

## Turkish EFL Learners' Appraisal of Group Work in Speaking: Self and Peer Reflections

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### Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate EFL learners' views related to group work and learner behaviors in group works in speaking. To address these issues, data collection was carried out in preparatory classes through a questionnaire constructed for this study. Participants of the study were 52 students learning English in a preparatory school at a state university in Turkey. In data analysis, statistical analysis was used for the questionnaire data using SPSS 20. Findings of the study indicate that students attributed positive aspects to themselves such as respectful, sharing, and participating in group activities in speaking. Data also revealed that students who evaluated the other members of the group had the opinion that other group members also had positive aspects in group work although some regarded their peers as ineffective and disruptive. Additionally, it is concluded that group work activities contribute positively to learners' speaking skill in English as well as creating a small and a sharing speaking community by increasing student motivation.

### Keywords

EFL students; group work; speaking skill; interaction

### Submission date

28.07.2018

### Acceptance date

06.10.2018

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### APA Citation

Harputlu, L., & Erarslan, A. (2019). Turkish EFL learners' appraisal of group work in speaking: Self and peer reflections. *The Literacy Trek*, 5(1), 1-22.

**Note:** This paper was presented in "The 4<sup>th</sup> International Educational Sciences Symposium" held in Alanya between 3-5 May, 2019.

### Introduction

It is a well-known fact that speaking skill is a productive one and it is a very complicated process due to its nature of constructing meaning through interactive

information processing (Wijaya & Sari, 2017; Zhang, 2013). As a skill, speaking enables the users of the language to produce utterances for various communicative purposes such as expressing ideas and opinions, and for establishing and maintaining social relationships with others; thus, while interacting with others for a communicative purpose, a person has to activate and use various linguistic knowledge appropriately (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). Speaking is, in fact, a matter of interaction with one or more participants involving a good deal of listening as well as having a knowledge of how linguistically take turns both in formal and informal communication (Harmer, 2007).

In terms of language education, it is also assumed that the ability to speak is the product of language learning, but rather it is a crucial part of the language learning process. Since it plays an important role in terms of communication, the objective of teaching speaking skill is to develop the ability to interact successfully in the target language involving comprehension and production (Hughes, 2003). It is generally agreed that students learn to speak in the target language by "interacting" when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task in classroom setting (Kayi, 2006).

Through the development of language teaching, one of the main concerns has been the place of interaction in language classes. From classical language teaching approaches, in which language was taught just for the sake of teaching grammar and vocabulary, to modern communicative approaches (Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), the issue of interaction has attracted the attention and interaction in language classes, thus, has been investigated intensively due to its contribution to improving target language learning (Wang & Castro, 2010) .

One of the significant ways to promote interaction in language classes is to make use of group work activities especially in speaking courses. Group works gain importance as they are highly appreciated by both the instructors and the learners since they provide various benefits not only for its effect in terms of enhancing permanent learning during the process of language instruction, but also for addressing hesitant students or disruptive students by giving them equal chances in groups to work, and to cooperate for a common goal increasing sense of belonging (Chiriac & Frykedal, 2011; Tauber, 2007). In Turkey, it is a clearly known fact that only a minority of the students

are able to speak English in spite of the intense language education they receive starting from primary school, and speaking in the target language, English, is still a major problem for a vast majority of the students (Coşkun, 2016; Paker, 2006). With this respect, teaching speaking as a skill gains importance in language education for Turkish EFL learners and ways to promote more chances of interaction in class becomes inevitable. Thus, given the significance of group work activities in language learning process, especially in speaking due to increasing the amount of interaction in class, this study aims to investigate Turkish EFL learners' self and peer evaluations about group work activities in speaking from the aspects of taking responsibility, respecting others, sharing information, task completion, involvement in the work share etc.

