



# Innovations in English Language Teaching and Learning: The Turkish Perspective

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## **Innovations in English Language Teaching and Learning: The Turkish Perspective**

### **FOREWORD**

In this publication we wish to share some of the interesting innovations in the teaching and learning of language which are currently taking place with the context of Turkish education. It is our hope that this will serve as the first volume in what will become a long series celebrating the research being conducted in this country. We begin this journey in the volume presented here, which consists of eight chapters.

Turkey is now playing a major role in the development of science and technology in the world, notes **Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi** in the introductory chapter. This contemporary role has created a dynamic landmark in terms of the degree of recognition that the country currently enjoys. To further substantiate their strong international reputation in learning and teaching, the author suggests, it is expedient to redefine teaching and learning in English within the Turkish context.

The second chapter, authored by **Ferit Kılıçkaya, Jarosław Krajka** and **Małgorzata Latoch-Zielińska**, focuses on e-learning. The implementation of e-learning, blended learning and distance learning in foreign language instruction has, suggest the authors, become widespread all over the world, including Turkey. With the generation of Digital Natives learning at schools, instructors face the challenge of providing distance learning courses and materials that would meet necessary standards. The re-evaluation of curriculum models and evaluation criteria is thus needed to ensure high quality of distance instruction. This chapter will report on different models of distance learning courses, reflecting on their applicability for English language teaching in Turkey. Moreover, course design guidelines are provided to facilitate effective authoring of online programs.

In the third chapter, **David Mearns** examines the possibilities of transitioning from pen and paper to online alternatives when giving feedback to student work. The chapter describes ongoing ICT-pedagogical practices for improving feedback given by teachers to students at high school level. Based on the author's classroom research, this chapter focuses on feedback given on academic essays completed within the writing process, in order to discover how students respond to a different type of feedback than that to which they have been accustomed. The author also suggests that we, as ELT practitioners, find ways to move for a change to our feedback practices, and provide students with an alternative methodology that could lead to better student-engagement and focused writing practices within this context.

Within the field of the education, notes **Yasin Aslan** in chapter four, a gradual but significant change has taken place recently, resulting in less emphasis being placed on teachers and greater stress on the role of learners and learning. This change has been reflected in a variety of ways in language education and teaching. Research and theory in second / foreign language learning strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies in order to gain new language skills. These strategies, suggests the author, enhance language learning and help learners develop language competence, in the four basic skills in foreign learning.

Reading comprehension is an important ability that learners need in order to decode meaning of texts in different genres, explains **Banu İnan** in the fifth chapter. Think-aloud is a technique that learners might use in order to overcome the difficulties of reading texts. With the help of teacher's modeling, notes the author, learners might observe the techniques their teacher uses while reading a text and they may do the same so as to overcome the difficulties they have in comprehending these texts.

In chapter six, **Ayşe Kaplan** and **Sharon Meredith** explain the results of a study conducted at Yasar University in the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011. The

aim of the study was to obtain feedback from freshman undergraduate students regarding the EAP course delivered in the tertiary campus and to utilise the data collected to improve and hopefully meet the specific needs of students related to their success in their academic endeavors and acquisition of academic tools. This chapter explores the literature of EAP, programme evaluation and humanistic approach, discusses the findings of the data analysis, and, the authors suggest, offers some implications for the improvement of the EAP programme considering students' perspectives and suggestions.

Writing in a foreign language has always been a difficult task, notes **Nilüfer Güler** in chapter seven. Most of the research conducted on the EFL and ESL writing has focused on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and paragraph organizing of the target language. However, even advanced language learners' writings have been criticized by their teachers. Contrastive rhetoric claims that it is as important to gain proficiency in the rhetorical pattern of the foreign language as gaining proficiency in syntax and vocabulary. This chapter highlights the importance of contrastive rhetoric in terms of EFL writing instruction, and some implications for EFL teachers are given by the author at the end of the chapter.

A major part of the bridge between the preparatory program and the freshman year is the series of lectures in mathematics and natural sciences (EMS) which the students attend during the upper intermediate course at Sabancı University, explains **Adam Simpson** in the final chapter. The hope is that students enjoy the valuable opportunity to experience something of what life will be like for them when they are attending lectures in their freshman classes. Additionally, notes the author, the aim is to show the students that, although the content of the lectures may already be familiar, they need to remember that, this being an English course, they need to become familiar with the language used in these lectures to showcase their competencies. This final chapter is an exploration of the extent to which is actually happening.

# Innovations in English Language Teaching and Learning:

## The Turkish Perspective



# TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN TURKEY

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*Turkey is now playing a major role in the development of science and technology in the world. This has created a dynamic landmark in terms of the degree of recognition that the country currently enjoys. To further substantiate their strong international reputation in learning and teaching, it is expedient to redefine teaching and learning in English. First, this will break the barriers of lack of communication which may arise when a foreigner who cannot speak the Turkish language arrives in the country and, second, it will showcase the English curriculum which could provide the average Turkish citizen with the ability to move to any Anglo-American enclave in search of the developmental opportunities which could enable them to indulge in any manner of research that could facilitate the development of Turkey. This study demonstrates that English has, at very least, come of age as a global language. It is a phenomenon which lies at the heart of globalization. English is now redefining national and individual identities worldwide; shifting political fault lines: creating new global patterns of wealth and social exclusion; and suggesting new notions of rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Graddol, 2006:12). Turkey is finding its place within this brave new world.*

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of language cannot be underestimated, because it is the vehicle of thought and communication. The English language is a national and international medium of oral communication (Chukwuma & Otagbumagu: 2007). By so doing, it has led to the exchange of feelings and effects which has contributed tremendously to the socio-economical and political development of any state. Turkey, as a country of high repute in science and technology, is growing with each day that passes. The need to inculcate the use of English in teaching and learning is what this study attempts to demonstrate. The need for this is to broaden the horizon of knowledge and the spectrum of development which would cut across all the levels of economies. In Turkey, many native languages exist which bring about mutually concrete body of thoughts as well though they do not enjoy the same international reception that English does. According to the Turizm research, "The Turkish language is not an Indo-European language. It belongs to the Altaic branch of the Ural-Altaic linguistic family. The languages of this family are called Altaic because they are believed to have originated in the high lands around the Altay Mountains of Central Asia. More than 90 percent of all contemporary speakers of Altaic languages speak a Turkish language. The peoples of this region led a nomadic life. Turks, too, for centuries being nomads, took their language along wherever they moved. The Turkish language now stretches from the Mongolian lands and China to the present day Turkey. The far eastern border of the language now is where once the Turkish people have originated from. The Turkish language at present is being heavily spoken in the following countries and regions: Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Turkistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and so on. The language being spoken in Turkey now is accepted to be the standard Turkish and it is the descendant of Ottoman Turkish and its predecessor, so-called Old Anatolian Turkish, which was introduced into Anatolia by the Seljuk Turks in the late 11th century AD. It basically differs from that of other Turkic origin groups in dialects and accents" (<http://www.turizm.net/turkey/info/language.html>).

With these languages in vogue, English will not only act as complementary code but a global language that will unite all factors and cultures. This study that examines teaching and learning English in Turkey is divided into six parts: (a) visualizes English use and its pedagogical application in Turkey, (b) stresses the methodological implications of English in Turkey, (c) concerns itself with the learning of English in Turkey, (d) looks at the teaching of English, (e) discusses cultural innovations and diversity that arise in the use of English for the Turkish people and (f) finalizes the discussion by suggesting some recommendations which are both analytical and theoretical.

### **ENGLISH USE AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION IN TURKEY**

Cambridge dictionary probes into the etymology of pedagogy as “the study of being a teacher or the process of teaching. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction as pedagogy is also occasionally referred to as the correct use of instructive strategies. For example, Paulo Freire referred to his method of teaching adult humans as critical pedagogy in correlation with those instructive strategies the instructor's own philosophical beliefs of instruction are harbored and governed by the pupil's background knowledge and experience, situation, and environment, as well as learning goals set by the student and teacher” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy>). Consequently, a teacher who uses English as the language of instruction is likely to introduce cultural knowledge of the English people and this will introduce new strategies different from the teaching methods known in Turkey. Three classes of learners exist in Turkey: They are the beginner’s category, intermediate category and advanced category. The teaching of English for these people may require a very simplistic application of lesson notes-the type constantly being used by the British Council. Traditional lesson notes were written to address the problems of the particular student and to solve problems.

For beginner’s classes, usually but not always within the ages of 2-7, the teacher may start by introducing

1. Alphabetical Order of Setting Words and its Classification
2. Christmas Adverbs of Frequency
3. Christmas Past Tense Mime
4. Classroom Treasure Hunt
5. Color Word Puzzle
6. Conjunctions
7. Countries and Nationalities
8. Driving Rules
9. Formal Letter Writing
10. Use of Present Tense / Simple Past Tense, etc.

(<http://www.usingenglish.com/teachers/lesson-plans/>)

However, English pedagogy in Turkey would go a long way to stimulate cultural and social balance. However, 'the impulse is to attach oneself to great traditions or to serve oneself from them, there is general agreement in all these instances about one thing: English Language affirms a set of social patterns and reflects a particular cultural taste. Writers who imitate the language of another culture, therefore, allow themselves to be defined by it. The best of the commonwealth writers who use English, however, have done more than just use language; they have also modified it, in the process of generating alternative literary and linguistic possibilities which make English language a world language' (*English for Academic Purposes* p.10).

The Turkish Intermediary Level learners (usually, but not always, between 8-15 years old) would need to undergo these English lesson plans:

1. Agreeing and Disagreeing Game
2. Although and Even Though
3. Business English Going to Game
4. Cambridge PEF Sentence Completion

5. Business Writing Comparative Game
6. Conversation-Smiling on the Outside
7. E-mail and Telephoning
8. History Vocabulary for ESL Students
9. How British is your English
10. Spelling and Punctuation among others

And the Advanced Level (usually 18+) would have to take these English pedagogies:

1. IELTS Speaking Tasks
2. A Minister Resigns
3. Adverbs of Frequency
4. Bird Flu
5. Business and Technical English
6. Christmas Party
7. Earthquake in Iran
8. Editing Skills
9. Gender Roles Case Studies
10. Multiple Literacies

(<http://www.usingenglish.com/teachers/lesson-plans/>)

## **METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TURKEY**

Individuals have different and peculiar learning habits and attitudes, a student organizes his study more effectively because learning is a process that deals with the mind set (*English For Academic Purposes*, 3-4). English methodology is an addition to the understanding of knowledge trends in Turkey. The applications of different methodologies and at times English theories would make room for diversity and purpose. Graddol sheds more light on this scenario when he explores some aspects of

English which shows that it is a global language with unique methodology in these areas which include: social, economical, political, and cultural values because these aspects tend to satisfy the yearnings of globalization. Language methodology categorizes language based on the number of speakers not necessarily examining the strength of the language and its linguistic implications. We can dismiss his fears that English language cannot go into extinction based on its wider coverage in schools, commerce and industry. His idea of “lesser-used language is to be taken seriously because no natural language in the world is “lesser-used” demography is not a basis for the understanding of thought and development. The example of Nigeria, Singapore, India, Malaysia and other L2 users are veritable proof that English language will remain undaunted. Rather, it will carry new metaphors, ironies with regards the locale where the code is applicable and this brings new imagery, paradox and development to English Language (*English Text* p.14).

In Turkey, English has unilaterally assumed a new metaphoric role. That is the methodological implication when some Turks use English as second language or additional language by code mixing, *switch coding*, transliterating their local codes to the English language hereby giving it a new linguistic and literary impressions about what the word means in its real state. Domestication of English language in Turkey would take many shapes. When we take a look at Turizm’s research, we found out that ‘the Turkish alphabet is designed for the easiest phonetic description: For instance, to describe the sound of "ch" as in "chalk", in Turkish alphabet there is the letter of "c" with a cedilla, a dot under the letter "c". The same applies for "sh" sound as in "shore". In Turkish you simply put a cedilla under the letter "s" and that new letter is one of the 29 letters of the Turkish alphabet. The reason why we do not put these letters right here on this section is that your browser might not support Turkish characters and you may find totally irrelevant letters if not signs instead.

There is one other interesting letter in Turkish and it is the so-called "the soft g". This symbol is created by adding a cedilla this time to the top of the letter "g". The reason

why it is called "the soft g" is the fact that you prolong the preceding vowel when there is a "soft g", in a way softening the utterance. To give you an example and let's kill two birds with one stone here; every foreigner, at least at the beginning, find it very difficult to say "thank you" in Turkish, "tesekkür ederim". Instead, there is a friendlier and easier way, that is, by saying "sağol", and the "g" here is a "soft g" and it is described with a cedilla dot on its top. So, you read it as "saaol" by prolonging the "a" sound, making it as if it were double. "Saaol", "Thanks". Turkish is an agglutinative language, meaning a fairly large number of affixes in Turkish may be added to the root; each affix has one meaning or grammatical function and retains its form more or less unaffected by the morphemes surrounding it. This term is traditionally used in the typological classification of languages. Turkish, Finnish, and Japanese are among the languages that form words by agglutination. To put it more simply, there are suffixes added to the stem of the words to generate new words or even sentences. Take the example "Cekoslavyalilastiramadiklarimizdanmisiniz?" If we should translate this one word sentence (43 letters) into English, it means "Are you one of those that we could not have possibly turned into a Czechoslovakian?" Learners should have a closer look at the suffixes forming the sentence'.

(<http://www.turizm.net/turkey/info/language.html>).

## THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH IN TURKEY

To learn English, a Turk can begin to look at the suffixes and prefixes, and then determine their English equivalent placement. This is called learning by association; the type structurally expressed by Vladimir Prop in his popular *Morphology of the Folktales*. 'From the individual's perspective, a learner finds himself going through different stages of the learning process. Learning as a process is an interactive act which varies according to different learners or individuals. It is peculiar in Turkey that people have different learning habits. While there are individuals who can sit for several hours reading and studying, there are others who punctuate their reading hours with breaks' (*English for*

Academic Purposes p.24-25). Learning of English in Turkey is a process that if properly harnessed could develop all three aspects of the individual, namely:

1. The individual or cognitive aspect that deals with the mind's development
2. The affective aspect that deals with the development of the emotion, attitude , interests, values etc
3. The psycho-motor aspect that deals with the development of the body or physical movement of an individual.

Based on the development of these three aspects on the individual, the student learner, in studying English and learning process, would have attained formal operational level where he conceptualizes information or knowledge both on abstract and concrete forms. In other words, a student-learner is working towards becoming a mature learner, who, although finds it easier to conceptualize concrete information more than abstract information, is in a position to do both. To effectively learn English in Turkey, learners cut across all the three groups I have mentioned would need to take note of these issues to enhance effective learning and study as stated below:

1. Learners to jot down the points while considering what materials to select.
2. They are to compare their points with those at the beginning of their learning sessions.
3. They should briefly summarize in their own words, the various points to be considered in surveying materials to be included in their learning sessions.

Surveying materials for proper English learning require the following considerations:

1. The purpose of study: Some learners in Turkey decide to learn English for academic purposes, social or economic reasons and a lot host of other reasons.
2. The amount of Time the learner has at his disposal: Some learners have limited time while some have enough time. They choose to strategize their time for acquiring new knowledge.

3. Material that are available to the learner on the subject.
4. The relevance of such available materials to the aspect of English (ibid).

Allocation of time for learning is a very integral aspect that a learner of English in Turkey should take into cognizance. Time factor dictates the pace of learning. The reason for this is that many learners are already advanced in age or in other aspects of life, however, they are into one kind of profession or the other. There is a strong and dire need to allot good time for the learning of English. In addition 'Having determined the purpose of *learning English*, the next vital point to consider is what time is at the learner's disposal. Student-Learners are very often faced with the dilemma of sharing their time equitably between the various activities that require their attention. It is imperative and expedient to state that the most brilliant student is probably the one who spends the longest hours studying. As a result, the student-learner organizes his time accordingly but devoting time to the new knowledge he wants to acquire (26).

For example, if a learner wants to learn how English words are formed and their functions, such person would know that he/she has dabbled into English grammar and this aspect is called *grammatical structures*. According to Ahaotu in *A Guide on English*, to identify grammatical structures and to state their functions are test items under comprehension in most public examinations. If you understand the eight classes of words and their functions, then, you will have no difficulty understanding this part. Identifying a grammatical structure means stating its name as used in grammar, examples: noun phrase, adverbial clause, a sentence, etc. The function of a word group is the same as that of the word class in which place the word group is found. For instance, a verb phrase represents an actual verb. Therefore, it can only function as verb- as indicators of the action or the condition of the subject. A sound knowledge of sentence elements is needed. To round this up, word formation encapsulates phrases and clauses could make a Turkish English learner understands the instrumentality of English sentence and how they are used to create meanings and effects.

A sentence is a group of words that express complete thought. It may be divided into *subject* and *predicate* as in “Turkey is having series of beautiful cities”. For analysis, *Turkey* stands for the Subject and *is having a series of beautiful cities* is the predicate. ‘Subject’ refers to the thing(s) or person about which the utterance is made while ‘predicate’ is what is said about them (verb +object or complement). To clarify the definition of a sentence above, it is important to note that not all sentences are, indeed, a group of words. There are instances of one word standing as a sentence. The lone word is usually an action verb used in a dialogue. The circumstances of the conversation enables the lone action verb to express complete thought which the discussants understand the meaning. An example is [you] Come [here](123). For the English language learner in Turkey many new experiences would occur. These experiences are not only tasking but enjoying.

## **THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN TURKEY**

Teaching follows systematic methodologies which teachers conform to in order to be able to pass across the message. Many scholars have defined various teaching methodologies in their own ways; these methodologies are either theoretical or analytical. Our intention is not to be bogged by different teaching methodologies because these methods may not be ideal for a Turkish beginner but may be relevant for an African who is already established in the use of English. To start teaching English, the English teacher may not necessary be an English native speaker but must be aware of the tonal usage in English.

However, the teacher should be ready to help the Turkish speaker handling the problem of transferring Turkish native tonal tongue to English. The speech and its formation should constitute the major aspect which the teacher should be able to handle so that the effort of teaching English in Turkey would not be fruitless. Let us just say that “intonation is the tone or melody of speech utterance. It is the pitch pattern in a sentence realized through the vibration of the vocal cords in the larynx. The variation in

pitch is called intonation and this gives melodies to speech. With regard to a language like *Turkish* that has different tonal pronunciation from English, there is need to differentiate among its *tonality*, its *tonicity* and its *tone*" (English for Academic Purposes).

*Tonality* means tone group or tone unit with their boundaries, *tonicity* depicts the placing of the tonic syllabic and establishing of the focus of the information pre-tonic section while *tone* is the pitch contour pattern in speech. Understanding these variables first would enable both the English teacher and his/her Turkish audience know the terrain of English usage and application. It would enable the construction of speech effective in day to day application. Teaching of English however would be achieved by the classifications I had earlier mentioned in the beginning of this essay: The classification of students into the beginner's class; intermediate class and the advanced class. Writing of curriculum, as well, could conform to the early mentioned variables as well.

To make teaching of English enjoyable and interesting for Turkish people who already enjoy their native language in arts and culture, in music and literature, there is need to introduce new innovations. These innovations would enhance the knowledge of English. Too much concentration on only one aspect of English should be discouraged and totally avoided to prevent boring atmosphere.

### **CULTURAL INNOVATIONS AND DIVERSITY**

The act of learning, speaking and writing in English could help the Turkish speaker in the development of new initiatives. Personal practice and learning could complement what the teacher has taught. It is expedient to know that English people have a well systematic history like the Turkish people. This history is unique in breaking the cultural barriers or cultural limitations. Cultural limitations do not enhance diversity. For a proper diversity of knowledge based on intercultural linkage, there is a strong desire to

establish concrete interest in the application of English artifacts to Turkish idiosyncrasies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Proficiency in English could be achieved when a Turkish learner and English teacher put into practice most of the ideas that this chapter suggests. The dictionary could form a good guide and word play intervals as well. Learners are strongly advised to develop new techniques for learning. The creation of time for accumulating new ideas is paramount. Turkey as a country could enjoy mutual relationships in art and culture in Europe and in the world. Finally, the study has demonstrated the benefits of learning English vis-à-vis its implications in the global unification efforts which could enhance global peace and tranquility.

