Distance Teaching of Turkish as a Foreign Language: Case of UbiCamp Project

Yabancı Dil Olarak Uzaktan Türkçe Öğretimi: UbiCamp Proje Örneği

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Abstract: Distance teaching of Turkish as a foreign language (DTTFL) was a neglected issue until recently. However, the number of people, who wants to learn Turkish at a distance, is increasing around the world due to increasing importance and use of open and distance education. In the present study, as one of the distance teaching experience, Learn Turkish Module, which was prepared and applied by Yasar University under the Umbralle of UbiCamp Project, will be mentioned. Firstly the current situation of DTTFL will be provided. After that design, production and delivery process of Learn Turkish Module will be shared.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish to Foreigners, Content Development, Distance Teaching, Distance Learning, UbiCamp.

Öz: Yakın zamana kadar Türkçenin yabancı dil olarak uzaktan öğretimi ihmal edilen bir konuyken açık ve uzaktan eğitimin artan önemi ve kullanımı nedeniyle uzaktan Türkçe öğrenmek isteyen sayısı artmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, UbiCamp Projesi şemsiyesi altında Yaşar Üniversitesi tarafından hazırlanan ve uygulanan uzaktan öğretim deneyimlerinden biri olan "Learn Turkish (Türkçe Öğren)" uygulamasından söz edilecektir. Çalışmada öncelikle uzaktan yabancı dil olarak Türkçenin öğretimi hakkında mevcut durum ortaya konulacak ve sonrasında "Türkçe Öğren" uygulamasının tasarım, üretim ve sunum süreci deneyimleri paylaşılacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancılara Türkçe Öğretme, İçerik Geliştirimi, Uzaktan Öğretim, Uzaktan Öğrenim, UbiCamp

1. Introduction

Enormous expansion in distance language learning opportunities has emerged over the last decade. Rapid developments in information and communications technology, together with societal changes, have increased awareness of and demand for distance education (White, 2003). Teaching Turkish to foreigners has gained importance as well. Foreigners get more interested in Turkish, and teaching Turkish as a foreign language has been gaining momentum, especially in the last decade, as a consequence of government policies in the field. Distance teaching of Turkish as a foreign language is a great opportunity to reach a wide audience and introduce Turkish culture. However, there is very limited academic study on distance teaching of Turkish (Adıyaman, 2001; Mutlu and Özöğüt Erorta, 2008; Pilanci, 2009, Pilancı, et. al., 2015). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to share content development experience for distance teaching of Turkish.

The paper is consisted five sections. First part is introduction. Second part covers distance learning environment as a foreign language teaching platform. Third part focuses on DTTFL. Fourth part is UbiCamp Project as a case of DTTFL. This part have subtitles as Content of Learn Turkish Module, Instructional Design of Learn Turkish Module, Production Process of Learn Turkish Module, and Delivery of Learn Turkish Module. Final part is conclusion.

2. Distance Learning Environment as a Foreign Language Teaching Platform

The traditional model of education is that learning and teaching take place in close proximity, at a particular point in time. However, in distance education the focal point of learning is no longer the classroom but has shifted to the home, or the workplace, or a study context (White, 2003). Distance education mainly serves learners who cannot attend face-to-face programs for one or another reason. Distance education is planned learning, which occurs in a different place and time from teaching, requires special techniques for course design and instruction, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements (Moore and Kearsley 1996).

The distance language teaching programs have been increasing due to the increasing importance and use of open and distance education, which provide rich learning environments, flexible time and gather students from different geographical areas (Pilancı, et. al., 2015). Effectiveness, technological aspects, and autonomy are the main streams in the research of distance language education courses in general (Ekmekçi, 2014). For instance, Sole and Hopkins (2007) focuses on four language skills, designing appropriate assessment strategies, and learners' contribution to the

educational context. White (2006) states there is a shift from the delivery of the content to facilitating transactions between, learners, teachers, and native speakers. Holmberg et al. (2005) emphasizes learner autonomy, learner support, development of intercultural competence, course design and learning environments.