### *Classroom Interaction and Group Work*

According to Brown (2001), “interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about” (p. 65) and most communication through language takes place by creating an interactive manner with others, our world and even our bodies (Monchinski, 2008). However, in the context of language teaching, “interaction” serves to fulfil a variety of purposes ranging from a linguistic theory in language acquisition (Brown, 2001; Ellis, 1997) to teacher-student, student-student interaction in formal language learning environments mainly in classrooms. In fact, classroom interaction covers a wide range of contexts such as “multi-media labs, distance learning situations, one-to-one tutoring, on the job training, computer based instruction” and so on (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 79). Classroom interaction in language learning process contributes positively to language development of the students or learners in that both the form and the content of the target language are practiced with a definite purpose in mind, which ultimately shapes the individual learners' language development (Consolo, 2006; Hall & Walsh, 2002). Creating an interactive atmosphere in the classroom and allowing the students to participate in activities with their peers or group members as well as with the teacher is assumed to develop students' proficiency in speaking as well as other language skills) in addition to acquiring knowledge of culture; in fact, students can use all they possess of the language (Brown, 2001). What is more, Canagarajah (1997) mentions that based on the safe houses concept, which is related to the coping and learning strategies in both oral

and written communication, students may find group work activities as places to form their learner identities by building up group negotiations.

As stated previously, one of the effective ways of promoting interaction in teaching speaking is to give as much place as possible to group work activities. Group work activities in general have a number of benefits in terms of language learning on the part of the students in that they improve learner responsibility and motivation as well as contributing to feeling of cooperation and warmth in the class (Ur, 2012). At the same, the length of exposure to language by creating practice opportunities is increased through the use of group work activities which in turn increases the quality of student talk (Ghorbani, 2011; Long & Porter, 1985).

Group works gain importance as they create the best atmosphere for those who hesitate speaking in class for different reasons such as fear of failure or making a mistake or feeling stressed in public. Additionally, the students who reflect such problem behaviors as disrupting others and classroom environment or causing serious problems tend not to participate in ongoing class procedures. Such students have difficulty in building positive social relationships in the class and somehow regard themselves as a person not belonging to the classroom environment (Tauber, 2007). Thus, group work activities also help instructors manage the classroom in a more effective way to deliver the language education in class better.

Finally, it is possible to generalize that group work is a powerful instructional tool increasing the interaction among class members in any classroom environment. Indeed, learning groups have a positive impact on student achievement, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes about learning (Marzano, 2003). However, as this is the case, it is crucial to know what goes on in group and how learner-to-learner interactions are evaluated by the students individually and from the lenses of their group peers (Brown & Rodgers, 2002).

In literature, there are a number of studies conducted regarding group work activities and cooperative learning within the field of language learning. Among these, Hamzah and Ting (2010) conducted a study to investigate the likely effects of group work in teaching speaking while focusing on students' perspectives on group work. Their findings showed a considerable increase in students' participation together with their positive attitudes towards learning speaking with the help of group work activities.

Çelik, Aytın and Bayram (2013), on the contrary, made their study focusing on English language instructors' perspectives on the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom in university context. Throughout the study, it was found that instructors held the belief that group learning was beneficial on the part of the students in language learning process while also causing a number of obstacles mainly related to classroom management aspects. Focusing on testing a number of ways to prevent students' code-switching in group work activities, Özdemir (2015) applied seven different strategies in pair and group work activities for a period of four weeks to prevent students using L1 in these activities and she found that code-switching can be prevented by applying such strategies as presenting the activity aims clearly, targeting students' language needs, rewarding and punishing, changing peers etc. Finally, a recent study by Jayanth and Soundiraraj (2016) was designed as an experimental one investigating the effectiveness of group working on engineering students' language learning. Based on the findings of their study, it was found out that a significant improvement occurred in students' learning the language as well as contributing to a decrease in their anxiety level and an increase in their self-confidence.

In terms of the studies conducted on the students' self and peer appraisal of the group work in speaking skill, the review of the literature clearly indicates a gap regarding the Turkish university context. Thus, considering the lack of research in literature, this study focuses on Turkish university students' appraisal of group work in speaking regarding their self and peers' contribution from the aspects of respecting others, sharing responsibility, supporting group members, participation to group task and task completion.

### *Research Questions*

This study seeks to find answer to following research questions:

1. How do students evaluate their own behaviors in group work activity in speaking course?
2. How do students evaluate their peers' behaviors in group work activity in speaking course?

