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**THE EFFECT OF USING DIFFERENT KINDS OF ICE- BREAKERS ON  
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' SPEAKING ABILITY<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract**

In this study the effects of ice breakers as a classroom activity on Foreign Language Speaking Production has been investigated. Participants of the study were one hundred Turkish EFL students from the American Culture Institute, Erzurum, Turkey who were selected after following the English standard speaking test (IELTS). Afterwards, they were divided into two groups in random manner; the experimental group and the control group. Students of both groups had to speak about some topics that were considered as their pre-tests and post-tests. The scores were analyzed through SPSS by applying normality test, correlation test, and independent sample t-test. The findings revealed that participants in the experimental group, who had received the treatments on ice breakers, significantly enhanced better performance in a speaking test.

**Keywords:** Speaking skill, Ice-breaker, Placebo, Treatment, Language learning.

**Özet**

Bu çalışma, yabancı dil konuşma üretiminde bir sınıf aktivitesi olarak kaynaştırma tekniklerinin etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu etkileri göstermek için IELTS sınavı müteakip Türkiye, Erzurum Amerikan Kültür Derneği'nden İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen yüz Türk öğrenci seçildi. Daha sonra bu öğrenciler kaynaştırma tekniklerinin uygulamasını alan deney grubu ve plasebo alan kontrol grubu olarak rastgele ikiye bölündü. Kendileri için ön test ve art test olarak düşünülen bazı konular hakkında konuşmak zorundaydılar. Puanlar; normallik testi, korelasyon testi ve bağımsız örnek test uygulanarak SPSS aracılığıyla analiz edildi. Bulgular kaynaştırma teknikleri uygulamaları alan deney grubu katılımcılarının konuşma testinde önemli derecede daha iyi performans gösterdiklerini açığa çıkardı.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Konuşma Becerisi, Kaynaştırma Tekniği, Plasebo işlem, İşlem, dil öğrenme

**INTRODUCTION**

Recently the speaking skill is considered the most important one for foreign learners; however, as studies clarify, generally, there are not enough useful speaking activities for adult upper- intermediate EFL learners to improve their oral ability. While trying to speak English, most of the learners try to translate from their mother tongue to the target language. Others try to skip speaking and find it stressful. To solve these kinds of problems in fluent speaking, teachers can apply ice-breaking strategies to stay away from major part of problem in oral

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communication, even among adult and advanced EFL learners and avoid translation and encourage students to spontaneously speak without translation.

Shumin (1997) states that all skills have the same degree of importance and speaking is as important as other skills. He says that to speak a foreign language, learning its grammar and vocabulary is not enough. He mentioned "interaction" as a crucial requirement in acquisition of speaking a foreign language. He also added that classroom environment, because of its limited practical usage, is not enough for learning speaking.

Dover (2004) considers ice breakers as "discussion questions" or "interaction activities" that can be used to help learners to learn to speak easily and enjoyably. He believes that developing an environment which decreases students' anxiety, "breaks the ice" between learners and learning with fun activities is the primary goal of ice breakers.

Pillai (2007) mentions the purpose of ice breakers as helping new and shy students to strike a conversation by developing communication skills and team building, breaking cultural barriers among students, promoting a sense of trust and friendship among them, encouraging, and preparing them to learn by stimulating their minds and/or their bodies.

Forbes-Greene (1982) defines icebreakers as "tools" that can be used in fostering the interaction among learners, encouraging "creative thinking", discussing about important assumptions, explaining new topics, and explaining particular information. According to Varvel (2002) ice breaker is an activity used to help individual ease into the group setting. Also, Wright (1999) defines ice breaker as opening communication among students as between teacher and students.

Jenkins (2001) argues that ice breaker should be dynamic and simple so as to satisfy students' need to establish an appropriate social relationship with other students and teachers and also preview the style and content of the classroom event.

According to Sapp (2007), principles of successful ice breakers are as follows:

- 1- Simple
- 2- Non-threatening
- 3- Open ended
- 4- Relevant
- 5- Energizing

Witkowski (2000) states that some elements should be considered in designing an appropriate ice breaker in the classroom. He listed these elements as follow:

- 1- Objective
- 2- Audience
- 3- Time management
- 4- Control

In reality, students' success in class depends mostly on how well the teacher breaks the ice among them. From this point of view, English teachers should take more attention about the methodology they can claim in their classes and try to improve their teaching ability.

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## **Purpose of the Study**

From skills point of view, speaking coherently and fluently is perhaps the most important thing for EFL learners. This study investigates ice breaking tasks as activities that are likely to play an important role in improving speaking ability of EFL learners. The primary question this study tries to answer is whether or not providing students with ice breaking tasks as their class activities can exert any impact on their speaking skill. Peterson (2010), states that if teachers start their lesson plan with a five-minute ice breaker activity, it will cause students to focus on the topic, start "creative thinking" and try learning in a new way. Leblanc (2011) confirms that by doing ice breaking activities students will lose their interest for the outside world and will focus on the lesson. So, after doing an ice breaking activity each student is going to be able to concentrate on their language lesson issue and as the result, learning will be more useful. Finally, it will be easier for teacher to reach each student and in this way the teacher can facilitate the way that students will attain their language learning goals.

