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## **ANADİLİ ALMANCA OLAN BİR STAJYER ÖĞRETMEN TARAFINDAN UYGULANAN ALMANCA KONUŞMA SAATİ ETKİNLİĞİ HAKKINDAKİ ALMANCA ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN GÖRÜŞLERİ**

### **Özet**

Almanca Öğretmenliği bölümüne kayıtlı öğrenciler, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunun hazırlık sınıfında Almanca konuşma problemi yaşamaktadırlar. Duygu ve düşüncelerini yabancı bir dilde ifade etmekte zorlanmaktadırlar. Böylece, yabancı dilde konuşamamaktan şikayet edilmektedir. Bu amaçla, öğrencileri konuşmaya yönlendirmek, konuşma becerisi ve alışkanlığı kazandırmak, onları konuşmaya cesaretlendirmek ve öğrendiklerini uygulamaları için anadili Almanca olan ve Türkçe bilmeyen Üniversitemizde Erasmus kapsamında staj yapan öğretmenle sınıf dışında Almanca konuşma etkinliği düzenlendi. Bu etkinlik, ders ortamından uzakta kampüs içi bir kafede ders kitabından bağımsız olarak toplam üç hafta her hafta 1,5 saat boyunca devam etmiştir. Bu etkinliğe, Almanca hazırlık öğrencilerinden 7 kişi düzenli olarak gönüllü katıldı. Etkinlik hakkında öğrencilerin genel görüşlerini ve algılarını öğrenmek için 30 soruluk anket hazırlanmıştır. Öğrenci mülakat soruları ise ankete paralel olarak yapıldı. Her konuşma etkinliğinden sonra Alman stajyer öğretmen tarafından alan notları tutulmuştur. Katılımcıların çoğu, Almanca konuşma saati etkinliğinde anadili Almanca olan bir öğretmen ile iletişim kurmanın Almanca konuşma beceri-

lerini, dilbilgisi kullanımlarını ve kelime bilgilerini geliştirdiklerini söylemişlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yabancı Dil Öğrenimi, Konuşma Becerisi, Yabancı Dil Olarak Almanca Öğretimi, Almanca Hazırlık Sınıfı Öğrencileri, ders dışı etkinlikler

## THE VIEWS OF TURKISH STUDENTS LEARNING GERMAN ABOUT THE SPEAKING HOUR ACTIVITY CONDUCTED BY GERMAN INTERN TEACHER

### Abstract

The students, who are enrolled at German Preparatory Language Programme at the School of Foreign Languages, lack German speaking skills. To address this problem, we've designed extra-curricular German speaking activities. An ERASMUS+ exchange staff (a German trainee teacher of German as a foreign language) conducted out-of-class German speaking activities once a week for three weeks in total. Each speaking activity is lasted for 1,5 hours per week. 7 volunteered students of German language preparatory programme attended the speaking activity regularly. The activity took place at a cafe in the university campus. Three data collection tools were used. A questionnaire, which is an adapted version of Sabo's questionnaire, is applied. An interview is then held with each student on individual basis. The German trainee teacher took fieldnotes after each activity. Almost all students note that the opportunity to communicate in German enable them to improve their speaking skills, the use of grammatical rules and vocabulary.

**Keywords:** Learning a Foreign Language, Speaking Skills, Teaching German as a Foreign Language, Turkish Learners of German Language, extra-curricular activities

### INTRODUCTION

Sociocultural theory puts forward that education is not only about theories, but about teaching learners how they can learn on their own and continue to learn as well (Williams and Burden 1997). Vygotsky (1962: 150) states that "direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrot like repetition of words by the child, simulating a knowledge of the corresponding concepts but actually covering up a vacuum". Vygotsky's (1896-1934) socio-cultural theory has hugely affected the field of education. It would not be wrong to say that his most remarkable contribution to the field is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this section, we define the

terms 'ZPD' and 'scaffolding' and relate them with some prominent studies in the field of foreign language teaching.

