AN INVESTIGATION OF PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' SPOKEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A CASE FROM TURKEY

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ SÖZLÜ İLETİŞİM BECERİLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ: BİR TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to investigate and promote pre-service English language teachers' competence in basic elements of spoken communication. In the study a group of 64 non-native pre-service teachers of English in the Oral Communication Skills course in a pre-service English Language Teaching department at the tertiary level in Turkey specifically practised the segmental and prosodic features of English, connected speech, and spoken language conventions through a number of spoken communication activities and tasks. With the purpose of evaluating participants' English pronunciation prior to the course and also after the course, a student questionnaire was administered and focused on students' self-assessment in word pronunciation, word stress, sentence stress, accuracy, intonation, word linking, assimilation, elision, and contraction before and after the course as well as the effect of course activities. The data findings indicated poor or average competence in various components of spoken communication prior to the study; whereas, the participants reported significant improvement in all these components as they improved basic components of spoken communication through various interactive course activities.

Keywords: spoken communication skills, English language teaching, pre-service teachers of English

ÖZ: Bu çalışma lisans düzeyi İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının İngilizce sözlü iletişimi oluşturan temel unsurlardaki yeterlilik düzeylerini incelemeyi ve geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada Sözel İletişim Becerileri dersinde anadili İngilizce olmayan İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümü 64 lisans düzeyi İngilizce öğretmen adayı ile sözlü iletişimin temel unsurlarını oluşturan İngilizcenin ses özellikleri, bürünsel unsurları, birleşik konuşma özellikleri ve konuşma dilinin temel özellikleri konularında iletişimsel dil etkinlikleri ile uygulama yapılmıştır. Bu katılımcıların uygulama öncesi ve sonrası sözlü iletişimi oluşturan bu unsurlardaki gelişimleri bir anket yardımıyla ölçülmüştür. Ankette katılımcıların kelime telaffuzu, kelime vurgusu, cümlede vurgu, doğru kullanım, tonlama, kelimede birleştirme, ulama, çıkarma ve kısaltma gibi unsurlarda kendilerini değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Çalışma bulguları, katılımcıların bu unsurları uygulama öncesi genelde zayıf ya da orta olarak gösterirken, çalışma sonrası uygulama kapsamında yapılan iletişimsel etkinler ile aynı unsurlarda öğretmen adaylarının belirgin bir gelişme içerisinde olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: sözlü iletişim becerileri, İngiliz dili eğitimi, İngilizce öğretmen adayları

1. INTRODUCTION

Acquisition of spoken communication skills can be much more difficult compared to learning the domains of language (i.e. grammar and vocabulary) in foreign language settings with limited opportunities for language practice outside the classroom. Such a prospect could be aggravated by a course syllabus that minimizes the speaking skill, though originally intended to improve just that (Ur 1996; Richards 2009). However, what makes language learners efficient language users in a foreign language is providing them with necessary communication skills and offering them opportunities to use both written and spoken language rather than merely accumulating a sound knowledge base in that language (Bygate 1987). Non-native speakers of English not possessing required spoken language skills are likely to face major difficulties in communicating with other speakers despite their likely expertise in grammar and extensive vocabulary knowledge. The problem sometimes lies in incorrect pronunciation of words, sometimes in incorrect stress or intonation pattern, sometimes in violation of patterns found in 'connected speech', or sometimes in inappropriate use of spoken language conventions. Thus any learner of English needs to develop a sound language competency in basic constituents of spoken English in order to secure successful spoken communication with native or other speakers of English. Prospective teachers of English are also expected to acquire such a

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competency prior to their professional lives since they would be the ones to transmit good spoken communication skills to their potential learners of English.

1.1. Native-like pronunciation or intelligibility?

Whether native-like pronunciation is a must for non-native learners of English or not has received considerable attention for the past few decades (Alptekin 2002; Alptekin 2010; Farrell & Martin 2009; Jenkins 1998; Kachru 1990; Matsuda 2003; Medgyes 1992; Prodromou 2007). Alptekin (2002) raises an important question for language programmes which focus on "native speaker competence in the target language setting" since native-like competence in a foreign language in non-native settings can be an unrealistic expectation. In the same vein, Alptekin (2010: 106) also discusses that "[w]hat characterizes ELF communication is that the language used, the social settings in which it is used, and the users themselves display heterogeneity, fluidity, and dynamism such that generally acclaimed native-speaker norms and conventions are simply irrelevant". Jenkins (1998: 120) proposes two reasons for this argument; namely, "[t]he first is the difficulty in resolving the basic conflict between the practical need to harmonize pronunciation among L2 varieties of English sufficiently to preserve international intelligibility; the second is the social and psychological need to respect the norms of the largest group of users of English, i.e. non-natives." Diverse varieties of English language and also vast number of non-native speakers of English, therefore, need to receive considerable attention in reaching a relevant compromise in this discussion.