Generally, in every classroom, there are students who are silent most of the time and they prefer to let others participate and do the activities. By encouraging students to participate in enjoyable and low risk ice breaking activities they, will be more successful in learning process.

Based on the problems and purpose of study, the following research questions were proposed:

- 1- Does providing students with ice- breaking tasks have any effect on their speaking ability?
- 2- To what extent ice-breakers improve speaking?

## **Teaching speaking in EFL classroom**

Learning English as a foreign language is difficult, because it cannot be learned naturally as learners' mother tongue. Although learning a foreign language means developing all language skills about related language, usually nowadays developing the ability of real communication in English is the main goal of English language courses. Thornbury (1997) stated that in people's daily life, speaking is pretty important and any average person produces thousands of words per day. He said that the process of arranging vocabulary and grammar often is not automatic. Learners first formulate the utterances in their first L1 and then interpret it into the target language. In addition, pressure to be accurate causes overuses of self-monitoring, which will have a negative effect in fluency. So, teaching speaking needs students' continuous practice. In teaching, speaking teacher has to be able to control the classroom in a way to avoid students' boredom. Therefore, teacher needs to be creative in choosing appropriate speaking activities and establishing a fun and interesting environment in learning process. Harmer (2004) considers some major roles for teachers in teaching speaking. Teacher can play such roles as prompter, participant, and feedback provider. As a prompter, teacher can help students who lost fluency and also they do not know what to say next (Harmer, 2004). Harmer also mentions that as a participant, teacher can participate in activities, and encourage students to continue engagement and maintain creative atmosphere. However, in such conditions teacher has to be careful not to do over-participation in activities. As a feedback provider, teacher can help students to avoid misunderstanding and hesitation in speaking activities. Harmer (2004) emphasizes that for being effective in teaching speaking teacher must use good techniques and/or strategies.

Interesting activities will make students more active and enthusiastic. Brown (2001) takes some principles into consideration in choosing techniques for teaching speaking. He believes techniques must cover:

- The spectrum of learner needs, based on accuracy and fluency.
- Encourage the use of language in meaningful contexts.
- Provide intrinsically motivating techniques. For this purpose they must consider ultimate goals and interests, and also their need and knowledge.
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction for ESL situation.
- Give students opportunities to start oral communication and interaction.
- Encourage students to develop their own speaking strategies.

According to Linse (2005) the most important feature of learning speaking is to provide an authentic opportunity for students to get knowledge and apply it in their daily life. Linse considers four techniques that can be applied in speaking class (2005):

- a. Audio-lingual method (ALM)
- b. Using puppets for dialogues introduction.
- c. Fishbowl techniques.
- d. Games

There are also many other activities that can be applied for teaching speaking. Those activities are as: role-plays, group discussions, acting from a script, communication games, prepared talks, songs, tongue twisters, and a lot of other ice-breaking activities.

### **Language Proficiency**

Language proficiency from Richards, Schmidt, Schmidt and Plat's (1992) point of view, can be a person's talent in employing a language for a particular purpose. Stern (1991) asserts that native speakers use an internal system, structure, a network schema, or first language proficiency and by this means convey meaning through utterances.

Proficiency in two languages, maybe best described as what Cummins (1980) has with competence, referred to as "dual iceberg" phenomenon, which shows underlying common and language specific element of every individual.

One of the best known rating scales for language proficiency is that of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (1970).

"It distinguishes four categories of proficiency: novice, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and superior. These levels are characterized generally in the following way;

*Novice:* a non-survivor; depends on memorized materials; only reacts, does not initiate.

*Intermediate:* a survivor; can produce own language, although with several errors; can ask and answer questions; discuss daily events.

*Upper-intermediate:* limited professional competence; can narrate, describe, and compare in any time frame; can state opinions.

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*Superior*: full professional competence; can go outside limited areas of competence and discuss a wide range of topics; can hypothesize and deal with abstract topics. "

In this study learners are at upper-intermediate level of language proficiency.

### **Ice-breakers and Principles of ice-breaker activity**

Motivating students in a course is essential to the success of the course. It is important to break the ice of students in a positive way by making sure that all of the participants feel comfortable. The activities the teacher uses at the suitable time to bring about more motivation among the participants are considered as icebreakers. Ice-breakers clear the way for learning by encouraging learners and making them more comfortable.

Forbes- Greene (1982) defined ice- breakers as the reception of corrective or evaluative information from the original sources, and as a secret means for sharing personal thoughts and/or feelings. Furthermore, Preziosi (1980) stated that ice-breaker activities involving the use of media, physical activity and other brain teaser activities, can be perfect ways of breaking the ice. Rodriques (1982) believes that ice-breakers must create an environment that is not only fun, but allows the students to be energized and motivated at the same time. Varel (2002) defined ice-breakers as activities or modes of discussion used to help individuals ease into the group setting. According to Wright (1999), ice-breakers are structured activities which are designed to "relax learners, introduce them to each other, and energize them in formal atmosphere or situation".

