the best attempts that has been carried out in our English Language Department. This claim has lots of reasons.

One of the reasons of this claim is the necessity of a foreign language's speaking skill. And this skill is highly different from others despite the fact that it is impossible to divide the four skills of a language. But speaking is different one. Because from the very beginning stage of learning a foreign language students find themselves in an insecure environment when they are supposed to speak in the target language. And our speech room is a great opportunity for us to express ourselves without hesitation. Because no one judges us, no one criticizes us and no one tries to give rules in that speech room.

Another reason of the claim can be explained like this: speaking courses have pressure on the students. And in our Speech Room, no lecturer tries to lecture us to speak under pressure. The students are free and enter that room whenever they want in certain hours. It is possible for us to enter that room with our friends and speak in the target language.

A third reason is the different phenomena that the students experience. We feel ourselves as if we lived in a foreign country in which English is spoken as mother language. Because it is possible to watch great English programs with the latest technological devices. These devices provide the latest news in the world.

Forth one is the greatest design of the room. Colors, desks floor and the curtains make a person feel relaxed. Desks are comfortable, colors are eye-friend. And the curtains and the floor reflect luxury. These opportunities highly affect our emotions in a positive way.

Briefly, we, students and the teachers in the future, agree with the functions, beauty and necessity of the Speech Room. It lessens our anxiety, makes us feel in secure and gives an opportunity to feel ourselves in a good environment.

Student 6

As we know, little importance is given to speaking in our system. Most of the teachers focus on reading and writing. However listening and speaking are also important. Because, if we don't understand what people

say or if we can't answer their questions, we are not referred as the speakers of that language. I think, speech room is very useful for us. Because we can talk about ordinary things. We don't have to worry about mistakes. As we know most of the students are worried about making mistakes. They think that their friends will laugh at them. And also, the teacher is authority in classroom. However in speech room, there is no authority. We choose our topic and talk about it. As we know discourse is an important factor in second language acquisition. But we're in Turkey and we don't have the opportunity to talk English apart from school. However thanks to speech room, we can speak English with our friends in our spare times. We also have fun while speaking with each other. Along with these we can listen to the BBC in Speech room, we learn how the words are pronounced. And when we understand some sentences we have self-confidence. We think that we can understand some sentences. And the most enjoyable part of Speech Room, is watching English films. Most of us love watching films. So when we watch films, we learn the pronunciation of words. And also we can say our ideas about the films. We criticize about the films in English and learn our friends ideas about films.

Finally we can say that as little importance is given to the speaking and listening in our system speech room is very helpful for us we don't have to worry about the mistakes, there's no authority, we can talk about everything. And the most important thing is that, we have fun while making these activities.

Student 7

Speech room is requisite for our department we are attending the English Teaching department but we get no chance to talk English whenever we speak English on the floor, generally people may speak about us, foolish, etc. So as foreign language teacher, we won't speak English so speech room was built for this reason. Generally we have no opportunity to talk or speak English in our daily life We don't speak English very fluently or accuracy and then we'll become English teacher and then we learn English our students we are not adequately speaking English. So speech room is chance is for us. Our department gives importance to development of students both profession and personality. Since we are trying to be competent English teacher we can't discuss about importance of the speech room in it, we are free to speak English about everything. Only condition is to speak English. In fact our aim is to speak English fluently. With the help of this room we can express our feelings and ideas in English. We can overcome the interference of mother tongue in language process. With the speech room we have self confidence to achieve something in English.

More ever English broadcasting helps our pronunciation. We get a chance to learn correct pronunciation from the first source, BBC, furthermore our listening skill is developing . In short word, speech room helps us develop our four main language skill. Besides them, it helps us gain self confidence, express our feelings lover the level of anxiety and eliminate the inhibitions that we build to protect our ego, motivate us to learn English.

Student 8

Learning a first language is difficult from learning a second language. Learning the second language is more difficult and complex because of limited time, characteristics of mother tongue and limited fortunes in order to expose to foreign language.

English as a foreign language is generally given in our schools. When we heard an English song or see a film in English our family or friends ask us to say what they are saying. But we feel anxiety and uncomfortable. Because even if we understand what they are saying we cannot explain it, we cannot speak in English. Because in our school, only grammatical rules are given, we know what present tense is or what reported speech is. But we cannot speak.

So we need real situation in order to practice in English. Because in our lives we cannot speak with our family, our relatives or so on in English. Our English knowledge is only limited with classroom activities. We cannot generally practice our second language outside the class.