3. How do students reflect on the effect of group work on their future language learning process?

### **Method**

The primary purpose of this study is to gain an insight into the students' opinions regarding their individual behaviors as well as their peers' behaviors with respect to group work in speaking; thus, it is designed as a descriptive study making use of quantitative approach to research.

#### ***Participants***

This study was conducted in preparatory school of a state university in Turkey and the data were collected from 52 preparatory school students, 7 of whom were female ones enrolled in Engineering Faculty as the participants of the study. Their age range was between 18 and 22, and they received 6 hours of listening-speaking course in a week time in B1 level under a program run by the School of Foreign Languages.

#### ***Data Collection Tool and Procedure***

In order to collect the necessary data for this research, following a careful review of the literature, a questionnaire was constructed based on SPARK (Peer and Self-Assessment Resource Kit) created for the purpose of assessing and evaluating the members in the group (Freeman & Mckenzie, 2002; Willey & Gardner, 2008; Willey, Jacobs, & Walmsley, 2007). The reason for using SPARK as the base of the questionnaire used in this study was its validity in the context of self and peer appraisal in group works. However, for the purpose of this study, the items used in the SPARK were adapted considering its actual domain of use. In fact, the SPARK was utilized as a web-based group work assessment tool developed for various purposes from creating project development teams to curriculum design as well as for providing comprehensive feedback to student performances. Thus, due to its web-based nature, and function of meeting various other needs, only a part of the SPARK was utilized for the purpose of data collection in this study. The questionnaire adapted from SPARK had three parts as "*Individual Evaluation*" and "*Peer Evaluation*" and finally "*Group Work Evaluation*". The first part had items asking students to evaluate their self-behaviors in the group activity. The questions sought whether each student listened to

their group members, shared ideas, participated in the group activity, took the responsibility and whether they were willing to participate in the group activity or not. The second part was the one in which the students were asked to evaluate their friends in group work. However, in this part, there were questions for evaluation of their friend's disruptive behaviors and whether they interrupted group work, distracted the attention or prevented group work from completing the work. The third part of the questionnaire included items which sought for information on how much this group work contributed to their learning from the lenses of the students on a four scale evaluation and whether they were ready for a future group work activity. After the questionnaire was constructed following the adaptation, three experts in the field of language teaching were consulted and the necessary changes were made.

In the data collection process, students were grouped in two different styles. First of all, based on the classroom observation, the students were homogenously grouped as four. Then they were provided with a number of speaking tasks and asked to choose their own topic among them. All the topic types were carefully selected from the speaking sections of the course book as an ongoing course program. After the group work, the students were given the questionnaires for self-assessment of group work, assessment of their contributions to that group work and peer assessment questionnaire.

### *Data Analysis*

The data collected through questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 20, and the mean scores of each question were assessed. The data showing the mean values of each questionnaire item were turned into percentage values to make it easier to compare and contrast all groups. For the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha score for the questionnaire was calculated and it was found that reliability coefficient of the data collection instrument was .76 proving the questionnaire used for data collection in this study was reliable.

## Findings

Conducting the data analysis, findings for each research question have been tabulated and presented starting from students' appraisal of their own behaviors, their peers' behaviors and finally their reflection of group work activities.

### *Findings regarding Students' Own Behaviors in Group Work*

The results obtained from the research were analyzed separately and figured out based on their percentages. There were totally 5 questions in this part, and percentages are as follows:

**Table 1.** "I listen to other members' ideas"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	10	19.2	19.2	19.2
	<b>Usually</b>	28	53.8	53.8	73.1
	<b>Sometimes</b>	8	15.4	15.4	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the percentages of responses given to the item "*I listen to other members' ideas*". According to answers given, 19.2 % percent of the students stated that they *always* listened to their friends' ideas. More than half of the students answered this statement as "*usually*". The percentage of the students who usually listened to their friends' ideas was 53.8%. An average of 15.4 % of the students *sometimes* listened to their friends' ideas. 6 students out of 52 answered that they "*never*" listened to their friends' ideas. Their percentage is 11.5%.