In addition, ice-breakers are defined as tools that enable the group leader to make interaction quicker, encourage creative thinking, challenge fundamental assumptions, illustrate new ideas, and introduce new material. There are different kinds of ice-breakers and when designing an ice- breaker, the teacher ought to think about the "ice" that needs to be broken.

Some of the researchers and teachers such as Siegenthaler (2007) consider warm-up and ice-breaker the same. On the other hand, some other ones such as Clark (1998) believe that ice-breaker is not related to the subject matter, whereas "openers" are related to the subject matter. Ice- breakers can be used as openers to motivate learners toward lesson. They can be used in the middle of a session to refresh the situation and get the concentration back. And they can also be used at the end of the lesson to confirm or review the material (Kanu, 2011).

Following are principles of a successful ice-breaker according to Witkowski (2000):

1. Objectives: An ice-breaker must be in line with the material given.
2. Audience: Ages and abilities of participants must be considered as an important factor.
3. Time Management: An ice-breaker may take 20 minutes with a group of eight but could end up being over an hour with a group of 20.
4. Control: Control the ice-breaker. Ice-breakers are short, fun activities to liven up and relax students not create a carnival-type atmosphere.

A good ice-breaker is specifically focused on objectives of students involved. Jenkins (2001) argues that the ice-breakers should be dynamic and simple. He states that at the beginning of a program, every student is insecure about other students and his or her place in the group. By using a good ice-breaker, a teacher provides students with an opportunity to start

communication. Jenkins (2001) believes that ice-breakers have to be simple, i.e. the length of the ice-breaker should not be too long or too short. Sapp (2007) further states the principles of ice-breakers as:

1. Simple: The simpler, the better.
2. Non- threatening: Ice- breakers should not make people feel uncomfortable.
3. Open ended: The uniqueness of students must be allowed to be expressed.
4. Relevant: The needs of the group and purpose of the lesson must be taken into account in choosing the types of ice-breakers.
5. Energizing: Ice-breakers should excite students according to their level of activity.

Ice-breaker activities provide students the opportunity to interact with each other, share and discuss their perspectives about every lesson, but also take them a step further, helping them to learn what it means to be successful and happy at school. Rodrigues (1982) believes that teachers need an activity to break the ice – turn up the temperature and ensure that they will create an environment that is not only fun, but allows the students to be energized and motivated at the same time. She clarifies that ice-breaker and warm-up activities are similar to each other and can be used at any time to get the brain going. Rodrigues (1982) states that when thinking about ice-breaker or warm-up, the key to be successful is to make sure that it will suit the environment students are in and meet their objectives.

Teachers, who organize and conduct the tasks and evaluate students' performance, have the main role in reducing speaking anxiety of learners (Hilleson, 1996; Riasiti, 2011; Subasi, 2010). According to Richards and Rogers (2001), using implementations of humanistic approaches such as "silent way, total physical response, suggestopedia, and community language teaching may have positive effects in improving students' speaking ability" (p.16).

There are several studies that have shown there is a direct relationship between students' participation and their tutorial accomplishment (Lim, 1992; Wudong, 1994; Zhou, 1991). Krupa-Kwiatowski (1998) also, proved in her study that ice-breaking activities cause participation, personal encouragement, and also trigger cognitive processes in language learning.

Tsou (2005) mentioned in his article that a number of the researchers (Hanania and Gradman, 1977; Krashen, 1982; Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982; Rodriguez, 1982) agree about the existence of a natural silent period in language acquisition that may be helpful in the learning process, however some others (Eliss, 1999; Gibbons, 1985) afflict with the beneficial result of the silent period. Tsou (2005) also found plenty of studies within the field of acquisition (Elis, 1988, 1993, 1999; Ely, 1986; Gomez, 1995; King, 1993; Seliger, 1977; Spada, 1986; Long, 1981; Swain, 1985, Tsui, 1992; Wagner- Gough and Hatch, 1975) which specialize in students' oral participation in the classroom. He mentioned Swains' "output hypothesis" (1985) as an instance and claimed that learners need some activities and tasks for significant use of their linguistic resources.

The conduction and selection of activities according to students' interests and level of proficiency is pretty important (Abdullah & Abdulrahman, 2010). Keeping in mind that each

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learning situation is unique and the problems faced may differ from one situation to another, different kinds of ice- breaking activities should be offered by different researchers.

The ice-breakers which were used during this research study included different kinds of “Tongue- twisters, English games, Code- switching or Code-mixing, and English Songs”.

Stuckeys (2009) defines “*tongue-twisters*” as words, phrases, or sentences that are tough to mention because there are varied mixture of similar sounds in most of them. He says that although they can be very challenging, are motivating and fun to learn as well. Tongue- twisters reinforce newly acquired articulation skills and also improve self-monitoring skill. Stuckeys also uses tongue- twisters in speech therapy (2009). He says that tongue- twisters can offer a variety of opportunities to practice a speech or language goals such as "auditory discrimination, fluency and voice".