While crediting the varieties that non-native speakers possess, some authors have investigated the importance of acquiring intelligible target language pronunciation on the part of foreign language learners (Celik 2008; Demirezen 2005; Demirezen 2009; Derwing & Rossiter 2003; Elliott 1997; Morley 1991; Murphy 1991; Seferoğlu 2005) rather than native-like pronunciation. In such a discussion, Munro & Derwing (2006: 521) outline that "intelligibility refers to how much a listener actually understands" a speaker while "comprehensibility" concerns "the listener's impression of how difficult it is to understand a given speaker." To this end, there is an emerging need for all language learners to be able to use the language not only accurately but also "coherently and intelligibly" (Murphy 1991: 52). Study of suprasegmental features is likely to make learners' English more intelligible (Derwing & Rossiter 2003), contributing to EFL speakers' and teachers' self-confidence in speaking English with sound spoken communication skills (Demirezen 2005). Elliott (1997: 104) also stresses the need to introduce pronunciation early on in order that the learners may "… lower their affective filters, and … feel less anxious about speaking". To this end, Munro & Derwing (2006: 530) propose working towards "a comprehensive model of the factors that affect the comprehensibility of second language speech" and further discuss that such a model is to reflect both segmental and prosodic features of speech. Demirezen (2009) also suggests introducing the students and non-native teachers to intonation patterns in English in order to overcome likely suprasegmental and segmental errors. Such arguments support the inclusion of pronunciation teaching with a macro view in language programmes.

1.2. A macro view of pronunciation teaching

Spoken communication skills in English entail acquisition of intelligible spoken competency so that the speaker can convey his/her message across successfully and effectively without causing any comprehensibility burden on the listener. In non-native contexts language programmes can strive to reach such an end by incorporating basic components of spoken language in their programmes. One of the effective means of teaching spoken communication skills is 'interaction' in an EFL classroom that incorporates acquisition of basic language skills such as the ability to understand what is spoken and to articulate what to say (Chaudron 1988). Thus offering the learners opportunities that facilitate interaction with each other and with authentic materials in real life situations promotes speaking effectively. However, in non-native contexts real life interaction may be rather difficult and practice opportunities are usually provided only in the classroom. To this end, spoken communication activities can include discussions, debates, role plays, dialogues, simulations, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, picture narrating, picture describing, finding the difference activity, memory games, audio-visual aids, songs, proverbs, limericks, tongue twisters, etc.

(Bygate 1987; Dobson 1987; Harmer 2001; Luoma 2004). All these various activities of a communicative orientation can be used to foster learners' spoken communication skills in non-native settings, incorporating segmental, prosodic and connected speech features of English as well as formulaic language which are largely neglected in non-native EFL settings.

Traditionally, pronunciation teaching with a micro view includes paying attention to segmental features such as consonant and vowel sounds and consonant clusters or producing the sounds appropriately involving the study of the phonemes (Morley 1991). However, rather than gaining pure pronunciation ability in segmental features of English, studies need to focus on the development of "functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom" (Morley 1991: 500; Jenkins 2004). According to Brown (2001: 270-271), such factors as "clustering, redundancy, reduced forms, performance variables, colloquial language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, and intonation" all make speaking difficult and need to receive due consideration in language programmes as well. Luoma (2004: 10) also defines a standard for learner pronunciation so as to achieve "communicative effectiveness" based upon "comprehensibility and probably guided by native speaker standards but defined in terms of realistic learner achievement." As a result, there has been increasing consideration given to prosodic aspects of spoken language since prosodic errors affect comprehensibility negatively (Munro & Derwing 2006; Jenkins 2002; Seferoglu 2005). Prosodic features involve those features that operate at a sentence, discourse or language level (Morley 1991; Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams 2007) or those features that refer to "words, phrases, and sentence stress, pitch contour or intonation, and rhythm" (Seferoglu 2005: 304).

In addition to prosodic features, language learners need knowledge and practice of 'connected speech' as another dimension of spoken communication skills, including "assimilation, deletion or elision, adding or linking, weakening including contractions and stress patterning (Jenkins 1998; Harmer 2001). Speakers can therefore produce fluent speech "by simplifying structure; by ellipsis; by using formulaic expressions; by the use of fillers and hesitation devices" (Bygate 1987: 15), linking sounds to each other such as moving a consonant to the beginning of the following word, making phones similar to neighbouring phones or deleting some sounds in speech (Vaughan-Rees 2002).

Another indispensable dimension of spoken communication skills according to Harmer (2001: 269) incorporates common "lexis and grammar" including "using common lexical phrases such as agreeing, disagreeing expressing surprise, shock, or approval" and knowledge of "negotiation language" "used to seek clarification and to show the structure of what we are saying" (Brown 2001). As Derwing, Thomson, & Munro (2006) define fluency as "either an indication of the degree of overall proficiency, or as a composite of temporal phenomena and other speech characteristics influenced by length of runs, repetitions, filled pauses, repairs and so on" (p.185), acquisition of effective spoken communication skills stems from practice of these language components, and acquisition of all these features leads to fluent speech or to effective communication.