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## BIOGRAPHY

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# **E-LEARNING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN TURKEY – CURRICULUM MODELS AND COURSE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

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*Nowadays, the implementation of e-learning, blended learning and distance learning in foreign language instruction has become widespread all over the world, including Turkey. With the generation of Digital Natives learning at schools, instructors face the challenge of providing distance learning courses and materials that would meet necessary standards. The re-evaluation of curriculum models and evaluation criteria is thus needed to ensure high quality of distance instruction. This chapter will report on different models of distance learning courses, reflecting on their applicability for English language teaching in Turkey. Moreover, course design guidelines are provided to facilitate effective authoring of online programs.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Computer technology has helped to introduce a number of innovations into foreign language instruction. The widespread use of methods, activities and tools of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) enabled many teachers all over the world, including Turkey, to enhance their teaching and maximize learning opportunities for their students. Fortunately, more and more schools on the one hand and households on the other have computers and Internet access to make technology-assisted learning possible.

Out of all the different forms of CALL, distance learning deserves its special place. Contrary to such well-established branches as multimedia CALL, Data-Driven Learning or Internet-assisted Language Learning, teaching foreign languages at a distance still awaits greater attention and development in the future. What is especially needed is the reflection on different modes of learning and their applicability to particular national contexts conditioned by, among others, learners' cultural preferences.

The aim of this chapter is to address the notion of distance learning as a possible source of inspiration for innovation in English language learning and teaching in Turkey. The discussion of development of Information Society and distance education will be followed by elaboration on fundamental concepts involved in e-learning. The presentation and critical discussion of different distance learning initiatives implemented at Turkish educational establishments will conclude the present chapter.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY AND DISTANCE EDUCATION**

One of the most fundamental aims of contemporary education on each level should be preparing students to function properly in the Information Society as well as find their proper place in knowledge-based reality (Myrdzik, Latoch-Zielińska, 2010).

The notion 'Information Society', IS for short, was used for the first time in 1963 by Tadao Umesao in the article about the evolutionary theory of society based on information (Nowak, 2005) and was made famous with the seminal work of Kenichi Koyama, *Introduction to the Theory of Information*, published in 1968. However, the development of the Information Society originated in the United States in 1956-1957, when the number of white-collar workers exceeded the number of manual labourers. The industrial America gave way to the society which for the first time in history was dominated by those dealing with information rather than production of goods.

The contemporary world demands skilful and reflective use of information, and it has become essential for people to develop their intellectual abilities, for education to be information-oriented, for communication to be computerised. At the same time, home computer terminals and nation-wide computer networks were introduced (Goban-Klas, Sienkiewicz, 1999). In Europe the idea of Information Society was made one of the pillars of knowledge-driven economy, together with education and science, which promised catching up with the USA in terms of economic development.

The most important influence for the development of Information Society was the report of the European Commission known as *The Bangemann Report* (1994). The report sparked off wide debate across Europe on the possibilities of balanced development and increasing the economic potential, as well as indicated dangers connected with the development of innovative information technologies and their influence on society.

During the late 1990s many analyses, reports and strategic documents on key directions of the development of the Information Society were prepared (Marciniński, 2011). To start with, the "*Towards an Information Society Approach*" green paper was issued by the European Commission in 1997, and the initiative "eEurope – An Information Society

for All” was proposed in December 1999. Within this strategy the issues of Information Society became strongly grounded in politics as a topic of discussion of member states and institutions of the European Union and a factor contributing to the process of European integration.

The complete plan for building the European Information Society, known as “Lisbon Strategy”, was passed at the European Union summit in Lisbon in 2000. After that, a number of key documents were prepared that clearly detailed specific actions and milestones. In 2000 at the summit in Feira “eEurope 2002 – An Information Society for All” action plan was passed, while in Gothenburg the need for modernisation and acceleration of reforms in candidate countries was further refined. At the Seville summit the “eEurope 2005 Information Society for All” plan obliged EU member states to develop electronic services, introduce electronic health service and provide universal Internet access, while the “European Information Society 2010” plan, passed at the Council of Europe summit in May 2005, proclaimed information technologies as the driving force of permanent growth and a precondition for the information society.

The Turkish Ministry of National Education started distance education programs in the 1970s, preparing delivery of programs in English and French to support the curricula at schools through a state radio, Radio Ankara. In the 1980s, in coordination with the state TV, TRT prepared foreign language teaching programs as well as other ones (Adıyaman, 2002). In accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1981, Anadolu University started to provide distance education in Turkey. In 1982, Anadolu University started to offer undergraduate distance education degrees in business administration and economics using digital versions of textbooks, streamed versions of broadcast TV programs, audio books and multimedia learning materials. Following wide-scale adoption of computers in schools starting from the 1990s and the educational reform in 1997, Departments of Computer Education and Instructional Technology were established to train teachers in the field of computers and computer education. Since then, many universities and

private institutions have started to provide distance education through various tools supported by technology.

## FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

To begin with, a number of basic concepts related to online learning and distance education need to be established. Many of them are used interchangeably (Pachler, Daly, 2011), however, crucial differences that occur between these call for ample discussion in this chapter. The general definition of e-learning is proposed by Daly and Pachler (2010) as follows:

*A set of practices which enhance the potential of people to learn with others via technology-aided interaction, in contexts which can be “free” of barriers of time and place. It involves the utilisation of a range of digital resources—visual, auditory and text-based—which enable learners to access, create and publish material which serves educational purposes. ... this material can be shared electronically with fellow learners and teachers both within and beyond the bounds of formal education contexts. (p. 217)*

- **Distance education** is a form of learning in which individual students or distributed groups of students are taught by a teacher, however, without being in constant contact.
- **Distance learning** is a learning context in which both student and teacher are separated by geographical and temporal distance, which results in individual learning with little or no cooperation with other students.
- **Distributed learning**, on the other hand, is a form of distance education in which students can fully interact both with one another and the instructors.
- **E-learning**, finally, is the process of education that uses innovative methods of transmitting knowledge via the Internet, extranet and intranet technologies, audio, video, flash animations and the like (Zielińska, 2011).

At the same time, one can distinguish a number of modes of distance learning, classified according to the type of technology used and the character of the learning process:

- **databases** – the simplest form of online education, in which students have online (Internet, intranet) or offline (CD, DVD) access to multimedia encyclopedias, libraries, training materials etc.;
- **online consultations** - quick answers to questions asked by Internet or intranet users, the exchange of information and knowledge via e-mail, newsletters, discussion forums, chats or FAQ systems;
- **synchronous mode** – the teacher and the student are in constant contact and both parties influence each other at the same time. This mode encompasses such techniques as audioconferences, videoconferences, interactive television or Internet chats. This format of learning features live interaction, individual as well as group work and discussions. Students are given access to source materials and tools, which can be presented, processed, collected, deleted, changed or monitored. Each student activity or its absence can be easily spotted.
- **asynchronous mode** – does not demand the presence of students and teachers at the same time in the same place. The former choose the moment they want to learn in, while the latter specify the topics, pace the content delivery, set deadlines for tasks, tests, modules and courses. This mode uses, among others, audio and video resources, websites, e-mail, discussion forums. The advantages of this format are that students can learn from any place rather than at school, they can access materials at any time and from any place, get more time to reflect as opposed to the synchronous mode. Moreover, this mode is more cost-effective, as the very cost of materials development depends on the level of sophistication of contents and the very system used.
- **Blended mode** – the most effective teaching model which mixes traditional and virtual forms of content delivery.

Currently, three most popular distance learning environments can be distinguished:

- **Learning Management System (LMS)**, which enables administration and delivery of content, monitoring learner progress and assigning access rights to particular modules and courses to individual students or groups of learners;
- **Learning Course Management System (LCMS)**, which, apart from LMS functions described above, also feature functionalities for didactic content authoring (so-called Web-Based Training, WBT);
- **mixed models.**

These are generally composed of five modules (Latoch-Zielińska, 2009):

- ✓ **subject management module**, which is responsible for scheduling the availability of subjects in the system, publishing content and tracking learning of enrolled students;
- ✓ **distance self-study module**, enabling learners to use distance courses and collecting information about their progress;
- ✓ **communication module**, allowing synchronous and asynchronous communication;
- ✓ **course builder module**, with which the teacher can design course templates and introduce content into them;
- ✓ **quiz module**, which allows the teacher to create quiz tasks for teacher-administered exams or self-study quizzes for students.

## LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE E-LEARNING CONTEXT

It is generally believed that distance education, contrary to traditional learning, is more modern, effective and attractive. Even though this point is frequently debated by many educationalists, the present paper will adopt a more positive view of distance learning in language education, placing less attention on the drawbacks or limitations of this form of learning.

As far as positive aspects of online education are concerned, T. Watkins (2005) distinguishes the following:

- focusing the learning process on the student,
- individualizing the learning curriculum and adapting it to the student's needs,
- setting the learning pace according to one's preferences,
- distributing learning units regardless of the time and place,
- encouraging critical and contextual thinking through promoting problem-based learning,
- fostering cooperation of students,
- emphasizing teacher-student dialogue,
- allowing access to educational resources not only related to a single lesson, but using rich multimedia libraries.

According to Stanisławska (n.d.), distance education meets the most fundamental standards of teaching: message complexity, curriculum cohesion, difficulty grading, presentation systematicity, knowledge durability, initiativeness and conscious learning. One particular aspect that needs to be stressed here is that distance education promotes problem-based learning, cooperative learning and learning to learn.

Moreover, online learning meets the assumptions of the constructivist approach to language education, within which students learn in interaction with their surrounding and are active at construing their knowledge by evoking previously learnt information (Dylak, 2000). In this paradigm, learners do not record ready-made information, but rather construct their own structures based on data. The constructivist view on teaching and learning stresses the active role of the learner in creating his/her self-identity.

Contemporarily, there has been a shift in roles observed, from teacher as monitor (Restricted CALL), through teacher as monitor and facilitator (Open CALL) to teacher as facilitator and manager (Integrated CALL – Bax, 2003). Goodyear (2001) and Goodyear

et al. (2001) have derived a set of indicators for how both tutor and student roles might be expected to change when moving from traditional to online teaching and learning.

<b>Changing teacher roles</b>
• From oracle and lecturer to consultant, guide, and resource provider
• Teachers become expert questioners, rather than providers of answers
• Teachers become designers of learning student experiences rather than just providers of content
• Teachers provide only the initial structure to student work, encouraging increasing self-direction
• Teacher presents multiple perspectives on topics, emphasising the salient points
• From a solitary teacher to a member of a learning team (reduces isolation sometimes experienced by teachers)
• From teacher having total autonomy to activities that can be broadly assessed
• From total control of the teaching environment to sharing with the student as fellow learner
• More emphasis on sensitivity to student learning styles
• Teacher-learner power structures erode

Together with wider adoption of problem-based learning and collaborative learning, new roles for teachers such as “facilitators of learning” as opposed to “deliverers of content” have been enforced (Naidu et al., 2002). E-teacher accompanies the e-learner in the process of gathering knowledge and becoming familiar with the outside world. The most important aim for the former is helping the latter understand objective reality and use acquired knowledge. Instead of being lectured, the student gets assignments to be done, which are constructed in such a way that they involve drawing one’s own conclusions and observations, as well as searching for alternative solutions. In order to tackle a particular problem the student needs to collect the necessary knowledge him/herself. This mode of learning is much more effective than getting a bunch of data to be remembered, which would be followed by showing the applications.

Teachers are “called upon to abandon traditional roles and act more as guides and mentors, exploring the new media themselves as learners and thus acting as role models for their learners” (Fitzpatrick and Davies, 2003, p. 4). In some contexts of CALL,

such as distance education, the change might even result in inapplicability of the term 'teacher', to be replaced by 'tutor', 'e-moderator' (Salmon, 2004) or 'pedagogue' due to its connotations of 'supervision' and 'guardianship' as well as 'instruction' (Hult, Dahlgren, Hamilton, & Söderström, 2005).

Distance education encompasses the plethora of methods, forms and tools to be used by the teacher. The selection of the most appropriate method is determined on the one hand by the objectives set, while on the other hand by teacher and learner capabilities. William Horton (2006) enumerates the factors which contribute to the process of learning in distance contexts. He stresses the fact that each of these can be encountered in the distance learning environment, and each can have its appropriate ways of implementation.

**Learning by listening** can be fostered by providing links to online audio and video resources, audio and videoconferences, e-learning courses, recordings of conferences and seminars. **Seeking truth** will take place when the teacher uses e-mentoring, discussion groups, mailing lists, chats, individual online research as well as other mechanisms of virtual community building. **Learning by reading** is triggered by the use of textual resources, virtual libraries, hyperlinks to online resources. **Learning by viewing**, on the other hand, will be facilitated by introducing online audio and video, conference and workshop recordings, screen sharing and whiteboards. Students can also learn through **investigating case studies**, when they are directed to virtual museums and laboratories, when they examine cases or when they are engaged in mechanisms of group criticism.

Furthermore, learners can acquire knowledge by **modelling their or others' behaviour**, which is accomplished by e-mentoring, using guest experts during lessons, incorporating case studies, roleplaying, simulations, games and tests in the course of the lesson. One can also learn through **trying out and exploring**, by being engaged in simulations, virtual

labs, brainstorming or manuals. Moreover, **discussion** as an activity is also not to be underestimated, and it is fostered by the e-teacher with discussion groups, mailing lists, chats, e-mentoring and other forms of virtual community building. **Remembering and practicing** are foundations of education, thus, activities related to practice or mnemonics can be used to maximize the memorization process. Finally, students will conduct **research** through individual searches on the Internet, teacher-directed exploration of online resources or analyses of selected cases.

### **BLENDED LEARNING AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORMAT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Both research and practice show that blended learning, as a paradigm mixing face-to-face and online components, is the most effective solution for foreign language learning (Garrison, Kanuka, 2004). Blended learning can have different forms: "implementing e-learning solutions in foreign language learning makes the whole process less time-consuming and more closely related to individual preferences and learning styles of students" (Czos, 2006, para. 6).

To sum up, the most important advantages of blended learning are the following (Goltz-Wasiucionek, 2010):

- Shaping the teaching process flexibly through using e-learning units and traditional lessons in different configurations.
- Modifying, updating and expanding content quickly and easily.
- Administering the teaching process and monitoring learner progress easily through transferring some part of their learning onto the virtual platform.
- Providing varied forms of work and assessment: among others, objective and customised feedback delivered automatically right after the completion of the task or quiz, as opposed to delayed or non-existent feedback in traditional learning.

- Extending students' exposure to the target language out-of-class, enabling individual work at one's own pace with communication with the teacher via a forum or internal mail.

In the framework of foreign language learning, blending the two components means, in practical terms, that the teacher can apply online activities to develop students' written skills such as reading comprehension and writing, while use face-to-face lessons to focus on oral proficiency and authentic use of language in communication. Also effectiveness of grammar instruction can be significantly increased by automated e-learning activities due to their multiple types, options and number. Listening comprehension is another skill that is fundamental for acquiring language proficiency. However, using audio recordings in traditional learning encounters many problems: limited time in class, the necessity to take all students at the same pace, the need to play the recording the same amount of times to the whole class. On the other hand, the provision of audio materials and accompanying quizzes on the e-learning platform enables students to listen to materials as many times as they prefer, as well as use a tape script or a dictionary at one's demand. If possible, stand-alone pronunciation software or speech recognition systems can be integrated with the online course to provide appropriate language model and opportunities for individual pronunciation practice.

## **DISTANCE COURSE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The foundation for making online courses is the Instructional Design educational theory, which specifies the techniques aiming at activating the student in the process. While designing distance courses, the following set of nine steps put forward by Robert M. Gagné is universally adopted (cited after Latoch-Zielińska, 2009):

- **Motivate the Learner** – use attractive teaching materials, encompass learners of different learning styles and modalities, apply varied forms of work to provide equal chances to all learners.

- **Explain what is to be Learned** – at the start of the course, define precisely what kind of knowledge and/or skills students are expected to achieve at its end. Use hyperlinking to allow learners to exercise their choice in navigating the material, even though this might mean losing track of important issues or skipping some fundamental concepts.
- **Recall Previous Knowledge** – show connections with the old knowledge, provide links to material introduced in some other lesson of the course, construct examples and tasks which require previous knowledge to be brought to the new task.
- **Present the Material to be Learned** – the course designer needs to reconcile students' learning styles and preferences with the specific conditions of online work, so that particular learning units do not devote more than 15-20 minutes to lectures, and the greatest part of the lesson is taken up by discussions, group work, projects and case studies. Theoretical knowledge can be summarized in an accompanying PDF file, a list of references or links to online resources.
- **Provide Guidance for Learning** – plan hints or cues for learners to facilitate individual work, include a large number of examples with practical applications of the presented aspect of knowledge, provide frequently asked questions with answers.
- **Active Involvement** – create the learning environment which would stimulate different forms of work, most of all, discussions and group work.
- **Provide Feedback** – think about cues and hints given to the learner while doing tasks or taking quizzes, which would guide him or her to correct answers without the need to send messages to the instructor.
- **Test Comprehension** – make provisions for instructors to assess students' progress not only through tasks and automatic quizzes, but also by planning individual or group projects, with presentation and discussion of results delivered to the whole group via a forum.

- **Provide Enrichment or Remediation** – encourage learners to consolidate and expand their newly acquired knowledge and skills by indicating links to related websites, using a glossary or highlighting additional reading sources.

A typical online learning unit needs to encompass the following elements (see, for instance, the structure of learning units in the e-Academy of the Future e-learning project, Szaleniec, 2009):

- **introduction:** title page and summary of contents,
- **aims and objectives** – specifying expected results of students' learning,
- **links** – indicating relations of the current unit with previous 'lessons',
- **introducing new knowledge** – presenting new aspects of knowledge, be it a grammatical structure, a set of lexical items, or a reading text with a new topic,
- **practicing new knowledge** – interactive activities based on new knowledge which aim at practicing skills,
- **consolidating new knowledge** – automatic revision of the most important aspects of the unit and interactive tests with automatic grading,
- **feedback** – information to what extent the aims of the learning unit have been accomplished and further actions to be taken if the result is unsatisfactory.

## USING THE E-LEARNING PLATFORM IN EDUCATING LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Distance education can be successfully applied in all areas of life based on traditional methods of acquiring knowledge. Most of all, its implementation can enhance the language teacher training process, as teachers will inevitably be expected not only to use traditional means of expression, but put to work digital tools as well.

The issue of teacher literacies necessary for conducting technology-enhanced instruction needs to be carefully considered. Warschauer (1999, 2002) has identified

four ‘electronic literacies’ that comprise the ability to operate a computer (*computer literacy*), the ability to find and critically evaluate online information (*information literacy*), the ability to produce and interpret complex documents comprising texts, images, and sounds (*multimedia literacy*) and finally the ability to manage online interactions thanks to one’s knowledge of the pragmatics of such interactions (*computer-mediated communication literacy*). Warschauer’s competences are not ordered hierarchically, instead, they are skills that overlap for a complete and successful CALL practitioner.

For Daud (1992), the main issues from a CALL class demanding teacher training implications involve exposure to different kind of software and platforms, how to teach together with the computer, how to manipulate the available software, how to handle students in this type of classes, how to integrate CALL into the curriculum and how to select appropriate software to suit different courses. Bebell et al. (2004) yield a similar list of six distinct categories of teacher technology use as follows:

1. Teacher use of technology for preparation
2. Teacher use of technology for delivery
3. Teacher-directed student use of technology
4. Teacher use of technology for special education and accommodation
5. Teacher use of e-mail
6. Teacher use of technology for recording grades

Carballo-Calero (2001) adds to the list the four essential skills, such as searching (for specific information using varied computer-based information sources), evaluating (the quality and applicability of computer-based materials), creating (text-based and multimedia digital artefacts to be published on the Web) and integrating (the new technology in their teaching in the most applicable way).

More specifically, a foreign language teacher conducting instruction at a distance should possess the following skills (Gajek, 2004):

- the ability to use e-learning tools with confidence,
- the ability to upload teaching materials and announcements to the platform,
- the ability to hold synchronous and asynchronous discussions,
- the ability to analyse the learning process based on the logs of the system (e.g., student access time, the number of quiz attempts or the number of views for specific resources),
- the ability to modify and adapt textual, audio and video materials to suit them to the needs of students,
- the ability to use electronic databases to enhance the process of materials authoring.