3. Distance Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language (DTTFL)

Teaching Turkish to foreign people in Turkey mainly takes place in universities. Turkish Education Centers (TOMER) are the leaders in this field. The coordination of this issue is done by the Yunus Emre Institution in abroad. According to the statistics of Yunus Emre Institution (2009), which was founded by the Prime Minister in 2009, and of the Department of Turks Abroad (2014), there is a demand for learning Turkey Turkish especially in the Balkans, the Middle East, Far East and Africa region. In this context Yunus Emre Institution is doing Turkish teaching face to face in various countries, but it is difficult to meet the demands of learning Turkish all over the world trough face to face education and to reach every individual who wants to learn Turkish in this way. At this point distance education emerges as an alternative solution. However, Turkish teaching standards required for the creation of effective distance learning is not yet formed. Furthermore, there are not any content configurations taking into account the individual differences and learning readiness even though it is demanded by the centers, who teach Turkish as a foreign language. There is very limited academic knowledge for effective distance teaching of Turkish. Although Anadolu, Ankara, and Hacettepe Universities have experiences on distance teaching of Turkish, it is not enough to develop a common ground in the field.

4. UbiCamp Project as a case of Distance Teaching of Turkish as a Foreign Language

UbiCamp Project attempts to respond to the need to overcome the usual barriers for virtual mobility (VM) within higher education institutions in the European Union. UbiCamp is the acronym of "Ubiquitous Campus", which is a model of Virtual Mobility that allows the integration of new institutions through a decentralised model. Within UbiCamp project which Yasar University is a part of, lectures are given in various subjects to students in different universities in EU countries, via online learning programmes. In this context, these lectures presented online are supported with cultural elements by every country (http://www.ubicamp.eu/). In this regard, "Learn Turkish" module was placed in the course, which was provided by Yasar University, to introduce Turkish culture to foreign students.

4.1. Content of Learn Turkish Module

The module is limited to basics of A1 level of foreign language teaching steps of "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment". After completing A1 level learners will be able to meet the most basic needs of daily life, introduce himself, understand the introduction of somebody, distinguish the sounds of the alphabet and use in speech, use number when they need in daily life. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2016) states four kinds of language activities as reception, production, interaction and mediation. Reception focuses on listening and reading. Production and interaction focuses on speaking and writing. Mediation focuses on translating and interpreting. Learn Turkish Module was just focused *reception* level of those since aim of it is to introduce the Turkish language as a part of Turkish Culture. The content of this module was provided by a lecturer, who is a specialist in teaching Turkish to foreigners, as follows.

- The Turkish Alphabet
- Let's Pronounce The Words
- Specific Sounds in Turkish
- Greetings
- Numbers
- Colors
- Clothes and Accessories
- Shopping Dialogs
- Days, Months and Seasons

4.2. Instructional Design of Learn Turkish Module

This content was enriched by Yasar University Open and Distance Learning Centre. Learning contents was delivered via learning management system administered by Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University as shown in
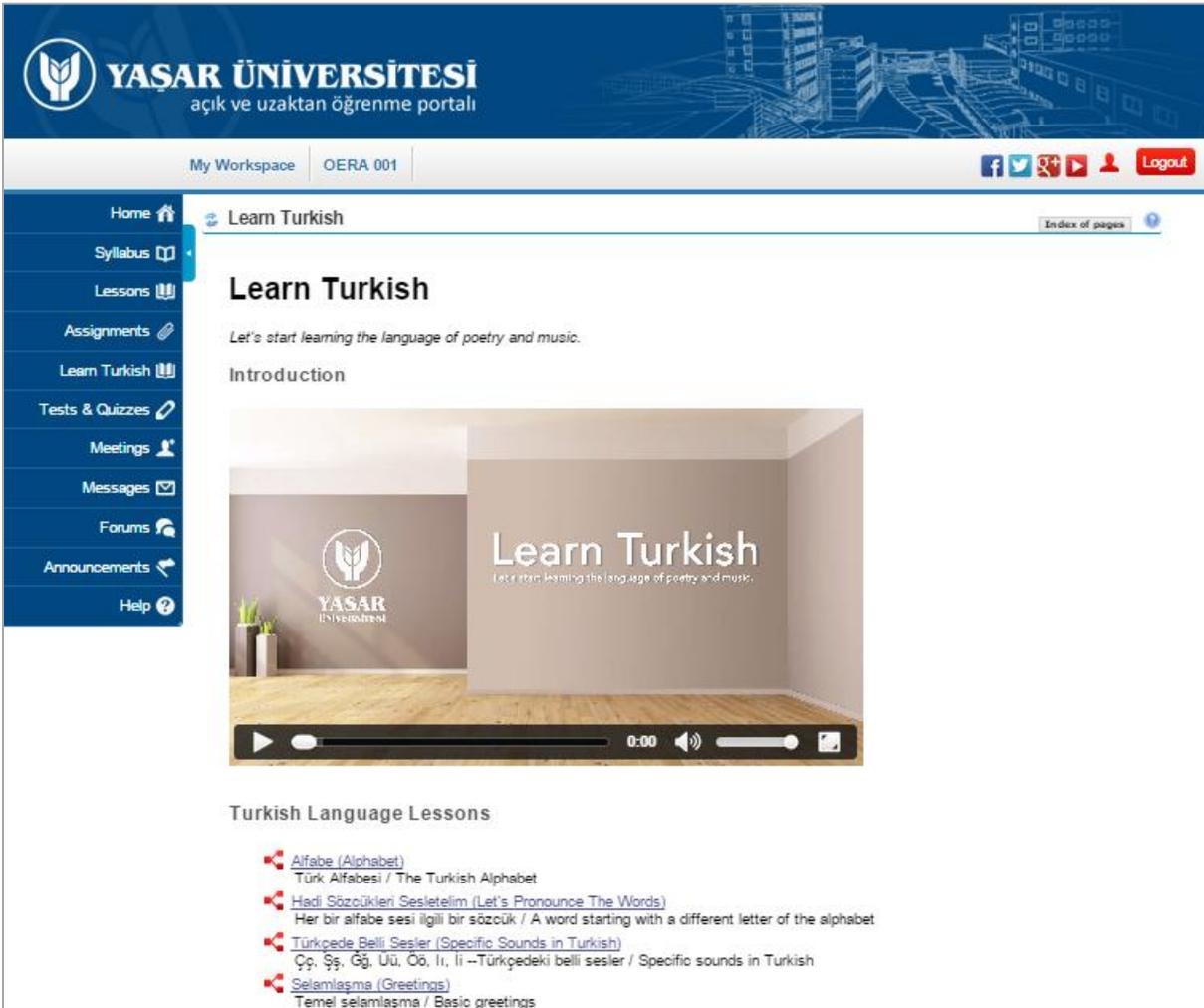
Screenshot 1. Learn Turkish Module were accessible to students, who were involved in programme. Each student logged in system with their user name and password.

Analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE) model was used as instructional design model (Morrison et al., 2010). An entertaining educational scenario was designed to increase student engagement. In this context, each topic was supported by visuals, animations, audio, games and virtual agents. Each topic had three parts as *video lecture, exercise* and *game*.

Video lectures were 5 to 10 minutes short videos to explain the topic. In video lectures, virtual agents were preferred as lecturers instead of humans to increase student's interest. Four types of video lecture were produced. First, presentation style video lecture with a virtual lecturer, as shown in Screenshot 2. Second, dialogue style. In dialog style video lectures, virtual and human agents discusses the topic. Screenshot 3 shows dialogue of virtual and human agent. Third, conversation style video lectures, in this type, two virtual agents have a conversation about the topic, as shown Screenshot 4. Fourth, multimedia style video lectures. In this type, an animations was used to explain the topic instead of agents.

Permanent vocabulary learning and retention can be improved by using different exercises. They are essential and beneficial for vocabulary learning (Hashemzadeh, 2012). Therefore exercises, which were focused on to improve listening and reading skills, were placed in the module. Listen and Repeat (as shown Screenshot 6), Listen and Match (as shown Screenshot 7), Listen and Choose (as shown Screenshot 8), Ordering Dialog (as shown Screenshot 9), Listen, Drag And Drop (as shown Screenshot 10) and Listen and Write (as shown Screenshot 11), exercises were provided to students.