About the “*English games*” Generally, most of the teachers consider English games as a waste of time, but there are evidences that they are very useful. For example, Piaget (1962) believed that plays and technology-based games have a crucial role in learning new skills. Deesri (2002) stated that games contain factors as rules, completion and fun relaxation which result in improving students' speaking ability. He mentioned that games encourage students to have a friendly competition and real communication. Using games as a teaching tool for teaching new vocabulary and grammar decreases students' stress and fosters communication practice.

According to Yeganehpour (2012), over the past decades, increasing interest in different aspects of “*code-switching*” has triggered a variety of investigations, and theoretical discussions have added new information to our understanding of bilingual speech behavior. English language teachers who use monolingual strategy in their teaching methods have been insisted on reducing or even rooting out students’ mother tongue in the classroom. The justification for this can be maximizing the amount of time for using the target code, and thus improving efficiency of language acquisition. But, it seems that there is still no empirical proof to support the notion that utterly limiting the utilization of mother tongue would essentially improve learning efficiency (Yeganehpour, 2012).

Generally, changing the languages during the class time is a pervasive phenomenon in foreign language classrooms. Nunan and Carter (2001) briefly define the term as “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse” (p. 93). According to Grosjean (1982), speakers use code-switching as a strategy in the classroom to make better interaction with their classmates.

Gardner (1983) in his famous multiple intelligence theory introduced music as an intelligence and said that teachers by using “*songs*” through the curriculum can greatly develop musical intelligence. Hasani, Rahmani, and Afsharfard (2014) studied the effect of songs on upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners. The results showed that performance of the students who used songs in their learning materials are much better than the other group who received spoken text. Martin (1983) and MC Carthey (1985) pointed out that music can help in acquiring all linguistic skills (Writing, Speaking, Reading, and Listening). Horwitz (1986) claimed that it may be easier for learners to learn skills of language but while learning speaking

they have mental block against it. So, teachers must use useful tools for removing this mental block. They said that music by decreasing anxiety breaks this mental block.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Setting

This research was conducted at American Culture Institute of Erzurum branch, Turkey. Students' age range was of 20-27, and their average age was about 22 years and 2 months. They were both male and female and all of them were foreign language learners of English. Following sample speaking tests of International English Language Testing System (IELTS), upper-intermediate level learners were chosen for the study.

The data were collected during some steps. These steps include preliminary visit, contacting the headmaster and asking the data about the students as participants, visiting the teachers giving the pre-test, giving the treatment, and giving the post-test.

### Participants

The type of sampling employed in this study was the available group sampling. That is, the unit of selection was not an individual, but two groups of individuals being randomized from several groups, i.e. from all the upper-intermediate language proficiency EFL learners' classes at American Culture Institute of Erzurum Branch, Turkey. Our target sample of learners consisted of one hundred participants.

They were divided into ten classes and the resultant sample comprised of classes with ten students in each, which means all groups were at upper-intermediate language proficiency level with one hundred male and female students (50 male and 50 female).

### Variables and Indicators of the Research

Generally there are two kinds of variables in most of the experimental research studies: dependent and independent variable (Kerlinger, 1986). According to Payne and Payne (2004) variables are the objects of the study that become research focus. Independent variable is considered as the cause, whereas dependent variable is considered as the effect. So, in this study, we considered two variables: independent and dependent. Independent variable refers to using ice- breaking activities. Dependent variable refers to the achievement of the students in speaking fluently.

### Scoring Technique

The sample IELTS speaking test was given to the students to analyze their abilities on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Analytical scoring of speaking was based on “*Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*”, (Brown, 2004).

### Procedure

At first step a pilot study was conducted to determine whether or not the items and the scales demand any modifications. The results of pilot test proved the positive effect of using ice-breaker activities in improving adult Turkish EFL learners speaking skill. Then, on the basis of the result, one hundred students, whose homogeneities were confirmed beforehand, were selected and divided into two groups of the control and experimental. As a next step, the



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pre-test of speaking test was taken of both the experimental and control group to ensure that both groups were in the same speaking level. Speaking test was chosen from IELTS sample questions.

During the study both groups attended English classes twice a week throughout the term (about 9 weeks, 3 hours per day). The teachers were different, but both of them used the same book in teaching (Travelers, B2, 2012). Each unit started with a topic page, including the topic of the unit and related pictures. This page gives useful hints to teacher to choose the appropriate kind of brainstorming and ice-breaking activities. In the experimental group, the teacher gave the participants ice-breaking to motivate them for participation, however, participants of control group just used activities which were given in their books.

After seventeen sessions, a similar IELTS sample speaking test was given as a post test. The collected data were carefully examined and contrasted using the normality test, correlation test, and independent-sample-T-test to notice whether would be any considerable difference between two groups.

**Data Analysis**

At the first step, normality test was used to check whether both groups were normally distributed.

Table.1.

*Case Processing Summary of Groups*

Group		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>Previous test scores</b>	<b>Experimental group</b>	50	100.0%	0	0.0%	50	100.0%
	<b>Control group</b>	50	100.0%	0	0.0%	50	100.0%

Table.2.