All these skills can be developed during pre-service training courses at university, when teacher trainees are put into the shoes of e-learners. The experiences collected in this way will surely result in their greater openness and enthusiasm towards new technological developments in the future.

### **THE CURRENT E-LEARNING TRENDS IN TURKEY**

The current trends in Turkey considering distance education and e-learning in teaching English can be categorized into three main streams: asynchronous discussion forums created by individuals or language teachers to provide discussion on several aspects of the English language, fully distance education English language programs which are provided by some commercial companies and universities and, finally, Web- or CD-based learning aiming at providing intensive activities to improve language learning skills such as reading and writing.

Learning materials used in asynchronous discussion forums created by individuals or language teachers (Özyurt & Özyurt, 2010) include lecture notes in plain documents and multimedia formats, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and question-answer

sessions where people pose questions and provide answers to some aspects of the English language, mainly centred around grammar, reading and vocabulary questions. The majority of discussion forum users also share materials that they create by themselves or the ones that have been prepared by some private language schools or language teachers, which address some difficulties faced by the Turkish learners of English. Some of the most popular websites are *İngilizce Sitesi* (<http://www.ingilizcesitesi.com>), *Dil Forum* (<http://www.dilforum.com>) and *English Office* (<http://englishoffice.ipbfree.com>).

In fully distance education programs, learners can benefit from websites that are intended to guide them from pre-elementary to advanced levels of English through several units accompanied by various lecture notes and exercises. Learners can work according to their own pace and are supported through tools like audio recording, pronunciation and special monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, in order to facilitate understanding of the lexical items provided in exercises or reading passages. Grammar and writing activities are also supported by virtual classrooms. In addition to grammar and writing activities, the listening skill is practiced through several audio and video materials. Moreover, learners can have speaking sessions with online tutors on dates announced in advance. The sessions held with learners are recorded for subsequent review. *The English Language School* offered by *Gazi University* (<http://dilokulu.gazi.edu.tr/>) and the commercial website, *İngilizce Okulu* (<http://www.ingilizceokulu.com/>) are good examples of these fully distance education programs.

The studies conducted to find out to what extent fully distance education programs are effective show that the majority of the students did not enjoy the online learning as it lacked opportunities for practice and face-to-face natural interaction (İnözü & İlin, 2007). According to the participants in the study, immediate feedback, teacher support and opportunities for real communication were expected from these programs and they

stated that they would opt for a traditional classroom. This can be attributed to the fact that Turkish students, generally speaking, are teacher-dependent and teachers are very at the center of the learning processes (Sakar, 2009). The cultural factors such as respect for authority and close interpersonal relationships can lead Turkish distance learners to experience difficulties with independent learning and unstructured learning environments (Usun, 2004). In another study conducted by Inal, Karakus, and Cagilkay (2008), despite their ICT skills, the majority of the Turkish high school students stated that they would not participate in fully distance education programs since face-to-face instruction and social climate of the traditional classroom would not be achieved. In another study confirming the findings of the previous studies (Sakar, 2009), the majority of the students again wanted to take face-to-face courses although they agreed that online courses were helpful.

On the other hand, Web- and CD-based learning programs aim to provide intensive language activities to improve language learning skills such as reading and listening. The current studies in Turkey reveal that language teachers mostly focus on reading, writing, pronunciation and vocabulary activities. Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) reported that Internet-based pronunciation activities helped Turkish learners overcome pronunciation difficulties. The studies related to reading skills (Sagin-Simsek, 2008; Tanyeli, 2009) showed Web-based learning environments can be a very efficient way of conducting reading classes. The studies conducted on vocabulary learning and teaching, hypermedia effect and the use of audio-visual materials such as captioned clips, all revealed very positive results and showed that learners did significantly better while acquiring new lexical items (Akbulut, 2007; Aydın, 2007; Kılıçkaya & Krajka, 2010; Yüksel & Tanrıverdi, 2009; Çakır, 2006). However, it is worth noting that listening, speaking skills and grammar knowledge seem to have been ignored as there is currently very little research conducted into these areas though especially listening and grammar activities really lend themselves to distance education or blended learning programs.

After reviewing the current trends, it will be useful to briefly discuss the recent studies focusing on the attitudes, beliefs and conceptions. The recent studies show that language teachers, teacher candidates and students have overallly positive attitudes towards technology and, according to them, technology has positive effect on EFL learning (Koçoğlu, 2008; Ozek, Kesli, & Kocoglu, 2009; Çoklar & Odabaşı, 2010; Baturay & Daloglu, 2010; Yüksel & Kavanoz, 2011). However, female subjects tended to have more negative attitudes towards technology (Hismanoglu, 2010). The positive attitudes towards technology as shown by these studies can be attributed to the technological tools provided to the participants.

Putting together all the studies conducted on the use of technology and the attitudes of Turkish learners and teachers, it can be concluded that Turkish learners and language teachers are eager to benefit from the opportunities provided by distance education. However, Turkish learners require immediate feedback, teacher support and opportunities for real communication to be taken into consideration as they are not ready yet for independent learning and unstructured learning environments.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we have indicated here, e-learning as a method of learning languages has great potential for foreign language instruction in Turkey. Even though some of the modes of learning at a distance might not be compatible with cultural conditions of Turkish students, the versatility of contemporary Learning Management Systems enables instructors to design their courses in such a way so as to address culturally-conditioned preferences. With increased mobility of citizens distance learning will play more and more important role, and language teachers need to be properly trained as either course designers or programme facilitators. It is to be hoped that the discussion of e-learning types and modes, together with course design guidelines, will contribute to

increasing the competence of Turkish teachers of foreign languages for their future distance teaching experiences.

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# DO WE REALLY NEED PEN & PAPER ANYMORE?

## VIDEO FEEDBACK CONSIDERED WITHIN THE WRITING PROCESS

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Hisar High School

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*The practice of giving feedback within the writing process has been the subject of many studies since the mid-1980s. The call for teachers to develop better feedback practices became apparent after studies showed that students have been generally less than satisfied with how teacher-student written feedback has been given. This chapter aims to identify how teachers may be able to offer feedback in a way that engages students, and presents them with clear messages that they will understand and appreciate. In order for this to be tangible in this context, the consideration and integration of alternative modes of learning through Information Communication Technologies (ICT) need to be realised. In particular, the use of Web 2.0 technology to assist in the writing process by giving students video feedback, instead of written feedback, on their draft papers is considered. The primary epistemology of the proposed approach is consistent with students looking for improved methods of feedback they receive from teachers.*

*This chapter describes ongoing ICT-pedagogical practices for improving feedback given by teachers to students at high school level. The students aged fourteen-sixteen are members of a small Turkish high school population of around three hundred pupils. Based on my own classroom research, this chapter focuses on feedback given on academic essays completed within the writing process, in order to discover how students respond to a different type of feedback than that to which they have been accustomed. I will also suggest that we, as ELT practitioners, find ways to move for a change to our feedback practices, and provide students with an alternative methodology that could lead to better student-engagement and focused writing practices within this context.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Bitchener (2005) states that feedback is regarded by L2-students as integral to their development and better understanding of linguistic features, whether it is by face-to-face interaction from teachers, or in written form as corrective feedback. Unfortunately, however, on reflection of my own feedback practices, students appeared to be less interested in the written feedback I was giving, and more focused on the grade they had received. This led me to believe that I was failing in my efforts to properly engage the students in the writing process, where feedback is essential for it to succeed. On further investigation, students complained of illegible hand writing, complex word structures and a general feeling towards me, their teacher, of being disconnected from their papers. As a second- language teacher and someone who likes to feel connected to his students, this revelation forced me to sit up and further reflect on the feedback practices I was currently employing. I knew that if I wanted to reconnect my students to the writing process, I had to find another method of giving feedback. The answer was to come in the form of video feedback.

Video-feedback has recently become possible through the research and development of ICT software and applications. By utilizing existing desktop recording software to enhance the feedback used for the writing process, I have been able to engage students enough for them to respond positively to the technology and methodology, thus creating better final drafts. It is therefore suggested that video-feedback could become a useful tool for teachers to help engage their students in completion of assignments that employ the writing process.

## **TEACHER FEEDBACK WITHIN PROCESS WRITING**

Process writing has helped instigate deeper research and academic enquiry into ESL&L2 writing practices (see, for example, Hyland and Hyland, 2006; Leki, 1990; Lynch, 1996;

Kroll, 2001). However, though there have been many theoretical advances and suggestions for improvement, it still remains that teachers have been less than willing to change. Brown and Glover (2006: 81-91) found from their study on feedback that, from students' perspectives, it is still being provided in a manner which is either too late in being returned, thus rendering it useless, or that the comments are unhelpful and inconsistent (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2003). In addition, Truscott (1996:151) observes that teachers have been consistently giving mixed messages to their students in surface error, organisation and content. Whether teachers focus on one particular area or not, the decoding and decontextualizing of messages from the teachers is too complex for most L2 learners (Sundem, 2007:57). This results in comments and recommended changes being mostly ignored, and students being deprived of appropriate teacher feedback. This means that this type of prescriptive instruction restricts the students greatly and causes harm to their own writing ability. Therefore, if we consider the use of objective and thought provoking feedback as an incentive for making students respond, instead of negative or incoherent comments that serve no real purpose, more teachers would be returning more relevant and useful feedback that can help to engage and give students more incentive to work on their drafts (Ferris, 2004; Truscott, 1996, 2004).

### **INDIRECT FEEDBACK IS LESS STIFLING**

Giving indirect feedback, where the teacher highlights that there is an error, and the students themselves identify what the error is, could prove to be the most profitable way for students to learn better writing skills. By doing so, teachers will engage their students in guided learning and problem solving'(Ferris and Roberts, 2001:19), which will lead to reflection about linguistic forms that may foster long-term acquisition (Bell, 2002; Lalande, 1982; Reid, 1998b cited in Ferris, 2002:19). Hence, by video-feedback relaying suggestions for change through visual media, students are encouraged to engage, interact, and to formulate more ideas and better understand how to properly

organize their second drafts (see for example Fairbairn & Fairbairn, 2001; Fairbairn & Winch, 1996; Johns, 1993). The results of the study conducted in the research referred to in this chapter, strongly support this claim with many novice academic writers using the video to stimulate thought and implement action for their second drafts through the indirect video-feedback I had sent them. As Bruton (2005) notes, novice writers develop partly from individual initiative, experimentation and feedback. It was thus my aim to act as teacher-interventionist and facilitator in the students' initial attempts at meaning, by offering balanced suggestions and pointers towards better expression, content and organization.

### **WRITTEN FEEDBACK: A TIME FOR CHANGE?**

From my own experience, and from the research conducted, I have also observed that young teenagers are generally unwilling to fully embrace the traditional methods of receiving written feedback. Although they do appreciate receiving comments of encouragement on their papers (Ferris, 1995), these comments appear to be secondary to what it is they really look for; that is, their grade. In reality, few students act on the feedback, and would seem to consider it as a waste of time (Truscott, 1996). The reasons for doing so are difficult to identify, but maybe partly due to teachers from their past who have written comments that were overly negative, or difficult to interpret properly (Zamel, 1985). It may also be as Lizzio and Wilson (2008) note, '...students only value feedback if they get the feeling that the teacher has considered the essay in a personal sense...; otherwise they will ignore the advice'. Earlier research from Cohen, (1987) and Ferris, (1997), found that students make little use, if any at all, of teachers' written feedback, and that the reason is down to the comments being vague, poorly hand written and overly complex in their phraseology (Fregae, 1999); for example, idiomatic and colloquial language items. The result of this has the effect of reducing, or in many cases removing, the willingness to complete home work and assignments (Nesbit & Burton, 2006). Therefore, the need for greater collaboration

within the writing process has revealed that improvements in giving feedback to students on their written assignments are necessary (for example, see Nicol, 2008; Biggs, 2003a; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Juwah et al, 2004). Moreover, the need for quality feedback which enthuses and encourages students is also necessary, so that students see it as useful, helpful and consistent (Glover and Brown, 2006).

In consideration of this, I would like to propose that teachers look to present feedback differently to what they have been used to. Agreeing with Muncie (2000), who notes that feedback is seen as essential to the draft process, I wanted to find answers to the following questions:

- ◆ Can video-feedback help students to improve their writing?
- ◆ How does video-feedback promote interaction between teacher & students?
- ◆ Is the Web 2.0 software-methodology easy to use and implement?
- ◆ What do students think about video-feedback?
- ◆ Is video-feedback time consuming?

## **THE EMERGENCE OF E-LEARNING**

We are now beginning to see a shift away from the computer being thought of solely as a delivery system of documents for instruction, to viewing the user/learner as a more active and engaged participant (Hawisher & Self, 2007). Electronic learning (or E-Learning) is fast becoming a consideration for on-line learning and distance learning opportunities around the world.

What are the strengths of e-Learning? Waterhouse (2005:10) believes that e-Learning facilitates:

- ◆ Student-centred learning

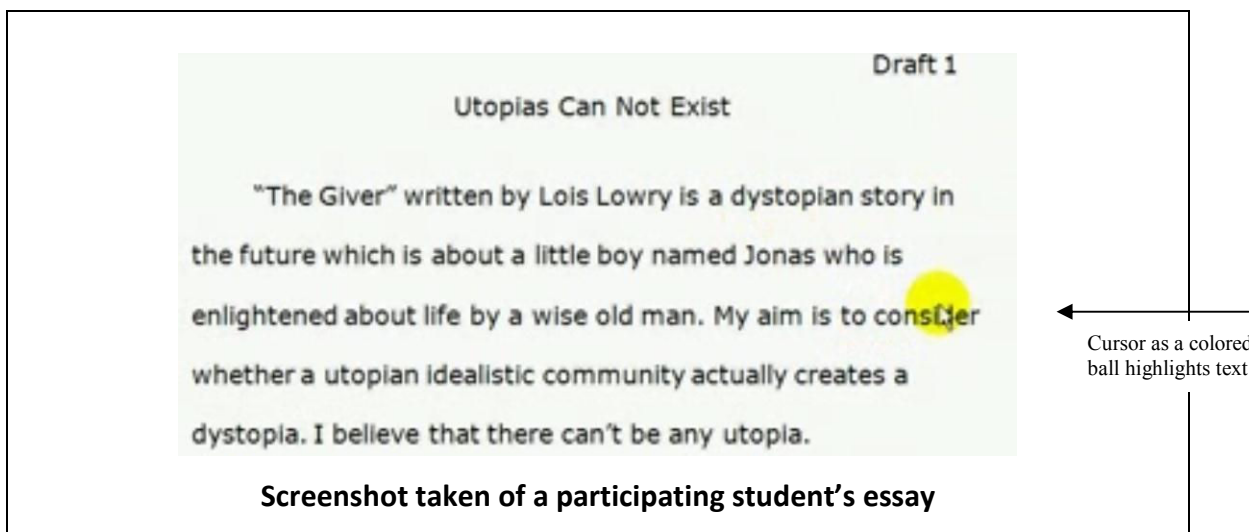
- ◆ Anytime anyplace learning
- ◆ Student interaction with course content
- ◆ Communication and collaboration while helping track students' time on task

Waterhouse (2005) underscores the importance of applying appropriate e-Learning pedagogy. She emphasizes that e-Learning improves learning when instructors focus first on the fundamentals of teaching and learning — which is on pedagogical principles — rather than on e-Learning technology. The educational aspects of e-Learning discussed by Garrison and Anderson (2003) fit well with the communicative potential of new technologies and constructivist and social practice theories of learning. By carefully designing the use of interactive e-Learning platforms, students and teachers are likely to tap into higher-order learning (Kekkonen-Moneta & Moneta, 2002: 423). By integrating, for instance, the writing process with ICT and modern technologies we can see pedagogical cross-overs that will benefit everyone, in particular the students. Now that the internet availability for information and networking in easy-to-use platforms is fast becoming ubiquitous, it is the opportunity for teachers to tap into this technological goldmine and build engaging educational partnerships with their students.

## **WEB 2.0: IN SUPPORT OF THE PEDAGOGY**

Although we are at a time when technology should be considered as support for language learning, we must be aware of what Griffler (2006) warns, 'The underlying principle in e-Learning pedagogy is that technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself'(3). Therefore, it is important for educators to integrate the available technology into their lessons, not to fully replace them. It is with this balanced understanding that we can consider the use of Web 2.0 technology, within e-Learning, as support to our syllabi, and use it to promote fuller interaction with the computer, the internet and its users. Even with favoured-by-students attitudes and practices of ICT and Web 2.0

applications, there have still been calls from students for more classic approaches to their education. There were students admitting that if not well-structured, lessons can deteriorate into 'games' and 'too much fun'. This directly supports Griffier (ibid) and powerful lessons were learned in the context of my own situation with Hazırlik students. This response from students cannot be underestimated as important lessons to be learned by educators considering a move toward technology-in-the-classroom.



## SCREEN-RECORDING SOFTWARE

Students complete drafts and send them to the teacher via email in word or pdf files. The teacher then opens the file and has it on display on the computer desktop. The ease-of-access screen recording interfaces allows for the user to choose the screen dimensions to record either part of, or the full screen. This can be particularly helpful when the file size of the video file needs to be kept small when sending files over the internet with limited speeds and band width. The application also has several file types to cater to conflicting operating systems, netbook requirements, ipad, ipod, and smart phones such as avi, mkv, mp4, m4v and flash files. The quality of visual and video recording is very high, so students can see their essay and hear the teacher easily. The yellow ball [shown in dark grey above] is in place of the cursor, so it draws attention to the areas where the teacher wishes to identify as problematic, or require some more

thought by the student. There is also a zoom-in-on-the-screen function where the teacher can focus on small parts of the text. This can be particularly helpful for students whose surface language errors may need attention, in addition to organisation and content. Rather than promote any one specific software application, I would suggest readers do a Google search for 'desktop recording software' to find the most suitable application. At time of writing this piece the same search returned a host of different programs, some need to be bought, whereas many are free.

### **TONE AND REGISTER IN VIDEO FEEDBACK**

I start by welcoming the student to the experience, and inviting them to be apart of the interactive-process. This shows students that I am trying to connect with them, that I am showing interest in their work. I also try to keep the tone informal and friendly, which also puts the students at ease. This is usually followed by a focus on form and the necessary requirements; i.e. student's name and essay heading. For this age group, a great deal of attention needs to be given on each essay for the introduction, thesis statement and general organisation. Many of the students have difficulty in focusing on a strong thesis statement, so suggestions, ideas and reminders of what we have discussed, through models in class, are relayed on the video. I also refer to the relevant parts of the body paragraphs, to make the students think for themselves about what they have included (or not) to formulate a stronger argument or opinion. It is worth noting that I also come across to the students as quite critical of their work. However, in order to keep them motivated I always follow up any criticism with a positive remark concerning a well written sentence, a well thought out idea, or an interesting concept related to what we have discussed in class. The use of positive language and encouragement are welcomed, and considered particularly helpful by students. I also use rhetorical questions designed to elicit examples and suggestions from their own life experiences, in order to feel more connected to the topic. In essence, this allows the students to connect to their own feelings concerning the

subject matter, thus allowing them the freedom to express themselves within the essay and create a voice.

### **THE TIME NEEDED FOR VIDEO FEEDBACK**

Although Zamel (1985) proposed two drafts and a final draft for assessment, I found that the students included in the study, aged between fourteen and fifteen, had great difficulty in understanding the importance of drafting. Prior to the study they would much rather write without planning or drafting; preferring instead to write down ideas as quickly as possible, and move on to other tasks. I believed that the most I could expect from the students was two pieces of writing for one assignment. That would mean giving video-feedback on their first drafts, with the second draft receiving a grade using the *ERB* criteria; thus agreeing with Ferns (1995); Freedman (1987); and Krashen (1984) who all believe that teacher-responses to earlier drafts of compositions is more effective than those only seen on the final draft. This leads me to the question of time and how long it takes to use the software for feedback. In fact, video-feedback aside, teachers engaged in traditional written feedback spend a great deal of their non-contact time marking papers. Dixon (1986) complained about the difficulties in responding to the unwieldy numbers of compositions produced each week (2). We, as writing teachers, need to be realistic in terms of the amount of any type of feedback we can actually give on a weekly basis. Therefore, if we consider that video-feedback approximates around seven minutes of video for a 500-word assignment, and that generates around 1200-1500 words of comments and advice (Stannard, 2007), it shows how much more information can be transferred between teacher and students if compared to traditional written feedback methods. Thus, teachers can see video-feedback as a practical and worthwhile exercise, since it allows for a greater connection to students in a significantly shorter time. It means that teachers can look at feedback as a true instructional opportunity and not a burden (Ferris, 2003: 123).