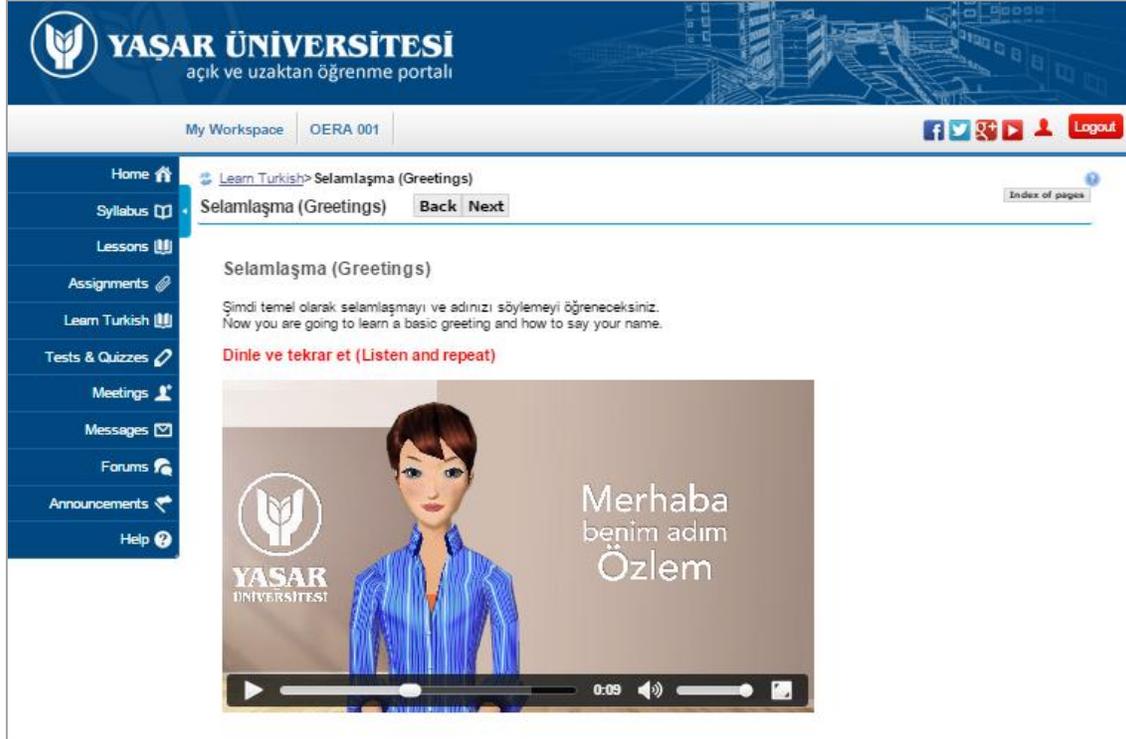
Games were used to improve writing skill. Hangman Game, as shown Screenshot 12, and Puzzle Game, as shown Screenshot 12, were preferred since they are very common in Turkish Culture as well as in other cultures.

Screenshot 1. "Learn Turkish" learning environment
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 2: Presentation style video lecture with a virtual lecturer.
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 3: Dialog style video lecture, virtual and human agents discusses the topic.
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 4: Conversation style video lecture, two virtual agents have a conversation on the topic.
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 5: Multimedia style video lecture
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University
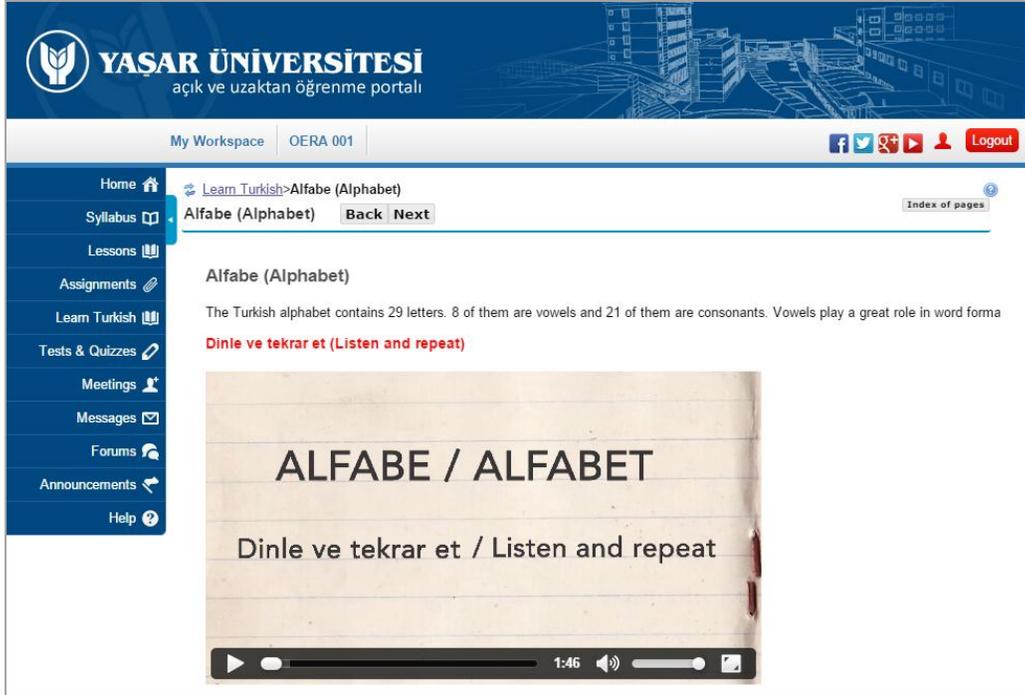
Screenshot 6: "Listen and Repeat" exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 7: Listen and match exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 8: Listen and choose exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Screenshot 9: Ordering dialog exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Alıştırma 4 | Exercise 4
Dinle ve duyduğunu kutunun içine sürükle (Listen and drag what you hear into the box)

Şimdiki alıştırmada rakamlar duyacaksınız. Duyduğunuz rakamları sırasıyla kutunun içine sürükleyiniz.
In this exercise you are going to hear numbers. Drag each number into the box in the order you hear them.