Statistical Descriptive of Groups

GROUP		Statistic	Std. Error	
<b>Previous test scores</b>	<b>Experimental group</b>	Mean	79.3000	
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	77.2336
			Upper Bound	81.3664
		5% Trimmed Mean	79.4222	
		Median	80.0000	
		Variance	52.867	
		Std. Deviation	7.27099	
		Minimum	65.00	
		Maximum	92.00	

<b>Control group</b>	Range	27.00		
	Interquartile Range	12.25		
	Skewness	-.189	.337	
	Kurtosis	-.983	.662	
	Mean	77.6600	.95772	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	75.7354	
		Upper Bound	79.5846	
	5% Trimmed Mean	77.6444		
	Median	78.0000		
	Variance	45.862		
	Std. Deviation	6.77212		
	Minimum	65.00		
	Maximum	90.00		
	Range	25.00		
	Interquartile Range	10.00		
	Skewness	.137	.337	
	Kurtosis	-.610	.662	

Tables 1. and 2. show the general view of two groups before treatment. Table 1. shows numbers and percentages of participants in both experimental and control groups. In Table 2., first focus is on Skewness and Kurtosis. The numbers in the left column are measures and standard deviations are in the right column. As Löfgren (2013) indicates, in SPSS, "Skewness and Kurtosis measures should be as close to zero as possible. In fact, most of the times data are skewed and kurtotic, but a small departure from zero does not make problem, as long as the measures are not too large compared to their standard errors" (Löfgren, 2013). As a consequence the researcher divided the measure by its standard errors in each case and results showed z-values which should be between -1.96 and +1.96.

Skewness for experimental group = -0.560

Kurtosis for experimental group = -1.41

Skewness for control group = 0.406

Kurtosis for control group = -0.921

These values are neither below -1.96 nor above +1.96. So, regarding skewness and kurtosis, data are a little skewed and kurtotic in both experimental and control group but their normality is acceptable. The researcher can assume that the data are normally distributed in terms of skewness and kurtosis.

The Table 3. represents Shapiro-Wilk's statistics.

Table.3.

*Tests of Normality for Groups*

<b>Group</b>	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.

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Previous test score	Experimental group	.101	50	.200*	.960	50	.088
	Control group	.091	50	.200*	.964	50	.132

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

According to the test of normality, the data must be normally distributed. So, if the p-value is below 0.05, the data are not distributed normally. In SPSS the p-value is labeled as "sig". According to Table 3. , in this case, p-value for experimental group is 0.088 and for control group it is 0.132. Both of them are above 0.05. So, we can conclude that the data are approximately normally distributed.

In the beginning of the semester a pre-test that consisted of sample IELTS speaking questions, was given to participants to measure their speaking ability. Then a similar test was given as a post-test at the end of semester to measure the amount of progress in both experimental and control groups.

Because scores of pre-test and post-test were given by two raters, estimating the inter-rater reliability was necessary for determining reliability of scores. Pearson correlation test was used for this purpose. Table 4. and 5. show that correlations between the scores of the raters are significant at levels below 0.01 which, obviously, means the raters were in agreement over the achievements of the participants.

Table.4.

*Correlations of Inter-Rater Reliability (Pre-Test)*

		PRE-TEST	PRE-TEST-2ND RATER
Pre-test	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Pre-test-2 <sup>nd</sup> rater	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	188

Table.5.

*Correlations of Inter-Rater Reliability (Post-Test)*

		POST-TEST	POST-TEST-2ND RATER
Post-test	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Post-test-2 <sup>nd</sup> rater	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As the Tables 4. and 5 show, correlation between the scores of both raters is almost 0.000, that are less than 0.01. It means that there was no significant difference between two groups of scores.

In the next step, the test scores of the pre-test were used to compute the independent – samples T-test analysis for examining initial homogeneity of the groups in speaking ability. Table 6. and 7. show the descriptive statistics of independent T-test.

Table.6.

T-Test: Group Statistics: Initial Homogeneity of Groups

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Experimental group</b>	50	44.7000	6.88165	.97321
	<b>Control group</b>	50	44.2000	6.57453	.92978

Table.7.

*Independent Samples Test: Equality of Means*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
<b>Pre-test</b>	Equal variances assumed	.208	.650	.371	98	.711	.50000	1.34597	-2.17103	3.17103
	Equal variances not assumed			.371	97.796	.711	.50000	1.34597	-2.17110	3.17110

According to statistic data of Tables 6. and 7., the mean score of the experimental group is 44.7000+\_ 6.88165, and for the control group is 44.2000+\_ 6.57453. The computed value of T-test is .371 (i.e.,  $t_{98}=.371$ ,  $p=.711$ ), degree of freedom is 98, and the amount of significance is .711, which is more than 0.05. Thus it can be concluded that the difference between control and experimental groups is not statistically significant and two groups are homogenous in their language proficiency.

After 8 weeks and 17 sessions, for computing the amount of progress for all participants of the study, i.e. control and experimental group, a post-test was given to them. There was only one distinction between experimental and control group. Teacher applied ice-breaker activities in the experimental group for improving students' speaking ability but this treatment was not used for the control group. The post-test questions as pre-test questions were chosen from sample IELTS speaking test questions.

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Table.8.