## **TEACHERS AND THE SOFTWARE**

Although technology for educators is in the ascendancy it is still apparent that many teachers baulk at the idea of fuller integration of software and tools to assist in their teaching practices. However, we must try to allay the concerns of teachers, if we hope to be successful with the applications considered in the context of technology, the writing process, and education as a whole for that matter. The American Directorate General of Education and Culture (2006) recommends that for educators to adopt and adapt to ICT a shift of paradigm is necessary in teacher-learner roles (4). Teachers are called upon to abandon traditional roles and act more as guides and mentors with effective implementation of new media to facilitate learner-centred approaches to learning. In consideration of the technology-pedagogy paradigm, the ease with which screen-recording software can be learned and used for video-feedback is a benefit for teachers, and perhaps offers them further opportunities for lengthier, yet clearer and more effective responses within the writing process.

## **PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The changes I have proposed for feedback within the writing process are only a small part of a much wider set of changes required within the teacher-as-educator paradigm. We are at a crossroads of major change within the context of education with emerging technologies that are beginning to focus on pedagogy. The challenge is for teachers and researchers to make possible the intelligent and informed use of digital technologies (Snyder, 2007). E-Learning means that we have to redefine our roles as educators and mediate between the world of the classroom and the world of natural language acquisition (Legutke, 2000). Linked inextricably to the internet, it means that we, as teacher-educators, have numerous opportunities to allow students to interact with content, and provide communication and collaboration that adds a world-wide dimension to learning (Waterhouse, 2005).

The internet broadens the literary experience from the world of print by incorporating video, hyperlinks to archived information, sound clips, discussion areas, supported databases and related software (Snyder, 2007). Video-feedback, which is possible because of Web 2.0 software, allows for teachers to adapt the way they give feedback within the writing process. Pahl and Rowsell (2005) see learning as a shared enterprise, which means a new set of skills can be developed to include students. In respect of K-12 education's changes rapidly taking place in countries around the world (Leu & Kinzer, 2000), teachers must try to adapt and move away from archaic practices. Teachers can encourage their students to bring their technology expertise into the classroom and educational context. Once students realize that the teachers are willing to enter into *their* visual world, they can be motivated to contribute more. Teachers will then witness a transformation of focus and channeled energy in the context of the classroom environment, as the students display a willingness to evolve alongside new texts and literacies (Carrington, 2005:22).

By reason of pedagogy and technology needing to work in a two-way relationship between teachers and students, we must all embrace the opportunity to use technology; thus promulgating the belief that process writing is a more interesting and engaging environment for students to develop their writing skills. With the advent of visual modality, as the means for the transfer of knowledge on the internet, teacher-educators need to investigate the wealth of opportunities available to them for use in and out of the classroom. Stannard (2006, 2007) in both his studies of screen capture software concluded that the technology not only highlights to students the benefits of oral and online delivery, but also offers additional visual elements to enhance communication in accordance with the dual process instructional methods advocated by Paivio (1986); Clark & Mayer (2003). In short, students perform better on retention and transfer when they view animation concurrently with the corresponding narration (Mayer et al., 1999).

It could thus be argued that since students prefer a visual reference, the use of only audio feedback as advocated by McFarlane (2009); Coleman (1972); Ice et al. (2007); and Rotherham (2007) seems less appealing. By combining both audio and visual stimuli, as used in video- feedback, teachers can hope for a more lasting impact on students when they attempt to improve their work and subsequently develop their understanding of how to write better essays.

Inconsideration of teachers combining animation and verbal commentary (Mayer, 2001) in the essay-feedback process, students find this instructional format most memorable. Therefore, video-feedback can be seen as a methodology that is less likely to appropriate, mislead or see students misreading complex teacher comments. The teacher-student 'closeness' of video feedback on their essays endears the students and encourages them to engage and participate more in the writing process.

Hawisher and Self (2007) wisely remind us of the reality that we cannot predict the degree or magnitude of changes that will continue to occur on the technological front. However, what we must not do is to ignore what is happening now in the realm of pedagogy and technology. As research in computers and literacy turns to twenty-first century contexts, we must surely consider how much the impact of e-Learning extends far beyond the classroom. The visual communication technology now available to us all as teachers means we are in a very enviable place for the cross-over of quality educational practices that have more chance of engaging students in their learning process. Writing can now be seen as something that is more enjoyable to the students as they see their mistakes and learn to work to improve them through very motivating technological and progressive teaching practices. Non-teaching friends I have explained and shown this approach to the writing process stare at me in disbelief. "I wish I had had that type of feedback when I was at school. The kids nowadays don't know how

lucky they are.” Perhaps this sentiment has some truth to it, but I say that we, as teachers have the duty to make those students realise exactly how lucky they are and how they can benefit by simply engaging and utilizing the technology as a means to develop better skills throughout their education.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Originally from Scotland, David has lived and worked in Turkey for fifteen years. He began teaching English to adults, then to university students, and now for the past ten years, to high school students. It was during his own MSc TESOL studies in 2010 that he began to realise the enormous opportunities for ESL-students working alongside emerging technologies. This meant a considerable turn away from normal teaching practices, both in and out of the classroom. In essence, it has led him to believe that we are at a pivotal moment in ELT pedagogies in Turkey with teachers looking for more interesting teaching practices that will lead to students becoming more engaged and ultimately more aware of the need for self-learning and autonomy.

# THE EFFECT OF MONITORING COMPREHENSION ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT, ATTITUDES AND RETENTION

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*Within the field of the education, a gradual but significant change has taken place recently, resulting in less emphasis being placed on teachers and greater stress on the role of learners and learning. This change has been reflected in a variety of ways in language education and teaching. Research and theory in second / foreign language learning strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies in order to gain new language skills. These strategies enhance language learning and help learners develop language competence, in the four basic skills in foreign learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a general process of changing behaviors in an individual. In other words, the behaviors of a person who has passed through the processes of education are supposed to change. As Varış (1985) states, a person's aims, knowledge, behaviors, attitudes and moral values change by means of education. Ertürk (1982) also expresses the notion that education is the process in which the individual intentionally changes his/her behaviors by means of the experiences he/she has had on his/her own. On the basis of these definitions, education is the process in which we make the individual change his/her behaviors by means of his/her life experiences and deliberate culturing (Demirel, 2004).

Within the field of the education, a gradual but significant change has taken place recently, resulting in less emphasis being placed on teachers and greater stress on the role of learners and learning. This change has been reflected in a variety of ways in language education and teaching. Research and theory in second/foreign language learning strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies in order to gain new language skills. These strategies enhance language learning and help learners develop language competence, in the four basic skills in foreign learning.

There are four basic skills in foreign language education, which we classify as listening, speaking, writing and reading. Among these, the developing of reading skills is not only important for reading comprehension but also for enriching vocabulary. Even those whose vocabulary and grammar are at an advanced level may have great difficulty in understanding reading passages or texts both in their native language and in foreign language. Taking into consideration the notion that there are cultural differences between languages, it can be seen that reading skills are rather complex, particularly in foreign language education.

The studies so far conducted show that the process of reading and reading comprehension go through a variety of stages. Although different strategies have been suggested for developing reading skills, it is seen that these strategies cannot enable the students to completely overcome the difficulties relating to reading skills. To overcome the problems concerning reading comprehension and to increase the quality of reading, there is also a need for studies about the learning process, which is essential to an understanding of modern education, at the center of which is the individual.

Teaching and using metacognitive strategies can affect students' achievement and attitudes positively, as well as the retention of knowledge, by contributing to the reading process in teaching reading skills. In addition, cognitive learning theories place emphasis on the necessity of the learner's active participation in learning and the undertaking of the responsibility of learning. This is why the recent research in this field has focused on learning strategies. Learning strategies are a set of behaviors and thoughts which the learner can enact during learning and which are expected to affect the process of encoding.

Students need certain behavioral and thinking processes so that they can carry out learning. For example, they find the main idea of a reading passage, summarize a story or take short notes about a text. Their performing these tasks successfully depends on the use of certain strategies, which are appropriate to learning. Learning strategies are processes used by the students to learn on their own. The students who provide for their learning are called "Strategic Learners", "Independent learners", or "Self-regulated learners". These students can manage such functions:

1. Identifying a particular learning situation accurately,
2. Choosing the most appropriate strategy for learning,
3. Monitoring to what extent the strategy is effective,

#### 4. Trying to give enough effort through motivation until learning occurs.

Research shows that students who read the reading materials effectively can use learning strategies as well. A strategic reader makes a decision about which strategy he/she will use in a learning environment, evaluates them effectually, and he/she modifies or adapts these strategies when needed. The researches done on good and poor readers with regard to the use of learning strategies indicate that good readers have more strategies than poor ones. These students possibly use appropriate learning strategies if they are not reminded what they should do. For instance, if a strategic student's purpose is to understand the reading material, he/she reads more slowly by thinking deeply, but if the purpose is to find a specific event, he/she browses throughout the reading passage.

Much research conducted on metacognition has indicated the relationship between metacognitive strategies and academic achievement. For example, Ryan's (1984) study found that college students who used "comprehension standards" to monitor their comprehension in an introductory psychology course performed better academically than those who used "knowledge standards." Slife et al. (1985) examined the performance of students of varying mathematical aptitude and different metacognitive ability. They found that high-metacognitive students were more likely to correctly monitor right and wrong answers than were low-metacognitive students. They also concluded that metacognition was an independent construct from general cognition. Swanson (1990) investigated whether children from fourth or fifth grades with high levels of metacognitive knowledge about problem solving could compensate for their overall low aptitude. The results showed that regardless of these children's overall aptitude level, higher metacognitive children outperformed lower metacognitive children in problem solving. All these studies explored different aspects of metacognitive strategies and obtained positive results. Considering the effectiveness of these researches on metacognitive strategies, our study examines the use of comprehension monitoring strategies.

## COMPREHENSION MONITORING STRATEGY

Comprehension monitoring is a reader's being aware of whether he/she has understood a text while reading. Metacognitive strategies are generally used to monitor comprehension. Comprehension monitoring requires not only establishing the targets for teaching a lesson or a unit but also determining the levels of achieving these targets and, if needed, modifying the strategies used in order to reach these targets.

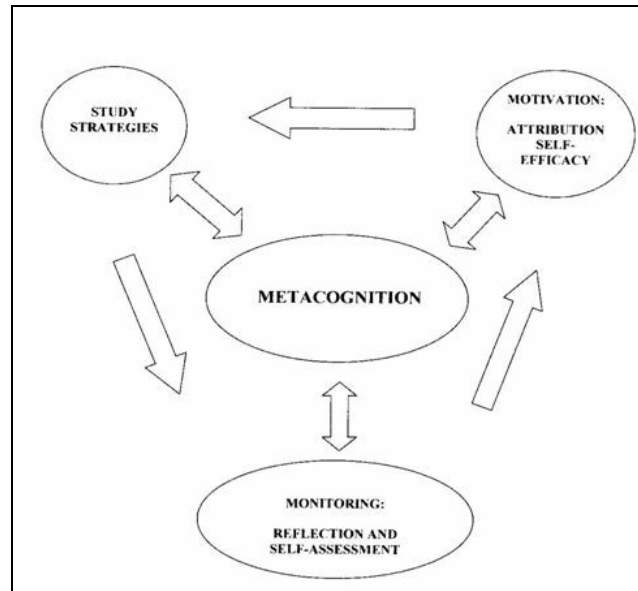
Upon looking into the earlier researches, we see the unanimity about the importance of learning strategies. However, it is interesting that there are several classifications of learning strategies. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) developed the classification, which is a basis for all other research concerning learning strategies. These are as follows:

## LEARNING STRATEGIES

Rehearsal Strategies	Elaborative Strategies	Organising Strategies	Comprehension- monitoring Strategies	Affective Strategies

Skilled readers monitor their comprehension as they construct meaning from a text (Brown, 1987; Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Ravell, 1979; Markman, 1977; Paris et al., 1983). Comprehension monitoring is an aspect of metacognition which involves evaluation and regulation, and skilled readers monitor their performance with persistence (Hacker, 1997; Pressley, 1994). If skilled readers detect a lack of understanding, they analyze the situation and develop a strategic plan (Pressley et al., 1989); this ability to detect and repair comprehension difficulties is central to reading

proficiency (Paris et al., 1983). Though some students are at the high school level, they have been found to monitor their comprehension while reading.



Monitoring Comprehension Instruction teaches students to:

- ◆ Be aware of what they do understand.
- ◆ Identify what they do not understand
- ◆ Use appropriate “fix-up” strategies to resolve problems in comprehension

Comprehension Monitoring Strategies:

- ◆ Identify where the difficulty occurs
- ◆ Identify what the difficulty is
- ◆ Restate the difficult sentence or passage in their own words
- ◆ Look back through the text
- ◆ Look forward in the text for information that might help them to resolve the difficulty.

In their extensive review of studies that used verbal protocols as a method of inquiry, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) conclude that skilled readers are flexible and goal-directed in their processing of text. Pressley and Afflerbach's model of "Constructively

Responsive Readers" subsumes Pressley's earlier models of self-regulated readers, entitled "Good Information Processors" (Pressley et al., 1989). The "Constructively Responsive Reader" model was developed by Pressley and Afflerbach from their review of 38 research studies of verbal reports. Through the review of these on-line, self-report studies, they found evidence of readers constructing meaning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating text. With regard to comprehension monitoring, Pressley and Afflerbach found evidence to support that comprehension monitoring involves many strategies including the monitoring of the characteristics of text and the monitoring of a reader's own state of processing. Thus, in our study we lay emphasis on the use of comprehension monitoring strategy use.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Students should be active in the learning process rather than recording what the teacher presents or tells in the classroom. Another important point is how the students learn and what they do in the learning process as well the knowledge presented to them. There is a considerable difference between a student who has acquired the necessary methods or habits for effective studying and learning and the one who has no or limited knowledge about them. The students' achievement distribution is usually heterogeneous because of their learning and studying strategies. That is why, in Turkey where traditional education is applied, there are significant differences in student achievement in the classroom although students go through the same learning processes. We also see the same thing at universities in Turkey, in which the researches concerning reading comprehension strategies are seem to be insufficient.

The students who use learning strategies effectively and evaluate their learning processes successfully will learn better. The teachers or lecturers who take care of the students' cognitive and learning processes and have enough knowledge about metacognitive strategies can help students reach better learning levels. Students should also be aware of the strategies while they are reading something. This will not only help

them become more successful in their courses but also affect the retention of the information they had positively.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, an experimental method with a control group has been used in order to find out the difference between the students who use comprehension monitoring strategies in the experimental group and the students who are taught by traditional methods, as shown:

Groups	Pre-test	Experimental Process	Post-test		Retention
G1	T1 <sub>123</sub>	Comprehension Monitoring Strategies	T2 <sub>123</sub>	4 weeks	T3 <sub>1</sub>
C	T1 <sub>123</sub>	Traditional	T2 <sub>123</sub>		T3 <sub>1</sub>

*The experimental design used in the Study*

In the study, G1 represents the experimental group and; C represents the control group. Both groups were employed a pre-test prior to the experimental process. The subjects were given an achievement test and an attitude scale toward English reading skills as a pre-test. According to the table above, the pre-tests employed to the subjects are as follows:

T1<sub>1</sub> —→ Achievement test

T1<sub>2</sub> —→ Attitude scale toward English reading skills.

Individual EFL readers are the main source of data in this study that requires the use of mental research techniques for data collection. The intensive study of single cases is expected to obtain rich data by means of immediate and direct observations of the readers' thought process, and their own statements about the ways they used for processing information while reading.

The two first-class groups in the English Teacher Education program of the Faculty of Education at Selçuk University formed the sample for the research. The total number of the students participated in the study was 62. If younger subjects were used, there was a greater chance that error detection rates would be underestimated. Baker (1984) found that young children tended not to use multiple standards spontaneously to evaluate their comprehension. Further support for using older subjects comes from the comprehension monitoring studies of Baker (1984) and Garner and Taylor (1982). These researchers found that logical reasoning skills are related to the detection of textual contradictions. Logical reasoning skills develop with age and are less well established in elementary school children than in middle school children. One group was used as the experimental group and the other one as the control group.

The Attitude scale towards reading course taught consisting of 13 items and the Achievement Test containing 30 questions were administered to both groups in a single session as a pre-test. In three weeks, experimental group was given various strategies comprehension (verbal, visual and action) in the teaching session, but not the control group. Three weeks later, each of the groups was administered the Success Test and Attitude towards Lesson Taught Scale given as post-test. The difference between the pre- test and post-test results is accepted as an achievement. Success test used to explore the retention of the things was given to all the groups four months after post-test.

## **FINDINGS**

The results given in the tables have been obtained from the students' answers to the reading comprehension test and the questionnaire. Initially the test had 50 questions; however having made the reliability and validity test with the help of statistics experts, the number of questions were reduced to 30. The results of this study can be taken into consideration as clues by language teachers about developing reading skills of students

who are deprived of using effective reading comprehension strategies.

According to these results, it can be said that low language proficiency may cause learners to rely on bottom-up strategies to get meaning from the text. There were no statistically significant differences between the frequencies with which the students used metacognitive strategies in English. In addition, analyses of the questionnaire indicate that there are similarities as well as differences between the first and the foreign language reading. The individual differences in the student's behaviour differed in the types and combinations of the strategies they used while reading.

**Table 1.** The Comparison of Achievement of Students in Experimental Group and Control Group

	Pretest		Posttest		Achievement			
	x	s	x	s	x	s	t	p
<b>Experimental Group</b>	19,93	2,30	22,87	2,29	2,93	1,66	6,303	0,000
<b>Control Group</b>	20,18	2,52	20,53	2,16	0,35	1,61		

In Table 1, together with the pretest, post-test and achievement scores of students in the experimental group and the control group, the achievement scores and the t values obtained from the achievement scores are seen. When we look at the distribution of the posttest scores applied to both groups at the end of the study process, the average of the experimental group has been found as  $22,87 \pm 2,29$ ; and the average of the control group  $20,53 \pm 2,16$ . The achievement scores have been accounted by using the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students in the experimental group and the control group.

**Table 2.** The Comparison of Retention Levels of Students in Experimental Group and Control Group

	N	x	s	t	p
<b>Experimental Group</b>	30	21,93	1,70	2,93	0,005
<b>Control Group</b>	31	20,55	2,6		

In Table 2, the comparisons between the retention scores of the students in the experimental group and the control group. According to the results of the retention test, which was applied 4 months after the posttest, the average of the experimental group has been found as  $21,93 \pm 1,70$ ; and the average of the control group  $20,55 \pm 2,08$ . The accounted 't value' between the average retention scores of the two groups is 2,93. This result shows a statistically significant difference. The students in the experimental group have performed a higher retention level compared to those in the control group.

**Table 3.** The Comparison of Post-test Attitude Scores of Students in Experimental Group and Control Group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
<b>Post-attitude</b>	<b>1</b>	30	39,10	3,09	3,15	0,002
	<b>2</b>	32	36,50	3,46		

In table 3, the posttest attitude scores of the students in the experimental group and the control group have been indicated. The average posttest attitude scores of the

students in the experimental group has been found as 39,10; and the average attitude pretest scores of the students in the control group 36,50. The 't value' obtained from the average scores of the two groups is 3,15 which shows a statistically significant difference. The students in the experimental group have reached higher attitude scores compared to those in the control group. The experimental method applied has enabled the students to develop positive attitude to the English Reading Skills course.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated sixty-two individual EFL students' using comprehension monitoring strategies and metacognitive abilities by means of the statistical analysis of the results and the use of verbal data analysis. We aimed at gaining an insight into the reading process by looking at what is going on inside the individual EFL readers, what strategies and what cognitive processes they use, their level of knowledge about their own reading strategies and how their comprehension of a text was affected by their awareness and control of strategy use.