LEARN TURKISH   Alıştırma/Exercise

Dinle ve duyduğunu kutunun içine sürükle / Listen and drag what you hear into the box   1 / 5

▶ Dinle / Listen

Bırak / Drop

| 8 | 10 | 3 |
| 7 | 5 | 1 |

Onayla / Submit

Screenshot 10: Listen, drag and drop exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

LEARN TURKISH   Alıştırma/Exercise

Dinle ve duyduğunu yaz / Listen and write what you hear into the text box   1 / 1

▶ on **+** ▶ bir **=** ▶ 0
▶ on **+** ▶ iki **=** ▶ 0
▶ yirmi **+** ▶ beş **=** ▶ 0
▶ otuz **+** ▶ üç **=** ▶ 0

Cevapları
sayısal olarak
yazınız.

Onayla /Submit

Screenshot 11: Listen and write exercise
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Alıştırma 3 | Exercise 3
Dinle ve duyduğunu yaz (Listen and write what you hear)

Şimdiki alıştırmada sözcükler duyacaksınız. Duyduğunuz sözcüğü sanal klavyeden harfleri sürükleyerek yazınız.
In this exercise you are going to hear some words. Type the words you hear by dragging the letters from the pop-up keyboard into the blank areas.

LEARN TURKISH   Alıştırma/Exercise

Dinle ve duyduğunu yaz / Listen and write what you hear   2 / 5

— — — — — —

▶ Dinle / Listen

A	B	C	Ç	D	E	F	G	Ğ	H
I	İ	J	K	L	M	N	O	Ö
P	R	S	Ş	T	U	Ü	V	Y	Z

Screenshot 12: Example of the game Hangman
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Sözcük Avı (Word Puzzle)
Bu oyunda bir bulmaca göreceksiniz. Yanda verilen sözcükleri bulunuz.
In this game you are going to see a puzzle. Find the words given in the puzzle.

Verilen sözcük ve söz öbeklerini bulmacada bul. (Find the given words and phrases in the puzzle.)

LEARN TURKISH   Alıştırma/Exercise

Sözcük avı / Word puzzle

A	B	N	Z	Ü	C	Ü	Z	A	B
F	A	R	Ü	Z	E	Y	T	İ	N
A	E	A	R	A	B	A	L	Z	E
P	P	T	R	A	B	G	Z	Ü	A
Ç	A	K	U	O	İ	Ü	Ğ	Ş	U
A	A	T	F	S	F	V	S	İ	Ç
K	H	N	A	D	Z	Ü	C	N	A
A	D	Y	R	T	F	A	E	B	K
P	A	T	E	T	E	V	P	U	Y
R	A	B	A	M	Ö	S	Ç	A	T

ARABA

ARABA

Screenshot 13: Puzzle Game
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

4.3. Production Process of Learn Turkish Module

Yasar University Open and Distance Learning Centre (YU-ODLC) undertook the responsibility of development and delivery of processes the course. YU-ODLC has a strong technical infrastructure and working with experts in field of instructional design. It contains 6 work offices as Administration and Planning Office, Content Development Office, Technology Development Office, Support Office, Visual Design Office and Post-Production Office. It is also a 240 m^2 studio, which is containing a Video Shooting Studio, Directing Room, Sound Studio, Make-Up and Dressing Room. Multiple-camera setup, green box technology and led lighting are used for video shootings in YU-ODLC. Necessary software and hardware are available for interaction and interface development, content enrichment and voice processing. Centre has been providing several online courses, such as 10 institutional basic courses and YOK Compulsory Lessons (Turkish Language and AİTT), since 2010.

In the process of preparing UbiCamp Learn Turkish module, firstly subject contents are taken from the expert. Then, instructional design was proceeded. After that video lectures were shot with green box technology as shown in image 14. After shootings of video lectures, sounds were recorded in sound recording studio as shown in image 15.

