AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEME-BASED
SYLLABUS ON THE MOTIVATION OF FRESHMAN STUDENTS
AT ATILIM UNIVERSITY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEME-BASED

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AT ATILIM UNIVERSITY

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M.A., Program in English Language Teaching

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This research investigates whether students' motivation improves when thematic syllabus is employed in the classroom.

This is the first time a theme-based integrated skills syllabus is employed at Atılım University Departmental English Language Studies Unit. With the outcome of the questionnaires conducted by the administration, it was realized that content is an important motivating factor and employing a theme-based syllabus can have a positive effect on students' motivation.

For this research, firstly an interest survey was employed to identify the areas students would like to focus on. After the quantitative analysis of the interest survey, a five-week theme-based syllabus was designed and employed for five weeks in the classroom. At the end of the semester,

interviews were carried out with twenty six students. From the point of view of the students, proposed syllabus was much more interesting and motivating than the common one employed in the first ten weeks of the semester.

This study showed that if a theme-based syllabus reflecting students' interests is employed in a classroom, student motivation improves. Thus, they can develop positive attitude towards the course and language learning.

Keywords: Motivation, theme-based syllabus.

ÖZ

TEMA ODAKLI İZLENCENİN ATILIM ÜNİVERSİTESİ BİRİNCİ SINIF
ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN MOTİVASYONU ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

Can, Seçkin

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Ayşegül Daloğlu

Haziran 2009, 94 sayfa

Bu çalışma tema odaklı izlence uygulandığında öğrencilerin motivasyonunun artıp artmadığını araştırmaktadır.

Atılım Üniversitesi İngilizce Servis Dersleri Birimi'nde tema odaklı izlence ilk kez uygulanmıştır. Yönetim tarafından uygulanan anketlerin sonucunda, içeriğin önemli bir motivasyon faktörü olduğu ve tema odaklı izlence kullanmanın öğrencilerin motivasyonu üzerinde pozitif etkisi olabileceği fark edilmiştir.

Bu araştırma için, öncelikle öğrencilerin odaklanmak istediği konuları belirlemek için ilgi anketi uygulanmıştır. İlgi anketinin niceliksel analizinden sonra, beş haftalık tema odaklı izlence dizayn edilmiş ve sınıfta kullanılmıştır. Dönem sonunda, yirmi altı öğrenci ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Öğrenciler açısından bakıldığında, önerilen tema odaklı izlencenin ilk on

hafta boyunca kullanılan izlenceden daha ilgi çekici ve motive edici olduğu görülmüştür.

Bu araştırma, öğrencilerin ilgilerini yansıtan tema odaklı izlencenin öğrenci motivasyonunu arttırdığını göstermiştir. Böylece, öğrenciler derse ve dil öğrenmeye karşı pozitif tutum geliştirmişlerdir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Motivasyon, tema odaklı izlence

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

1.0. Presentation

This chapter comprises six sections. In the first section, general background to the study will be presented. In the second section, the problem will be explained in detail. The third section will present the aim of the study. In the fourth section, scope of the study will be provided. Fifth section will present the methodology. Finally, in the last section, significance of the study and limitations will be presented.

1.1. General Background to Study

The question why some people can learn a second or foreign language easily and others cannot under same circumstances has been a matter of debate for a long time. There are quite a lot of variables that affect the success in foreign language, and motivation is one of the most significant of them. Thus, motivation research has received much attention in recent years. The trend towards motivational theories has generated more interest in the topic among researchers. While motivation is considered as learners' own property, it is also a transitive concept since teachers can also motivate their students. Moreover, learning a language is a long term activity, and motivation does not remain constant. Therefore, it is more complex than it seems and balancing the various internal and external influences is significant during the long process.

Being one of the most well-known types of content-based syllabus, theme-based syllabus can be described as a syllabus organized around a theme or topic rather than around another organizing feature such as a grammatical syllabus (Brinton, Snow & Weche, 1989). In traditional

syllabuses, content is used for enclosing the grammatical input into the content; however, in theme-based model, content is used to develop the language skills. Theme-based syllabus is also advantageous in terms of materials since it can be designed considering students' needs and interests. Moreover, authentic materials can be used frequently and this situation leads to a fruitful classroom environment.

1.2. Problem

The low motivation level of students is one of the main problems that instructors suffer from while teaching "Introduction to Communication Skills" course at Atılım University Departmental English Language Studies Unit. Students frequently have concentration problems during the class and this situation decreases the success level. They find reading texts boring and would like to have up to date texts instead of the traditional texts provided in the coursebook. Moreover, they would like to read authentic texts which they can also face in daily life.

The current syllabus used in Introduction to Communication Skills course is not designed around students' interests and students are supposed to read the texts in the coursebook chosen by the committee at the beginning of the semester. Instructors do not have a chance to use extra materials during the course due to the hectic programme. It is obvious that increasing students' motivation is not possible through the current syllabus in use; thus, designing a new syllabus organized around themes considering students interests is necessary.

1.3. Aim of the Study

This study aims at investigating the effectiveness of the theme-based syllabus on the motivation of freshman students taking "Introduction to Communication Skills Course" offered at Atılım University, Departmental English Language Studies Unit. The theme-based syllabus will be prepared considering the results of student interest survey. After applying the

syllabus in class for five weeks, the effectiveness of it will be investigated through interviews with students.

The following questions will be studied in the study:

1) What are the themes students would like to focus on in Introduction to Communication Skills Course?

2) Is a theme-based syllabus prepared according to students' interests a positive factor in increasing student motivation in Introduction to Communication Skills Course?

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the effectiveness of theme based syllabus on the motivation of freshman students taking "Introduction to Communication Skills Course" offered at Atılım University, Departmental English Language Studies Unit in the spring semester. The participants of this study are the students who are taking the course at Atılım University in 2009 spring semester.

1.5. Methodology

An interest survey will be designed and conducted in order to identify the areas that students would like to focus on. The results will be reflected in a theme based syllabus which will be designed for Introduction to Communication Skills course. After the implementation of the syllabus, interview sessions will be organized with students in order to investigate the effectiveness of the syllabus on student motivation.

1.6. Significance of the Study and Limitations

What the researcher claims is that the findings of this study will give an idea about the reasons behind students' low motivation level. Whether students' motivation increases after the implementation of the syllabus can

lead the instructors and administrators to question the usability and effectiveness of the current syllabus in this course.

The findings of this study can also help the instructors to be aware of the themes that students would like to focus on in the courses offered by Departmental English Language Studies Unit. Thus, instructors have an opportunity to design their syllabuses by making use of the results of this study and increase student motivation. This situation will also lead to an increase in student participation and success rate in English courses.

Apart from student motivation and participation, it will also increase instructors' motivation level since students' positive attitude in the classroom affects instructors in positive way. Therefore, it is possible to say that there will be a more successful learning and teaching setting in classrooms.

The results of this study can also be used by other English-medium universities since the themes included in the survey are those which are highly rated by students at similar ages.

Lastly, this study will contribute to field of English Language Teaching by revealing the most popular themes among students at a private university.

When it comes to the limitations of this study, it is assumed that the data obtained reflect the sincere thoughts of the students. The findings of this research will be limited to Atılım University freshman students who have attended "Introduction to Communication Skills Course" in the spring semester and should not be generalized to apply to all institutions in ELT field. Nevertheless, the study can be useful for institutions planning to use theme-based syllabus.

1.7. Definition of Terms

1.7.1. Motivation

Motivation is an abstract and complex term and it changes over time during language learning process. Harmer (2001) defines motivation as

"some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (p51). According to Dörnyei (1998), motivation is something dynamically arousing in a person that through the cognition and motor processes leads to the selection, prioritizing, and eventual implementation of initial wishes and desires. He suggests that direction and magnitude are the two fundamental aspects of motivation and they both determine the expended effort and persistence for a particular action. Gardner (1985) explains motivation under three titles: effort expended to achieve a goal, a desire to learn the language, and satisfaction with the task of learning the language. A motivated person makes an effort to achieve a goal, but this does not mean an individual expending effort is motivated. He claims that motivation involves a goal, an effortful behavior, a desire to attain goal and favorable attitudes towards the activity in question. Thus, goal is stimulus affecting individual differences in motivation which can be seen in the effort, desire and attitudes to achieve the goal.

1.7.2. Content-based instruction:

Content-based instruction can be explained as the teaching of the content or information in the language being learned without any effort to teach the language itself separately from the content (Khranke,1987). In other words, it is the integration of particular content with language aims. (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 1989)

1.7.3. Theme-based instruction:

Being the most frequently adopted form of content- based syllabus, theme-based syllabus can be described as the syllabus in which "the teacher selects a theme from which language outcomes are to be realized" (Met,1999: 8). The course is formed around themes and the material used in the classroom provides basis for language analysis and practice. Therefore, themes can be chosen in accordance with students' interests, needs and aims. They are considered as a source for meaningful and

contextualized activities. Snow (2001) reports that theme-based syllabus has been widely used in language courses of university level students with different backgrounds since it also serves as a basis for English for Academic Purposes. The topics can be chosen from a wide variety of contents which will lead students to expand their background and integrate themselves into the course easier.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0.   Presentation

This chapter aims to review the literature related to syllabus design with a special focus on theme-based syllabus, including its rationale and advantages. Then, there is review of motivation, including motivation models, research on motivation in the second language. The chapter finishes with a summary.

2.1.   Syllabus Design

There have always been great debates on the differences in foreign language teaching methodologies, but the issues regarding the syllabus design have generally been ignored. As a result of the striking changes of 1970s, language learning has not only been considered as the language learning itself, but also as acquiring the necessary skills in the target language. As Stern (1984) suggests, "The Modern Languages Project" which aimed to provide a basis for teaching for the 'the communicative needs of specified groups of learners and develop a curriculum in terms of situations, social roles, and language functions was the first attempt suggesting a curriculum approach in language teaching area. In 1969, the Council of Europe suggested three main requirements for successful language learning. These requirements are as follows:

a) If full understanding is to be achieved among the countries of Europe, the language barriers between them must be removed.

b) Linguistic diversity is part of the European cultural heritage and that it should, through the study of modern languages, provide a source of intellectual enrichment rather than obstacle to unity.

c) Only if the study of modern European languages becomes general will full mutual understanding and cooperation be possible in Europe.

(Council of Europe, 1969.p.8 cited in Richards, 2001,p.26)

The Council of Europe aimed to meet these requirements and developed "Unit Credit System" which was also used as a framework to develop language teaching programs.

> An educational system in which the syllabus, curriculum or body or materials (knowledge and skills) to be studied, learned or acquired, is broken down into a number of quantum units of work, each with its own precise definition of the terminal behavior to be achieved by all the learner, all of the units being accompanied by a carefully constructed system of credit ratings.
>
> (Kingsbury, 1971,p.11 cited in Nunan, 2001,p.27).

The Unit Credit System suggested that all languages expressed the same meanings but with different structures and a meaning based syllabus was applicable in all languages. This idea lead to the conclusion that 'the content for a common core which all learners would acquire before specializing in language related to specific purposes' (White,1988,p.17). Therefore, 'needs analysis' and 'meaning' were also considered as determining factors in syllabus design.