**Table 2.** "I share my ideas with other members"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	28	53.8	53.8	53.8
	<b>Usually</b>	14	26.9	26.9	80.8
	<b>Sometimes</b>	4	7.7	7.7	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the percentage of answers given to the statement "*I share my ideas with other members*". According to responses given, 53.8 % percent of the students "*always*" shared their ideas with their friends, which is more than the half. The percentage of the students who *usually* shared their ideas with their friends is 26.9%. An average of 7.7 % of the students shared their ideas with their friends "*sometimes*".



**Table 3.** “I Involve in the work share”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
	<b>Usually</b>	32	61.5	61.5	65.4
	<b>Sometimes</b>	18	34.6	34.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

For the statement, “*I Involve in the work share*”, only two out of 52 students answered as “*always*” the percentage of which is 3,8 % and two third of the students, 61,5 %, answered as “*usually*”. The percentage of the students who stated that they “*sometimes*” involved in the work share in group work is 34,6 %.

**Table 4.** “I take responsibility in the group”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	4	7.7	7.7	7.7
	<b>Usually</b>	16	30.8	30.8	38.5
	<b>Sometimes</b>	22	42.3	42.3	80.8
	<b>Never</b>	10	19.2	19.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the students’ own evaluation of their taking the responsibility in group works, Table 4 shows that only 7.7% of the students “*always*” took the responsibility while 30.8% of them answered the item statement as “*usually*”. At the same time, 42.3% of the respondents stated they “*sometimes*” took the responsibility; however, 19.2% of them responded that they “*never*” took the responsibility in group works.

**Table 5.** “I am willing to participate in the group work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	22	42.3	42.3	42.3
	<b>Usually</b>	20	38.5	38.5	80.8
	<b>Sometimes</b>	8	15.4	15.4	96.2
	<b>Never</b>	2	3.8	3.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows the percentages of answers given to question “*I am willing to participate in the group work*” and according to answers given, 42.3 % percent of the students were “*always*” willing to participate in group work activities, while 38.5% were “*usually*”, 15,4% were “*sometimes*” and 3.8 % were “*never*” eager to participate

in the group work. It is understood that most of the students were ready to participate in the group works.

***Findings of Students' Peer Behaviors in Group Work***

In the second part of the questionnaire, the students evaluated their friends in terms of their behavior and contributions in the group work.

**Table 6.** “My friend listened to ideas of the group members”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	10	19.2	19.2	19.2
	<b>Usually</b>	28	53.8	53.8	73.1
	<b>Sometimes</b>	8	15.4	15.4	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 6, it came out that 19.2 % of the students “*always*” listened to their friends’ ideas. More than half of the students, 53,8 %, “*usually*” and 15.4 % “*sometimes*” listened to their friends in group works. The percentage of the students who never listened to their friends’ ideas was found as 11.5 %.

**Table 7.** “My friend shared his/her ideas with group members”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	10	19.2	19.2	19.2
	<b>Usually</b>	26	50.0	50.0	69.2
	<b>Sometimes</b>	6	11.5	11.5	80.8
	<b>Never</b>	10	19.2	19.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows the percentage of answers given to item “My friend shared his/her ideas with group members”. Based on the responses, 19.2 % of the students “*always*” shared their ideas with their friends. The percentage of the students who *usually* shared their ideas with their friends was 50 %. An average of 11.5 % of the students shared their ideas with their friends “*sometimes*”. As Table 7 shows, 10 students out of 52 answered that their friends “*never*” shared their ideas with their friends with a percentage of 19.2%.

**Table 8.** “My friend involved in the work share”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	26	50.0	50.0	50.0
	<b>Usually</b>	10	19.2	19.2	69.2

<b>Sometimes</b>	8	15.4	15.4	84.6
<b>Never</b>	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the students' peer involvement in the work share in the groups, 50 % of the students stated their peers “*always*” involved in the work share, and 19.2 % of them responded the related item in the questionnaire as “*usually*”. Additionally, 15.4 % of them answered as “*sometimes*” and 15.4 % of them stated that their friend “*never*” involved in the group work.