The findings of this study seem to support the conclusion of the researchers such as Baker and Brown (1984) who state that metacognitive skills in reading reliably differentiate between good and poor readers. During the study, we saw that the differences in the performance levels among the groups were not brought about by the differences in the readers' background experience with English, but rather by their effective use of metacognitive strategies. Otherwise, all the readers who had more experience with English would be expected to be in the group of good comprehenders; but it was not the case in this study. Readers who had considerably less English backgrounds (students coming from public high schools) performed better in the process using their higher level of awareness and control of their comprehension processes. The good comprehenders also differed from other groups of comprehenders in the correspondence between the think-aloud protocols and self-report interviews,

that is, there was a consistency between what they said and what they actually did in the process.

The good comprehenders were flexible in choosing and applying the strategies appropriately and automatically. The use of comprehension monitoring strategy distinguished the good comprehenders from other readers. In other words, besides the difference in the quantity of comprehension, the strategies the good comprehenders used were different in quality. The good comprehenders understood the organization of the text and constructed logical relationships among the ideas in the text by frequently checking their comprehension for consistency with other parts of it. Metacognitive control directed these readers to the overall reasoning process. They were the only readers who used the discourse plan of the text to organize their recalls. The findings of the studies which investigated knowledge and use of textual organization support this result with the conclusion that students who understood the organization of a text and used the same organization to write their recall protocols remembered more information than those who did not. These comprehenders also frequently and spontaneously engaged in self-questioning, picked up cues which gave them information about how well they were performing, and evaluated their current level of comprehension in the process, which resulted in successful storage and retrieval.

When we compared the metacognitive knowledge of the average comprehenders to that of the good ones, we found little difference. What differentiated these two groups from each other was rather their use of this knowledge. Hence, the findings indicate that readers' metacognitive awareness is crucial to meet the challenges of a text, yet it is not sufficient: a reader must be able to self-regulate his or her reading process. The average readers were incapable of transferring the metacognitive knowledge into strategic use to meet the demands of the task.

The average comprehenders failed to apply comprehension monitoring strategies as effectively as the good comprehenders. They were far from monitoring ongoing activities whether comprehension was occurring, and did not engaged in self-questioning to determine whether the goals are being achieved. They also differed from the good comprehenders in that they generally used an external consistency standard to evaluate their comprehension. They employed inference-drawing behaviors excessively, that is, they relied mainly on their background information to interpret the text without processing enough information in it. This resulted in comprehension failures. These readers were unable to take corrective actions because of the weakness of their comprehension-monitoring and self-assessment strategies. The average comprehenders recognized the organizational plan of the text, but they did not construct their recall protocols on the basis of this textual organization.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that the use of comprehension monitoring strategies which enable the readers to assess the task and to control the cognitive processes in order to take necessary steps for the task completion improves comprehension and recall. In other words, effective reading requires active control of the process, and the efficiency of strategy use depends on the reader's knowledge of when and where as well as how to use it.

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# THE USE OF THINK-ALOUD STRATEGIES IN OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTIES OF READING COMPREHENSION

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*Reading comprehension is an important ability that learners need in order to decode meaning of texts in different genres. Think-aloud is a technique that learners might use in order to overcome the difficulties of reading texts. With the help of teacher's modeling, learners might observe the techniques their teacher uses while reading a text and they may do the same so as to overcome the difficulties they have in comprehending these texts.*

## INTRODUCTION

The research related to reading comprehension and ways to cope with the difficulty of texts constitutes an important proportion of any ELT practitioners' work. Learners' attempts to decode the meaning of a text, the vocabulary items that the text is made up of, and the underlying meaning that could be inferred from the text are associated with a group of strategies such as skimming, scanning, reading a couple of times, predicting, etc. Once thought to be comprised of the accumulation of such skills, reading is now believed to include more complex processes involving reasoning and problem solving (Wade, 1990). In other words, only the use of cognitive abilities is not adequate to explain the complex nature of reading comprehension as they are merely based upon the thinking skills of the learner. Reading is a skill having multi-dimensions including the simultaneous functioning of different cognitive and "metacognitive" abilities. In the classification of strategies for reading comprehension, predicting, summarizing, questioning, clarifying, imagery, and rehearsal might be considered as cognitive strategies which take place through the learning process, while metacognitive strategies are used to think about and plan the act of learning (Brown, 1980) such as self-monitoring, self-regulation, etc.

"Metacognition", in its simplest definition, is "knowledge about knowledge and thinking about thinking" (Scmais, 2002:635). According to Livingstone (1997:1), it refers to "high order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning". There are three basic aspects of metacognition. These are, according to Pintrich, Wolters and Baxter (2000):

- ◆ metacognitive knowledge
- ◆ metacognitive monitoring
- ◆ self-regulation and control

The first aspect of metacognition includes learners' being more aware of their own thinking as well as being more knowledgeable about their own cognition. In metacognitive monitoring, learners judge their own cognitive processes to be able to understand whether they use them successfully or not, and when they use them to alter their behaviour, it is associated with the idea of control. (Son & Schwartz, 2009) Metacognitive strategies are generally used to monitor and regulate the thoughts by the learners and if practiced well, they may be applied automatically. Metacognition is thought to be a very important for reading ability (Cromley, 2005). Even though much of the previous research focused on the learners' strategy use and how it differs in different settings, learners' awareness of these strategies during reading, which refers to "metacognitive awareness", has started to attract the attention of researchers all around the world recently (Singhal, 2001). Metacognitive awareness is quite significant because only when learners are aware of what they can do and what they need to perform well are they able to do something so as to carry out these requirements. When they are not aware of their capabilities and the difficulty of the text that they are dealing with, they may not do anything to anticipate or go beyond difficulties (Carrel, 1989). For this reason, reading strategy instruction which is metacognitively-oriented might be beneficial to learners in order to be aware of what they are able to do and what they can do to overcome the difficulties of reading texts. It may be carried out by doing what is suggested by each phase of the following plan.

<b>Phase 1</b>	Teacher introduces strategy
	Repeated modeling of strategy for students through read-aloud and think-aloud examples.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Students practice strategy
	Repeated rehearsals in collaborative or individual setting
<b>Phase 3</b>	Continuous practice and experience
	Strategy activated automatically
	Able to explain text to others

**Figure 1: Phases of Metacognitively-Oriented Reading Instruction**

The plan above might be used to introduce the use of metacognitive strategies to students. As can clearly be seen in this plan, teacher repeats the modeling of a strategy for students through the examples of read-aloud and think-aloud. Later on, they practice the use of the strategies either individually or with their friends and after a period time the activation of each strategy becomes automatic and students reach a point where they can explain the text they are reading to the other people around them.

*“Think aloud”* is an important metacognitive process through which students verbalize their thoughts while reading a text, thus modeling the process of comprehension (Block & Israel, 2004). According to Almasi (2003:25), “think-alouds are one type of verbal report in which an individual expresses everything that he or she is thinking as she performs a given task”. When this task on learners focus is related to reading, learners reveal the strategies they are using to understand a text. In this sense, it might be considered as an instructional tool that scaffolds comprehension awareness (Israel, 2007). Wilhelm (2001) describes “think-aloud” as a way of:

- ◆ creating a record of strategic decision-making process of going through a text
- ◆ reporting everything the reader is aware of noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, asking, and understanding as he or she reads,
- ◆ talking about the reading strategies being used within the content of the piece being read.

Chamot (1995:2) explains the significance of think-alouds stating that “think-alouds can open a window on a learner’s thinking processes, revealing strategies” which may not be possible with the help of other techniques that are used to learn about learners’ strategies. Think-alouds are used to model comprehension processes such as making predictions, creating images, linking information in a text with prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and overcoming problems with word recognition or comprehension (Gunning, 1996).

Even though it is relatively easy to employ think-alouds in the classroom, they are rarely used in instructional settings. Almasi (2003) explains the way the process of think-alouds works in the following way; the learner reads a text aloud and he/she verbalizes the thoughts that pass through his/her mind. At this point, the examiner might use some indirect cues such as *“Can you tell me more?”* and *“Don’t forget to tell me what you are thinking about”* (Wade, 1990) so as to elicit information when necessary. The thoughts of the learners can either be recorded on video or audiotape, or they may be noted down by the teacher while the learner is verbalizing them. After the noting-down is over, the categorization of the data is made by the teacher. The data might be analyzed in terms of the variety of strategies, metacognition, motivation, and ability to analyze the task possessed by the learners. Furthermore, in order not to miss anything important, the examiner notes down non-verbal information such as signs of anxiety, frustration, proficiency, etc. (Wade, 1990). While learners are imitating the process of think-alouds, it is a good opportunity for teachers to identify the learners’ strengths and weaknesses and to plan the following lessons accordingly.

### **THE USE OF THINK-ALOUDS FOR READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION**

“Think-aloud” is an important way of providing learners with the necessary strategies that they could use while dealing with the difficulties of reading texts. This reading strategy instruction might include the following components:

- ◆ setting a purpose for reading
- ◆ making a picture in mind
- ◆ stopping and rereading to clarify
- ◆ asking questions
- ◆ activating prior knowledge
- ◆ making predictions

- ◆ summarizing
- ◆ paraphrasing
- ◆ monitoring comprehension/ self-correction

There are multiple ways to conduct think-alouds in the classroom:

- ◆ The teacher models think- aloud while reading aloud, and the students listen
- ◆ The teacher thinks aloud during shared reading and the students help out
- ◆ Students think aloud during shared and the teacher and other students monitor and help
- ◆ The teacher or students do think-alouds in writing on an overhead, with sticky notes, or in a journal during shared reading
- ◆ Students think- aloud in small-group reading and the teacher monitors and helps
- ◆ Students do think-alouds individually during independent reading using sticky notes or a journal, and then compare their thoughts with others. (Wilhelm, 2001)

Teachers' modeling of these strategies might be really helpful for learners when they have difficulties in identifying the content of literary texts and when they cannot answer the questions based on what they have read, etc. This is called "*mental modeling*". According to Pani (2004:356), "mental modeling is a teaching technique that informs learners about the reasoning processes that lie behind strategic reading". The teacher uses this technique in order to display the procedure of how experienced readers overcome the difficulties of reading process to the novice learners. With the help of this technique, learners might learn what passes through a superior reader's mind while he/she is reading and they might try to do the same (Pani, 2004). This technique of mental modeling is highly related to the concept of "scaffolding" developed by Jerome Bruner in 1950s based on the theory of Vygotsky about the Zone of Proximal Development. Bruner first used this term to explain the first language acquisition

process of children. Scaffolding refers to “a process in which a more knowledgeable (or expert) speaker helps a less knowledgeable (or novice) learner by providing assistance” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:131). Assistance of the expert by means of scaffolding is very crucial until learners are able to apply the same strategies for reading comprehension. In other words, when the construction is ready to stand alone, the scaffolds around it are thrown away.

### **THE BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF USING THINK-ALOUDS IN READING COMPREHENSION**

Almasi (2003) mentions the necessity of a planned conversation between the students and the teacher to be able to be familiar with the techniques and strategies used to cope with the difficulty of text comprehension through think-alouds. However, using think-alouds in the classroom setting might bring about some advantages and disadvantages with it.

Initially, it is alleged that there are a lot of benefits of using think alouds. Firstly, they focus more on process than product (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984; Garner, 1987); therefore, it serves as an important way of obtaining information about how students strategize. It is also possible to be knowledgeable about the high level cognitive processes through the explanations of the user (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984). Secondly, think-aloud protocols are very effective in assessing learning which go beyond the other ways of assessing reading comprehension traditionally such as by using comprehension questions, retellings and summaries. What is more, with the help of think-alouds, the teacher is able to see the strategies employed by the students and the time and manner of employing these strategies (Almasi, 2003).

Conversely, this method has got some drawbacks as well. Bereiter & Bird (1985) suggest that when learners are engaged in a think aloud, there is a lot of cognitive processing

and it can hinder the cognitive work which is required for reading and understanding a text. An individual is asked to read a text and to verbalize every thought that passes through his mind simultaneously. As both of these two processes require too much cognitive work, their occurrence at the same time might disrupt or slow down the reading process (Bereiter & Bird, 1985). In order to overcome these difficulties, teachers might model how to carry out think-alouds as a part of their instruction and they might practice them in their lessons whenever they find an opportunity (Bereiter & Bird, 1985), which will lead to the automatic use of think-alouds used by the learners.

### **THE PROCEDURE OF THINK-ALOUDS IN READING COMPREHENSION FOR STRATEGY TRAINING**

For think aloud technique that could be used as a way of reading strategy instruction, the following procedure might be used in reading- comprehension-based courses:

- 1. Interview:** At this stage learners are interviewed about the difficulties they experience and the ways that they try to cope with them while reading a text.
- 2. Strategy Training through Mental Modeling:** While introducing a new comprehension strategy, teachers can model during read aloud and shared reading by following these steps:
  - a.** Decide on a strategy model
  - b.** Choose a short text or a section of text
  - c.** Read the text ahead of time and mark locations where you will stop and model the strategy
  - d.** State your purpose by naming the strategy
  - e.** Read the text aloud to students and think aloud at the designated points

- f. If you are using a read aloud, continue in the same way. If you are conducting a shared reading experience, have students help pinpoint the words and phrases that help you identify your thinking by underlining or using self-sticky notes
  - g. Reinforce the think-alouds with follow up lessons in the same text or with others
- 3. Students' Imitation of the Teacher's Modeling:** Students work on a different text, they stop at designated points and explain the clues that they focus on, try to say what they understand from what they read, etc.
- 4. Teacher's Monitoring:** While students are trying to imitate the teacher's modeling, the teacher takes some notes by focusing on students' strengths and weaknesses, pays attention to both linguistic and paralinguistic data such as mimics, reading pace, pauses, periods of silence, variations of vocal tone, and body movement.
- 5. The Second Strategy Training through Mental Modeling:** Based on the data gathered through the monitoring session, on-going problems are identified and follow-up lessons are organized by the teacher.

## FROM THEORY INTO PRACTICE

In order to understand the basic problems learners suffer from while they are reading passages, it might be a good idea to conduct an interview with students from the classroom. The following issues could be included in the interviews with learners:

- ◆ What should they do first? Should they do anything before they start reading?
- ◆ What should they do while they are reading?
- ◆ What should they do after they finish reading?

- ✦ What do they do when they come to something that they do not know? What do they do when something they read does not make sense? What do they do when they see a word that is not familiar to them?

Carrying out such interviews may be influential on learners' success and they may help teachers to identify learners' metacognitive awareness, which is in turn very important for think aloud technique (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Based on the responses gathered through the administration of these interviews with learners, the following instructional might be applied in a reading comprehension lesson.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN**

### **PRE-READING ACTIVITIES:**

Students are introduced the significance of think-aloud technique for reading strategy training. Each phase of the classroom talk is recorded by the teacher for subsequent analysis. The teacher explains some key strategies that could be used to cope with the difficulties in comprehending the reading texts, which are questioning, predicting, clarifying, making connections, re-reading, visualizing, summarizing, and commenting, by giving examples for each of them. This is the theoretical part of the instruction. Afterwards, they try to apply these strategies on a reading text with the teacher's assistance. The following text is used to identify some possible difficulties and to find some solutions to students' problems.

The teacher first asks students what they understand from the phrase "alternative medicine". Is there an alternative to what is done by doctors at the hospitals? If yes, is it as influential as modern medicine?

### **WHILE-READING ACTIVITIES:**

#### **ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**

Alternative medicine is, by definition, an alternative to something else: **modern**, Western medicine. But the term ‘alternative’ can be misleading, **even** off-putting for some people.

**Few** practitioners of homeopathy, acupuncture, herbalism and the like regard their therapies as complete substitutes for modern medicine. **Rather**, they consider their disciplines as supplementary to orthodox medicine.

The problem is that many doctors refuse even to recognize ‘natural’ or alternative medicine, to do so calls for a radically different view of health, illness and cure. **But** whatever doctors may think, the demand for alternative forms of medical therapy is stronger than ever before, **as** the limitations of modern medical science become more widely understood.

Alternative therapies are often dismissed by orthodox medicine **because** they are sometimes administered by people with no formal medical training. But, **in comparison with** many traditional therapies, western medicine as we know it today is a very recent phenomenon. Until only 150 years ago, herbal medicine and simple inorganic compounds were the most effective treatments available.

**Despite** the medical establishment’s intolerant attitude, alternative therapies are being accepted by more and more doctors, and the World Health Organization has agreed to promote the integration of proven, valuable, ‘alternative’ knowledge and skills in western medicine.

## **ANALYSIS**

Based on the text above, some reading strategies are introduced by the teacher. Some key words or expressions that might be used to identify meaning relationships and to

clarify the general meaning of sentences are determined by the teacher. For instance, if students' answers to the questions in the "Pre-Reading" part are not satisfactory, the first sentence might be used to clarify the meaning of "alternative medicine". It says that "alternative medicine" is an alternative to something modern, then the teacher could say it must be something related to traditional medicine practiced by some people with the help of some plants and herbals (***predicting***). This kind of quick guesses could be really helpful for learners to form some hypotheses based on some other key words which could explain the meaning relationships between the clauses in sentences and between sentences in the paragraphs. At this point, transitions and conjunctions in sentences (despite, as, because, etc.) might be helpful in clarifying the meanings of sentences (***clarifying***). After each segment is read aloud by the teacher, she tells the learners what it is about by explaining which clues helped him in interpreting the text she is reading (***predicting***). If she has any difficulty in understanding a sentence, a phrase or simply a word, she re-reads it and she tells the learners that it could be useful to read more than once from time to time in order to avoid misunderstandings (***re-reading***). What is more, the teacher stops and models a strategy for learners. For example, after a sentence or a paragraph finishes, she paraphrases and summarizes them loudly to exemplify these strategies to students. (***paraphrasing and summarizing***).

The topic of the passage is familiar to anyone because people use the techniques learnt from their mothers and grandmothers to heal others or themselves. For this reason, personal experiences might be used to explain the meanings of some words or paragraphs (***making connections***). For example, the teacher might say "when I was a child, my grandmother used to heal my stomach ache using boiled peppermint and lemon" in order to explain the meaning of "*herbalism*".

In addition to these reading strategies, some other strategies that are used to guess the meanings of unknown vocabulary items from the context and from their morphology might also be utilized and exemplified for students' advantage. For instance, focusing on

the prefixes in such words as “*misleading* and *compound*” and teacher’s verbal explanations about the meanings that they add these words could be beneficial for learners. In this way, the teacher also models these strategies when she explains their significance while reading aloud the sentences that include these words.

## **POST-READING ACTIVITIES**

After the teacher’s modeling is over, it is time for learners to imitate the same techniques. While they are trying to do the same, the teacher does the recording again. When she listens to them afterwards, she pays attention to the following points:

- ◆ Do the learners generate hypotheses?
- ◆ Do they support these hypotheses with information from the passage?
- ◆ What information from the text do the readers use?
- ◆ Do the readers relate material in the text to background knowledge or previous experience?
- ◆ At what point do the readers recognize what the text is about?
- ◆ How do the readers deal with unfamiliar words?
- ◆ Which strategies do the learners benefit from while trying to understand the text?
- ◆ What other observations can be made about the readers’ behaviour, strategies, etc.? (Wade, 1990)

Based on the answers of these questions, a second session of strategy training might be organized by the teacher.

## **CONCLUSION**

The think-aloud technique is a fine vehicle for enabling the understanding of the causes of comprehension problems and make informed decisions about subsequent instruction because learners will be able to see the reasoning their teacher, a more experienced reader, is using while she is reading. With the help of teacher’s assistance, they can

improve their own reasoning. As Oster (2001) suggests, what students say during think-alouds might become the course teacher's "homework" to be studied because students' comments might help the teacher to plan instruction in specific skills students are in need of. Moreover, students' think-alouds might be a basis for devising some student-centered activities to be used in the classroom.

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## BIOGRAPHY

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## EAP COURSE EVALUATION – SUGGESTIONS FROM STUDENTS

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*This paper summarizes a study conducted at SoFL EAP classes at Yasar University in the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011. The aim of the study was to obtain feedback from first year (freshman) undergraduate students regarding the EAP course delivered in the tertiary campus and to utilise the data collected to improve and hopefully meet the specific needs of students related to their success in their academic endeavors and acquisition of academic tools. To identify areas for improvement, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data gathering were used. This chapter explores the literature of EAP, programme evaluation and humanistic approach, discusses the findings of the data analysis, and offers some implications for the improvement of the EAP programme considering students' perspectives and suggestions.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, in many non-native contexts such as in Turkey, there is an increasing tendency to use English as the medium of instruction at the tertiary level. Therefore, many English-speaking universities in Turkey offer EAP courses to their undergraduates. The purpose of the EAP programme of Yasar University is to help first-year students to acquire academic skills as well as communication skills that enable them to use the target language competently, and thus, be successful in their academic studies. The present paper reports on the evaluation study of the EAP programme carried out at the end of the course, aiming to investigate the students' satisfaction regarding course content, course materials, assessment of learning, independent learning, study skills and academic instruction. Learners' opinions and suggestions concerning the areas mentioned were gathered and investigated.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

As the evaluation study is carried out in the EAP context by taking into consideration students' views, a brief literature review of EAP, programme evaluation, and humanistic approach is given.