*T-test: Group Statistics: Post-Test Means of Groups*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Experimental group</b>	50	69.7000	11.96977	1.69278
	<b>Control group</b>	50	54.8000	5.79937	.82015

Table.9.

*Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
<b>Post-test</b>	4.532	.036	7.921	98	.000	14.90000	1.88100	11.16722	18.63278
<b>-test</b>			7.921	70.803	.000	14.90000	1.88100	11.14921	18.65079

An independent-samples T-test was run in SPSS to compute the significance of distinction between post-test means of both groups. Tables 8. and 9. represent the results of the experimental and control groups in post-tests.

According to Table 8. and 9. , the mean score of the experimental group's students who used ice-breakers in speaking activities is 69.7000 and the mean of the control group is 54.8000. So the results of this part of analysis can be summarized as:  $t = 7.921$ ,  $df = 98$ , and  $p = .000$ . P-value is below 0.05. So, it can be concluded that the difference between the means of experimental and control groups' post-tests is considerably significant.

The data analysis answers the first and second research questions and state that there is significant difference between the levels of speaking proficiency of the language learners who use ice breakers and those who do not. So, the researcher can put a step up and suggest that using ice breakers in speaking classes at upper-intermediate level has positive effect on EFL learners' speaking ability.

## CONCLUSION

The main concern of the present study is ice-breakers. They encourage students to join in speaking activities, even by repeating a few simple sentences, singing funny songs, playing simple games, and even playing a short and funny role. Therefore, ice-breakers may be suggested as interactive tools which enhance meaningful learning and fluent speaking to those who are looking for an effective way of language acquisition.

It seems on the foundations and answers of the questions proposed in this study, the difference between the speaking skill of EFL students who used ice-breakers in English classes (experimental group) and those who did not use this strategy (control group) was considerably meaningful.

Statistical analysis shows that the mean speaking score of the experimental group on post-test is 69.70, and the mean speaking score of control group on post-test is only 54.80. The measured t-value in the t-test is 7.921 and as demonstrated in tables 8 and 9 shows difference at  $\alpha=0.05$ . Consequently, we can conclude that "There is statistically significant difference between the control and experimental group which can be attributed to the ice-breakers".

Comparing significant difference between the average speaking proficiency of the participants who used ice breakers and those who did not use them, shows the amount of ice-breaker activities effect and answers the second research question (To what extent ice-breakers improve speaking?). So, we can again claim that using ice breakers in speaking classes at upper-intermediate level has a positive effect on EFL learners' speaking ability.

The findings of this research are in line with studies that suggest ice-breakers as a natural, purposeful, funny and motivating phenomenon which facilitates, and supports communication, pronunciation, and fluency, and increases risk taking among older learners. Researcher believes that ice-breakers in language classroom do not indicate any kind of breakdown in pedagogical purposes (Forbes- Greene, 1982; Preziosi, 1980; Wright, 1999; Witkowski, 2000; Jenkins, 2001; Varel, 2002; Rodriques, 1982).

### Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

#### Limitations

As several other studies, this study also suffers from some limitations, "those conditions beyond the control of the investigator that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations" (Best & Kahn, 1998, p.38). It seems that the subsequent factors have limited this study in one way or another:

1. Actually, for giving each person in a population a similar likelihood to be included in the sample, "random sampling" is needed. Yet the type of sampling, which was employed in this study, was the available group selection, i.e. instead of individual subject selection, there was group selection.
2. Subjects' social classes were certainly unheeded as well.
3. Teachers' age, gender, and social class were unheeded, too.
4. The number of the subjects was restricted to one hundred and also the extension of the experiment was limited to one term.

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5. The generalizability to other language proficiency levels desires further research and analysis.

### **Delimitations**

In order to meet the criterion of manageability and to permit a satisfactory analysis of the results, narrowing down and delimiting the problems in any study have proved to be inevitable. This study is no exception; therefore, through a number of delimitations, the researcher tried to set the boundaries of this study:

1. What this study tries to find out is the effect of "ice-breakers" on speaking skill of EFL Turkish students, not on any other aspect of their proficiency.

2. The participants were chosen from amongst the male and female undergraduate Turkish learners who are improving their English level in the American Culture Institute in Erzurum.

3. To reduce the subject anxiety during the speaking, the examiner was the students' own teacher.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The research findings have several pedagogical implications. In recent teaching methodologies, the active use of language and involvement of the learners in what is taking place in the classroom are considered as two crucial factors in language learning. In order to meet this criterion requirement in the classroom, the application of ice-breaker activities seems to be of great advantage. This technique increases the participation of the learners and their risk taking ability. After or during speaking activities and discussions, conducting ice-breakers as a strategy of communication helps them feel more comfortable in case of stress and being nervous and embarrassed and consequently keeps the interaction going.

On the other hand, English language teachers who teach upper-intermediate level adult learners have for a very long time been dealt with alleviating students' anxiety and stress in the language acquisition environment. The assumed reasons are minimizing the amount of time spent for learning the target language and then improving language efficiency. However, the issue of facilitating English speaking in the classroom methodologically is very important, and it should have lots of implications for practicing language teachers. It is therefore necessary for us to exactly understand the effectiveness of different kinds of ice-breakers, and till that time prevent making quick and censorious judgments on its classroom indications.