Acquisition of all these essential components of spoken communication skill in non-native EFL contexts is not far from reality. Therefore, the content of Oral Communication Skills course is to emphasize practice of segmentals and suprasegmentals and also it needs to incorporate connected speech and conversation rules for "meaningful pronunciation practice" (Otlowski 1998) in order that language learners can relate what they learn to real contexts meaningfully (Murphy 1991). Such components can be realized through a careful application of spoken communicative activities in the classroom.

1.3. Aim of the study

In state school language teaching programs in Turkey, primary importance is usually given to acquiring grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills while speaking, listening and writing skills are largely ignored due to the nature of university entrance exam that focuses on testing reading, written language, vocabulary, and translation (Basturkmen 2001). English Language Teaching (ELT) departments usually admit students with limited speaking skills, namely inability to communicate with

others, lack of understanding of what is said, and poor skills in expressing themselves orally in the target language. Unintelligible or incomprehensible communication probably results in loss of communication on the part of interlocutors, thereby making instruction on effective spoken communication skills a requisite in language programmes. Thus, the study seeks to answer the research question: "How can non-native prospective English language teachers at pre-service ELT programmes attain effective spoken communication skills in English?" with a major purpose to investigate and promote pre-service English language teachers' competence in basic elements of spoken communication. For this purpose, a group of non-native prospective teachers of English looked into and practised segmental and suprasegmental features of English, connected speech, and spoken language conventions through a number of spoken communication activities and tasks in the Oral Communication Skills course in a pre-service English Language Teaching department at the tertiary level in Turkey.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research context and participants

This study was conducted in an English Language Teaching department in a Turkish University for two years. 64 prospective teachers of English in their freshman year attended the Oral Communication Skills courses for 28 weeks in two semesters: 35 students in their freshman year in 2008-2009 academic year, and 29 students in 2009-2010 academic year. The majority of students were female in the study: only nine of thirty-five students and three of twenty-nine participants were male, respectively. It was the first time these students received formal instruction on the basic components of spoken communication in English.

The Oral Communication Skills course had the main purposes of enabling freshman students to acquire basic spoken language skills and strategies in order to express themselves fluently and accurately in varying subjects or topics; to be able to understand others through listening and reading activities, to be able to speak more fluently, to be able to ask and answer questions, to pronounce the words correctly, to have ability in suprasegmental features of English, to use grammar, phonetics and intonation correctly, to present mini-talks in English, to make informative and persuasive talks, and to practice language through discussions, debates, role-plays, individual and group presentations of literary texts in English.

Since the participants in this study hardly received any training on pronunciation or on such language features summarized under segmental and suprasegmental features prior to university education, the course syllabus was modified to incorporate the mostly ignored components of speaking such as prosodic features, connected speech and spoken language conventions by considering the peculiar features Turkish learners of English were likely to possess. Suprasegmental aspects of the English sound system such as rhythm, stress, and intonation and also the segmental aspects such as consonants and vowels contain major differences from those of Turkish in many respects and such differences needed to be addressed in the Oral Communication Skills course. The course particularly focused on teaching sounds, word stress, sentence stress, elision, assimilation, linking, contraction, rhyme, and formulaic language, inter alia.

The course specifically focused on enhancing the basic components of spoken communication skills through such practical activities as writing book reviews and presenting them orally, acting dramas and role-plays, and participating in discussions and debates. All these activities aimed at giving participants chances to improve their speaking skill in English by promoting an interactive atmosphere in an English-medium context. Table 1 displays course activities with their specific aims for the participants.

Table 1: Activities Applied in the Oral Communication Skills Course

Activities	Aims of Activities
Pronunciation Studies	To produce spoken language with intelligible pronunciation.
Acting in Dramas	To pronounce individual sounds correctly.
Class Debates	To place correct stress in words and sentences.
Role Plays	To apply intonation patterns correctly.
Group Book Reviews	To use conventions of connected speech.
Individual Book Reviews	To use formulaic language.

As part of the spoken language activities, each student read three novels of their choice, wrote book reviews, and presented them orally. In the first term, book reviews were presented individually to the whole class and in the second term they had group work in which each student presented the review to other group members and the others took notes of their classmates' presentations and then orally summarized what their classmates had presented to them.

Students also acted out different plays and dramas. For this purpose, the students were free to choose any plays of their choice. In pairs or groups, they performed role-plays and dramas in the class. Moreover, students were assigned various topics for discussion and debate in the classroom. Some of the debates were open to the whole class and sometimes students debated in groups. All these activities were intended to promote interaction with peers in the classroom (see Appendix 1 for sample course activities).

2.2. Data collection instruments

With the purpose of evaluating learners' level in a number of segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation prior to the course and also after the course, a student questionnaire including four sections was administered. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the academic year after all the students had become familiar with these terms through a number of related activities. The first part of the questionnaire focused on students' self-assessment in 'word pronunciation, word stress, sentence stress, accuracy, intonation, word linking, assimilation, elision, and contraction' before they started the Oral Communication Skills course. The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with students' evaluation of the same components at the end of the course. The third part focused on students' self evaluation of the contribution of the course activities such as pronunciation studies, role-plays, class debates, individual and group book summary presentations, acting out in dramas, and course-book activities to their spoken communication skills in general. The final part was an open-ended question on their suggestions for future speaking courses.