2.2. Curriculum and Syllabus

Language learning is a complex and demanding process and successful language teaching requires a selection and arrangement of

items in accordance with other parameters of language teaching situation. As Nunan (1988) suggests, the term syllabus gained importance as a result of adopting new theories and recognizing learners' different needs.

Although the terms 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' are sometimes used interchangeably, there is a clear distinction between them. As Dubin and Olshtain (2002) suggest, the term curriculum is used for broader contexts in which planning for language instruction takes place in national or international levels. It is a very general concept, which involves the consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors, which contribute to the planning of an educational programme. However, syllabus is a more specific document prepared for a particular group of learners. In other words, curriculum includes syllabus, but not vice-versa. For instance, a curriculum may cover the whole school year, but a syllabus may form only one part of a curriculum. As Krahnke (1987) suggests "A curriculum may specify only the goals (what the learners will be able to do at the end of the instruction), while the syllabus specifies the content of the lessons used to move the learners toward goals."

Shaw (1987) also labels curriculum and syllabus as two separate things by defining syllabus as a statement of the plan for any part of curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself. He also adds that the syllabus should be viewed in the context of an ongoing curriculum development process.

Rabbani (2006) takes the term syllabus as a part of a curriculum when the language is learned or taught as an integrated or supporting subject with others, or in a department of a different subject. He suggests that syllabus is an independent framework when foreign language is taught as a subject in any institution.

Widdowson (1990) views syllabus as

…the specification of a teaching programme or pedagogic agenda which defines a particular subject for a particular group of learners, such a specification not only provides a characterization of content, the formalization in pedagogic terms of an area of knowledge or behavior, but also arranges this content in a succession interim objective is concerned with both selection and ordering of what is to be taught.

(p.127)

He believes that syllabus can be considered as a valuable tool of education policy which reflects pedagogical goals. After goals are determined, harmony of pedagogical goals and ideological positions regarding the educational system is also concerned in addition to pedagogical effectiveness.

2.3. Need for Syllabus Planning

It is common knowledge that language learning is a complex and demanding process and it cannot be achieved within a short period of time. Selecting materials considering pre-determined objectives, proficiency level and time is very significant in order to achieve successful language teaching. In other words, presenting the items is as important as the content of the course. Allen (1984) explains this process as analyzing the course material within its own internal logic and the material whose nature can be broken into a set of individual learning items are presented in a certain order. Although the aim of this grading process is preventing confusion and chaos, there is not a consensus about the criteria about selection and grading materials. Allen (1984) lists and explains the approaches in syllabus design are as follows:

  a) Traditional Approach: It focuses on formal grammatical criteria is quite significant.

b) Functional Approach: It focuses on communicative language use.

c) Experiential Approach: It focuses on natural growth of language, placing learners in real-life situations without any interference to their environment or the selection of items.

<div align="center">(p.65)</div>

Nunan (1988) also asserts, "in looking at starting points in syllabus design, starting point can be analysis of language, information about the learner, beliefs and assumptions about learning process, or a combination of these" (p.25). He also identified key questions regarding each perspective. For example, "What linguistic elements should be taught?" question is for linguistic perspective, "What does the learner want to do with the language?" is for learner perspective and "What activities will stimulate or promote language acquisition?" question is for a learning perspective.

2.4. Overview of Syllabus Types

2.4.1. The Structural Syllabus

The structural or grammatical syllabus is the most well known syllabus type. It mainly focuses on what a learner needs to know. As Breen (1987) asserts, structural syllabus is a systematic and rule-based view of the language in which subsystems of phonology, grammar, morphology and discourse as text are highly valued. Breen also adds "Only a supportive role to the meanings or ideas conveyed through language (ideational language) and to the ways in which we behave socially with language (interpersonal knowledge)" (Breen,1987,p.52).

Structural syllabus is well-established since it is based on a long history of linguistic analysis. Many teachers adopt structural syllabus since it presents the subject matter in a systematic and rule – governed way.

Therefore, learners are provided with 'generative knowledge'. Moreover, many teachers have background information about the view of language adopted in structural syllabus. Structural syllabuses generally include discrete sentences, yes/no and wh- questions, articles, prepositions, conditionals, and relative clauses, and some other essential grammar points. Long and Crookes (1993) claim that such kinds of syllabuses do not meet the requirements of current foreign language learners' needs and ignore modern generative grammar. Apart from this, Widdowson (1968), Crystal (1981), Ventola 1987 also criticized the artificiality of dialogues in reading passages. Wilkins (1972) also emphasized the negative effects on motivation for learners who need to be able to communicate as soon as possible. Lightbown (1983) and Pienemann (1987) also stated that due to structural syllabuses, learners acquire structures in isolation and the use of instructional sequences which do not reflect acquisition sentences. Long and Crookes (1993) also criticized it because of the inadequacy of full native-like target structure. The widest criticism to structural syllabuses have been made by Khranke (1987) by pointing out structural knowledge may be teachable, but there is almost no evidence that it affects behavior in language use to any great degree. He also argues that structure–based instruction can mislead learners into thinking that they are learning a language when they are learning facts and information about a language in fact.

2.4.2. The Notional / Functional Syllabus

The Notional / Functional syllabus is seen as the most popular alternative to structural syllabus and leader of the contemporary language teaching syllabus types. It mainly focuses on learner's knowledge of speech acts. It values the knowledge which learners can acquire via language. It is also a skill oriented view of learner capabilities and prioritizes learner's capacity to be incorrect in interpretation and production of certain linguistic components. Breen (1987) emphasizes that a functional

syllabus can select and subdivide what is to be learned in a categorical way by identifying main types of language purposes in sets and sub-sets. Afterwards, it specifies the ways in which these functions can be realized in different ways via language code. The sequence in functional syllabus is from general to more specific. It adopts 'mechanistic' methodology which is directly based on grammar-translation and audio – lingual methods.

The notional / functional syllabus has certain positive qualities when compared to structural syllabuses. For instance, as Finocchiaro & Brumfit (1983) assert, a syllabus including information about how language is used increases the efficiency of the instruction. If the content of an appropriate notional / functional syllabus can be learned, students will certainly be able to function in written or spoken interaction. Khranke (1987) also suggests that if the instruction is more specific, there is high possibility of developing effective users of a new language with limited domain.

On the other hand, Khranke (1987) criticizes notional / functional syllabuses since it remains as a sample series of isolated form- function pairings and it will not develop interactional and communicative ability since these isolated functions are not synthesized into discourse. "If notions and functions are taught according to cognitive learning theory, then there is no reason to believe that such instruction will be much more effective than structurally based instruction" (p. 37) . Paulston (1981) also points out that the notional / functional syllabus pays little attention to language acquisition theory.

2.4.3. Situational Syllabus

Situational syllabus has also a long history since many methods have used the examples of the language being learned in situations and settings. As Mohan (1977) suggests, situational syllabus design courses which are organized around situations and deal with structures they arise. Variety of communication activities are organized through situations. The

situational syllabus can help students to use their knowledge of the world as a tool for learning and provide motivating materials.

On the other hand, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) suggest that the role of routines and patterns in language acquisition is controversial and basing the course on these routines and patterns so much can damage productive language learning. Moreover, Wolfson and Judd (1999) underline that creating authentic language for instructional purposes is very difficult. They claim that it is likely to become inappropriate in many ways even when they are found. Khranke (1987) also emphasizes sequencing problems in situational syllabuses. He criticizes lack of criteria for determining the difficulty of situations and sequencing them in the syllabus. It may be possible to use some natural chain of events in sequencing, but it does not solve the problem since it causes difficulty in controlling the language

2.4.4. Task-based syllabus

The task-based syllabus is based on 'means' rather than 'product', and has gained popularity since the Bangalore project (1979-1984) and Breen's article of 1987, after the concept of 'language task' has become an important building block within the curriculum and called as "a central pedagogical tool for the language teacher as well as a basic unit for language syllabus design and research" (Williams and Burden, 1997,p.168). According to Khranke (1987), the main characteristic of the task-based syllabus is that it uses activities that learners have to do for non-instructional purposes outside of the classroom as opportunities for language learning. "Tasks are a way of bringing the real world into the classroom" (Khranke,1987,p.57).

Another distinctive characteristic of task-based syllabus is that "they require the student to apply cognitive processes of evaluation, selection, combination, modification or supplementation (so-called high order thinking

skills) to a combination of new and old information." (Khranke, 1987, p.58). It is common knowledge that the aim of task-based learning is to use learners' real life needs and activities as learning tools. Therefore, language form is learned through language use.

On the other hand, task-based syllabus is criticized in several ways. The first problem is implementing the instruction. It is likely to face problems with teachers, instructional setting or the students in terms of organization and performing. Another problem of task-based learning is resources since it requires materials apart from textbooks and class materials. As Nunan (1988) asserts, when the language is taught outside the culture where it is used, task-based instruction is difficult to implement. Moreover, as Khranke (1987) underlines, some students may resist or object to task based instruction since they do not prefer active participation during the instruction.

2.4.5. The Process Syllabus

The 'Process Syllabus' proposed by Breen (1987) as the second main example of the 'process' paradigm and it is based on different kinds of educational theories. He defines process syllabus as "a context within which any syllabus of subject-matter is made workable" (p.169). It can be drawn from this definition that "process" can be "all things to all people", but examination of the term "context" as used here shows significant differences between this and other types of syllabus, in the areas of language, teaching methodology, learner contributions, and planning for teaching and learning. Process syllabus is not a clear working plan. Instead, it provides a framework for teachers and learners to create their own on-going syllabus in the classroom. Therefore, it allows changing abilities, learning needs, and perceptions in the learners, without specifying particular content, methodology, lexis, structure, or grammar (Breen, 1987).

2.4.6 Theme – Based Syllabus

Theme-based syllabus is one of the types of content-based syllabus. Content refers to the subject matter we learn through language, which is used as a tool to convey the content (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Content-based instruction can be explained as the teaching of the content or information in the language being learned without any effort to teach the language itself separately from the content (Khranke,1987). In other words, it is the integration of particular content with language aims.

Being the most frequently adopted form of content- based syllabus, theme-based syllabus can be described as the syllabus in which "the teacher selects a theme from which language outcomes are to be realized" (Met,1999: 8). The course is formed around themes and the material used in the classroom provides basis for language analysis and practice. Therefore, themes can be chosen in accordance with students' interests, needs and aims. They are considered as a source for meaningful and contextualized activities. Snow (2001) reports that theme-based syllabus has been widely used in language courses of university level students with different backgrounds since it also serves as a basis for English for Academic Purposes. The topics can be chosen from a wide variety of contents which will lead students to expand their background and integrate themselves into the course easier.

Theme-based syllabus is organized in two ways. The first way is organizing the syllabus with unrelated topics like sports, literature, and business and this way is more preferable for students coming from different backgrounds. The second way is defining one major topic as title and attaching some subtitles to it. For instance, sports can be taken as the main theme and the syllabus can be organized around it by adding some subtitles such as extreme sports, popular sport, Olympics and etc. It is necessary to emphasize that language teacher is not supposed to be the expert of the content.

Stoller and Grabe (1997) outlined the organization of theme based course as follows :

1. Themes: The ideas around which the other components such as texts and tasks are organized due to aims of the course, the students' needs and interests, and institutional expectations.