The finding of this study may help EFL teachers to let their students make use of these activities at home for more practice. The traditional system of teaching has accepted that using fun activities may decrease the level of language proficiency. In other words, in most of language courses, the higher the level of language proficiency the lower the frequency of ice-breaker instances. While, on the basis of this study, there is a meaningful relationship between the speaking ability of EFL students who use ice-breakers in speaking classes and those who do not use this strategy.

Teachers may help students to use language as a means of communication. By this way, students are encouraged to speak more comfortably, especially in high levels that most of their attempt is to find the best structure, to have the best choice of words, and to speak fluently.

It is hoped that this research work provides insights for teachers to apply in their own classrooms. It is also hoped that some of the issue may find its way into an enhanced research agenda, because despite the revived interest, the amount of published research into the area remains disappointingly small.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

At the end of a research, one may get the feeling that this is just the beginning. This of course, is by no means regrettable, as no research is complete and comprehensive, and no researcher can claim that the results of his/her study can be applied in all the possible relevant cases.

As is quite conventional in scientific experimentation, the conclusions achieved in current study opens a new avenue for investigation and expand the scope of further research on using ice-breakers for adult high level learners. It is only then that the validity of this research findings can be credited and generalized.

Therefore to obtain optimal results, the researcher recommends the following topics for further research:

- Research can be done on the bases of behaviors of EFL teachers in classrooms in order to find out whether it might enhance language learning.
- Replication of the current study with different cultural groups at higher level of English proficiency needs to be carried out to proof or confirm the results of the present research study.
- Research on the comparison of ice-breakers with adults and children is also in need. For example, there is the diachronic dimension of ice-breakers, its relation to language uses in individuals, and in groups, and societies, which has not yet been studied.
- Some studies are recommended to investigate the effects of ice-breakers on the development of other skills e.g. studies on the effect of ice-breakers on vocabulary acquisition are recommended.

Finally, the researcher hopes the results and implications of this research will be useful to administrators and practitioners in similar contexts that are making decisions affecting EFL learners' speaking behavior.

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### Uzun Özet

Son zamanlarda konuşma yeteneği yabancı öğrenciler için en önemlisi olarak düşünülmektedir; bununla beraber, çalışmaların ortaya çıkardığı gibi orta üstü seviyedeki yetişkin İngilizce öğrencilerinin sözel yeteneklerini geliştirmeleri için faydalı konuşma aktiviteleri yeterince bulunmamaktadır. İngilizce konuşmaya çalışırken, öğrencilerin çoğu ana dillerinden hedef dile çeviri yapmak için uğraşırlar. Diğerleri ise konuşmayı stresli buldukları için bunu atlarlar. Akıcı konuşmada bu tür problemleri çözmek amacıyla öğretmenler, sözel iletişimdeki problemin büyük kısmından uzak kalmak için yetişkin ve ileri düzey İngilizce öğrencileri arasında bile kaynaştırma stratejileri uygulayabilirler, ve çeviriden sakınıp öğrencileri çeviri yapmadan anında konuşmaya teşvik edebilirler.

Mevcut çalışmanın temel konusu kaynaştırmalardır. Öğrencileri konuşma aktivitelerine katılmaya, birkaç basit cümleyi tekrar etme, eğlenceli şarkıları söyleme, basit

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oyunlar oynama ve hatta kısa ve eğlenceli bir rolü oynamaya teşvik ederler. Bu sebeple; dil ediniminde etkili bir yol arayanlar için kaynaştırmalar, anlamlı öğrenme ve akıcı konuşmayı geliştiren interaktif birer araç olarak önerilebilirler.

Bu çalışmanın cevaplamaya çalıştığı asıl soru öğrencilere kaynaştırmalar görevlerini sınıf aktiveleri olarak sağlamanın, onların konuşma becerilerinde herhangi bir etki ortaya koyup koyamayacağıdır. Bu soruyu cevaplamak için, homojenliği önceden doğrulanmış olan yüz öğrenci her birinin elli üyesi olacak şekilde biri kontrol grubu diğeri ise deney grubu olarak iki gruba bölündü. İkinci adım olarak, hem deney hem de kontrol gruplarının aynı konuşma seviyesinde olduklarından emin olmak için konuşma öntesti yapıldı. Konuşma testi örnek IELTS sorularından seçildi. Örnek IELTS konuşma testi öğrencilere telaffuz, dilbilgisi, kelime ve akıcılık becerilerini analiz edebilmeleri için verildi.

Çalışma boyunca, her iki grup da dönem boyunca haftada iki kere İngilizce derslerine katıldılar (yaklaşık 9 hafta, günde 3 saat). Öğretmenler farklıydı, fakat her ikisi de aynı kitabı kullandı. Her ünite, ünitenin konusunu ve ilgili resimleri içeren bir konu sayfasıyla başlıyor. Bu sayfa öğretmene uygun beyin fırtınası ve kaynaştırma aktivitelerini seçmesi için faydalı ipuçları veriyor. Deney grubunda, öğretmen, katılımcılara onları katılmaya motive etmek için kaynaştırma veriyor, fakat kontrol grubu katılımcıları sadece kitaplarında verilen aktiviteleri kullanıyorlar. Onyedinci oturumdan sonra, benzer bir örnek IELTS konuşma testi ardıl test olarak veriliyor.