Vygotsky (1978: 86) defines ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". The actual developmental level indicates a learner's level of mental development at a particular time and shows the functions that have already matured in the learner. The level of potential development refers to those functions that have not yet matured. The ZPD has been redefined by Ohta (2005) to fit in the educational setting. According to Ohta's version of ZPD, individual linguistic production determines the actual developmental level in foreign language classrooms. Language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer also shows individual's potential development level. Wertsch and Hikmann (1987 cited Ohta 2000) claim that teacher can only decide on a learner's ZPD by negotiating through collaborative interaction. This helps teacher notice what the learner can do on their own and with assistance. Knowing the limits of learners can help teacher encourage them to fulfil their potentials to the limits of their ZPD (Shayer 2002). Therefore, a teacher can decide on the level of scaffolding needed because scaffolding can be "used most effectively when it is tailored depending on learners' needs in response to learner development" (Lantolf and Aljaafreh 1996).

The scaffolding metaphor is used extensively in language teaching, and is defined as the process that enables learners to move from their actual developmental level to their potential developmental level is referred to as 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976). The eventual aim of scaffolding is that, when it is removed, the building will then stand on its own "learners become more capable of working independently (ibid.)". Scaffolding may be carried out by peers as well as by teachers (termed 'peer assistance' in Ohta 2001: 88).

This study is carried out with German preparation class students in School of Foreign Languages in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University. The main goal of the study is to reveal the views and perceptions of these students about the extracurricular German speaking activity by using a survey.

One of the major goals in language classes is to improve students' speaking skills so that students can use the target language (TL) effectively and efficiently. Although such a goal seems easy, actually this has been among the main problems experienced in language classes, especially in foreign language learning classes in which students have limited opportunities to use TL. Researchers have long been trying to find effec-

tive ways to overcome the problems that emerge while learning or teaching speaking skills. Recently researchers have proposed several activity types that have been proven to be effective in developing students' speaking skills. One of the possible activity types is the extracurricular activities which are carried out of classroom hours by native speakers (NSs) of TL and to which students can take part in voluntarily. Especially in foreign language learning environments this type of activity that allows students interact with NSs can be very useful.

In scope of this study, an extracurricular German speaking activity is carried out by a German intern teacher who is from German and speaks German as her mother tongue. Students who attend German preparatory classes in School of Foreign Languages in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University take part in this study. Since these students are in a foreign language learning program, they mostly have problems with using the language in interactive ways. Therefore, with this activity it is aimed to provide opportunities to students to practice their German and enable them develop their speaking skills.

## METHODOLOGY

In this current study, a mixed research design in which both qualitative research design was employed. To obtain data about students' views and perceptions, questionnaire which was developed by Sabo was utilized with some adaptations. This questionnaire consisted of 30 items. In addition, an in-depth interview was carried out as well. Both the questionnaire and the in-depth survey included statements and questions related to the students' personal views, ideas and approaches about the German speaking activity. The German speaking activity lasted for three weeks. Moreover, German intern teacher took logs during those three weeks to identify the problems encountered throughout the activities, the successful applications and her own ideas and feelings about the activities. Then, she evaluated her notes.

In this study, mainly students' views and perceptions related to the implementation of German speaking activities in which the development of students' speaking skills were aimed at. The data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews were transcribed, coded. And then categorized according to the above-mentioned aim.

## FINDINGS

### Views Related to the Teacher

Almost all the participants were thinking that the German speaking activity should be carried out by a NS of German. Five out of seven students found the German speaking activity which was designed in a student-centered way good. All the partici-

participants stated that they liked the spoke in German to the teacher and thought that this activity that enabled the development of communication skills instructive. Six out of seven participants thought that communicating with a NS of German developed their speaking skills and contributed their language and vocabulary knowledge positively.

### **Views about Teacher's Corrective Feedback**

Throughout the interviews participants were asked to state their opinions about teacher's correcting their mistakes. The majority of the students stated that they partially agree that teacher should correct their mistakes in terms of grammar and vocabulary. That is, it could be said that they were in favor of teacher correction. In addition, they also stated that they did not offended when they were corrected in front of their peers during this activity. Most of them stated that they preferred immediate feedback. Three of the participants agreed totally that they needed to be given a change to self-correction whereas four of them agreed partially in this issue.

### **Views about the Speaking Activity**

Four of the participants stated that they liked to work with another participant in pair activities in German speaking hour whereas three of them were indecisive. The majority of the participants (six) stated they liked small group activities (3-5 people) during the speaking hours. Moreover, almost all of the participants thought that this German speaking activity and the other activities like this could provide more opportunities to them to develop their speaking skills.