2. Texts: Content resources which provide sustainment and progress of the plan in order to achieve the goals of course.

3. Topics: The sub-elements of major content which help to examine them more specifically in coherence, providing a setting where the learners explore both content and language

4. Threads: The ties between the themes providing coherence to the overall curriculum in a naturally-woven way, while bridging the themes, seeming separate and also providing opportunities to examine the content and language from different perspectives.

5. Tasks: Being in accordance with the texts, tasks are the activities through which the instructional skills appropriate for the objectives of the course are utilized.

6. Transitions: The pre-planned activities in order to provide and sustain the coherency across topics in a theme and tasks in a topic

(pp.83-84).

Brinton, Wesche and Snow (1989) suggest that theme-based instruction has many advantages. First of all, themes make linguistic forms more meaningful for learners. Therefore, it facilitates comprehension and motivates learners. In theme-based instruction, content serves as the basis for teaching skills areas. Moreover, it addresses students' needs and

interests. It allows the use of authentic materials in language classes and provides variety. Lastly, it allows integration of four skills.

Kovalik (1997) suggested integrated thematic instruction model and claimed that performance of students can be improved via employing eight brain compatible elements.

- Absence of threat
- Meaningful content
- Choices
- Adequate time
- Enriched environment
- Collaboration
- Immediate feedback
- Mastery (application)

(Kovalik,1997,p.37)

These brain compatible elements are based on three interdisciplinary principles: brain research, teaching strategies and creative curriculum development. Theme, components, topics, key points and activities are incorporated. According to Kovalik (1997), the main goal of curriculum development is program building through activities and enrich pattern-seeking through the use of themes.

2.4.6.1. The Rationale behind Theme-Based Syllabus

As it has been mentioned above, theme-based syllabus is frequently adopted in syllabus design. The most powerful argument for its popularity is its providing a natural setting for language learning. Learners focus on the topics that they can experience in real life, so they have intrinsic motivation to participate in the course and need to be involved in purposeful, meaningful real life activities (Met, 1991; Snow et al., 1989). Moreover, like all other aspects of learning, language learning values the

meaning most and degree of meaning depends on how it serves for the needs of the learner.

Krashen (1985) suggested comprehensible second language input as the main element of successful language learning. He claims that successful language acquisition is possible when instruction focuses on meaning rather than form. Crandall (1993) also claims that successful language learning is possible when there is a sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of language and thematic instruction is good strategy for it.

Cummins (1980) also provided another significant theoretical support for theme-based instruction. He distinguishes between cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). BICS is the social dimension of language that demonstrates a student's ability to converse socially with teachers, peers, and others. He states that BICS can be acquired within a short period of time like 2-3 years; however, CALP is more complex and demanding process. He suggests that CALP takes from 5 to 12 years to develop, depending on a multitude of variables for each ESL student. Crandall (1987) suggests that students may develop communicative competence to some extent, but they may not achieve more abstract, formal, contextually reduced language of texts, lectures, discussions of science or mathematics, or social studies. A course organized around themes can create an environment surrounded by communicative elements like background information, visual or contextual cues and equip students with the skills to reach the level required for academic language proficiency.

Genesee (1994) provided another argument supporting theme-based syllabus. Since the themes or topics can be chosen in accordance with students' needs and interests, it is possible to build the teaching on background knowledge of learners. He emphasizes that learning becomes meaningful when learners apply their already existing schemata and skills

into new learning situations. As students make use of their existing schemata, learning becomes more meaningful and comprehensible facilitating the progress in linguistic, cognitive and academic skills recursively. This situation also decreases anxiety, increases motivation and self-esteem (Kasper, 1995).

2.4.6.2. Empirical Evidence for Positive Effects of Theme-Based Instruction

Theoretical arguments to support the efficiency of theme-based instruction have already been discussed. There are also some empirical studies in English Language Teaching field demonstrating the efficiency of theme-based instruction.Significant empirical studies have been conducted in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Alptekin, Erçetin, & Bayyurt (2007) conducted a two-year study investigating the effectiveness of a theme-based instruction for fourth and fifth grade students. During the study, the experimental group was exposed to a theme-based syllabus which was designed parallel to topical content of subject areas in science and social studies. The control group, on the other hand, was exposed to a grammatical syllabus designed by the Turkish Ministry of Education that was based on grammatical structures. Both of the groups had two hours contact-teaching per week. Cambridge Young Learners English Test was applied three times a year (beginning of the first year, beginning of the second year and the end of the treatment) in order to measure the language development. The results revealed that EFL learners who were exposed to the theme-based syllabus designed in relation to national curriculum were able to develop better language proficiency in listening and reading/writing than the control group exposed to the traditional grammatical syllabus. Interviews with students also revealed the positive attitudes of students towards theme-based syllabus.

Another research was conducted by Olgun (2004) in order to investigate the influence of thematic instruction on the motivation students

at Middle East Technical University. It was applied in the Prep-School where students receive thematic instruction. For this research, firstly a pilot study and then qualitative analysis using in-depth interviews developed on the basis of the pilot study was employed. Therefore, using a triangulation of different kinds of data on related questions; interviews were carried out with fourteen students on three separate occasions at the end of each span from the upper-intermediate group. The results revealed that students receiving thematic instruction feel more motivated and relaxed during the courses and themes organized in accordance with students' need and interests have an important role on this.

Another study was carried out by Rodgers (2006) in a university-level Italian geography CBI course to demonstrate the improvement in content knowledge and linguistic form/language. The participants were 43 adult beginning level L2 learners of Italian at a university in the United States. The focus of the course was the physical and social geography of Italy and its regions. The students studied an authentic geography book used by middle school students and a workbook specifically designed to accompany the textbook by the Italian language director of the university. Students did not receive any formal instruction, however, they were dealt with in when they arouse within context. The results revealed that participants improved both their content knowledge and linguistic abilities.

Kasper (1997) provides another study showing the efficiency of content-based instruction on academic performance. The study compared the subsequent academic performance of 73 ESL students who took content-based course with 79 ESL students who took non-content-based ESL courses at Kingsborough College. The first group read texts on five academic disciplines like language acquisition, computer science, and anthropology. The non-content-based class used texts from various topics rather than being grounded in any specific discipline. When the two groups were compared in terms of their performances in various assessments, the content-based group scored higher than the control group on each

assessment. The study also investigated the subsequent performance of the students on the college assessment examinations of English proficiency administered at the end of the semester both in reading and writing separately. The experimental group was reported to achieve higher overall scores in the English proficiency than the students in the control group in all four semesters. The experimental group also continued to achieve higher scores after they were mainstreamed after that course.

Song (2006) reports another study investigating long term outcomes of theme-based instruction on ESL students at Kingsborough Community College. The study compared ESL students receiving content-linked ESL courses to ESL students receiving non-content-linked courses. The content-linked ESL courses were a part of a developmental English program which aimed to prepare ESL students for mainstream courses. The content-linked courses were designed in relation to general content courses like *Introduction to Psychology.* These courses were documented over a five-year period so that the researcher could investigate long-term outcomes of content-linked courses. The results of study provided significant differences between the two groups. Students who attended content-linked courses performed significantly better than the students in non-content-linked courses in the other language courses required during the following years.

In conclusion, all of these theoretical discussion and empirical data reveal that students are more successful when courses are organized around themes. However, themes should be chosen in accordance with students' interest so that they feel motivated, relaxed and powerful during the instruction.

2.5.   Motivation

2.5.1. Definition of motivation

Motivation is an abstract and complex term and it changes over time during language learning process. Harmer (2001) defines motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (p51). McDonough (2007) also identifies the elements of motivation as follows:

- The reasons why we want to learn,
- The strength of our desire to learn,
- The kind of person we are, and
- The task, and our estimation of what it requires of us

(p.369)

According to Dörnyei (1998), motivation is something dynamically arousing in a person that through the cognition and motor processes leads to the selection, prioritizing, and eventual implementation of initial wishes and desires. He suggests that direction and magnitude are the two fundamental aspects of motivation and they both determine the expended effort and persistence for a particular action.

Gardner (1985) explains motivation under three titles: effort expended to achieve a goal, a desire to learn the language, and satisfaction with the task of learning the language. A motivated person makes an effort to achieve a goal, but this does not mean an individual expending effort is motivated. He claims that motivation involves a goal, an effortful behavior, a desire to attain goal and favorable attitudes towards the activity in question. Thus, goal is stimulus affecting individual differences in motivation which can be seen in the effort, desire and attitudes to achieve the goal.

2.5.2. Researches on Motivation in the Second Language

Importance of motivation in foreign language learning cannot be underestimated. It is not realistic to expect successful foreign language learning for individuals who are not motivated. Moreover, as Gardner (1972) suggests, motivational factors can be more important than learners'

language aptitude since it influences the amount of effort a learner extends.

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between motivation and foreign language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) conducted consecutive studies in Canada, United States and Philippines and reached the conclusion that learners with high motivation level are more successful in foreign language learning. Similar studies followed Gardner and Lambert and they all reached a meaningful correlation between motivation and language learning success (e.g., Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Dörnyei, 1994; Ely, 1986; Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Lalonde,Moorcroft, & Evers, 1987; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Julkunen, 1989; Kraemer, 1993; Ramage, 1990).

After the appearance of studies on general motives of motivation, Gardner proposed "socio-educational" model concerning positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group and also the desire to interact with members of that community (Gardner,1987 cited in Dörnyei, 2003). He suggested that second language learning is a social and psychological concept and conditions of the learning process are quite significant. In foreign language learning, language classroom is the only place where a student receives L2 and the teacher is the main source of L2. Thus, association of these elements is an important factor influencing students' attitudes.

Although Gardner's "Socio-Educational" model contributed to ELT field, some counter arguments arouse. Crookes and Schmidt (1991 cited in Gardner & Tremblay, 1995) proposed researchers on L2 approaches in motivation. Oxford and Shearin (1994) and Dörnyei (1994) argued that the social dimension may not be the most important element of L2 motivation and it is necessary to take a more pragmatic and education-centered

approach. Although these arguments aroused interest in ELT field, no empirical data was suggested to support them.

2.5.3. Motivation Models

2.5.3.1. Gardner's Socio-education Model

Socio-educational model is a social-psychological approach focusing on the relationship between motivation and foreign language learning in a school context. Gardner (1985) integrates the elements of social psychology and learners' attitudes, cultural beliefs, motivation and identifies motivation as the leading factor. In this model, he also identifies the desire to learn the language, motivational intensity, and attitudes towards learning a language as the components of motivation.

In order to measure motivation, Gardner developed Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) consisting of a series of self-report questionnaires including a battery of questions to measure 19 different subscales regarding different aspect of motivation. However, AMTB only focuses on pleasantness and Gardner and Tremblay (1995) made a drastic change and expanded the dimensions of appraisal in order to examine the role of valence, self-efficiency, expectancy and goal setting in language learning.

2.5.3.2. Dörnyei's Extended Framework

Dörnyei developed the Clement et al.'s (1994) tripartite motivation construct of integrativeness, linguistic self-confidence and the appraisal of the classroom environment and prepared a list of motivational components including the language level, learner level and learning situation level.