The questionnaire had a high reliability rate. For the first part (Before the Study) and also for the second part (After the Study) of the questionnaire the Alpha value is .88 and .85, respectively, which indicates a high reliability value. As for the activities (Part C=Activities) the reliability value is .56, which can be regarded as a satisfactory reliability rate. The overall value of the whole questionnaire is .87, which is of a high reliability.

2.3. Data analysis

The quantitative data were evaluated descriptively in terms of mean (*x*) values and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test through SPSS 16.0, and the qualitative data were used to support the quantitative data. Students were coded as S1 to S35 for the participants who took part in the 2008-2009 academic year and as S36 to S64 for the participants in the 2009-2010 academic year and such codes were used when their views were referred to in the qualitative part of data analysis. Different questions with 5 Likert-scale choices were answered by the students to find out their rationale behind their views of their knowledge of basic communication elements and also their attitudes towards classroom activities.

In analyzing the means (*x*) for the questionnaire items, standard values that follow a five point scale were used; namely, '1.00-1.79' for 'Very Poor' and 'Not Useful at all'; '1.80-2.59' for 'Poor' and 'Little Useful'; '2.60-3.39' for 'Average' and 'Unsure'; '3.40-4.19' for 'Good' and 'Useful';

and '4.20-5.00' for 'Very Good' and 'Very Useful'. The results of the normality test showed that the data were not normally distributed, so as a non-parametric test Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was applied. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test as an alternative to t-test as a statistical tool was used to compare students' progress in the specified spoken language components. The test involves the use of matched pairs, and in this particular study, data concerning spoken language competence of learners 'Before the Study' and also 'After the Study' was used.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Evaluation of students' spoken language skills prior to the course

The majority of 64 students reported poor or average competence in all components prior to the course except for 'accuracy,' which may indicate that most of the students lacked knowledge and skill in the basic features of spoken language in English. Table 2 presents that mean values for elision, fluency, word stress and assimilation were found as 'poor' between $x=2.20$ and $x=2.40$ and those of intonation, sentence stress, contraction, word pronunciation, word linking and accuracy as 'average' between $x=2.62$ and $x=3.11$.

Table 2: Students' Self Evaluation for the Features of Spoken English: Before the Course

Features	Mean (x)
Elision	2.20
Fluency	2.24
Word Stress	2.31
Assimilation	2.40
Intonation	2.62
Sentence Stress	2.65
Contraction	2.68
Word Pronunciation	2.71
Word linking	3.02
Accuracy	3.11

The analysis of students' written responses also indicates that students did not attain effective spoken language proficiency before university, as the majority pointed out that language courses they attended at high school focused on grammar, vocabulary and reading skills rather than speaking skill since the university entrance exam focused on testing such language components. Some student views might highlight this opinion. Student 13 attributed his/her poor speaking skills to the university exam: "I couldn't speak English fluently. I knew only grammar and other subjects so as to pass the university exam because in high school we only studied for the exam." Many other students were of similar views and were likely to graduate from high school with poor speaking skills. Some of the students reported that they did not develop competency in any of the basic issues involved in spoken communication prior to the course. Some sample student views may show that weakness lies in almost all components of spoken language. One of the students highlighted the need to improve spoken language skills as s/he lacked skills in both segmental and suprasegmental features of spoken communication: "I needed to advance my skills because I couldn't pronounce words correctly. I didn't know how I stressed words and sentences. I didn't use word linking during my speeches. I didn't think that I had fluency..." (S42). With such poor background, students had to attend an intensive course that specifically aimed at teaching the basic components of spoken communication.

3.2. After the course: improving spoken communication skills

An analysis of the same elements after students attended the Oral Communication Skills course shows improvement in all these features since the students reported 'good' competence in all the components except for 'elision,' which was reported as 'average' ($x=3.34$) since mean values for all other components were high between $x=3.40$ and $x=3.88$ (see Table 3).

Table 3: Students' Self Evaluation of Features of Spoken English: After the Course

Features	Mean (x)
Accuracy	3.88
Word Pronunciation	3.82
Word linking	3.82
Word Stress	3.71
Sentence Stress	3.65
Fluency	3.51
Assimilation	3.51
Intonation	3.42
Contraction	3.40
Elision	3.34

In order to test if there was any significant change or improvement in these components, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used. The test shows significant statistical differences concerning basic components of speaking skill before and after the Oral Communication Skills course. A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test shows that a 28 week, three times weekly speaking course elicited a statistically significant change in all pronunciation components (see Table 4).