## **ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES**

English for Academic purposes (EAP), a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), aims to develop communication and academic skills that help learners to study, communicate and conduct research in the target language (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). Considering the non-native contexts, EAP courses help EFL students to achieve success in an academic environment where English is the medium of instruction (Dubleby-Evans and St. John, 1998). EAP instruction is mainly associated with diverse study skills including various learning strategies such as listening and note-taking,

skimming and scanning, predicting ideas and deducing academic words from the context, seminar discussions and oral presentations, summarizing and paraphrasing, report and essay writing, and reference skills such as using the library and using a bibliography (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Jordan, 1997). Because it places focus on the learner and the situation (Hump-Lyons stated in Carter and Nunan, 2001), EAP is learning-centred and humanistic.

Professionals involved in EAP curriculum development and instruction agree that a successful EAP course that meets the target learners' needs is usually based on an integrated syllabus which addresses both process and product and the complex goals of the course (Richards, 2001). They also support the notion of employing the eclectic approach, that is, practices of communicative, skills-based, task-based, process and discourse approaches are combined to improve English language mastery and communicative competences and to promote intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning. Further, the proponents of EAP emphasize the importance of the strategic investment that develops strategies for task fulfillment and self-awareness of styles, strengths and weaknesses (Brown, 2007). This strategy training enables students to be autonomous learners and enhances their ability to choose appropriate strategies for successful development of academic skills and lexis.

## **PROGRAMME EVALUATION**

To increase accountability of an EAP programme, namely its efficiency and effectiveness, and to improve it, programme evaluation is essential. In an educational context, evaluation is viewed as 'collecting information about different aspects of a language programme in order to understand how the program works and how successfully it works, enabling different kinds of decisions to be made' (Richards, 2001:286). The main purpose of the evaluation is 'to guide classroom instruction and enhance student learning on a day-to-day basis' (Genesee stated in Carter and Nunan, 2001:146).

Considering all aspects of learning and teaching, programme evaluation might be either formative, developmental or on-going, which takes place during the course, and summative, which is conducted at end of the course (Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992). While the formative evaluation is usually informal and aims to refine the existing programme by making necessary adjustments, the summative evaluation is formal and its purpose is to assess how effective and efficient the programme is. Summative evaluations that are periodically conducted provide useful information about what has been accomplished and 'put a programme in an excellent position to respond to crises when, and if, they occur' (Brown stated in Johnson, 1989:230). Post-course evaluation conducted with the lecturers of the relevant departments is also essential to get feedback regarding the effectiveness of the EAP course (Jordan, 1997). Well-planned and well-conducted evaluation can provide useful information about the classroom practice and promote more effective teaching and better learning.

### **HUMANISTIC APPROACH**

The humanistic approach 'asserts the central role of the "whole person" in the learning process' (Thornbury, 2006:97). It emphasizes the student's awareness, 'the person's subjective view about themselves and the world' (Kyriacou and Chang, 1993) and 'active student involvement in learning and in the way human learning takes place' (Richards and Renandya, 2002). To promote autonomy and develop the ability to take responsibility of what is learned; learners should have voice in the decisions that might affect them.

The humanistic approach to evaluation focuses on the students' thoughts and feelings about teaching and learning. The learners' opinions and comments about the existing programme as well as their experiences which they have encountered throughout the learning process are vital when evaluating the EAP course. Students' feedback regarding their perceptions of instruction and learning provides valuable information on the needs

of the learners and helps the evaluators to gain worthy insights for effective decision making.

The data collected from the students can provide extremely valuable insights for curriculum development (Alderson, 1992) and enhancement of student learning. The learners' valuable feedback can facilitate successful and effective course improvement (Hedge, 2000), which leads to the growth of EAP course suitability and learner motivation and satisfaction.

## **THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the EAP programme through the perspectives of the learners.

This study aims to address these questions:

- ◆ What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing EAP programme?
- ◆ What adaptations and alterations can be made to improve the EAP programme?

It is hoped that by answering these questions better insights regarding the EAP programme might be obtained so that relevant changes, additions and deletions to the programme could be made.

Even though the researchers believe that students are the ultimate and more valued critics of the course, they are aware that the teachers' perspectives should also be considered. Clavijo (2001) corroborates this idea when he states that "curriculum organization and development represents a way of thinking and acting in school by teachers and students. Their active roles influence decisions about how to construct the curriculum" (p. 34). However, the students as active participants in the learning process and inside evaluators of the academic instruction are in a better position to assess the

EAP programme. As Nunan (1993) states there can be “disparities between what teachers believe happens in class and what actually happens” (p. 139). Hence, the reactions of the students to the content of the course, testing system, in-house and commercial materials used, and the teaching and learning process as well as their ideas and suggestions are important to make better decisions.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS**

EAP course evaluation was conducted with 40 EFL freshman students, aged between 18 and 25, at the School of Foreign Languages of Yasar University. Students are attending their departments and EAP classes in which they acquire the knowledge for participation and hopefully successful assessment in undergraduate fields of study.

### **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The programme evaluation of this study which is based on empirical evidence was undertaken at the end of the course in the form of summative evaluation. The aim was to gather objective information about the accountability of the EAP programme and to measure the quality of the course.

To provide complete information and strengthen evaluation conclusions, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and used in the EAP programme evaluation. Quantitative research which relies heavily on numbers is used to measure “levels and changes in impacts” (Rao and Woolcock, 2003:167) and ensure the reliability and objectivity of the evaluation study (Mackey & Gass 2005; Richards, 2001). The qualitative source of data reflects the students’ perceptions by “delving deep into issues of process” (Rao & Woolcock, 2003:167).

This study makes use of two types of instruments: the EAP Course Evaluation Student Questionnaire (EAPCESQ) (see Appendix A), devised to obtain quantitative information, and Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews (SFGIs) (see Appendix B), created to collect qualitative information.

The EAPCESQ comprises 35 close-ended questions grouped in five sections: course content, independent learning, course materials and resources, testing and assessment, and academic instruction. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire by indicating agreement with statements on a five-point Likert scale, where “1” indicated “strongly disagree”, “2” indicated “disagree”, “3” indicated “no idea”, “4” indicated “agree” and “5” indicated “strongly agree”.

To refine the results of the quantitative data, the SFGIs were conducted. They were held about a week after the questionnaire had been distributed. The aim of the focus groups was to investigate participants’ opinions about the areas of concern so as to elicit in-depth information on specific questions (Richards, 2001). Perceived problems were deduced by asking open ended questions.

The mixed method research designed as a triangulation strategy was used to increase the reliability and validity of research findings (Long, 2005; Lynch, 1996). Through triangulating, the qualitative and quantitative data were cross-validated and the findings were compiled within a single study.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The questionnaire was administered to the students in the last week of the first semester in January, 2011. The quantitative data obtained throughout the questionnaire were compiled and analysed. The average for each item of the questionnaire was calculated. After calculating the averages, it was concluded that the results of negative value between -2 and -1 require significant change, the results of value between -0.9

and 0.9 need to be improved and the results of positive value between 1 and 2 are satisfactory (see Figure 1 for summary). The data from the focus group discussions were transcribed and analysed by grouping the findings around the themes that were mentioned above.

*Figure 1: Summary of EAPCESQ value interpretation*

- 2 - -1	- 0.9 - 0.9	1 - 2
REQUIRES CHANGE	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	SHOWS SATISFACTION

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The learners were involved in the process of evaluation by encouraging them to assess some aspects of the EAP course curriculum. They were asked to complete the EAP Course Evaluation Student Questionnaire. They were given opportunity to state their opinions about issues related to course content, independent learning, course materials and resources, testing and assessment, and academic instruction, and discuss some problematic areas of the EAP programme. The participants' oral expressions of their thoughts about the EAP programme took place in focus group discussions.

The results are discussed in five sections as the data obtained from the questionnaires and focus groups are presented in the sequence according to these sections.

### SECTION 1: COURSE CONTENT

Questionnaire results regarding the course content (see Table 1) indicated that all academic skills needed improvement as least satisfaction was expressed for listening

and note taking (see Table 1, item 1), and writing skills (see Table, item 6). Though it was reported that the students were satisfied with the opportunities provided in the class to practice their academic listening and note-taking skills (see Table, item 2), it was clear that they did not improve their listening and note-taking skills on a satisfactory basis. Moreover, students do not share a positive view about the speaking component of the EAP curriculum. They believe that they did not improve their academic speech. The result of item 9 was negative and it revealed that the EAP course did not fulfill students' expectations.

*Table 1: Course Content*

No	Questions	Value
1	I improved my academic listening and note-taking skills in the EAP classes.	0,05
2	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic listening and note-taking skills inside the classroom.	0,95
3	I improved my academic speech in the EAP classes.	-0,58
4	I improved my academic reading skills in the EAP classes.	0,55
5	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic reading skills inside and outside the classroom.	0,15
6	I improved my academic writing skills in the EAP classes.	0,05
7	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic writing inside and outside the classroom.	0,13
8	I improved my academic vocabulary in the EAP classes.	0,38
9	The EAP classes have met my expectations.	-0,98

The data obtained from the focus groups revealed similar results. The qualitative data confirmed the idea that all academic skills needed to be improved. Most students agreed that they had serious difficulties in understanding academic written and spoken discourse as well as taking notes during the lectures as they were aware that they failed to use learning strategies. They were also conscious of the fact that many of them lacked the knowledge and academic lexis to comprehend academic texts, lectures and academic speeches, and give presentations. Most of the students expected the EAP classes to be arranged according to their departments and they stated that the EAP

course syllabus and content should be designed in consultation with the tertiary departments. Further, the learners expressed that they did not have any opportunities to practice writing academic essays inside the class due to the time constraint and the intense syllabus. Some of the students suggested that the mechanics of different genres of academic essay needed to be learned in the Preparatory Class so that they could be able to apply their endeavors to vocabulary acquisition and content in the EAP classes. They also stated that the vocabulary taught in the EAP classes was not practical and useful, so they suggested that the academic vocabulary needed in their departments could be taught in the EAP classes as one of the students expressed: “We are bored and reluctant to learn words that we do not need in our departments, we need to be taught the words appropriate and useful to our departments and strategies for learning vocabulary as well.” Additionally, they recommended that they could be asked to prepare mini-presentations in order to improve their academic speech: “We need to learn how to give presentations. We also want our instructors to teach us stress-management skills.”

## **SECTION 2: INDEPENDENT LEARNING**

Quantitative data regarding the independent learning (see Table 2) demonstrated that self-assessment and reflection skills, study skills, and cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies required improvement. Students showed highest dissatisfaction with the items 10 and 11, which indicated that learners needed to develop their study skills in order to be independent learners. The results also showed that students needed to be involved more actively in strategy training (see Table 2, item 13).

*Table 2: Independent Learning*

No	Questions	Value
10	I learned how to plan my learning and study my lessons independently.	-0,73
11	I have improved my study skills which I use in my academic studies.	-0,8
12	I was provided with enough opportunities to reflect on my learning.	-0,43
13	The EAP lessons have raised my awareness of skills and strategies that I can use for my language development.	-0,53

Students also supported their arguments in the focus groups, in which they expressed that they had no knowledge of how and where to use strategies, albeit they would like to take responsibility for their learning. The following statements made by the students confirm the statistics above:

“We don’t know how to study for our departments. Our lack of self-awareness related to learning strategies and study skills exacerbates our stress and ultimate academic failure. “

“We need a separate lesson for learning strategies in order to cope with the exams in our departments and academic life in general.”

Learners also declared that learning strategies and study skills should be taught exclusively in EAP 101. Furthermore, they requested self-assessment forms to be completed at the end of every lesson. Some students pointed out that because they had only 3 lessons a week, some learning strategies should be thought in the Preparatory Class and instructions in some of the strategies could be taught in the EAP course.

### **SECTION 3: COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

The data obtained from the questionnaires indicated that students were satisfied with the in-house prepared instructional materials and the use of various audio-visual aids as the point 19 had the highest value of 1.33 (see Table 3). Yet, they do not share a positive view about the textbook employed as a course material and a guide of EAP instruction. The numbers indicated that the text book needed to be changed and the library needed

sources for studying Academic English. Additionally, the statistics demonstrated that the topics and materials were not engaging and interesting.

*Table 3: Course Materials and Resources*

No	Questions	Value
14	The instructional materials were relevant to the course content.	1,2
15	The instructional materials were sufficient.	1,03
16	The topics and materials used in the EAP classes were engaging and interesting.	-0,6
17	The textbook, <i>EAP Now</i> , used in the EAP classes was engaging and interesting.	-1,2
18	The library has enough sources for studying Academic English.	-1,1
19	A variety of audio-visual aids (OHP, multi media, flashcards, video, realia and so on) were used.	1,33

Similarly, particular negative feedback regarding the EAP textbook was expressed in the focus group discussions. Students stated that a book that focused on study skills and strategy training should be selected. Some of them also suggested that they could be recommended a vocabulary book to study in their own time: “To improve our academic vocabulary, we need a book to study at home; this will be interesting and enjoyable for us.” The majority of the students also agreed that topics and texts related to their departments should be preferred.

#### **SECTION 4: TESTING AND ASSESSMENT**

Having looked at the quantitative data collected, it seemed that the evaluation system required improvement (see Table 4). Learners demonstrated the least satisfaction with point 22 in this section. Students expressed that they wanted to be provided with detailed feedback regarding their achievement at the exams. The collected data also revealed that there was a discrepancy between the course content and the content of exams. Further, it could be drawn from the table that the students were satisfied with

the grading system and they agreed that assignments and tests were graded fairly and thoroughly.

*Table 4: Testing and Assessment*

No	Questions	Value
20	The content of the test tasks is directly linked to the course content and instruction.	0,68
21	I had enough time to complete the test tasks in the exams.	0,83
22	I was provided with sufficient feedback regarding the achievement at the exams.	0,4
23	Assessment results were announced in a reasonable time.	0,78
24	Assignments and tests were graded fairly and thoroughly.	1,23

Students also expressed similar ideas in the focus groups, in which they pointed out that they would like to receive more feedback about their performance in the exams: “We were not given an opportunity to see our exams. After the exams some time should be allocated for error work, which will be an opportunity for us to learn from our mistakes.” The majority of the students asserted their dissatisfaction with the writing component of the exams as they noted that writing an academic essay in one hour was a difficult task and even impossible for them. They suggested that it could be more beneficial if ongoing assessment of the academic essay writing was applied in the EAP classes: “We cannot write an academic essay in one hour, we want process writing to be included in the writing component of the EAP course.”

## **SECTION 5: ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION**

The quantitative data collected regarding the academic instruction (see Table 5) revealed positive aspects of teaching. It was reported that their instructor was well-prepared and well-organized, and she treated them equally and with respect. The students also expressed satisfaction with the pace of the classes as well as the instructor’s teaching skills and thorough knowledge of the academic English language.

The statistics furthermore demonstrated that the instructor encouraged student participation and conducted effective EAP classes.

*Table 5: Academic Instruction*

No	Questions	Value
25	The instructor was well-prepared and well-organized in class.	1,88
26	The instructor presented language points in clear and engaging way.	1,55
27	The instructor encouraged and ensured full student participation in class.	1,65
28	The instructor answered questions carefully and satisfactory.	1,63
29	The instructor conducted effective and interesting classes.	1,13
30	I was treated fairly, impartially, and with respect.	1,93
31	The instructor was aware of individual and group needs.	1,18
32	The instructor gave appropriate feedback to me about my progress.	1,4
33	The instructor was a good language model for me.	1,63
34	The classes were well paced.	1,48
35	The classes were smooth, sequenced and logical.	0,98

The focus group discussions showed similar results as the learners noted that the instructor was supportive and helpful inside and outside the class. They also expressed that they were willing to attend the EAP classes because the instructor motivated them to do so: “We came to the classes because our instructor always helped us when we needed, she used different methods and resources in the classes in order to help us to better understand the course material, and she motivated us, she taught us the skills that we needed in our departments despite the time constraint.”

## IMPLICATIONS

In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the accountability and quality of the existing EAP programme through the perspectives of the students using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

## **DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Considering the issues summarized above, it can be concluded that the focus of the EAP programme is development of academic skills and learning strategies that enable learners to use English competently in various academic settings. However, the variables in EFL academic teaching situations as well as the learners' needs and learning styles should be considered (Brown, 2007).

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

The results suggest that there is not much reinforcement and time given to developing academic skills and strategies. Therefore, the academic curriculum should focus on practicing academic skills and study skills by giving priority to the skills and strategies that are more needed in students' departments.

The results reveal that there is a great need for the improvement of listening comprehension skills and note taking strategy. This leads to the conclusion that learners should be provided with opportunities to practice these skills and strategies outside the classroom due to the fact that the time dedicated to EAP classes is limited. To improve listening and note taking skills, extensive listening tasks can be devised. Two sets of in-house online materials can be designed. Audio-visual recordings of live lectures, recorded in the different departments of the Yasar University Tertiary Campus or taken from some online resources, can be created to develop listening and note-taking skills and comprehension of the academic content. Materials based on EAP tutor notes of another lecture series can be designed to develop learners' grammatical and lexical competences (Harvey and Nicholls stated in Alexander, 2007). This will help students to prepare themselves to comprehend authentic lectures and extract key information (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001).

Other tentative conclusion that can be drawn from the interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data is that the students have difficulties in producing academic speech. To develop presentation and participation skills, a variety of communicative tasks and activities could be included in the EAP curriculum. Academic platforms on the Moodle could be organized to foster an environment for academic discussions, and seminar simulations can be implemented in the EAP classes. To develop confidence in speaking and improve speaking fluency, short talks can be integrated in the EAP classes (Jordan, 1997).

With regard to the reading skills, results suggest that students need to develop reading strategies that will help them to comprehend academic texts. To develop such strategies, both extensive and intensive reading tasks can be designed. The intensive reading tasks can focus on the sub skills: scanning, deducing unknown words from context, identifying different patterns of organization and understanding relationships between parts of text through cohesive devices, whereas extensive tasks can involve activities that develop strategies such as skimming, distinguishing between important and less important items, and dealing with long texts that are required by all academic disciplines (Carrel and Carson, 1997). As Makalister (2008) claims, “extensive reading will have a positive impact on the rate at which learners acquire the target language” (p. 248) and “vocabulary will be acquired incidentally” (p. 248) during the reading process. All these tasks and activities should be prepared and designed to promote reading comprehension, extend academic vocabulary range and enhance students’ intrinsic motivation.

From the statistics displayed above it is obvious that the writing component of the EAP curriculum needs some adaptations and adjustments. Students need to be given opportunity to plan for writing, organize their piece of writing, revise and edit successive drafts in order to ensure that the final product is improved (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). The process approach should be integrated in the EAP programme, which will

either develop students' writing skills or promote learner-centeredness (Jordan, 1997). Only one type of essay can be conquered throughout the EAP course mastering the steps of the writing process, nevertheless various genres of academic texts can be incorporated in the reading component of the EAP curriculum so as to make students familiar with them and help them to acquire recurring patterns and structures of academic texts (Hammond and Derewianka stated in Carter and Nunan, 2001).

In connection with vocabulary teaching, students think that they need to improve their academic vocabulary inside and outside the class. To enrich the students' lexical competence, the incidental learning, explicit instruction and independent strategy development to teaching vocabulary should be incorporated in the EAP curriculum. Learners should be provided with opportunities for both incidental learning of vocabulary, which can be realized through extensive reading and systematic learning of lexis as vocabulary instruction is integrated into all academic components of the EAP programme (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

Results also reveal a clear need for strategy training and instruction of study skills and reflection skills. Learner training encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning in the academic environment. Awareness of learning strategies helps students to become more autonomous; that is, more conscious of their own learning processes (Szabo & Scharle, 2000).