**Table 9.** “My friend took responsibility in the Group Work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	24	46.2	46.2	46.2
	<b>Usually</b>	20	38.5	38.5	84.6
	<b>Sometimes</b>	2	3.8	3.8	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 shows the percentage of answers given to statement “*My friend took responsibility in the group work*” and the results indicate that 46.2 % of the students undertook responsibility as “*always*”, and the participants stated 38.5 % of their peers “*usually*”, 3.8 % “*sometimes*” and finally 11.5% “*never*” undertook their responsibilities in the group work.

**Table 10.** “My friend met his/her responsibilities in the group work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	26	50.0	50.0	50.0
	<b>Usually</b>	18	34.6	34.6	84.6
	<b>Sometimes</b>	2	3.8	3.8	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Based on the responses given to the statement “*My friend met his/her responsibilities in the group work*”, Table 10 shows that half of the students stated after sharing the group tasks, their friends “*always*”, discharged their responsibilities and 34.6 % of them responded the item as “*usually*”. 11.5 % of them stated that their friend “*never*” met their responsibilities in the group work.

**Table 11.** “My friend was willing to participate in the group work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	<b>Always</b>	8	15.4	15.4	15.4
	<b>Usually</b>	16	30.8	30.8	46.2
	<b>Sometimes</b>	20	38.5	38.5	84.6
	<b>Never</b>	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the students' peers' willingness to participate in group works, Table 11 shows that 15.4 % of the students were “*always*”, 30.8 % were “*usually*”, 38.5 % were “*sometimes*” and 15.4 % were “*never*” willing to participate in the group work. In fact, findings indicate that students' evaluation of their peers related to their eagerness to participation in the group work was partly positive.

**Table 12.** “My friend shared the information sources with the group members”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	6	11.5	11.5	11.5
	<b>Usually</b>	38	73.1	73.1	84.6
	<b>Sometimes</b>	0	0	0	0
	<b>Never</b>	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

The students' sharing the information sources with the group members was also assessed from their peers' perspectives, and the results indicate that 11.5 % of the students “*always*” shared the information sources with group members, and a vast majority of them, 73,1 %, “*usually*” shared. What is striking here is that, according to answers given by them, 15.4 % of the students, yet, did not have the willingness to share their information sources with their friends in the group work.

**Table 13.** “My friend was inefficient in group work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	14	26.9	26.9	26.9
	<b>Usually</b>	24	46.2	46.2	73.1
	<b>Sometimes</b>	8	15.4	15.4	88.5
	<b>Never</b>	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 13 shows the percentage of answers given to statement “My friend was inefficient in the group work”. The results show that 26.9 % of the students felt that their peers were “*always*” inefficient in the group work. Nearly half of the students were evaluated as “*usually*” inefficient having the percentage of 46. 2 %. The number of the students who stated that their friends were “*sometimes*” inefficient in the group work was 8 out of 52 the percentage of which is 15, 4%. Based on these findings, students

had the opinion that their peers in the groups were mostly inefficient which shows that most peers, in spite of taking responsibility and willing to participate in the group work activities, were regarded as not effective contributors in the groups.

**Table 14.** “My friend disturbed the group work order/ distracted our attention in the group work”

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<b>Always</b>	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<b>Usually</b>	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<b>Sometimes</b>	8	7.7	7.7	7.7
	<b>Never</b>	46	92.3	92.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 shows the responses regarding the group work from the perspective of problematic behaviors on the part of students who disturbed the group work, or distracted the attention. The percentage of students who “*sometimes*” disturbed the group work is slightly low as 7.7 % and who “*never*” disturbed” is quite high as 92.3 %. Thus, it is understood that group work activities were not interrupted due to distractive students, showing nearly all students respected their peers.

### *Students’ Reflection on Group Work*

The third phase of the questionnaire consisted of the questions regarding group work effect on students for their preferences of future activities in speaking. After they evaluated their self and peer behaviors in the group work, they finally evaluated how it affected their behaviors and performance in English. The reason why this part was applied is that it is a complementary questionnaire as group work has three dimensions physically as the student individually, students as a group creating a community and the group work itself as the setting. After all, it was necessary for this research to investigate how the students benefited from the group work and to see how students felt about their behaviors for the group work to be applied in other sessions as a classroom activity for enhancing their communicative skills and appropriate behaving. Each question had 4 options as “Completely”, “Average”, “Partially”, and “Never”. Table 15 below illustrates the aspects of the group work based on the students’ evaluation.