Table1: *Components of Foreign Language Learning Motivation*

_____

Language Level	Integrative Motivational Subsystem
	Motivational Subsystem

Learner Level	Need for Achievement
	Self-Confidence
	Perceived L2 Competence
	Causal Attributions
	Self-Efficacy
Language Situation Level	
Course-Specific	Interest
Motivational Components	Relevance
	Expectancy
	Satisfaction
Teacher-Specific	Affiliative Motive
Motivational Components	Direct Socialization of Motivation
	Authority Type
	Modelling
	Task Presentation
	Feedback
Group-Specific	Goal-orientedness
Motivational Components	Norm & Reward System
	Group Cohesion
	Classroom Goal Structure

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Source: "Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom" Z. Dörnyei 1994, Modern Language Journal, 78, p. 280. Copyright 1994 by the Modern Language Journal.

Although it is successful in emphasizing the multi-dimensional nature of foreign language motivation, it is not taken as a proper motivation model since it includes neither goal component nor the recent findings of self -determination theory

In his extended framework, Dörnyei analyzed L2 learning motivation within a framework of three levels, which contain a list of motivational components. Language level contains factors regarding L2 such as culture, community and values related to L2 learning. Learner level involves learners' personal characteristics such as self-confidence, need for achievements, casual attributions, goal orientations and self-efficacy. Learning situation level encompasses situation-specific motives which include course-specific, teacher-specific and group-specific motivational components. Dörnyei's model is a good example since it examines motivation by adopting classroom perspective. Wong (2007) also added two important motivational components that had not yet been considered: the role of parents in students' in L2 learning motivation and the rule of culture influencing L2 learning motivation. The addition of these two components made Dörnyei's framework more comprehensive and effective.

2.5.3.3. Williams and Burden's Extended Framework

Williams and Burden (1997) examined various motivational theories and prepared a detailed framework of motivational factors. It is considered as the combination of various models in motivation field.

Table 2 :

Williams and Burden's Framework of Motivation in Language Learning

Internal factors	External factors
Intrinsic interest of activity	**Significant others**
- arousal of curiosity	- parents
- optimal degree of challenge	- teachers
	- peers
Perceived value of activity	**The nature of interaction**
- personal relevance	- mediated learning experiences

- anticipated value of outcomes   - the nature and amount of
feedback

- intrinsic value attributed to   - rewards

  the activity   - punishments, sanctions

Sense of agency

- locus of causality

- locus of control re process and

  outcomes praise

- ability to set appropriate goals

Mastery   **The learning environment**

- feelings of competence   - comfort

- awareness of developing skills and   - resources

  mastery in a chosen area   - time of day, week, year

- self-efficacy   - size of class and school

                                         - class and school ethos

Self-concept   **The broader context**

- realistic awareness of personal   - wider family networks

  strength and weaknesses in skills   - societal expectations and
  required   attitudes

  - self-worth concern   - the local education system

- personal definitions and judgments   - conflicting interests

  of success and failure   - cultural norms

Attitudes

  - to language learning in general

  - to the target language

  - to the target language community and culture

Other affective states

  - confidence

  - anxiety, fear

Developmental age and stage

Gender

_____

Source: "Psychology for Language Teachers: a Social Constructivist Approach (p.138), M. Williams and R. L. Burden, 1997, Cambridge University Press. Copyright, 1997 by Cambridge University Press. Adapted with permission.

In this framework, Williams and Burden (1997) point contemporary view on learning when they underline that education "must focus on the learner" (1997:205). Apart from emphasizing learner participation in the learning process as joint course-designer, decision-maker and evaluator, they value developing individual making sense and constructing meaning in learner's own world. In this model, learner is an individual who has affective needs and reactions and these needs and reactions should be considered as an integral part of learning. Due to the promotion of these concepts, examining and adopting ideas from other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and philosophy is necessary in this model. Moreover, awareness of the expanding role of EFL /ESL as a vehicle of education and learning is significant.

2.5.4. Time Concept in Motivation: A Process-Oriented Approach

Time element has been ignored in motivation research for a long time. As Dörnyei (2002) suggests, when motivation is examined in relation to specific learner behaviors and classroom processes, the lack of stability of the construct becomes obvious. Therefore, a variation even within a single lesson can be dramatic. However, a process-oriented approach can account for the 'ups and downs' of motivation and capture the ongoing changes of motivation during learning process. Dörnyei (2002) has several studies about the time notion in motivation and reached the conclusion that many of the controversies and disagreements in foreign language motivation research go back to insufficient temporal awareness.
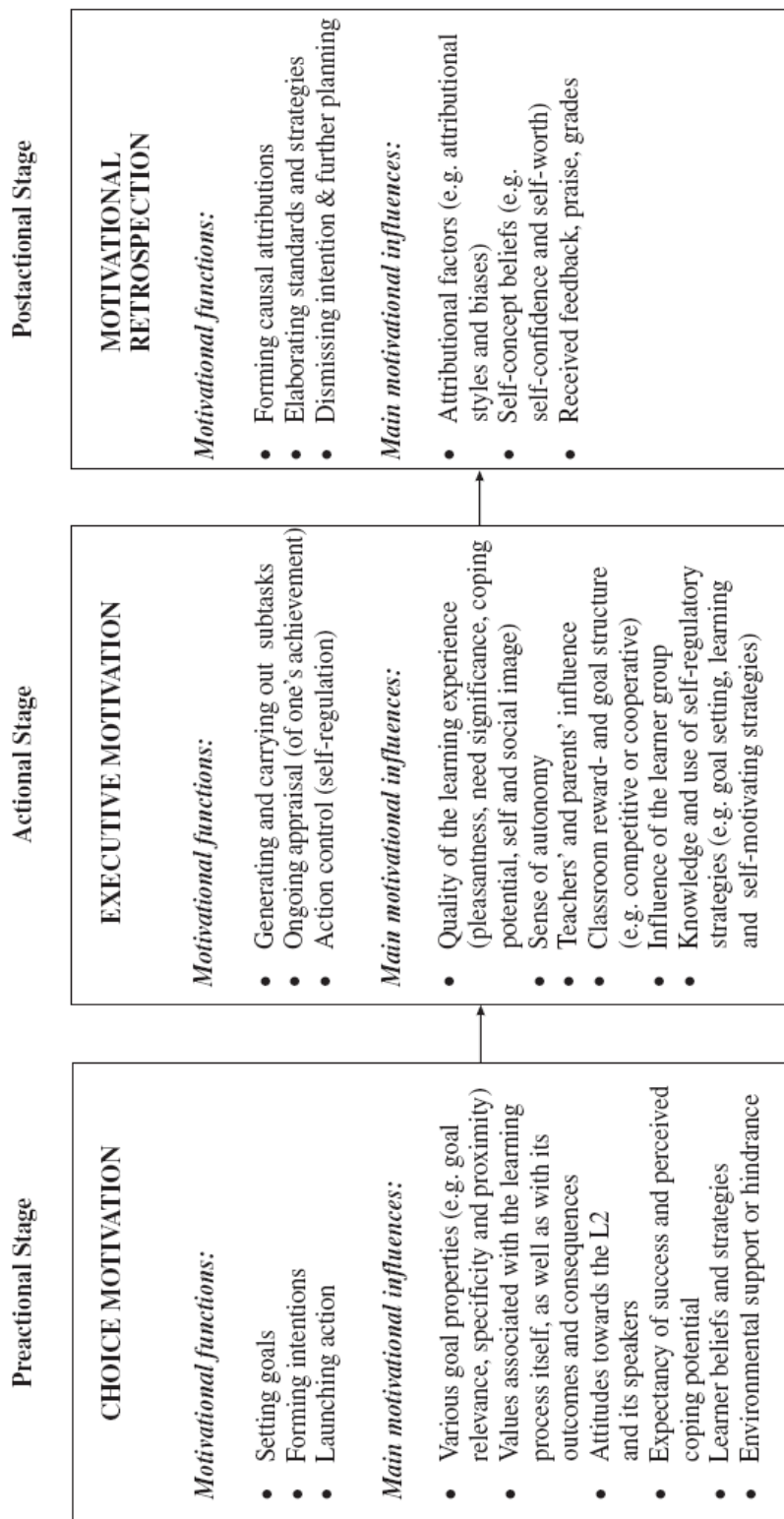
It is an established premise in the process-oriented paradigm that motivation shows different characteristics depending on what stage the individual has reached in pursuing a goal. This would, however, mean that different or even contradicting theories do not necessarily exclude one another but may simply be related to different phases of the motivated behavioral process.

(Dörnyei,2002, p.18)

Dörnyei benefited from the work of German psychologists Heinz Hackhausen & Julius Kuhl and Hungarian professor Istvan Otto in order to develop the certain tenets of process-oriented approach. He breaks down the whole motivation process into three different temporal segments in accordance with the process of transformation of initial wishes and desires into goals, and then intentions, accomplishment of the goal and final evaluation of the process. The main three phases of this process are as follows:

1. *Preactional Stage (Choice Motivation):* Motivation needs to be generated first. Afterwards, generated motivation leads the choice of goal that the learner will pursue.

2. *Actional Stage (Executive Motivation):* The generated motivation should be 'maintained' and 'protected' during the process. "This stage is relevant to sustained activities such as studying L2 and learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number distracting influences such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant comments from others or anxiety about tasks."(Dörnyei, 2002:20)

3. *Postactional Stage (Motivational Retrospection):* This is the stage after the completion of the action reflecting learners' evaluation of how things went. Kind of activities that learners will be motivated to pursue in the future will be determined by the way learners process their past experiences.

Table 3: Process Model of Motivation

Preactional Stage	Actional Stage	Postactional Stage
CHOICE MOTIVATION	**EXECUTIVE MOTIVATION**	**MOTIVATIONAL RETROSPECTION**
Motivational functions:	*Motivational functions:*	*Motivational functions:*
• Setting goals • Forming intentions • Launching action	• Generating and carrying out subtasks • Ongoing appraisal (of one's achievement) • Action control (self-regulation)	• Forming causal attributions • Elaborating standards and strategies • Dismissing intention & further planning
Main motivational influences:	*Main motivational influences:*	*Main motivational influences:*
• Various goal properties (e.g. goal relevance, specificity and proximity) • Values associated with the learning process itself, as well as with its outcomes and consequences • Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers • Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential • Learner beliefs and strategies • Environmental support or hindrance	• Quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image) • Sense of autonomy • Teachers' and parents' influence • Classroom reward- and goal structure (e.g. competitive or cooperative) • Influence of the learner group • Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g. goal setting, learning and self-motivating strategies)	• Attributional factors (e.g. attributional styles and biases) • Self-concept beliefs (e.g. self-confidence and self-worth) • Received feedback, praise, grades

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It is necessary to underline that Dörnyei's process-oriented approach is based on the principle that the mentioned three phases are associated with three largely different motives. The factors which affect learners' motivation in the planning stage are quite different from the factors in action process. In the same way, new set of motivation components will occur when the learner evaluates the process at the end.

2.6. Conclusion

Language learning is a complex process and it encompasses many components. As a result of the tendency towards adopting new theories and recognizing learners' different needs, syllabus design has become an important component of language teaching. Presentation of items has become as crucial as the content of the course. There are various syllabus types used in contemporary English language teaching practices and theme-based syllabus is one of the most popular of them. Since it enables instructors to select themes, it is considered as a source for meaningful and contextualized activities. There are many studies about the effectiveness of theme-based syllabus and they reveal that learners exposed to theme-based syllabus feel more motivated and generally develop better language proficiency.