To enhance the success of students in their academic studies, explicit instruction of language learning strategies can be integrated into the EAP programme. This will develop learners' study skills and strategies that will enable them to cope effectively and efficiently with change, extended learning tasks and examinations. Students can be asked to keep strategy diaries or fill in strategy questionnaires such as Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990).

Results suggest that students have negative view about the textbook. The instructional materials for this course should be selected, adapted and created according to the students' needs. To scaffold the learning process and foster intrinsic motivation, authentic teaching materials which offer good intake of academic language use (Richards and Renandya, 2002), and materials which 'affect the learners by attracting their attention, interest and curiosity' and which engage students in 'learner-centred discovery activities' (Tomlison, 1998:11) should be utilized. Adopted written and oral texts should promote learning of academic skills and acquisition of academic lexis. For successful acquisition of academic vocabulary, students might be recommended an academic vocabulary self-study book. Furthermore, English instructors and science staff should collaborate in the preparation of the instructional materials and in the decision-making process (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001).

The findings also indicate that testing and assessment system needs improvement. To ensure consistency between the objectives of the exams and the objectives of the academic curriculum, students can be provided with sample exams during the semester. To maximize the content validity, test specifications for each test can be developed (Alderson and al., 1995). To minimize subjectivity of the writing component of the tests, clear test instructions should be created, and analytical rubrics should be created and used (Weigle, 2002). In order to give effective feedback about the midterms and finals, more time can be allocated for exam analysis. Students should be allowed to see their midterm and final exams, or at least see the answer key in detail.

## **CONCLUSION**

To design a successful EAP course for EFL students, it is crucial to provide learners with optimum exposure to academic content and tasks (Stroller, 2001) in the classroom through motivation-stimulating activities, and beyond the classroom by providing students with plenty of extra-class learning opportunities such as extensive listening

and reading, online learning, independent learning tasks, and opportunities for application of learning strategies outside the class (Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007).

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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## Appendix A

### EAP Course Evaluation Student Questionnaire (EAPCESQ)

This questionnaire aims to find out some information about the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing EAP course. There are 5 sections and you are kindly requested to circle the number that reflects your opinion. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Thank you!

Student Name: Class: Date:			Strongly Agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
COURSE CONTENT	1	I improved my academic listening and note-taking skills in the EAP classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	2	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic listening and note-taking skills inside the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
	3	I improved my academic speech in the EAP classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	4	I improved my academic reading skills in the EAP classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	5	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic reading skills inside and outside the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
	6	I improved my academic writing skills in the EAP classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	7	I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic writing inside and outside the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
	8	I improved my academic vocabulary in the EAP classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	9	The EAP classes have met my expectations.	5	4	3	2	1
INDEPENDENT LEARNING	10	I learned how to plan my learning and study my lessons independently.	5	4	3	2	1
	11	I have improved my study skills which I use in my academic studies.	5	4	3	2	1
	12	I was provided with enough opportunities to reflect on my learning.	5	4	3	2	1
	13	The EAP lessons have raised my awareness of skills and strategies that I can use for my language development.	5	4	3	2	1
COURSE	14	The instructional materials were relevant to the course content.	5	4	3	2	1

	15	The instructional materials were sufficient.	5	4	3	2	1
	16	The topics and materials used in the EAP classes were engaging and interesting.	5	4	3	2	1
	17	The textbook, <i>EAP Now</i> , used in the EAP classes was engaging and interesting.	5	4	3	2	1
	18	The library has enough sources for studying Academic English.	5	4	3	2	1
	19	A variety of audio-visual aids (OHP, multi media, flashcards, video, realia and so on) were used.	5	4	3	2	1
TESTING AND ASSESSMENT	20	The content of the test tasks is directly linked to the course content and instruction.	5	4	3	2	1
	21	I had enough time to complete the test tasks in the exams.	5	4	3	2	1
	22	I was provided with sufficient feedback regarding the achievement at the exams.	5	4	3	2	1
	23	Assessment results were announced in a reasonable time.	5	4	3	2	1
	24	Assignments and tests were graded fairly and thoroughly.	5	4	3	2	1
ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION	25	The instructor was well-prepared and well-organized in class.	5	4	3	2	1
	26	The instructor presented language points in clear and engaging way.	5	4	3	2	1
	27	The instructor encouraged and ensured full student participation in class.	5	4	3	2	1
	28	The instructor answered questions carefully and satisfactorily.	5	4	3	2	1
	29	The instructor conducted effective and interesting classes.	5	4	3	2	1
	30	I was treated fairly, impartially, and with respect.	5	4	3	2	1
	31	The instructor was aware of individual and group needs.	5	4	3	2	1
	32	The instructor gave appropriate feedback to me about my progress.	5	4	3	2	1
	33	The instructor was a good language model for me.	5	4	3	2	1
	34	The classes were well paced.	5	4	3	2	1
	35	The classes were smooth, sequenced and logical.	5	4	3	2	1

What High School did you go to?	
Where were you born?	
Where is the place the largest number of your extended family live?	
In 2009 what was the university of your first choice?	
Why did you want to go to that particular university?	
Why did you come to Yasar University?	

Adapted from: Jordan, 1997 and Richards, 2001

## Appendix B

### Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews (SFGIs)

GROUP SIZE:

DATE:

No:	Question	Notes
1.	Do you believe that this course has improved your academic English?  Why? Why not?	
2.	Can you understand English when you listen to lectures?  To what extent? Well? Good? Not at all? So-so?	
3.	Can you manage to take notes while listening to lectures?  What difficulties do you face to face?	
4.	Can you understand academic reading texts? To what extent? Well? Good? Not at all? So-so?	
5.	Can you easily communicate with your instructors or native speakers (in English)? Why not? Do you have the confidence to communicate in English outside the class?	
6.	Can you produce academic presentations in seminars or discussions?  What difficulties do you face to face?	
7.	Can you write academic essays? Why not? Do you understand the questions? Do you have enough vocabulary? Do you know where to start?	
8.	Is the academic vocabulary taught in the course practical and useful for you?	

	Which? How?	
<b>9.</b>	Do you have any difficulties in your written exams? What kind of? Time management? Understanding instructions?	
<b>10.</b>	Do you benefit from the strategies taught in the EAP classes while doing your assignments and exams?  How?	
<b>11.</b>	Can you assess yourself? How? Can you reflect on your learning?	
<b>12</b>	Do you study your lessons on your own or do you prefer working in groups?  Who helps you? Why not?	
<b>13</b>	Do you think that the feedback given by your teachers was beneficial and constructive, and helped you see your strengths and weaknesses? Why not? How?	
<b>14.</b>	What are the strengths of the EAP course? What was good?	
<b>15.</b>	What are the weaknesses of the EAP course? What was bad?	
<b>16.</b>	What did you enjoy most?	

<b>17.</b>	What did you enjoy least?	
<b>18.</b>	What would you change in the EAP classes?	
<b>19.</b>	Which skills, do you think, you didn't develop in this course? What were the constraints? <i>(time, pace, lack of AVA, class size, teaching methodology, teacher incompetence, too much content, a lot of exams)</i>	
<b>20.</b>	Do you want to add something else?	

Teacher's Name:

## CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC AND EFL WRITING

*Nilüfer Güler*

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*Writing in a foreign language has always been a difficult task (Carson, 2001). Most of the research conducted on the EFL and ESL writing has focused on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and paragraph organizing of the target language. However, even advanced language learners' writings have been criticized by their teachers; "the paper is out of focus... lacks organization... lacks cohesion." (Kaplan, 2001:13). Contrastive rhetoric claims that it is as important to gain proficiency in the rhetorical pattern of the foreign language as gaining proficiency in syntax and vocabulary. This chapter highlights the importance of contrastive rhetoric in terms of EFL writing instruction. The narrative essays of 30 Turkish EFL learners and 23 native English speakers are compared in terms of their rhetorical organization, narrative length and orientation. Some implications for EFL teachers are given at the end of the chapter.*

## CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC AND EFL WRITING

Writing in a foreign language has always been a difficult task (Carson, 2001). Most of the research on EFL and ESL writing has focused on the grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph organizing and all have aimed to make ESL and EFL writing better in terms of its mechanics. However, writing in the second language does not only consist of these mechanical functions. To communicate effectively in the target language requires more than using words and syntax correctly or the right pronunciation of words to convey ideas. Writing coherently and passing the message across in a meaningful way is as important as writing correctly in the foreign language: “To persuade others of our intent and meaning, we depend on transactions between the speaker or writer and the audience and on logical connections between ordered information sets” (Panetta, p. 13). So while learning the structure and the mechanics of a foreign language, one needs to develop some other skills to acquire better writing abilities in that language also.

One of the most popular - while at the same time one of the most criticized - theories on ESL and EFL writing is *contrastive rhetoric*. Contrastive rhetoric has gained a lot of attention, especially in foreign language education settings. Atkinson (2000) states that “The contrastive rhetoric hypothesis has held perhaps its greatest allure for those in non-native English-speaking contexts abroad forced as they are to look EFL writing in the eye to try to understand why it at least sometimes looks “different”, often subtly out of sync with what one might expect from a “native” perspective (p. 319). Contrastive rhetoric has brought important new insights into foreign language education.

## WHAT IS CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC?

Even though Kaplan's (1966) ground breaking work is thought to be the first study on contrastive rhetoric, Connor believes that the origins of contrastive rhetoric go back to Sapir and Whorf's linguistic relativity theory. Whorf (1956) argued that the language one uses affects the way this person sees the world. Languages are not just organizations of expressions but also a "stream of sensory experience" (Whorf, 1956, p.55). So, the cultural-educational skills we gain through the use of language affect our world view and language use abilities.

Contrastive rhetoric was first introduced to second language acquisition by Kaplan (1966) with his seminal work *"Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural education"*. Among other language skills, the effect of rhetorical patterns of written text has gained the most importance and has now been investigated for more than thirty years (Kubota & Lehner, 2004, p.8). Kaplan found that even advanced students follow their native languages' rhetorical patterns and, because of this, get some criticism from their teachers such as "The paper is out of focus... lacks organization... lacks cohesion." (Kaplan, 2001, p.13). According to him, the foreign students' paper is out of focus because the students are using a rhetorical pattern that violate the expectation of the native speaker. The students are using the rhetorical pattern of their first language which may not apply to the expectations of the native English Speakers (NES). Kaplan (2001) emphasizes that it is *as important to gain proficiency in the rhetorical pattern of the foreign language as to gain proficiency in syntax and vocabulary*.

Contrastive rhetorians highlight that there are different logic and rhetoric patterns for different societies. Kaplan found that Anglo-European texts were linear; Semitic, parallel; Oriental, indirect; and in Romance languages and Russian, digressive (see figure 1).

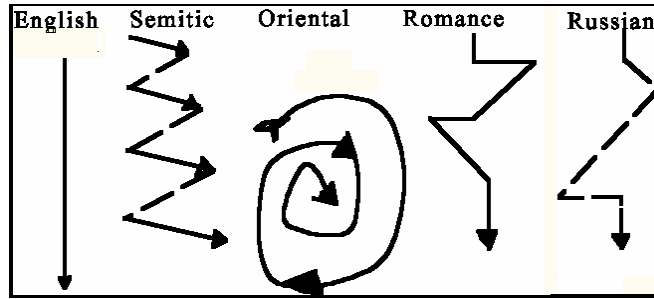


Figure 1: Kaplan's (1966) diagram on cross-cultural writing patterns

Culture specific rhetoric patterns are therefore thought to affect the writing of the ESL and EFL students in a negative way and “Kaplan recommended that ESL students [must] learn to write essays in an Anglo-American study model constructed with a straight line of development” (Connor, 1996, p.16).

Contrastive rhetoric has improved the teaching of EFL writing “in particular in the area of English for Academic Purposes university settings” (Connor et al., 2008, p. 1). However, it should be highlighted that contrastive rhetoric does not assess or emphasize the effect of L1 on L2 writing in terms of syntax or phonology; but in contrastive rhetoric “the interference manifests itself in the writer’s choice of rhetorical strategies and content” (Connor, 2002, p. 494). So, the writing styles of the students and the effect of their culture and cultural-educational skills in choosing the certain writing styles is the subject of contrastive rhetoric.

At the outset of contrastive rhetoric, the audio-lingual method was very popular and ESL students were expected to correct the mistakes they were making in ESL writing by imitating the L2 writing rhetoric. “Overall, the research supporting contrastive rhetoric hypothesis recommended making rhetorical differences explicit, raising students’ awareness of such differences, and acculturating students through language exercises with concrete models that meet audience expectations” (Kubota & Lehner, 2004, p. 13). However, with the development of more prescriptive language teaching the area of contrastive rhetoric study has been expanded “to an interdisciplinary area of applied linguistics incorporating

theoretical perspectives from both linguistics and rhetoric” (Connor, 2002). Writing has been accepted to be a cognitive act, rather than just descriptive rules. The reader and the context of the writing gained as much importance as the writer and the genre of the writing. Writing is accepted to be “interaction within a particular discipline or scholarly community” (Connor, 1996, p. 18).

Contrastive rhetoric has been severely criticized over the last decade for several reasons: for over-generalizing the term “Oriental” (Hinds, 1983), for its insensitivity to cultural differences (Scollon, 1997; Spack, 1997, Zamel, 1997), for being overly-simplistic in its research methodology (Matsuda, 1997), and for promoting the superiority of Western writing (Kubota, 2001). Some of these arguments are invalid because since the students address the readers of the second language (L2), and since L2 is English in this case, it should not be accepted as seeing Western writing as superior to the others. In fact, Walker (2004) highlights that writing in another language besides English would require the native English writer to conform to the L2 under the same circumstances. Kubota and Lehner (2004) claim that “critical contrastive rhetoric encourages teachers and students to critically reflect on classroom practices such as comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 rhetorical patterns and teaching/learning “preferred” discourse patterns of the target language” (p.9). The first research that has been done on contrastive rhetoric may seem simplistic compared to the advanced research methods; however, Connor (2002) highlights that numerous researches have been conducted on contrastive rhetoric and the researchers investigated the subject from different perspectives. Kaplan (1987) admits that he “in the blush of a discovery, overstated some both the differences and his case” (p.11).

In their recent book, Connor et al. (2008) argue that these criticisms are not true in that they assume that contrastive rhetoric is static and “frozen in space”(p.3). In

fact, contrastive rhetoric has changed a lot with the development of teaching techniques. Indeed, Connor (2002) highlights the fact that Kaplan accepts that the first introduction of contrastive rhetoric was not a detailed work that has been prepared with a deep data analysis. Connor (1996) also highlights in her book that during the 1990s the contrastive rhetoric field has been experienced a paradigm shift “broader definition that considers cognitive and socio-cultural variables of writing... has been substitutes for a purely linguistic framework” (p.18)

One of the recent findings in the research is that since writing and writing rhetoric is a learned skill at school, the newly learned rhetoric may affect even the first one, which means that L1 learning styles can influence the L2 writing and the opposite also may be the case (Uysal, 2008, p.185). The abundant research on this subject has shown that CR is an important part of second language acquisition research and its deep benefits should be utilized in EFL classes.

The affect of learning the culture specific writing requirements is not limited to this. Kang (2006) states that “knowing culturally preferred narrative features and evaluative elements in English narrative discourse may help them comprehending English reading passages” (p.402). Learning the writing discourse patterns will increase the meta-linguistic awareness of the students to these patterns and make even the reading passages more comprehensible for them.

## **NARRATIVES**

Kang (2006) underlines narratives are the earliest discourse forms acquired by children. Even though there have been excessive research on argumentative essay writing and contrastive rhetoric, there has not been much research done on

narrative essays and contrastive rhetoric. According to Casanave (2005) narrative plays an important role in L2 writing and research; and also “more accurate narrative inquiry in L2 writing research can potentially help L2 writing researchers dismantle stereotypes of cultural pattern” (p.29).

Children start using narratives at very early ages. It was found that mothers educate their children to use the narrative structures that are accepted and valued in their societies (Kang, 2003; Blum-Kulka; 1993; Melzi, 2000). Blum-Kulka (1993) researched the conversation at dinner tables of Israeli and American families and found cultural difference plays an important role on the discourse patterns used by the speakers, Melzi (2000) focused on the narrative dyads of Spanish-speaking Central American and English-speaking European American mothers and found differences on the conversational focus of these parents.

Even though this is one of the most commonly used writing style in ESL, EFL and mainstream writing classes, unfortunately, there is not much research focusing on the narrative skills of Turkish EFL learners in their English essay writing. This study aims to focus on the effects of culture-educational patterns of Turkish EFL learners on English narrative essay writing. Do these culture-educational patterns are different from the native English writers’ narrative essay writing patterns?

## **OUR STUDY**

### **PROCEDURES**

For this study, 30 Turkish and 23 American college students were recruited to write a narrative essay about “what they did last summer”. Then the essays of the students were collected and some of the students were interviewed. Even though all of the students from Turkey were college students, their proficiency level in

English was different. The students were given a brief questionnaire about their English language learning history and then they wrote their essays. All of the participants asked to write the essays in English, Turkish EFL learners were asked to write the essays in Turkish as well.

The Turkish EFL learners are at different proficiency levels in English and they have been studying English for different periods of time. The Turkish participants had 5 years of formal English education on average. These students are studying at different colleges in Turkey and all of them are studying at the intensive English schools of their colleges.

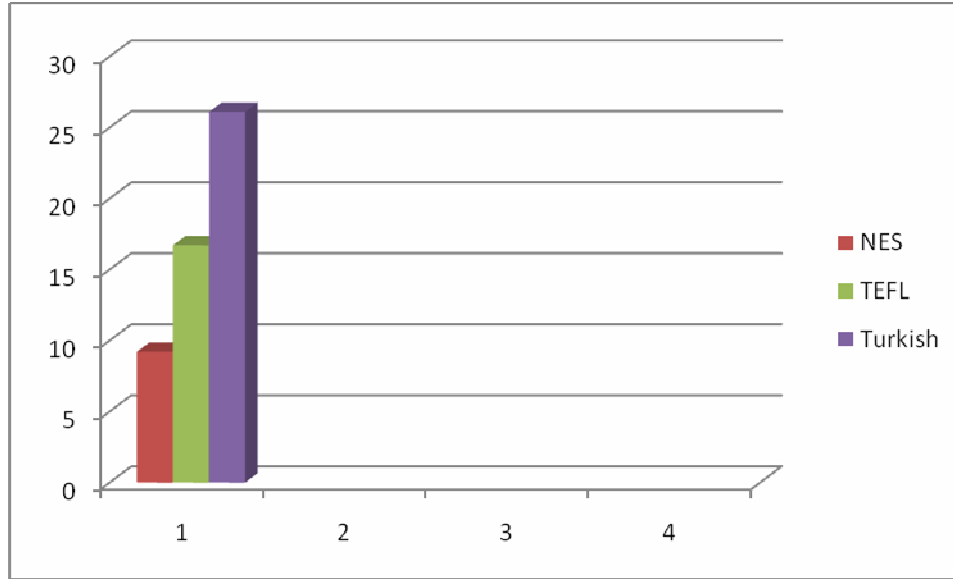
## **RESULTS:**

The narratives of the students are analyzed in terms of *narrative length, orientation, overall organization*.

### **NARRATIVE LENGTH**

The number of clauses used by the Turkish EFL learners and English Native Speakers (NES) was very different. The mean for clause number NES was 9.2 and it was 16.7 and 26.1 for Turkish EFL learners and Turkish narratives respectively. Turkish students wrote longer stories in both in English and in Turkish.

Turkish EFL learners tended to write simple sentences by not using any conjunctions. However, NES preferred to use conjunctions and combine the sentences. They indicated the cause and effect; beginning and end relationships for the events in their essays. Turkish EFL writers tended to list the events and did not make many connections between the events.



## OVERALL ORGANIZATION

In term of overall organization, all of the participants, NES and Turkish EFL learners had an introduction, body, and conclusion in their English essays. The introduction part of the essays was very similar for Turkish EFL learners and NES. However, the body part of the essays was different in that the NES tended to focus on one important event in their summer vacation and describe the event; but Turkish EFL learners tried to list all of their summer vacation without focusing any of them in detail. NES used more description of characters and place and include more abstracts i.e. emotions, stating expectations, comparisons of expectations with reality and evaluation of events in their essays than Turkish EFL learners.