Table 4: Learners' Self-report of Their Knowledge in Spoken Communication Features of English Before and After the Course

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	Z	Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) (P)
Word pronunciation-Before-After	-6.625	.000
Word stress- Before-After	-6.842	.000
Sentence stress- Before After	-6.126	.000
Accuracy- Before-After	-6.551	.000
Intonation- Before-After	-6.265	.000
Linking- Before-After	-6.799	.000
Assimilation- Before-After	-6.572	.000
Elision- Before-After	-6.213	.000
Contraction- Before-After	-5.848	.000
Fluency-Before-After	-4.388	.000

In open-ended questions students also reported improvement in all these components and such positive effects can be grouped as improving basic components of spoken communication, gaining self-confidence, and gaining fluency in spoken English. Students' self-reports may indicate how the course helped students improve various elements of spoken communication. In most of the student statements, it was possible to see positive views as to improvement in segmental and prosodic features, which also added to their self-confidence in spoken English. In a self report by student 47 it can be easily seen how gaining skills in various components contributes to self-confidence in speaking skill as well:

"My speaking skills such as word pronunciation, word stress, sentence stress, etc. are improved. I think the speaking courses make us relaxed while speaking. We can express ourselves confidently" (S47).

Some other student comments reflect this fact that another striking effect was on their gaining self-confidence in speaking.

"I think it is good for us to take the speaking course. We can develop our fluency now. I am relaxed for speaking in the course. We have some topics to speak. It was good for debating and also dramas were good because at the same time we gained our self-esteem and learned the vocabulary and also it was good for our pronunciation" (S13).

"Before I began studying in ELT program' I had hesitations about my speaking skills especially in terms of fluency and correct pronunciation. These led me to stay away from communicating people who were proficient in English because I was afraid of making mistakes" (S24).

"I was not good at speaking. I had problems with pronunciation but I have improved my skills in pronunciation, word stress specially fluency. When I first took to speaking classes, I hesitated to speak. I was shy but now I get used to speaking because I am more qualified than before" (S63).

Many other views clearly showed the contribution of course activities to their spoken language skills:

"Strong points are the ability of fluent speaking. I learned some tips while studying speaking courses. I improved my pronunciation: how to stress the words correctly. The course was not boring. It was very enjoyable" (S11).

"I learnt how to pronounce words, the correct forms. I learnt word stress, sentence stress. I learnt how I can speak fluently. Thanks to different activities that we did in the classroom, I learnt to defeat my fear and excitement" (S45).

Students might have reached mastery in spoken communication skills due to course activities that focused on practical application of whatever was studied as part of course syllabus.

3.3. Evaluation of spoken communication activities

Students were also asked to report on the effect of activities they participated in throughout the year. As can be seen from Table 5, all course activities were greatly appreciated by the majority of students since mean values for different activities were high between 'x=3.97 'Useful' and 'x=4.77' 'Very Useful' and these values may indicate that such activities helped students to overcome weaknesses related to their spoken proficiency.

Table 5: Evaluation of Activities Followed for Spoken Communication Skills

Course Activities	Mean (x)
Pronunciation Studies	4.77
Acting in Dramas	4.54
Class Debates	4.42
Role Plays	4.31
Group Book Review	4.22
Course book Activities	4.02
Individual Book Review	3.97

Various classroom activities were useful to help students improve spoken communication skills in English as most students found chances to consolidate their knowledge and skills in English while reporting on the weakness of following a course book:

"I think the way we are following is good. You should continue with dramas, debates, books reviews (I like it most), and role plays. I think you shouldn't continue course book activities as the topics sometimes are boring" (S4).

"I think it was very useful to discuss some topics in the classroom with our classmates because we improved ourselves by means of both cultural information and language improvement as practical ways. But I hated my course book because its activities are really boring and irritating for me" (S35).

Acknowledging the possible weaknesses of a text book, we incorporated different activities and applied a number of various materials fostering different oral language features of English. As was earlier highlighted by many students, such an application was appreciated:

"To discuss in our class was good for us. Role plays were also good for us. It improved our self-confidence. Presenting a book was boring. But when we presented in group, it was so effective, I think" (S5).

"I think it is useful. Especially, group work contributed to us to share information with each other. Thanks to novel presentation, we are familiar with some famous writers. ... We learned some stress, rhythm, etc." (S40).

Thus, it can be argued that there is an increasing need to involve non-native English language learners in practical activities fostering learners' spoken communication skills.

4. DISCUSSION and RESULTS

The concept of world Englishes has been extensively discussed in the related literature. We can acknowledge that there exist varieties of English and that differences non-native learners possess and bring to the language classroom should be appreciated. However, when compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary, reading or writing skills, non-native learners of English develop their speaking and listening skills rather slowly due to limited exposure to English in and out of the classroom (Basturkmen 2001; Dalton 1997). Introducing non-native learners of English to segmental and prosodic features and offering them chances to possess effective spoken communication skills would help alleviate major difficulties that non-native speakers are likely to face in conversations with native speakers or with other non-native speakers. Research findings in this particular study may indicate that English language teaching syllabi in the Turkish context tend to ignore suprasegmental features, a major feature of communication of speech, as Celik (2001: para.2) also stresses that such features of language do not either receive importance or the field is devoid of "a concise, salient, practical, and workable framework."