But in our department the Speech Room is constructed and in this way we can practice with our friends in English. There is relaxed atmosphere in the Speech Room. We feel comfortable in there. Also our teacher support us in this subject. Sometimes we can drink coffee or tea in the Speech Room. sometimes we can watch some films in English. In this way we can correct our pronunciation and we ca work together. We can help each other. I think in our department the Speech Room is a big opportunity for us, for learners.

Student 9

It is one of the best attempts that has been carried out in our English Language Department. This claim has lots of reasons.

One of the reasons of this claim is the necessity of a foreign language's speaking skill. And this skill is highly different from others despite the fact that it is impossible to divide the four skills of a language. But speaking is different one. Because from the very beginning stage of learning a foreign language, students find themselves in an insecure environment when they are supposed to speak in the target language. And our speech room is a great opportunity for us to Express ourselves without hesitation . Because no one judges us, no one criticize us and no one tries to

give rules in that speech room.

Another reason of the claim can be explained like this: speaking courses have pressure on the students. And in our Speech Room, no lecturer tries to lecture us to speak under pressure. The students are free and enter that room whenever they want in certain hours. It is possible for us to enter that room with our friends and speak in the target language.

A third reason is the different phenomena that the students experience. We feel ourselves as if we lived in a foreign country in which English is spoken as mother language. Because it is possible to watch great English programs with the latest technological devices. These devices provide the latest news in the world.

Forth one is the greatest design of the room. Colors, desks floor and the curtains make a person feel relaxed. Desks are comfortable, colors are eye-friend. And the curtains and the floor reflect luxury. These opportunities highly affect our emotions in a positive way.

Briefly, we, students and the teachers in the future, agree with the functions, beauty and necessity of the Speech Room. It lessens our anxiety, makes us feel in secure and gives an opportunity to feel ourselves in a good environment

Student 10

Language is a process that can develop through communication and interaction of people. The way we, people, can do it is, of course, speaking and listening. Writing and reading are also important for a language acquisition period. But without listening and speaking, it won't reach the satisfying degree.

To be able to increase language usage of the students, teachers of tomorrow, our department decided to utilize a room for only this aim. The room is always available for the students who want to speak English and improve their speaking and listening abilities. The room is named as Speech Room, only English used to make language a daily accent. Sometimes the students are laughed at when they do something unusual and speaking English out of class can be an example of it. Being laughed at is not a good feedback for students and as a result of this they do not speak and it means that language stays as a lesson in their lives. In this action, tea and coffee are presented to the students. Another purpose of this request is to put relaxed atmosphere for speaking. What the students say in the room is listened by Miss Akalın and when it is needed she can warn them about their mistakes. This factor, being watched and listened can sometimes cause anxiety and unwillingness. But on the other hand it is advantageous as the learners can see the right usage of language. The room serves the students wholly. But if

it were utilized for more individual usage, the participation might be more than now. But as the language is a process of communication, individuality will prevent students from interacting to each other. So general usage is more beneficial for practicing the language.

As conclusion, it can be said that the room is an advantage for the students in the department and their language practice. To be able to make it widely used, students should be more informed about it and there can be some activities which will take their attention.

5.CONCLUSION

Overall, the comments reflect a positive and encouraging attitude towards the activation of the room more fully in the department. The students all agree with the effectiveness of the project, though they may be individually reluctant to attend the sessions for reasons of being shy in interactive communication. The key concerns in self-access and implicit learning are to develop students' ability to learn autonomously and interactively, to raise their awareness, to motivate them, and a range of other outcomes that cannot easily be measured. This article helps us to get a comprehensive picture of the work students do in a flexible environment as in the Speech Room. By looking at how students respond for example to the prompts they receive from the Speech Room and whether or not their learning behavior changes over time, we can gauge changes in how students approach their independent language learning. By looking at how the students complete and revise their language learning as in speech and their needs we can identify changes in their awareness. Although much progress has been made, much exciting work still lies ahead.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. Douglas Principles of Language Learning and Teaching, Prentice Hall, 1987.
- Krashen, Stephen Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, Pergamon, Oxford (1982).
- Reinders, Hayo Big brother is helping you: Supporting self-access language learning with a student monitoring system, Volume 35(1), March 2007, Pages 93-111. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?>
- Varnosfadrani, Azizollah Dabaghi and Helen Basturkmen, The effectiveness of implicit and explicit error correction on learners' performance. Volume 37 (1), March 2009, Pages 82-98 .Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?>