Participants were asked whether they felt more comfortable when they spoke to their peers in this speaking activity rather than speaking to the teacher in classroom. three out of seven participants partially agreed that they felt more comfortable while two of them totally disagreed. Other students either partially disagreed or were indecisive. However, all the participants wanted to interact with the teacher. Participants stated similar views in interviews and they stated that they wanted to interact with the teacher and they felt happier when they could. In addition, they thought that interacting with their peers during this speaking activity would help them improve their speaking abilities as well.

### **Views Related to Peer Correction**

The participants were also asked how they felt during the speaking activities when they had been corrected by their peers. In terms of correction of grammatical mistakes, two out of seven participants stated that they did not feel bad. Two of them agreed partially whereas one of the participants did not agree totally. In terms of peer correction of vocabulary mistakes, four participants stated that they did not have prob-

lems with it whereas three of them disagreed this. When the data were investigated according to the peer correction of pronunciation mistakes, a similar tendency was observed.

In German speaking activity, participants were asked to state their level of agreement on the statement “the person who should correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation mistakes could only be corrected by the teacher herself.” Only one of the participants agreed totally to the statement whereas half of the remaining students disagreed totally and the other half disagreed partially. That is, they thought that mistakes should be corrected by the teacher not by peers. Almost all of the students thought that peers should help each other by showing the grammatical and pronunciation mistakes and wrong vocabulary selection.

The majority of the students, who took part in the activity, stated that at the German speaking hour activity, they felt the need to get help from the classmates to correct their grammatical, lexical and pronunciation mistakes.

### **Interview Results about the German Speaking Hour Activity**

#### **a. Number of Students in a Group**

Almost all of the participants (six students) found the number of people in the German speaking hour activity to be between 1-5 was adequate. They thought that if there are fewer people in the group, they would be able to talk more in a certain period of activity hour. They also stated that they would have more opportunities to self-correct their mistakes and the duration of conversation would be for a longer period of time.

#### **b. The Use of Coursebook**

As an answer to the question “Would you prefer having a speaking lesson based on the coursebook or on daily language”, six of the seven students responded that they preferred a speaking activity designed independently from a coursebook. A student pointed out that both approaches were appropriate. It may be concluded from students’ replies that they needed to be up-to-date in daily issues and wanted to feel free from grammatical rules in order to maintain spontaneous talk in the speaking activity. Some students suggested that such a speaking activity should be based on the coursebook if it was applied at the preparatory school. On the contrary, such a speaking activity should be independent from the coursebook if it would continue at the Faculty of Education after finishing the prep school.

### **c. Use of Teaching/Learning Materials**

Almost all of the students found it convenient to use electronic dictionary, smart phones/ internet connection during the speaking activity. Yet, students also suggested that communication will take place without smart phones. Six students noted that the use of coursebook was unnecessarily at a speaking lesson.

### **d. Out of Class Time**

All students participating in the activity found it more effective when it was conducted at somewhere else other than the classroom and as an extra-curricular activity excluded from the class time. They stated that they felt more comfortable and relaxed in this way. They also described the atmosphere as more friendly than the ones conducted in the classroom.

### **e. Homework**

6 students from 7 did not want a homework to be a requirement of the speaking activity. In other words, almost all of the students, who participated in the German speaking activity, did not find the paper/homework suitable for this type of activity. They realised that feeling comfortable was necessary in such an activity in order to provide spontaneity and practicality. Therefore, any kinds of homework would restrict them in having an opportunity to speak freely.

### **f. Use of Mothertongue**

Students participating in the German speaking activity have become aware that this is a German-only speaking activity. Almost all of the students, who participated in the activity, used Turkish as little as possible if none at all. They emphasized that the purpose of the speaking activity was mainly to practise German: 'The more they speak German, the better they are'. Thus, they believed that it was useful for them to use German-only policy at the speaking activity.

### **g. Use of Turkish in Group Work**

Most of the students, who participated in the activity, said that it was useful to use the mothertongue (i.e., Turkish) in group work discussions. Using the mother-tongue was considered as an aid for learning German within the group and thus they stated that they saved time. Participants, on the other hand, thought that some of them would learn more words in the target language if they did not use Turkish.