In stress-timed languages such as in English "stressed syllables recur at regular intervals, regardless of the number of unstressed syllables that intervene in a sentence" (Ohata 2004: para. 24). An important prosodic feature 'stress' was difficult to apply for the non-native prospective teachers of English in this study as their mother tongue, Turkish, lacks such a feature. Bayraktaroğlu (2008: 18) points out that Turkish is a "syllable-timed" language while English is a "stressed-timed" language and Turkish speakers find 'unstressing' in English very difficult. Turkish learners tend to pronounce stressed or unstressed English syllables at a steady rate as is done in Turkish. Such a difference is likely to cause communication barriers for the non-native learner as Turkish learners tend to apply stress evenly, causing misunderstanding on the part of the listener, which was also observed in this particular study. Since one incorrect pronunciation of a sound changes the meaning and improper stress in a word or sentence might also affect the overall communication and cause embarrassment for the interlocutor, prospective teachers of English need knowledge on what teaching spoken language involves and need to learn the means of teaching speaking such as activities and resources they need when teaching communication skills (Laborda 2007). So, this study may set a model for any English language teacher to introduce spoken communication skills to their students.

With this particular study, it was realized that the participants, prospective teachers of English in the ELT department, had limited knowledge and had developed poor skills in various components of spoken communication in English. From the responses of participants in the study, it was also possible to identify that these students lacked knowledge and skill in segmentals, suprasegmentals, connected speech and/or basic spoken language conventions prior to the programme as none had developed good language skills in assimilation, elision, contraction, or linking in English, and thus failed to use fluent speech in English. This study may show that even student teachers in ELT programs have no idea of such prosodic features of the language. Due to limited exposure to authentic spoken English or lack of education on segmental and prosodic features of English, Turkish learners of English as well as prospective teachers of English hardly develop good communication skills but rather have pronunciation problems or difficulties in expressing themselves in English. Prosodic elements poorly developed by Turkish speakers of English may also lead to being misunderstood or may result in failing to understand native speakers. Demirezen (2005: 82) also argues that "poor pronunciation impedes good language skills, condemning the non-native teachers of the English language to less than their deserved social, vocational and occupational promotion and development." Thus this study may indicate that all speakers of English including prospective and practising teachers of English need such prosodic features as rhythm, intonation, stress, use of spoken language conventions to produce intelligible and comprehensible speech and also to avoid loss of communication.

This study showed that Turkish learners lacked ability in spoken communication skills regardless of native-like or non-native English due to limited instruction or focus on pronunciation studies. Coskun (2010) opposes the idea of attaining native-like English for Turkish learners of English; rather he points out the need for Turkish learners of English to access other non-native speaking forms of English and discourse patterns in order that they can interact with them in international contexts effectively. However, the reason why Turkish learners are unable to acquire good pronunciation skills is not merely linked to unique differences between Turkish and English, but it is closely related to poor practice Turkish learners receive in spoken English. Once Turkish learners are conversant with the features of spoken English and provided with abundant practice, they can further develop their related skills and communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English with ease. Robertson (2003) pinpoints the importance of including pronunciation study in language programmes but stresses that such a study needs to address the characteristics of the target learners. Farrell & Martin (2009: 4) also support a "balanced approach" that involves considering the teaching context, exposing learners to different varieties of English as well as incorporating learners' own English with their peculiar features. This particular study attempted to expose the participants to varieties of spoken English and also to basic constituents of spoken communication which are usually ignored in the Turkish context. That is why; introducing such an important but neglected issue to the students, very positive outcomes were obtained. When students attended the course which focused on practice of some new elements in spoken communication that they had never received, they appreciated the contribution of such education to their speaking skills.

In order to build students' confidence in speaking and to lessen their anxieties, English language teachers should provide the students with as many practice opportunities as possible, similar to this particular study, in order to enhance their communication skills so that they can speak in front of large groups and communicate with native and non-native speakers effectively. As a result, the study of spoken communication skills should gain primary importance for non-native learners of English, and such a study is of particular importance for Turkish learners and teachers of English with specific features different from those of English.

In sum, the Oral Communication Skills course conducted in an ELT department at a Turkish university had the sole purpose of making a group of non-native pre-service teachers of English realize the importance of a number of basic components concerning their speaking ability and also to train them accordingly. These learners practised their spoken communication skills through a number of communicative in-class activities. Results of qualitative and quantitative data show that such an interactive practice contributed immensely to prospective teachers' acquisition of segmentals, suprasegmentals, connected speech, formulaic language, accuracy and fluency in English prior to their professional lives. Such an application needs to be disseminated in all pre-service ELT programmes in order that future teachers of English can disseminate effective spoken communication practice in EFL programmes.