Being another key component of language learning, motivation has already received much attention. Four main elements have been identified as key components of motivation: the reason of learning, strength of desire to learn, individual qualifications and tasks. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between motivation and foreign language learning and all of them reached to the conclusion that motivation a direct influence on foreign language learning.

As a result of the various studies on the relationship between motivation and foreign language learning, some motivation models were suggested. Gardner (1985) suggested socio-educational model through integrating the elements of social psychology and learners' attitudes,

cultural beliefs, motivation. Dörnyei (1997) suggested extended framework including a list of motivational components based on language level, learner level and learning situation level. Williams and Burden (1997) also suggested a detailed framework of motivational factors as a combination of various motivational theories. Their model also requires ideas from other disciplines and an awareness of the increasing role of foreign language learning as a vehicle of education.

Apart from mentioned models, Dörnyei (2002) emphasized the importance of time concept in motivation and suggested process-oriented approach. This approach accounts for the ongoing changes of motivation and captures them. It includes three stages: choice motivation, executive motivation and motivational retrospection. While choice motivation includes generation of motivation and choice of goal, executive motivation includes maintaining and protection of motivation. Motivational retrospection is the last stage and includes the evaluation of how things went.

In conclusion, syllabus design and motivation are significant components of foreign language learning. Like other variables of learning, they need to be melt in the same pot for successful language learning. In other words, motivation should not be ignored while designing a syllabus and theme-based syllabus is one of the possible tools which enable instructors to contribute to the increase student motivation.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the design of the study. There are two data collection procedures applied in this study. The main aim of the first study was to define the topics that learners are interested in. After identifying the popular topics among students, a theme-based syllabus based on the results of the survey was prepared and applied in class for five weeks. Afterwards, the effectiveness of the proposed syllabus was investigated through interview questions.

3.1 Overall Design of the Study

This study includes three phases and two different data collection tools were used. It aimed at answering the following questions:

a. What are the themes students would like to focus on in Introduction to Communication Skills course?

b. Is theme-based syllabus designed in accordance with students' interests a positive factor in increasing student motivation in Introduction to Communication Skills course?

At the beginning of the research, an interest survey (Appendix A) was prepared and conducted. After the quantitative analysis of the interest survey, five themes which ranked the highest numbers were chosen and a five-week theme-based syllabus (Appendix B) was designed. During the first teen weeks of the semester, the common syllabus (Appendix E) prepared by Departmental English Language Studies Unit was used in all sections of the same course. In the second stage of the study, the theme-based

syllabus was applied employed five weeks in one section of the same course.

After the implementation process, interview questions (Appendix C) were applied to twenty six students. The questions were adapted from the study of Kormos (2008) who investigated the elements that characterize the language learning motivation of Hungarian English language students in terms of Dörnyei and Ottó's (2003) process model of motivation. The interview questions were divided into two parts. In the first part, generalizable information about the language learning motivation of learners was gathered. The second part was more specific and aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the proposed theme-based syllabus on the motivation of students taking the same course. A visual representation of the design of the study is provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Design of the Study

Phase	Number of Participants	Time
1. Interest survey	158	First ten weeks of the semester
2. Implementation of the theme-based syllabus	28	Last five weeks of the semester
3. Individual interviews	26	Last week of the semester

3.2. Participants

The interest survey was administered at Atılım University Departmental English Language Studies Unit. The participants were 158

first year students who attended preparatory school for a year. They were between 18-21 years. Nearly all of the students had prep class both at university and in high school. At the end of the preparatory class, they took the proficiency exam and those who scored between 60 - 66 (out of 100) enrolled in this course. When we consider that minimum passing grade is 60 in prep school, it is possible to say that their proficiency level was low.

After the implementation of the theme-based syllabus, 26 students were interviewed. The interviewees were chosen from the students who had been included in the interest survey. The theme-based syllabus was applied in another class in order to make respondents feel free to reflect their sincere opinions during interview sessions.

3.3. Instruments

The first instrument used for this study was an interest checklist (Appendix A), which was adapted from Metin (2002). It was used for the study aiming at designing an advanced level speaking course syllabus for the first year semester students at ELT departments in Turkey. Two major changes were made while adapting the interest survey. The first change was changing some topics which students do not have any background information. The second change was the reorganization of the items in terms of appearance in order to make students understand it easily. The checklist consisted of two parts as Part A and Part B. Part A consisted of a list of main topics to be scaled on an interest scale and sub-topics for each main topic. Students first responded to a 3-point scale ranging from 1 to 3. Each number represented a certain interest level; that is, 1- boring; 2- neutral; 3- interesting. The students responded to the checklist showing their ranking by encircling one of the numbers. Part B consisted of a plain list of the main topics presented in Part A. Students were supposed to use sub-topic lists in Part A and choose their most favorite sub-topic for each main title and write his choice down in the space provided in Part B.Students were fully guided by their instructors while filling the

questionnaire and it is assumed that students sincerely answered the questions.

The aim of the checklist was to identify the areas learners were interested in and designing the suggested syllabus by taking these topics into consideration. There were 21 main titles in the checklist and each title had different subtopics. Main titles were general concepts like sports, and subtopics were more specific like popular sports, extreme sports, Olympics, world sport records.

The second instrument used in the study was student interviews. Some of the interview questions were adapted from Kormos (2008) who searched motivational profile of English learners in Hungarian context. The interview questions were divided into two parts. The first part aimed at gaining generalizable information about the language learning motivation of the students. These questions were based on Dörnyei and Otto's process model of motivation and aimed at gathering information about the pre-actional, actional and post-actional stages of motivation. The second part aimed at collecting data about the effectiveness of the theme-based syllabus on the motivation of freshman students taking "Introduction to Communication Skills Course". Thus, it contained questions regarding students' attitudes towards the theme-based syllabus and differences between the syllabuses used in that course. The questions in the second part were designed by the researcher considering the possible reactions of students towards the theme-based syllabus.

Based on the findings of quantitative data analysis, a five-week theme-based syllabus (Appendix B) was designed and employed. After the quantitative analysis of the student interest survey, technology, travelling, mysteries of the world, addictions and issues in sports were identified as the most popular topics and five-week theme-based syllabus was built on them. While designing the syllabus, the pre-defined aims and objectives of the course were not ignored and the proposed theme-based syllabus was

developed in the parallel of the common syllabus in terms of target skills. During the process, the common syllabus prepared by the institution was adopted in other classes. However, since all the students were supposed to take the same final exam at the end of the semester, all the specific activities included in the common syllabus were also reflected in the proposed theme based syllabus. Thus, standardization in teaching was achieved.

3.4. Data Collection

The survey (Appendix A) was conducted to first year students at Atılım University in the spring semester 2008 – 2009 academic year. Since Departmental English Language Studies Unit serves for all kinds of departments at Atılım University, students from various departments answered the questions in the survey. The checklist was applied to 158 students during the classes. Since they do not understand certain items due to insufficient proficiency level, students were guided by instructors of Departmental English Language Studies Unit.

Twenty-six interview (Appendix B) sessions were scheduled at the end of spring semester in 2008 - 2009 academic year and all of the sessions were conducted by the researcher. Six students preferred to be interviewed in the classroom and the others were interviewed in the office. Since students' proficiency level is not sufficient and they would have difficulty in expressing themselves in English, they were all interviewed in Turkish so that they could express themselves better.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0. Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of theme-based syllabus on motivation of freshman students taking "Introduction to Communication Skills Course" offered at Atılım University, Departmental English Language Studies Unit, Introduction to Communication Skills course. The results will be presented under two different titles: Results of the interest survey and results of the interview.

4.1. Results of the Interest Survey

After the survey had been conducted, the topics and subtopics were ranked from the most favorite to the least favorite:

Table 5: List of Most Popular Topics and Subtopics

THE MOST FAVOURITE TOPIC	THE MOST FAVOURITE SUBTOPIC
1. Issues in Technology	The internet
2. Traveling	Holiday
3. Mysteries of the world	UFOs
4. Addictions	Computer games
5. Issues in Sports	Popular Sports
6. Arts	Cinema

|	
7. Crime and Punishment	Serial killers
8. Famous People	Paparazzi
9. Earth Matters	War
10. Humor	Comedy movies
11. Relations	Best friends
12. Historical Issues	World wars
13. General Issues	Hobbies
14. Health and Beauty	Diets
15. Hot Issues	Terrorism
16. Issues in Education	University life
17. Work and Business	Advertising
18. Cultural Issues	Different cultures
19. Psychology	Dreams
20. Political Issues	History of politics
21. Gender Issues	Gender differences

4.1.1. EARTH MATTERS

Of the seventeen sub-topics under the main title "earth matters", "war" ranked the highest with 21 percent. "Global warming" and "nuclear weapons" are also other subtopics that student would like to focus on. It is also possible to say that they are not interested in social topics like "refugees", "urbanization", "hunger" and "world peace
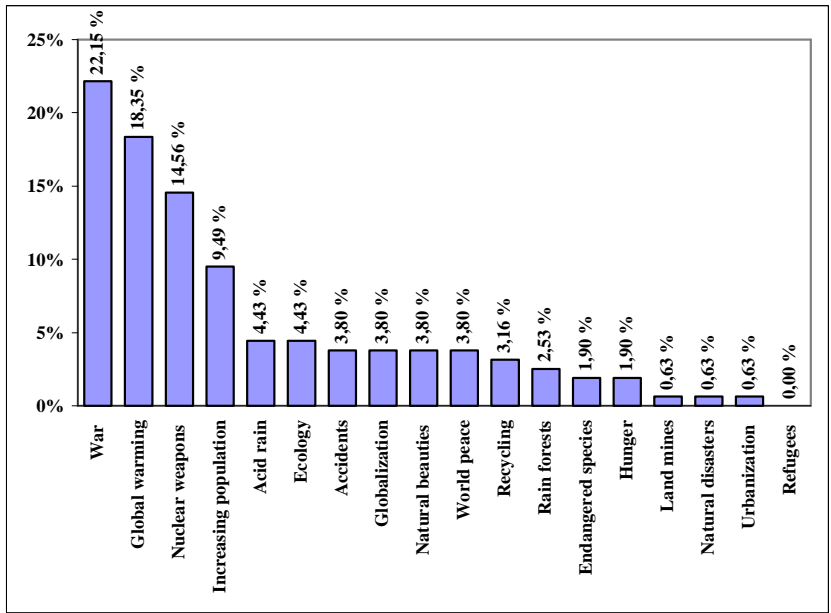
n158

Figure 4.1: Subtopics under earth matters and how preferred they are

4.1.2. ISSUES IN EDUCATION
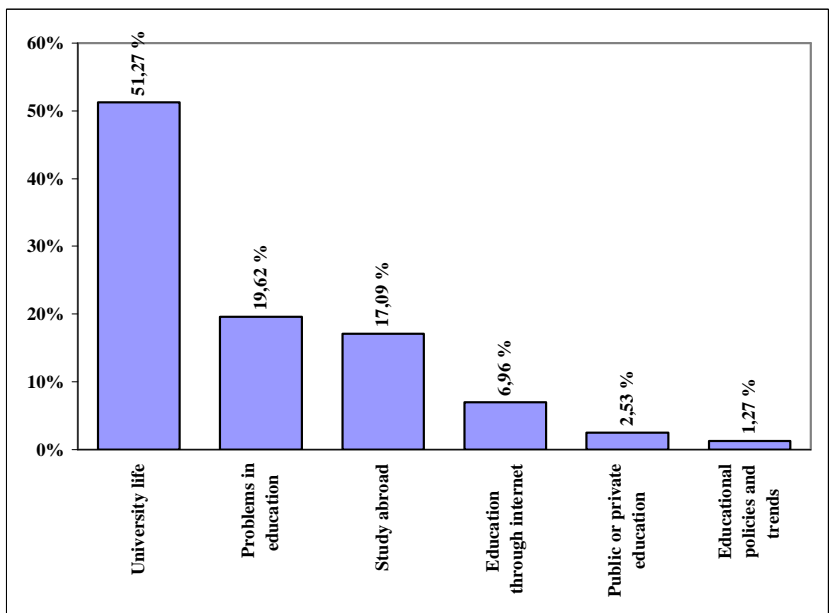
n158

Figure 4.2: Subtopics under education and how preferred they are

Of the seven sub-topics under the major title "issues in education", "university life" ranked the highest with 51 percent. Some students are also interested in "problems in education" and "study abroad". Surprisingly, they are not interested in hot topics like "public or prsivate education" or "education through the internet".