### **h. Content/Topics**

The students, who participated in the activity of the German speaking course, expressed their views on the topic selection. The majority of students found it important that everyday topics, cultural information (cinema, books, music, theater, hobbies, etc.) and especially knowledge about the German-speaking countries should be involved in the speaking activity. Students wanted to talk also about nature and environmental problems in the target language.

#### **i. Native Teacher**

Six of the seven students mentioned that having a German teacher, who did not know any Turkish, was an advantage in such a speaking activity. At first they asserted that they were compelled, but then they were accustomed to this situation and were forced to talk in German by which they learned better. At the same time, the students tried to express Turkish culture by using German to share information between the teacher whose mothertongue was German. This could be considered as a meaningful opportunity to use a language. To sum up, the fact that the teacher could not speak Turkish did not leave a negative impression on the student.

#### **j. Time**

Participants wanted to have a longer duration of speaking activity in German. Six of the seven students hoped that it continued for two semesters throughout the course of education and that it should be continued at the Faculty of Education after finishing at the prep school. They stated that they could make a better progress when the activity lasted longer. Participants were asked how often they found it appropriate to meet a foreign language speaking activity. They expressed that 1.5 hours a week was too short for such a speaking activity and it should be designed for at least two hours a week. The more frequent and longer the speaking activities are, better for them. They also stated that the speaking activities could be arranged once every two weeks for a year.

#### **k. Difficulties in Speaking German**

While speaking German as a foreign language in the German speaking activity, the students, who participated most actively, expressed the lack of vocabulary knowledge and realized their language deficiencies. Some also stated that they had a lack of grammar knowledge as well as problems in pronunciation. They emphasized the lack of vocabulary knowledge and the difficulty they experienced in constructing sentences in German. All of the students, who participated in the German speaking activity, said they felt enthusiastic, motivated and comfortable while speaking in this activity. Even though they were excited at the beginning, they said that they beat it and



they felt good, safe and happy as time went by. While learning to communicate with a foreign teacher, participants were also motivated by the target language. Meanwhile, participants struggled to learn the culture of the target language. As one of the participants stated: “We did not speak very well, but at least we understood” (Learner X).

## CONCLUSION

German speaking activity mainly focused on improving participants’ speaking skills both in and out of the classroom environments. In this activity, participants not only found the chance to develop their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge and pronunciation but also had found the chance to develop their intercultural competence by learning about NSs’ behaviors and attitudes. This activity had led participants to use the TL by providing a supportive environment. According to the data obtained from the survey, participants found this kind of German speaking activity useful especially when it was carried out by a German lecturer. Moreover, they added that in the long-term they could improve their speaking skills in a better way. To be able to interact with a NS lecturer made them happy. Accordingly, it could be stated that thanks to the activity participants’ awareness about the significance of practicing the TL had raised. It could also be stated that participants found the extracurricular nature of the activity which did not include any assignments and freed from course books beneficial. They pointed out that in this way the activity did not increase their anxiety and provided a friendly and peaceful learning environment in which they could express themselves freely. That is, practicing what they had learned together with a German NS motivated them. Since the lecturer did not speak any Turkish, they had to use German, and participants found this beneficial. Another issue that participants liked was the application of small group activities which took relatively long time. Thanks to this speaking activity participants realized that one of the basic problems that they were facing was the lack of enough vocabulary. In addition to curricular activities carrying out extracurricular speaking activities provided participants authentic environments in which they could use TL. It is thought that lecturer’s being a NS of German helped them as well. Because the only way to get into contact with the lecturer was using German which was also reflected in both students’ interview results and lecturer’s logs. It is thought that this kind of authentic speaking activities focusing on the interaction between lecturer and the participants by means of TL was an efficient way of learning speaking. Mostly, participants’ levels of proficiencies were A2 according to the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR), students were able to overcome the problems by using dictionaries or gestures and mimics and they could express themselves. This encouraged them to use the language to communicate as well. The main goal of this speaking activity was to enable participants use TL outside the

classroom environment. In this respect, it was thought that a lecturer who was a NS of German and who carried out speaking clubs could help participants improve their speaking skills.

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