Toplanılan bilgi, iki grup arasında dikkate değer herhangi bir farklılık olup olmadığını anlamak için dikkatlice incelendi ve normallik testi, korelasyon testi ve bağımsız-örnek T testi ile karşılaştırıldı.

Bu çalışmada ileri sürülen soruların temelinde ve cevaplarında, öyle görünmektedir ki İngilizce derslerinde kaynaştırmalar kullanan İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin (deney grubu) ve bu stratejiyi kullanmayanların (kontrol grubu) konuşma becerilerindeki farklılık oldukça anlamlıdır. Bu yüzden, şu sonuca varabiliriz: “Kontrol ve deney grubu arasında, kaynaştırmalara atfedilebilecek, istatistiksel olarak önemli bir fark vardır.”

Kaynaştırma kullanan ve kullanmayan katılımcıların konuşma yeterliliği ortalaması arasındaki önemli farkı kıyaslamak, kaynaştırma aktiviteleri etkisinin miktarını gösterir ve ikinci araştırma sorusunu (kaynaştırmalar ne ölçüde konuşmayı geliştirir?) cevaplar. Bu yüzden biz yine ileri sürebiliriz ki orta üstü seviye konuşma sınıflarında kaynaştırma kullanmanın İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler üzerinde pozitif bir etkisi vardır.

Sonuçlara göre, araştırmacı bir adım daha ileri gidebilir ve orta üstü seviye konuşma sınıflarında İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler üzerinde kaynaştırmalar kullanmanın pozitif etkileri olduğunu öne sürebilir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları kaynaştırmaları; iletişimi, telaffuzu ve akıcılığı kolaylaştıran ve büyük öğrenciler arasında risk almayı arttıran; doğal, amaçlı, eğlenceli ve motive edici bir olgu olarak öne süren çalışmalarla uyumludur. Araştırmacı kaynaştırmaların dil sınıfında pedagojik amaçlarda herhangi bir tür bozulmaya işaret etmediğine inanmaktadır. Bu teknik öğrencilerin katılımını ve risk alma becerilerini arttırmaktadır. Konuşma aktiviteleri ve tartışmalar sırasında veya sonrasında, kaynaştırmaları

bir iletişim stratejisi olarak yürütmek, stres,gergin olma veya utanma durumlarında onlara daha rahat hissetmeleri için yardım eder ve sonuç olarak etkileşim devam eder.

Orta üstü seviye yetişkin öğrencileri eğiten ingilizce öğretmenleri, öğrencilerin dil edinimi çevresindeki kaygı ve streslerini azaltmakla çok uzun bir süredir uğraşmaktadırlar. Varsayılan nedenler hedef dili öğrenmek için harcanan zaman miktarını azaltıyor ve sonra dilin etkililiğini arttırıyor. Fakat; sınıfta ingilizce konuşmayı kolaylaştırmak meselesi metodolojik olarak çok önemlidir ve ingilizce öğretmenlerinin pratik yapması için pek çok içerime sahip olmalıdır. Bu yüzden farklı kaynaştırmaların etkililiğini tam olarak anlamamız önemlidir, ve o zamana kadar kaynaştırmaların sınıf belirtileri üzerine hızlı ve tenkitçi yargılamalar yapmayı önleyin.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları ingilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmenlerin, daha fazla alıştırma için, öğrencilerinin bu aktivitelerden evlerinde faydalanmalarına izin vermelerine yardım edebilir. Geleneksel öğretim sistemi eğlenceli aktiviteler kullanmanın dil yeterliliğini arttırabileceğini kabul etmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, dil derslerinin çoğunda, dil yeterliliği seviyesi ne kadar yüksekse, kaynaştırma örnekleri sıklığı o kadar azdır, Konuşma sınıflarında ice breakerları kullanan ingilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin konuşma yetenekleri ve bu stratejiyi kullanmayanlar arasında bu çalışmanın temelinde anlamlı bir ilişki olmasına rağmen.

Öğretmenler öğrencilere dili bir iletişim aracı olarak kullanmada yardım edebilirler. Bu yolla, özellikle ileri seviyelerde,teşebbüslerinin çoğu en iyi yapıyı bulmak olan öğrenciler daha rahat bir şekilde konuşmaya, en iyi kelime seçimlerine sahip olmaya ve akıcı konuşmaya teşvik edilirler.

Bu çalışmanın kendi sınıflarında uygulama yapmaları için öğretmenlere içgörü kazandırması umulmaktadır. Ayrıca, konunun bir kısmının gelişmiş bir araştırma ajandasında yolunu bulabilmesi umulmaktadır, çünkü canlandırılan ilgiye rağmen bu alanda yayınlanmış araştırma miktarı hayal kırıklığı verecek biçimde azdır.