4.1.3. ISSUES IN TECHNOLOGY
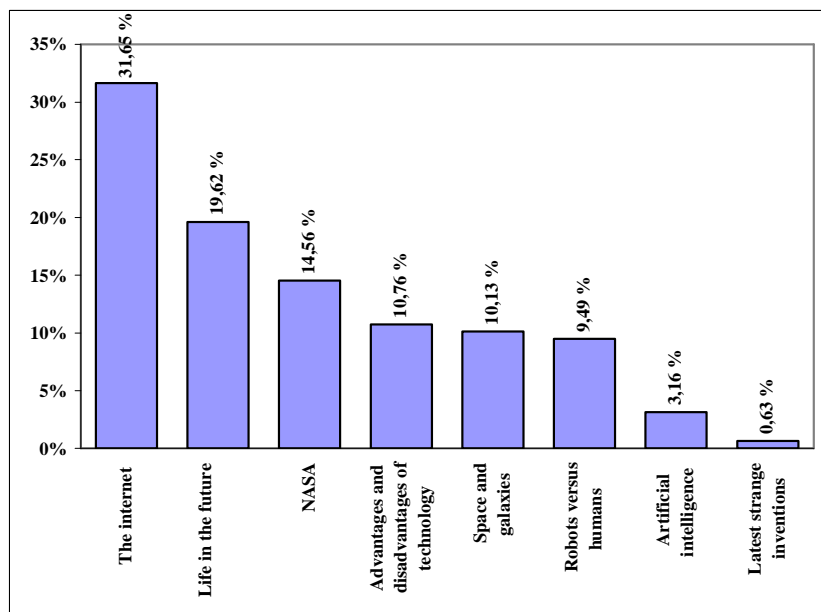
n158

Figure 4.3: Subtopics under technology and how preferred they are

Of the eight sub-topics under the major title "issues in technology", "the internet" ranked the highest with 31 percent. "Life in the future" and "NASA" are the other topics that students are interested in. "Artificial intelligence" and "latest strange inventions" are the topics which are not preferred by the students.

4.1.4. ARTS

Of the nine sub-topics under the major title "arts", "cinema" ranked the highest with 38 percent. "Music" and "fashion" can also be seen as the popular topics among students..
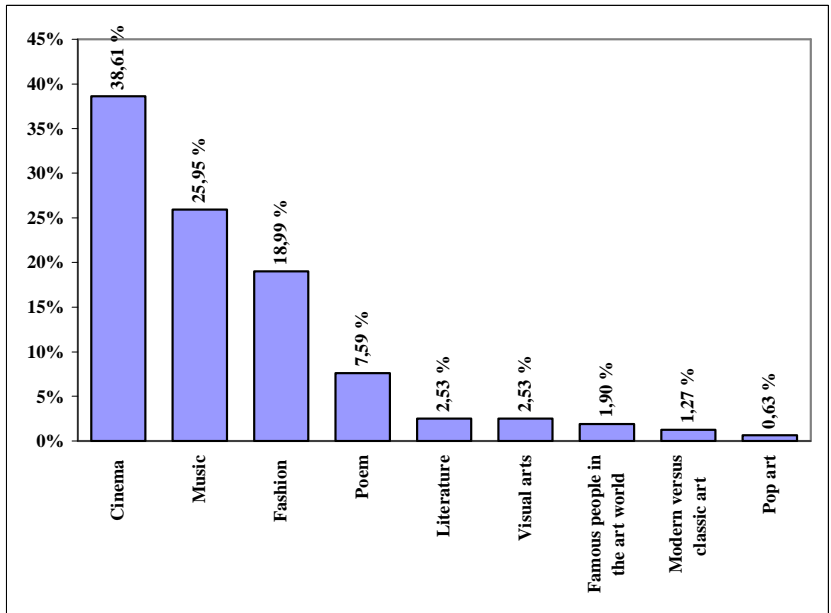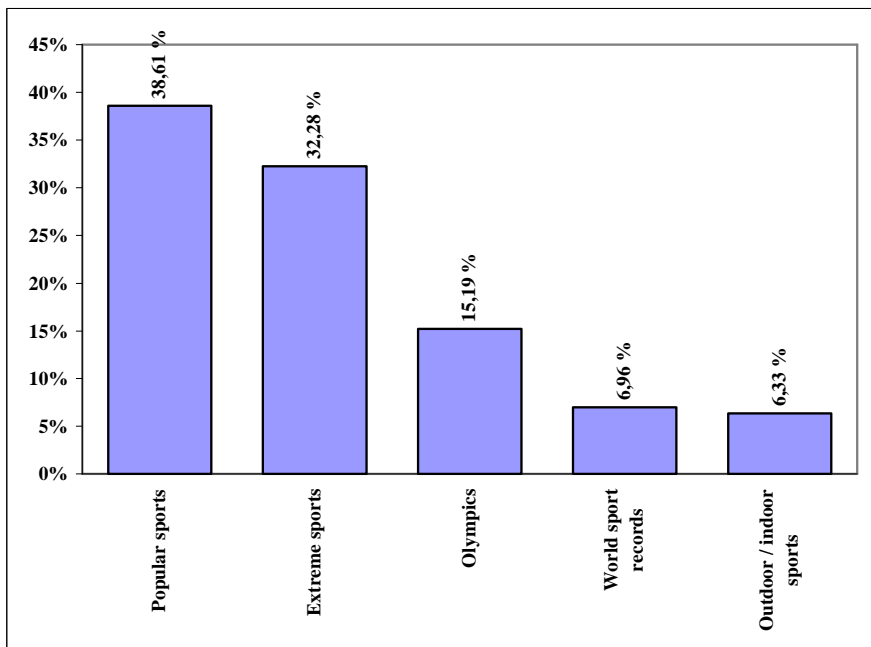
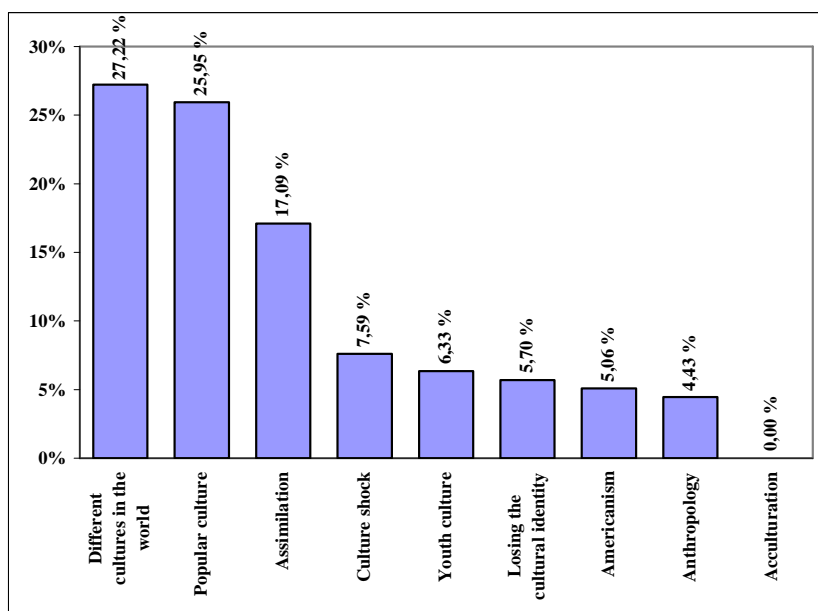Figure 4.4: Subtopics under arts and how preferred they are

4.1.5. ISSUES IN SPORTS

Figure 4.5: Subtopics under sports and how preferred they are

Of the five sub-topics under the major title "issues in sports", "popular sports" ranked the highest with 38 percent.

4.1.6. CULTURAL ISSUES

Figure 4.6: Subtopics under culture and how preferred they are

Of the nine sub-topics under the major title "cultural issues", "different cultures of the world" ranked the highest with 27 percent. 25 percent of the respondents also ranked "popular culture" under the title of " cultural issues".

4.1.7. GENDER ISSUES

Of the three sub-topics under the major title "gender issues", "gender differences" ranked the highest with 59 percent. 25 percent of the respondents ranked "equality between man and woman" and 13 percent of the respondents ranked "man and woman stereotypes
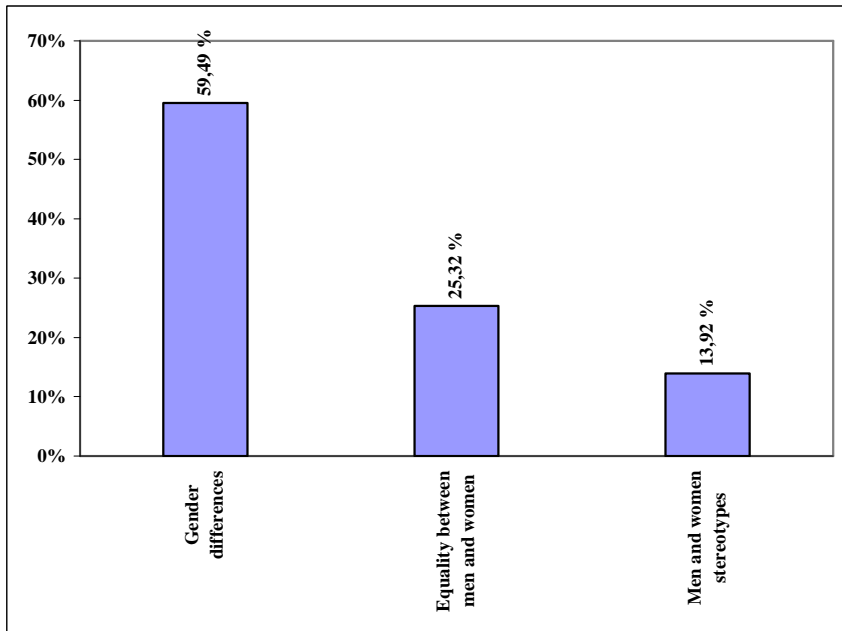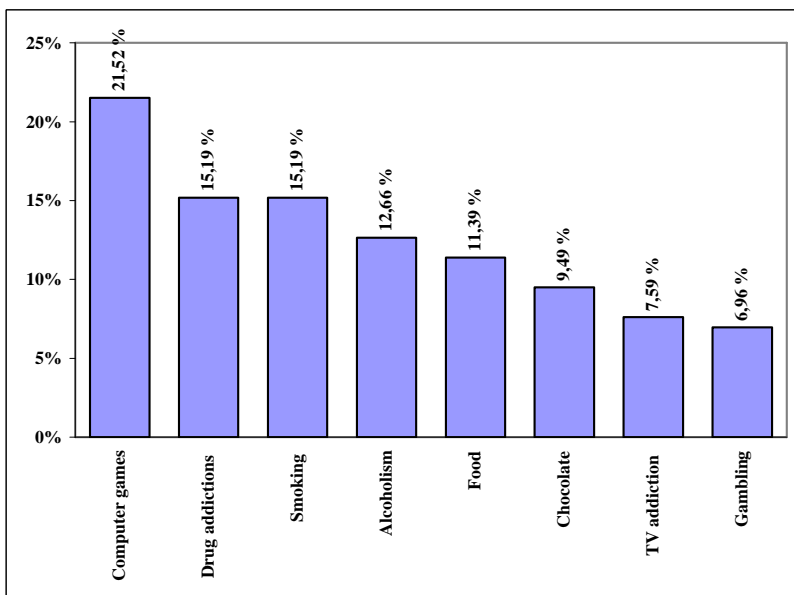
Figure 4.7: Subtopics under gender and how preferred they are

4.1.8. ADDICTIONS

Of the eight sub-topics under the major title "addictions", computer games ranked the highest with 21 percent. "Drug addictions", "smoking" and alcoholism" are also other topics students would like to focus on.