Image 14: Green box shooting within center
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

Image 15: Sound recordig studio
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

At next stage, contents are edited by using Adobe Creative Cloud (Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Premiere and Adobe After Effects) software systems in postproduction studio as shown in Image 16. Exercises, games and interactions were developed by using Adobe Flash and Articulate Storyline software systems.

Image 16: Postproduction Studio
Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University

4.4. Delivery of Learn Turkish Module

At the last stage, usability test were conducted and content are delivered via learning management system (http://e.yasar.edu.tr) as shown in Image 17.

Image 17: http://e.yasar.edu.tr
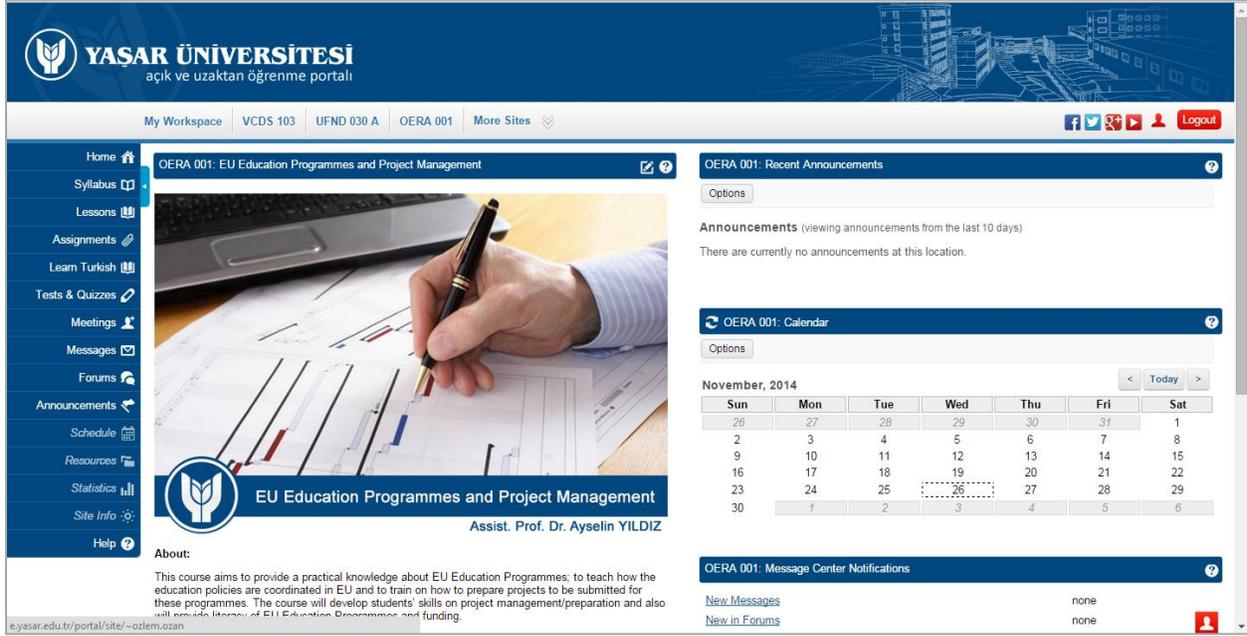*Source: Reproduced with permission from The Center for Open and Distance Learning of Yasar University*

As mentioned earlier, "Learn Turkish" module was placed in a course, which was produced and delivered by Yasar University under umbrella of UbiCamp Project, to introduce Turkish culture to foreign students. Therefore, studying this module was not obligatory. Students were free to study this module. It was open from September to May 2015. 347 visits occurred to module and 4372 events was triggered by 8 students from 5 different countries.

5. Conclusion

The distance language teaching programs have been increasing due to the increasing importance and use of open and distance education around the world (Pilanci et al, 2015). It provides rich learning environments and flexible time, as well as ability to gather students from different geographical areas. Although, there is a wide variety in the studies of language teaching, especially teaching English as a second and foreign language, the literature in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language is limited. Instructional design process of teaching Turkish as a foreign language differentiate teaching English as a foreign language since Turkish is a member of Ural-Altaic language family. The languages in this language family are agglutinative languages. Affixes have certain systematic and function. Besides, vowels have a certain systematic of use. This feature requires more exposure to the hearing Turkish words. Therefore, listening exercises are very important to practice vowel harmony of Turkish.

Games offer students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere (Chen, 2005) for especially writing exercises.

When the distance language teaching programs are examined, it can be seen that these programs are developed and implemented by teams from different disciplines (Pilanci, et. El., 2015). Capability of interdisciplinary studies are need to be improved to design rich, meaningful online contents for teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

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