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Extended Abstract

Yabancı dil ve de özellikle İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğreniminde anadile yakın bir konuşma ya da telaffuz ediniminin gerekli olup olmadığı tartışması son yıllarda giderek artmaktadır. Bu tartışmadaki en önemli noktaları yabancı dil öğrenen kişinin kendine özgün unsurlarının göz önüne alınması, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak konuşanların sayısının İngilizceyi ana dil olarak kullananlara göre daha fazla olması ve birçok çeşitlilik arasında hangi İngilizcenin temel alınacağı gibi konular oluşturmaktadır. Bu hususların geçerliliği kabul edilmekle birlikte doğru bir telaffuzla dil kullanımı, dilde akıcı konuşma ve anlaşılabilirlik İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen kişiler ve de mesleği İngilizce öğretmenliği olacaklar için önemli kalmaya devam etmektedir. Sözlü iletişimin etkin olması konuşmanın anlaşılabilir ve akıcı olmasına ve karşılıklı konuşmada konuşma üslubunun gerekliliklerini yerine getirmeye bağlıdır. Bu amaçla etkin bir sözlü iletişim becerisi, sadece dilin fonetik ses unsurlarının öğrenimine bağlı kalmayıp, kelime ve cümlede vurgu, tonlama, ulama, ekleme, çıkarma gibi pek çok bürünsel unsurun edinimini ve karşılıklı konuşmada dikkat edilmesi gerekli unsurlarında edinimini gerekli kılmaktadır.

Üniversitelerin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümlerine gelen öğrencilerin genellikle hedef dilde söyleneni anlama ve kendilerini sözlü olarak ifade etmekte zorlandıkları görülmektedir. Bunun başlıca nedeni olarak daha önce aldıkları dil eğitimlerinin üniversite sınavına hazırlık amacıyla yapısal dil unsurlarına ağırlık vermesi ve sözel iletişimsel dil ediniminin fazla önemsenmemesi olarak gösterilebilir. Hedef dilde bozuk bir telaffuzla ve yanlış bürünsel unsurlarla anlaşılması zor sözlü iletişim dili kullanımı, hem konuşanın kendini ifade etmesini hem de karşı tarafın söyleneni anlamasını zorlaştırmaktadır. Böylesi bir durum etkin bir iletişimin oluşmasını sağlamak amacı ile öncelikle gelecekte öğretmen olacak adayların ve de tüm dil öğrenenlerin sözlü iletişim ile ilgili eğitim almayı ve bu beceriyi edinimlerini sağlamayı zorunlu kılmaktadır.

Bu amaçla İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümlerinde Sözlü İletişim Becerileri dersi müfredata konulmuştur. Bu derslerde belirtilen hedeflere ulaşmak derse geniş bir açıdan bakmayı gerektirmektedir. Buda yalnızca ders kitabı etkinlikleri ile sınırlı kalmayıp, hem ses unsurlarının hem de bürünsel unsurların öğretimini gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu unsurların yanı sıra öğretmen adaylarının birleşik konuşma özelliklerini ve konuşma dilinde uyulması gerekli temel öğeleri de çalışmaları ve içselleştirmeleri gerekmektedir. Tüm bu unsurların edinimi ise adayların hem sınıf içi hem de sınıf dışı iletişimsel etkinliklerde bulunmaları ile sağlanabilecektir.

Bu amaçla bu çalışma bir Türk üniversitesinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümüne gelen İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının sözlü iletişim becerilerini incelemeyi ve bu becerilerini iletişimsel etkinlikler yoluyla geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının sözlü iletişimin temel unsurlarını öğretmek amacı ile "İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Lisans Programlarında İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Sözlü İletişim Becerileri Nasıl Geliştirilebilir?" sorusuna yanıt aranmaktadır. Çalışma Bir Türk Üniversitesi'nde İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümü 1.sınıfına başlayan 64 lisans öğrencisi ile yapılmıştır. Öğrenciler Sözlü İletişim Becerileri dersini ilk defa almışlar ve 64 öğrenciden 35'i bu derslere 2008–2009 eğitim öğretim döneminde, 29'u ise 2009–2010 güz ve bahar dönemlerinde 28 haftalık bir süreyle katılmışlardır. 64 öğrenci bu derslerde İngilizcenin ses unsurlarını, bürünsel unsurlarını, birleşik dil özelliklerini ve sözel konuşma dilinin uyulması gerekli unsurları sınıf içi çalışmalarla öğrenip, sınıf içi ve sınıf dışı iletişimsel etkinliklerde bulunmuşlardır. Bu etkinlikleri ses ve bürünsel çalışmalar, konuşma dilinin özelliklerini tanıyıp çalışma, tartışma etkinlikleri, drama ve oyun çalışmaları ve kitap özeti sunumları gibi kişisel ve takım çalışması etkinlikleri oluşturmuştur.