Figure 4.8: Subtopics under addictions and how preferred they are

4.1.9. HUMOR

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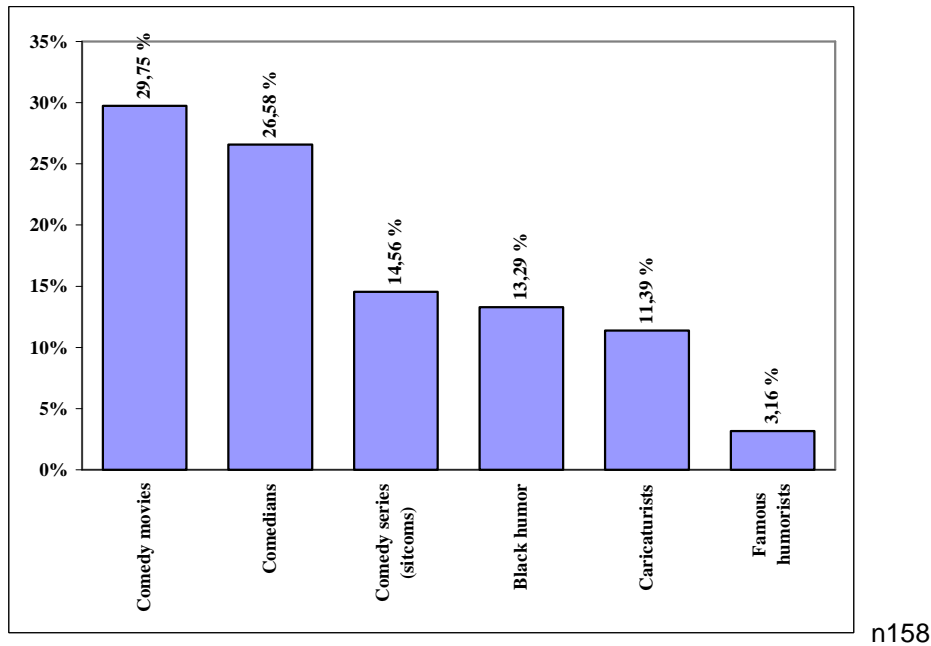
Figure 4.9: Subtopics under humor and how preferred they are

Of the six sub-topics under the major title "humor", "comedy movies" ranked the highest with 29 percent. While "comedians" is also another favorite topic among students, "famous humorists" is only ranked by 5 students.

4.1.10. HOT ISSUES

Of the 11 sub-topics under the major title "hot issues", "terrorism" ranked the highest with 38 percent. "Human cloning" and "satanism" are also other topics that some of the students would like to study. "Sentence &fine", "sexual choices ", " euthanasia" and "capital punishment" are the topics that are not preferred by the students.
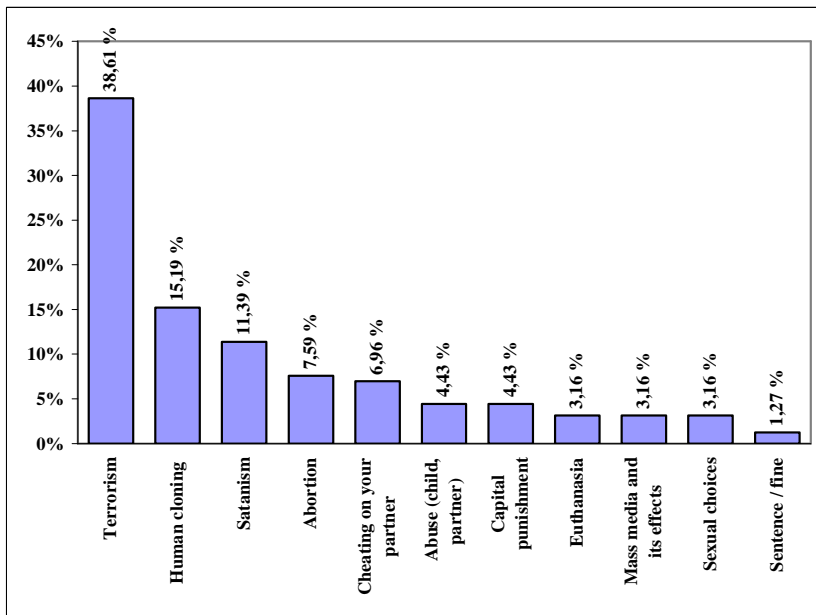
Figure 4.10: Subtopics under hot issues and how preferred they are

4.1.11. HISTORICAL ISSUES
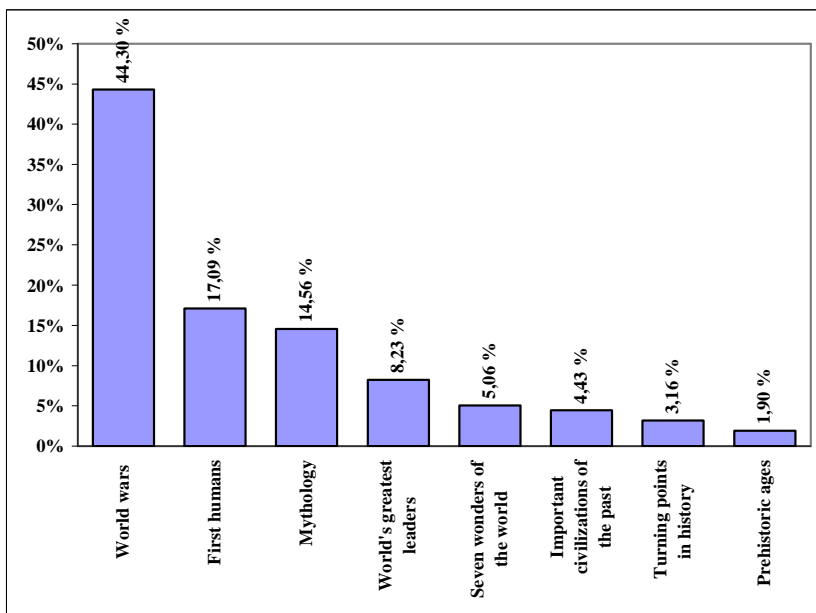
Figure 4.11: Subtopics under history and how preferred they are

Of the eight sub-topics under the major title "historical issues", "world wars" ranked the highest with 44 percent. On the other hand, the results show that students are not interested in "prehistoric ages", "turning points in history", "important civilizations of the past" and "seven wonders of the world" so much.

4.1.12. POLITICAL ISSUES

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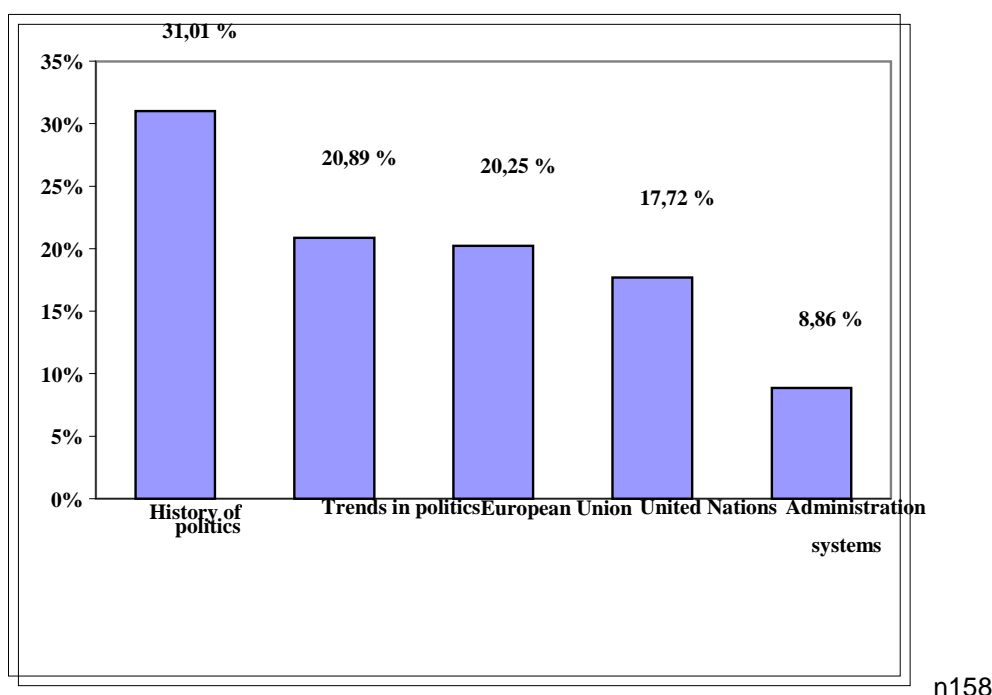
Figure 4.12: Subtopics under political issues and how preferred they are

Of the five sub-topics under the major title "political issues", "history of politics" ranked the highest by 31 percent. "Trends in politics", "European Union" and "United Nation" are also the topics chosen by many students.