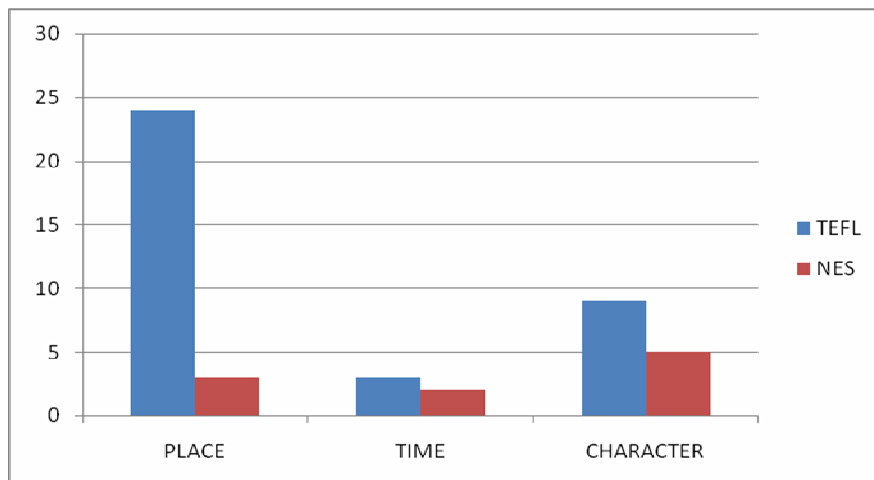
The average number of events that the Turkish EFL students cited in their essays is 3 and this number was 2.1 for NES. Turkish EFL learners tended to cite the events they experienced chronologically like a list and then finish their essays in an evaluative way such as “It was a great summer”, “it was a boring summer”. Turkish EFL learners made the conclusions about their summer for the readers.

NES also made comments yet NES tend to make comments on the specific events happening during the summer such as “It was a great way to pad my savings account”, “It was a great summer job”. The Turkish EFL learners also comment on the events but 23 Turkish EFL learners out of 30 finished their essays by making an evaluative comment about all of the events they experienced during the summer for the readers.

The students used descriptives just for places but not for people around them. However, NES avoided making descriptions of people but they described the environment, their job, and their feelings in their essays.

## ORIENTATION

It has been found that the Turkish EFL learners tend to describe the events in order and also describe the places that the events took place. NES did not describe the place, time of the events as much as Turkish EFL learners but they tended to describe the effects of certain events on themselves. They were describing the events and while combining the events they wrote sentences like “This trip thought me the importance of patience” and their emotions on what they did.



## **DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING**

In this study it has been observed that Turkish EFL learners and NES have some commonalities and differences in terms of their English narrative essays. The similarities are in that both Turkish EFL learners and NES tend to use a thesis sentence and a conclusion sentence in their essays.

The differences are more obvious especially in terms of the length of the essays. Turkish EFL learners tend to write longer narrative essays in both Turkish and English. They have several repetitions during their essays. Turkish EFL learners tend to focus on several events in their descriptions compared to NES who usually focus one or two events.

In addition, Turkish EFL learners mostly tend to state the event and describe the place it took place. However, NES tend to state the importance of the event by making it clear how it helped them to improve personally, emotionally or even financially. NES not only describes the events but also states the importance of it in their lives.

Even though there were a lot of similarities in terms of narrative writings of Turkish EFL learners and NES, there were also a lot of differences. Uysal (2008) highlights that even though “cultural-educational factors still were found to constitute an important part of second language writing process and products” (p.197). So it is very important for EFL teachers to be aware of the specific writing requirements of the second language and train their students to be aware of these requirements to enable the development of discourse strategies that are more appropriate for the target language. To illustrate, the Turkish EFL learners should be aware of the type and amount of information that NES tend to provide in narratives are different than Turkish EFL learners do. So to express themselves

and their ideas better, not to sound “unnatural” in the second language, they need to learn the rhetorical patterns of writing in the target language.

It is very important for EFL teachers to be the aware of the culture-education differences between languages and increase their knowledge in terms of English writing discourse patterns. Most of EFL writing still focuses on syntax and vocabulary development yet research shows that even the most advanced EFL students may produce syntactically perfect writing samples which would be criticized for being non-cohesive, linear and even understandable. As stated above, most of the Turkish EFL learners focus more than three events in their narratives while NES tend to focus on just one. This kind of essays may sound too overwhelming for NES and non-native students may lose credit for that.

Contrastive rhetoric should not be perceived as a way of assimilation of EFL and ESL writers but it should be appreciated as a way of expressing oneself better in the second language by using the rhetorical patterns of the target language. The teachers should highlight these differences to their students. No matter if it is native or foreign language writing, there is always a place for creativity of the students. Contrastive rhetoric does not kill the creativity and uniqueness of the EFL students; on the contrary, it enables them to express their unique and creative ideas in L2 writing in a more cohesive and understandable way.

Walker (2004) found in his dissertation research that teaching students about contrastive rhetoric was especially important for lower level EFL students. Learning about contrastive rhetoric helped the improvement of writing styles of these students a lot. Walker (2004) also states that especially teacher conferencing individually with the students was very beneficial for the students. But the success of the teacher-student conferencing for contrastive rhetoric also

has some regulations. In these meetings the students should be encouraged to talk about their ideas and thinking strategies, “not about teacher’s agenda and assignment clarifications” (Walker, p. 110). So EFL teachers should attract the attention of especially lower-proficiency EFL students to rhetorical patterns of the target language and when it is necessary help students individually.

In addition, Kubota and Lehner (2004) found out that quality of writing in L2 is closely linked to quality of writing in L1. Students who write in L1 observed to write better in the L2 also. This result indicates that practicing writing is another indicator of better writing in L2. The students should be encouraged to write a lot in EFL classrooms and the teachers should help students see the different uses of rhetorical patterns in L2 with several examples.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the students should be taught about contrastive rhetoric especially at lower levels of instruction. It does not mean that learning about the contrastive rhetoric will solve the all ills of the EFL essay writing. However, as stated above it will help students to write in a more cohesive way in the second language. In addition, the instructors themselves should educate themselves about the role of culture and contrastive rhetoric. This study supports the previous research stating that contrastive rhetoric play a very promising role in helping EFL learners (Walker, 2004; Hinds, 1883; Uysal, 2008; Reid, 1989).

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## BIOGRAPHY

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## BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PREP CLASSES AND FRESHMAN YEAR

Adam J. Simpson

Sabanci University, School of Languages

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*One of the great strengths of the upper intermediate program at Sabanci University School of Languages is the extent to which it acts as a bridge between the preparatory English year and the kinds of lectures the students will be attending and the language they'll be encountering when they progress to their freshman studies. A major part of this bridge is the series of lectures in mathematics and natural sciences (EMS) which the students attend for one hour a week and which form a percentage of their overall course grade. As teachers, our hope is that our students enjoy the valuable opportunity to experience something of what life will be like for them when they are attending lectures in their freshman classes. Additionally, we aim to show the students that, although the content of the lectures may already be familiar, they need to remember that, this being an English course, they need to become familiar with the language used in these lectures to showcase their competencies. This chapter is an exploration of the extent to which is actually happening.*

## INTRODUCTION

I'm delighted to be currently teaching upper intermediate students for the first time in more years than I care to mention. One of the great strengths of our upper intermediate program is the extent to which it acts as a bridge between the preparatory English year and the kinds of lectures the students will be attending and the language they'll be encountering when they progress to their freshman studies. A major part of this is the series of lectures in mathematics and natural sciences which the students attend for one hour a week and which form up a small percentage of their overall course grade. As teachers, our hope is that our students enjoy the valuable opportunity to experience something of what life will be like for them when they are attending lectures in their freshman classes. This chapter is an exploration of whether or not that is actually happening.

For quite a lot of our students, these lectures perform a role, noted by Ball (2000), Thousand, Villa and Nevin (2002) and Lapan, Kardash and Turner (2002), that we too rarely get to see in our teaching: they empower my students. They manage to do this in a couple of ways. Firstly, for all its faults, the Turkish education system churns out generation after generation of young mathematic wizards. Consequently, the content of some of the lectures may already be familiar for many. This factor puts our students in the position of power, as they know the content a lot better than I do, from a scientific perspective at least. It's very rare they we are able to empower our students in such a way, so this is a situation that I love, as we're witnessing our students thoroughly thrive in a second language setting. Secondly, given that we don't lose focus of the fact that this is primarily an English course, we are able to approach the language focus with both myself and the students as classroom equals, a factor emphasized by Gilabert (2009). For example, if we ask them to explain what an exponential function is, they know they can do it well with a few minor glitches in the way they express the concept in English, while we're only vaguely aware of what this is - understanding all of the language of the

lecture doesn't mean understanding the lecture - and yet am able to guide the students on the appropriate way to express themselves in English.

Dörnyei (2001) notes the impact of what he terms the 'Learning Situation Level' on learner motivation: *'[It] is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of L2 learning within a classroom setting: course-specific motivational components (related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks)'*. Because this aspect of their course aims to address the 'Learning Situation Level', students need make an effort to concentrate on making sure that they are familiar with the language that the lecturer uses to discuss mathematical and scientific topics as this will make it easier for them to follow when they are studying more advanced topics later on in their studies.

In order to help our students better get to grips with the subjects, adopt a CLIL approach, as discussed in Coonan (2003), Dafouz-Milne (2006), Dalton-Puffer, C. (2007) and Marsh (2002). We do pre-lecture and post-lecture classwork. To exploit the content of the lectures as a means of focusing on the relevant lexico-grammatical features of English which are common in Maths and Science, we do several things in class. Firstly, we highlight vocabulary and semi-technical terms encountered in the lectures. Secondly, we prepare for lectures by retrieving existing subject knowledge. We also actively encourage students to express content of lectures in their own words. In terms of skills development, we give students the opportunity to ask questions and compare notes with peers to check understanding of the content of the lectures, as well as providing speaking opportunities through discussion of issues arising from lectures. If any of you are involved in an upper intermediate preparatory program, I highly recommend that you consider developing such a program as this. Nevertheless, I still felt that I wanted to ask my students how they felt about the course of lectures. Here are a few selected responses from their feedback.

**CURRENT COURSE SCHEDULE**

	DATE	TOPIC CONTENT AREAS
1	25 <sup>th</sup> February	<b>COURSE INFO</b>
2	4 <sup>th</sup> March	Prime numbers
3	11 <sup>th</sup> March	Functions and their graphs
4	18 <sup>th</sup> March	The Derivative
5	25 <sup>th</sup> March	The Integral
6	1 <sup>st</sup> April	One-dimensional motion
7	8 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>PROBLEM SESSION</b>
	15 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Revision</b>
8	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	<b>SEMESTER BREAK</b>
9	29 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>QUIZ1</b>
10	6 <sup>th</sup> May	Galileo and the Heavens
11	13 <sup>th</sup> May	The central dogma of molecular biology
12	20 <sup>th</sup> May	Phase transitions and critical phenomena
13	27 <sup>th</sup> May	The Special Theory of Relativity
14	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	<b>QUIZ 2 &amp; COURSE FEEDBACK</b>
15	10 <sup>th</sup> June	No Lecture
16		Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> June Upper-Intermediate Final Exam

**OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

The lectures are delivered by faculty members from the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. To help Upper-intermediate students at the preparatory English program to prepare earlier and more effectively for their Freshman Natural Sciences and Math courses by:

- ◆ Refreshing and or extending previous content knowledge of maths and science
- ◆ Raising awareness of aspects of current research at the university and topics of broader scientific interest
- ◆ Providing exposure to the language of maths and science in English
- ◆ Providing experience of extended lectures of a similar type to those in their Freshman courses

Language support sessions are delivered by School of Languages instructors. To exploit the content of the lectures as a means of focusing on relevant lexical-grammatical features of English which are common in Maths and Science by:

- ◆ Highlighting vocabulary and semi-technical terms encountered in the lectures
- ◆ Preparing for lectures by retrieving existing knowledge
- ◆ Encouraging students to express content of lectures in their own words
- ◆ Giving students the opportunity to ask questions and compare notes with peers to check understanding of the content of the lectures
- ◆ Providing speaking opportunities through discussion of issues arising from lectures

Problem sessions are run with teaching assistants from either the university's Academic Support Programme or Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. To give further hands-on practice of the content of the lectures through the solving of maths and physics problems; and an opportunity for students to practice the relevant lexical-grammatical features focused on in the language support sessions; and achieve the following learning outcomes:

- ◆ Recognizing the oral expression of basic mathematical formulae
- ◆ Asking questions for clarification and to check understanding

- ◆ Understanding basic mathematical problems and carrying out the required instructions
- ◆ Expressing basic mathematical formulae orally
- ◆ Explaining in simple terms how an answer was obtained

Course methodology is based on interactive lectures and smaller group sessions. Current course requirements are that attendance is counted as part of students' Attendance Grades for their preparatory English course. The two quizzes given during the course account for 5% of the students' overall grade.

### WHAT DO THE STUDENTS THINK?

**1. What do you enjoy most about EMS (English for Maths and Science) lectures? Why do you enjoy this?**

- ◆ *'We enjoy [the] classes because the information that we learned last year stays fresh [in our minds].'*
- ◆ *'Listening and note taking [at the same time]. It is good practice.'*
- ◆ *'As it will be helpful when we become freshmen and because it's fun.'*

### WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?

Firstly, there is clear recognition that their previous studies at high school will have given them a strong grounding for at least some of their freshman year courses. This is nice, as it isn't something teachers get to see on a regular basis. This is also evident from the activities we've done in class. As stated previously, this can be extremely empowering for students and it's really wonderful to see them operating so comfortably in this second language environment.

Secondly, there appears to be a genuine understanding of the goals of this course of lectures, in that we're trying to equip our students with the skills they need to be able to cope in their freshman year. Taking notes while listening to a lecturer who doesn't follow a script can be very challenging, so starting this in subjects in which they are familiar seems to be working.

## **FOLLOW UP WORK**

- ◆ Continued analysis of the notes my students have taken.
- ◆ Discussion of the strategies they've used to take notes.
- ◆ Sharing my notes and the strategies I used while making them.

## **2. What's the most challenging part of EMS lectures? Why do you think this?**

- ◆ *'No challenge.'*
- ◆ *'There isn't any challenging part and I don't think about this [much].'*
- ◆ *'Note taking!'*

## **WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?**

I asked these questions after only a couple of lectures, which are perhaps the most elementary in terms of the concepts delivered. The lectures further down the line will be more challenging, so this represents a question that can be asked again later on in their course, to see if these feelings persist.

Informal conversations with students appear to suggest that they are so familiar with the language of maths that they've been able to 'fill in the gaps' in the English. What does this mean? One issue in particular arises. While with the previous question I suggested that it may be good to ease students into listening to lectures with familiar

content, there is a danger that they'll be in for a big shock when they encounter lectures delivering new information.

### **FOLLOW UP WORK**

- ◆ Guard against complacency! Some lectures are coming up in which my students won't have the same degree of background knowledge.

**3. If you could change anything about EMS lectures, what would it be (please give details)?**

- ◆ *'The sequence of the subjects. For example, the third EMS subject shouldn't be derivative and the fourth shouldn't be integral.'*
- ◆ *'I don't change anything.'*
- ◆ *'Sending emails of the lecture after the lessons [would be nice].'*

### **WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?**

Just before the third lecture, which was scheduled to be on 'the derivative' rather than 'the integral', the lecturers, all of whom are freely giving their time to this course and are under no obligation to deliver these lectures, had to rearrange their schedule. This meant switching around a couple of the lectures. While I'm reliably informed that there is some benefit to doing the integral before the derivative, this response was nevertheless a little disappointing. This course has taken a great deal of organizing and coordinating and teachers tried to stress the fact that the professors really are doing this out of the kindness of their hearts. This may have been a one-off, throw away comment from one student who couldn't think of another response for this question, but this should nevertheless be something that is discussed in class.

One of the other responses has also raised another issue for discussion in class. As far as sending emails about the lecture, is this something that students are expecting will happen throughout their academic careers? This is another area for future research.

#### **FOLLOW UP WORK**

- ✦ Stress the fact that we have to work around the busy schedules of these kind-hearted professors.
- ✦ Discuss the expectations of what lectures and follow-up sessions will actually involve in freshman and beyond.

#### **4. When you look at your EMS notes, can you understand what you've written?**

- ✦ *All responses were 'yes'.*

#### **WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?**

Having looked at their notes, this reaffirms the fact that they have pre-existing knowledge of the subjects covered so far, and actually did a good job of noting down what was said, albeit a lot of this was (possibly familiar) mathematical formulae rather than notes formed from the language spoken.

#### **FOLLOW UP WORK...**

- ✦ What would I have done if any of the students had said 'no'?
- ✦ Continue to look at their notes to see what strategies they are using/need to develop.

#### **5. How can your teacher best support you in your EMS studies?**

- ◆ *'Doing preparation [work] about the subjects before the lectures.'*
- ◆ *'Everything is great.'*
- ◆ *'You're already supporting us.'*

### WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?

It should be reiterated that the students aren't thrown blindly into the lectures. The subject is raised in classes before the lectures and 'support' materials are worked through. Bearing this in mind, it is assumed that the first response here is of the *'keep doing...'* rather than the *'I wish we could...'* variety. The general positivity is of course pleasing, and suggests that the students derive some benefit from the preparatory work that we do with them.

### FOLLOW UP WORK...

- ◆ Am I doing enough work in class before the lectures?
- ◆ Am I doing too much work in class before the lectures (pre-empting the lecture)?

### 6. What do you think about the EMS quizzes?

- ◆ *'As the time is limited for the lectures, we don't know a lot of things so the quizzes should be easy.'*
- ◆ *'[We feel] fear.'*
- ◆ *'We don't know yet.'*

### WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE RESPONSES?

These responses indicate that the students are aware of the upcoming assessment, although the students are approaching this in different emotional states. The first

statement seems to have achieved some level of perspective about what could be included in their first assessment: after four lectures in a subject with which they already have a strong background, how likely is it that they will be caught out? Nevertheless, does this suggest that the students could be complacent over their ability to express their knowledge in English, which, after all is what they'll have to do in freshman (and is thus the whole point of this course)?

As far as the other responses are concerned, exam anxiety is to be expected. Given that a lot of support work is done around these lectures in class, as well as the aims and objectives clearly covered, this is clearly an issue that affects different students in different ways.

### **FOLLOW UP WORK**

- ◆ As with all exams, make sure the line between providing adequate input and spoon feeding the answers is not crossed.
- ◆ How can I better ease their exam anxiety?

### **THINGS WE'VE LEARNED FROM ASKING THESE QUESTIONS**

It's always good to ask your students what they think. Regardless of the extent to which you feel you may already know what's going through their minds with regard to any given part of their studies, asking them is always likely to throw up something you hadn't expected, or at very least confirm things you hoped to be true.

Through asking my students about how they feel we have learned a lot. Firstly, they seem to have a clear grasp of what we're trying to achieve. For any teacher who has ever tried to impart the objectives of a course of study to students, you can appreciate how great it feels when they 'get it'. Secondly, it's nice to be able to provide them with a

language learning environment in which they feel genuinely empowered by their existing subject knowledge. Again, for any teacher who's ever tried to use existing knowledge to assist in language acquisition, which I hope would include all of us; you can again appreciate how great this feels. Nevertheless, teachers should guard against complacency and make sure that the process of note-taking, a precious skill, is being developed sufficiently to aid the students when they get on to lectures in which they don't have such a strong grounding. This is particularly pertinent given that this forms an assessed part of their course work. With this in mind, the class work supporting these lectures should maintain a language focus, while not going to the point where the assessment is completely pre-empted.

Those who are involved in an upper intermediate or advanced preparatory English program, and who are in a position to implement such a course of study, are recommended to consider developing a program such as this.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Originally from England, Adam has been living and teaching in Turkey for more than a decade, all of that time spent in the tertiary education sector in universities in Istanbul. His interests include descriptive curriculum planning, developing flexibility in lesson planning and the considered integration of technology in the language classroom. He is currently a member of the curriculum development team at the School of Languages at Sabancı University in Istanbul.

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In this publication we wish to share some of the interesting innovations in the teaching and learning of language which are currently taking place with the context of Turkish education. It is our hope that this will serve as the first volume in what will become a long series celebrating the research being conducted in this country. We begin this journey in the volume presented here, which consists of eight chapters.