Öğrencilerin çalışma öncesi ve sonrası temel sözlü iletişim becerilerini incelemek amacı ile bir anket uygulanmıştır. Anketin ilk kısmı öğretmen adaylarının kelime telaffuzu, kelimede vurgu, cümlede vurgu, doğru kullanım, tonlama, kelime birleştirme, ulama, eksiltme ve birleştirme gibi unsurlarda çalışmaya başlamadan önceki durumlarını değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. İkinci kısımda ise çalışma sonrası aynı unsurlarda kendilerini değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Anketin üçüncü kısmında ise uygulanan etkinliklerin temel sözel becerilerin edinimine olan katkısı ile ilgili katılımcıların görüşleri istenmiştir. Son kısımda ise öğrencilerin daha sonra düzenlenecek benzeri uygulamalarda ki önerilerini belirtmeleri istenmiştir. Uygulanan anketin tümünün .87, birinci kısmının .88, ve ikinci kısmının ise .85 gibi oldukça yüksek sayılabilecek bir güvenirlik oranına sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Üçüncü kısmı ise .56 gibi güvenilir kabul edilebilecek bir orana sahiptir. Nicel veriler aritmetik ortalama değer (x) ve SPSS 16 kullanarak Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Testi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Elde edilen nicel veriler nitel veri kullanılarak desteklenmiştir.

Çalışmada yer alan 64 katılımcının büyük çoğunluğu uygulamaya başlamadan önce kişisel sözel iletişim ile ilgili tüm unsurları genelde zayıf ya da orta olarak değerlendirmişlerdir. Bu verinin yanı sıra anketteki yazılı ifadelerinde katılımcılar uygulama öncesi bürünsel unsurlarla ilgili bir bilgileri olmadığını, sözlü İngilizceyi yanlış kullandıklarını ve sözlü iletişimde çok zayıf kaldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Anketin çalışma sonrası ile ilgili kısmında aynı unsurlara verdikleri yanıtlarda, uygulama kapsamında yaptıkları iletişimsel etkinler ile belirgin bir gelişme gösterdikleri gözlenmiştir. Katılımcılara ait olumlu nitel beyanlar uygulamanın kendi sözlü iletişim becerilerini nasıl geliştirdiğini açıkça göstermektedir. Böylesi kapsamlı bir uygulamadan geçen katılımcılar İngilizce kullanırken kendilerine olan güvenlerinin arttığını ve konuşmada kendilerini daha rahat hissettiklerini ayrıca belirtmişlerdir.

Çalışma bulguları Sözlü İletişim Becerileri ya da Konuşma becerileri gibi derslerde İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının ya da her hangi bir İngilizce öğrencisinin iletişimsel yeterlikleri oluşturan ses unsurları, bürünsel unsurları, birleşik dil unsurları ve konuşma dilinde uyulması gerekli unsurlarda eğitim almalarını ve bu alanlarda uygulama yapmalarının gerekliliğini göstermektedir. Bireysel ve takım çalışmaları ile sözlü iletişimi oluşturan telaffuz, tonlama, ulama, eksiltme, ekleme, birleştirme, nerede ve nasıl etkin konuşulacağını öğrenme gibi iletişimsel tüm unsurlarda kendilerini geliştirme fırsatları sunulmalıdır.

Dünyada farklı İngilizcelerin var olduğu ve kişilerin bireysel özelliklerinin öğrendikleri dile yansıyacağı bir vakıadır. Fakat bu İngilizce öğrenenlerin ve öğretmen adaylarının doğru ve akıcı bir telaffuz ve konuşma becerisine sahip olmayacağı anlamına gelmemelidir. Bu amaçla gerek herhangi bir dil öğrencisine ya da geleceğin öğretmen adaylarına mümkün olduğunca sözlü İngilizceyi doğru ve akıcı kullanım yolları ve fırsatları sunulmalıdır. Bu çalışma etkin bir sözlü iletişim yetisine sahip olmanın, ana dili İngilizce olmayan öğrencilerin ve İngilizce öğretmen adayları için ne kadar önemli olduğunu göstermesi açısından İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten ve öğrenenler için önemli bir örnek oluşturmaktadır.

Appendix 1. Sample Course Activities

Pronunciation Studies:
Students are introduced to segmental and prosodic features of English as well as formulaic language through authentic audio-visual materials such as online dictionaries, dialogues and speech made by native speakers, songs, tongue twisters, limericks, and chants.

Individual Book Reviews:
Each student chooses a novel and analyzes it in terms of its main idea and characters and makes a summary and then presents the novel orally in the classroom. While presenting the novel other students take notes and after the presentation, all students talk about the novel.

Group Book Reviews: Students in groups of three or four present their novels to each other and others take notes. Having finished their group presentations, each group member presents a peer's novel to another group.

Sample Novels Reviewed:
The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck; The Darkness and the Dawn by Thomas B. Costain;
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain.

Dramas and Role Plays:
Students choose a play as a group and rehearse it with group members before they act out the play in front of class members.

Sample Dramas Performed:
The Case of the Crushed Petunias by Tennessee Williams; Overheard by Bruce Kane;
The First Fireworks by Alex Broun.

Discussion and Debates:
Students are given a topic and asked to discuss or debate on it in small groups or as a whole class. In debates there are for and against groups and each group tries to convince other group members.

Sample Topics:
Effect of media on people; Addictive personalities and recovery methods; Common issues such as shyness, lying, and laziness.

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