**Table 15.** Aspects regarding the students' evaluation of group work in speaking

Reflections on group work	Completely (%)	Average (%)	Partially (%)	Never (%)
<i>Readiness for a new group work</i>	15.3	57.6	26.9	-
<i>Listening to the others</i>	46.1	46.1	7.6	-
<i>Sharing the responsibilities</i>	46.1	50	3.8	-
<i>Supporting group members</i>	61.5	34.6	3.8	-
<i>Participation to the discussions in the group work</i>	30.7	57.6	7.6	3.8
<i>Respecting different ideas in the group work</i>	69.2	19.2	7.6	3.8
<i>Willingness to take charge in the group work</i>	19.2	53.8	26.9	-
<i>Complete the task in the group work</i>	50	38,4	11,5	-

Related to “*readiness for a new group work*” in speaking, out of 52 students, 8 of them stated that they were completely ready for another group work after this work. Their percentage is 15.3 and a majority of the participant students answered the question whether they would be ready for a new group work activity after the current one as “average” with a percentage 57.6. Yet, 26.9 % of them responded that they were “*partially*” ready. These findings show that thanks to group work most of the students would be willing and ready to take part in a group work for the following activities.

In terms of “*listening to others*”, the percentage of the students who would “*completely*” listen to their friends in case of a likely new group work activity was 46.1 % which is the same percentage of the option “average”. 7.6 % of the students would “*partially*” listen to others in other following group works.

The aspect of “*sharing the responsibilities*” sought to figure out how many students out of 52 would share the responsibility in a following group work. Out of 52 students, 24 of them, with a percentage of 46.1 %, stated that they would completely share the responsibility in another group work. Half of the students, stated that they would share the responsibility “in an average manner”. A quite low percentage of the students would partially share the responsibility in a following group work.

When it comes to “*supporting group members*”, the number of students who would “*completely*” support group members in the following group work is 32 out of 52 with quite a high percentage as 61.5 %. 18 out of 52 students, 34.6 %, stated that they would support their friends in an “average manner”. 3,8 % of the students, the number of which is only 2 students out of 52, stated that he/she would “*partially*”

support group members. It shows us that nearly two third of the students would support the group members enhancing the possibility of creating the opportunity of benefiting from each other in the group work which is one of the major aims of grouping the students for a communicative atmosphere in the classroom. The support given to group members during the activity by their friends eliminates the possibility of being disturbed by the others if the percentage of the supporting students is high.

Based on the results of the statement “*participate in the discussions in the group work*”, which aimed at to figuring out the likely students who would participate in the discussions in a following group work. Findings show that 16 of the participants stated that they would completely participate in the discussions in another group work. Their percentage was found as 30.7. More than half of the students, 57.6 %, stated that they would participate in the discussions in the group work “in an average manner”. However, 3.8 % of the students, 2 students out of 52, stated that he/she would “never” participate in the discussions.

The findings regarding *respect* issue for the subsequent group work activities show that the number of students who would “completely” respect different ideas in the group work is 36 out of 52 with quite a high percentage as 69.2. At the same time, 19.2 % stated that they would respect different ideas in the group work in an “average manner”. 7.6 % of the students stated that they would “partially” respect different ideas in the group work. It shows us that more than two third of the students would respect different ideas in the group work.

Related to students’ willingness to take charge in the group work, out of 52 students 10 of them stated that they would completely be willing to take charge in the following group work. Their percentage is 19.2 %. More than half of the students, 53.8 %, stated that they would be willing to take charge in the following group work “in an average manner”. However, a considerable amount of the students, 26.9 %, stated that they would “partially” be willing to take charge in the following group work.

As the final aspect which sought for students’ evaluation of themselves in terms of their eagerness to complete the given tasks in the group work in speaking, the percentage of students who would “completely” complete the task in the following group work is 50 %. 20 out of 52 students, 38.4 %, stated that they would complete the

task in the group work in an “average manner”. 11.5 % of the students, the number of which is 6 students, stated that they would “partially” complete the task in the group work.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

This research was conducted to investigate students' self and peer appraisal in relation to various aspects such as group responsibility, respecting others, willingness to take part in the group work and task completion. Based on the findings, study shows that after a three-week- group work activity conducted, students' self-appraisal of group work activity in terms of their individual behaviors yielded a number of significant conclusive remarks. Aspects regarding students' listening to their group members, sharing ideas with others, involvement in workshare, taking the individual responsibility and their willingness to participate in the group work were evaluated throughout the study. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students viewed themselves as active contributors in the group work activities in speaking courses while learning the target language. A great majority of the students evaluated themselves as respectful to others presenting themselves as respecting, listening to their group members as well as sharing their ideas explicitly with their peers in the group. However, it is also seen that their percentage of involvement in the group work is lower respectively. Thus, it may be possible to claim that the relationship among group members might affect them in terms of respecting the group members, namely behaving positively to group members during the activities; however, when it comes to their tendency to involve in the work share, it is not the similar case. Additionally, considering students' evaluation of their own behaviors in group work, it was found that the students had positive attitudes towards taking place in group work activities. Studies regarding the effects of group works in language classes show yielded similar findings in that although group work activities help students in terms of their cognition, motivation and social skills (Alfares, 2017; Humaera, 2015), a number cases when students show inhibition and prefer not to participate in group work speaking activities. In her study, Şener (2014) found that students' willingness to communicate were higher in small groups rather than large group activities such as making presentations. Additionally, students' low level of participation to group work activities is attributed



to the learner autonomy. As Üstünlüoğlu (2009) stated in her study, for students to take the responsibility of their own learning, they need to be autonomous language learners and level of autonomy among learners is affected from such various factors as learner independency in learning, gender, and motivation. Thus, it is possible to say that in group works, students' social skills are enhanced, but there can be differences among group members in terms of taking the responsibility and participation to activities, which needs to be taken into consideration by the language teachers in designing the group work activities.

As for the second issue focused in the study, students' evaluation of their peers, it came out that students' in the groups were equally respectful to their peers; however, what is worth focusing on regarding students' appraisal of their peers is that nearly 20% of the participants did not listen to group members, share their ideas, involve in the work share, take the responsibility and were not willing to take part in the activities in groups. Even, students found one of their group members as inefficient. However, from a general perspective, students evaluated both themselves and their peers positively. Regarding this, Hay and Nilsson (2016) stressed that to promote speaking in group works, certain sets of rules need to be specified explicitly to learners prior to the arrangement of group works to make them become aware of their responsibilities, share of work load, and to increase the quality of speaking. Thus, within the context of this study, it can be concluded regarding the students' behaviors that group works are suitable for the students if the members of groups dwell on the task or the activity in compliance respecting each other, sharing and enhancing information, taking responsibility and being eager to participate in the ongoing group activities.

Finally, as the findings of this study pose, students showed eagerness for the group works in speaking course, and asked for the continuity of conducting group work activities in the future. It is clear from the literature that group work activities take an important place within sociocultural theory which posits that collaboration among individuals is enacted through group work activities yielding higher levels of interaction in class, an increased motivation on the part of the learners and sense of belonging (Sainsbury & Walker, 2012). The findings of this study, similarly, show that group work activities are favored by the students increasing interaction among class

members. Thus, it can be concluded that group work activities are beneficial tools if the students are grouped so as to create an interactive atmosphere among group members in the target language for Turkish EFL learners in addition to providing convenience on the part of the language teacher in terms of increasing student talk in the class and classroom management.

### *Suggestions for the further study*

Since the current study was utilized as a descriptive one, it can also be conducted in various contexts in other research designs. Initially, an experimental study with a pre and posttest design may be conducted to see the extent to which work activities contribute to speaking. Additionally, data were collected from a limited number of participants to the convenience of the researchers. Thus, a new study with a larger number of participants may yield better generalizable results. Additionally, the participants in this study were B1 level engineering students. A new study can be conducted on students with lower and higher language levels from various departments. In fact, the issues suggested for the further study can be regarded as the limitations of this study.

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