4.1.13. MYSTERIES OF THE WORLD

Of the ten sub-topics under the major title "mysteries of the world", "Secrets UFOs" ranked the highest with 36 percent. "Secret of the pyramids" and "ghosts" are also other dominant topics under the this title.
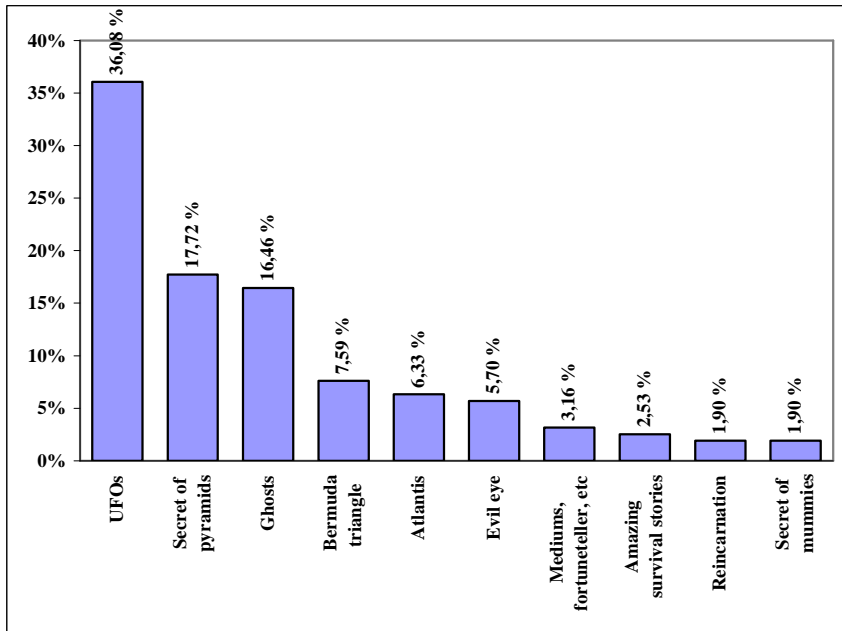
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Figure 4.13: Subtopics under mysteries of the world and how preferred they are

4.1.14. FAMOUS PEOPLE
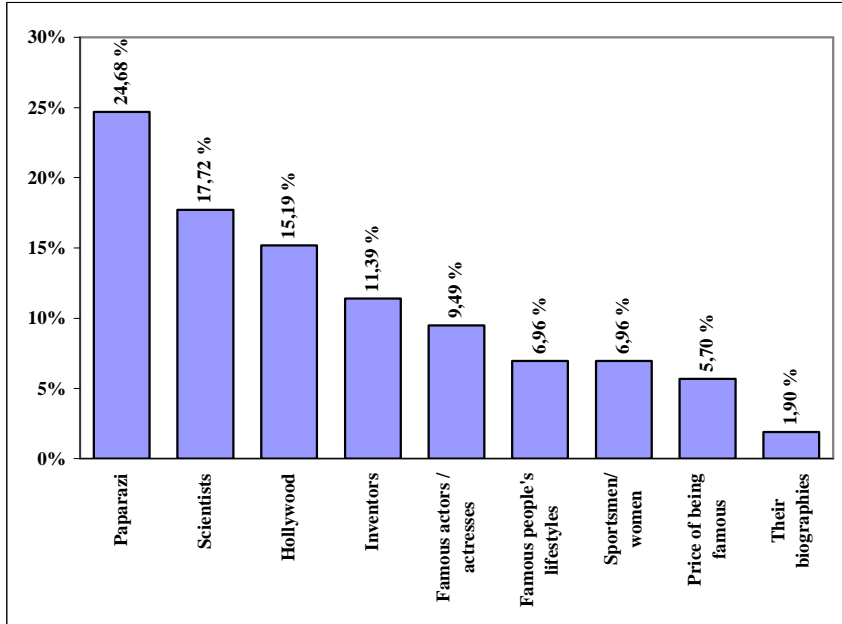
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Figure 4.14: Subtopics under famous people and how preferred they are

Of the nine sub-topics under the major title "famous people", "paparazzi" ranked the highest with 24 percent. "Scientist", "Hollywood" and "inventors" are also chosen by huge number of students.

4.1.15. RELATIONS
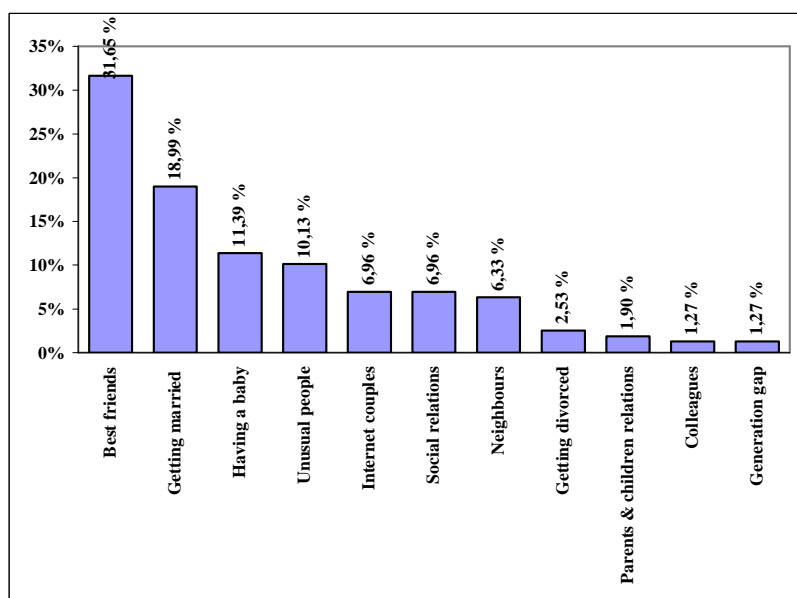
Figure 4.15: Subtopics under relations and how preferred they are

Of the eleven sub-topics under the major title "Relations", "best friends" ranked the highest with 31 percent. "Getting married" and "having baby" are also other popular topics. On the other hand, it is clearly seen that student are not interested in topics like "generation gap" and "colleagues".

4.1.16. PSYCHOLOGY

Of the nine sub-topics under the major title "psychology", "dreams" is the most dominant topic and it was chosen by 39 percent. Few students prefer "personal problems", "obsessions" and "regrets".
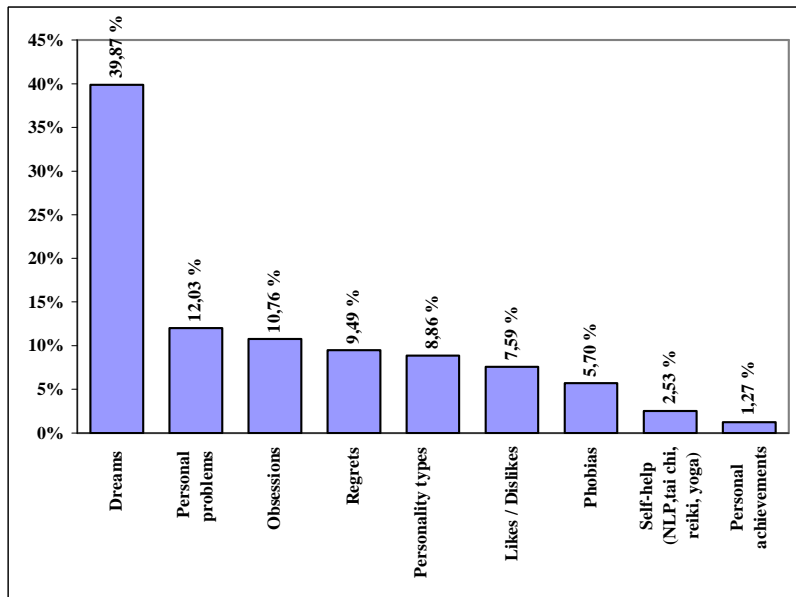
Figure 4.16: Subtopics under psychology and how preferred they are

4.1.17. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
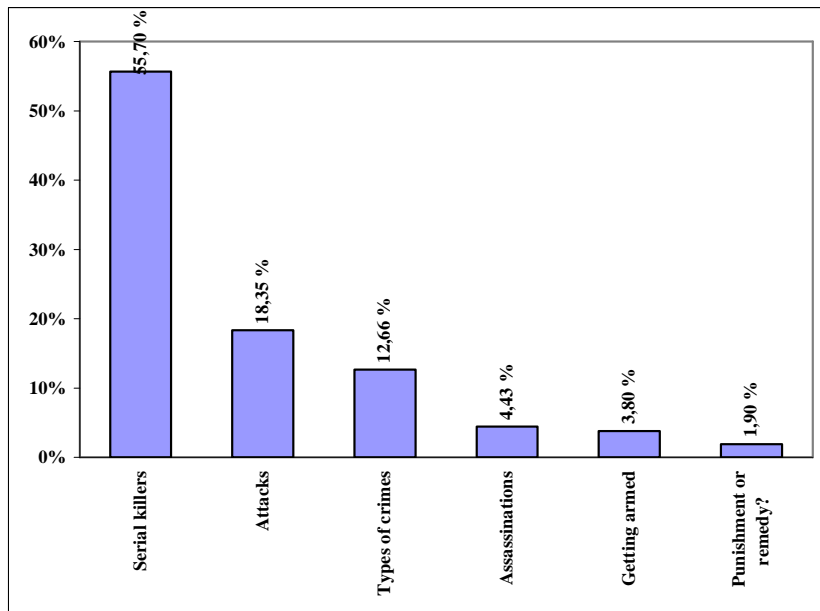
Figure 4.17: Subtopics under crime and punishment and how preferred they are

Of the six sub-topics under the major title "crime and punishment", "serial killers" has ranked the highest with 55 percent. "Attacks" was chosen by 18 percent of the respondents and "types of crimes" follows it with 12 percent.

4.1.18. TRAVELLING

Of the seven sub-topics under the major title "traveling", holidays is the dominant one with 61 percent. Other topics chosen by students are "alternative hjoliday", "tourism" and "package tours".

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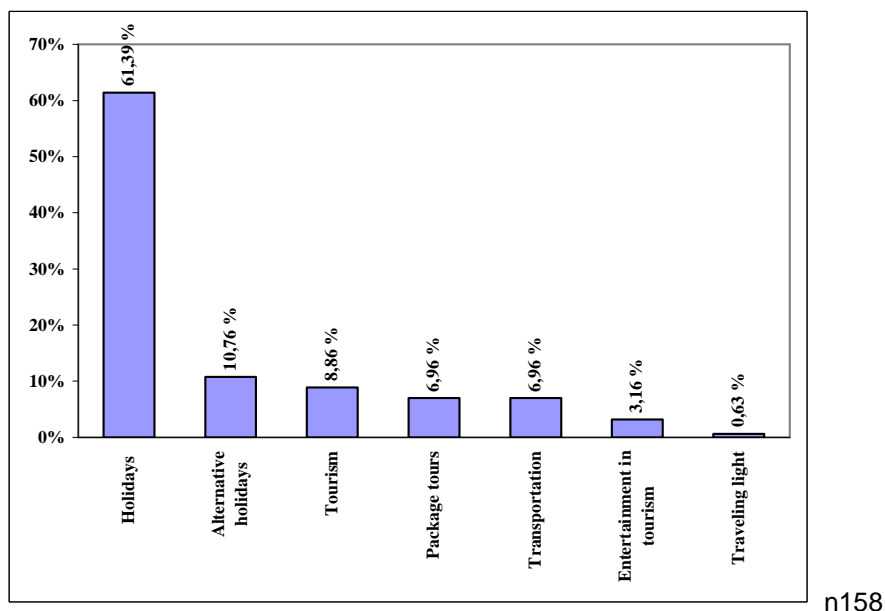
Figure 4.18: Subtopics under travelling and how preferred they are

4.1.19. HEALTH & BEAUTY

Of the eleven sub-topics under the major title "health and beauty", diets has ranked the highest by 24 percent of the respondents. All of other subtopics have also been chosen by certain number of students.
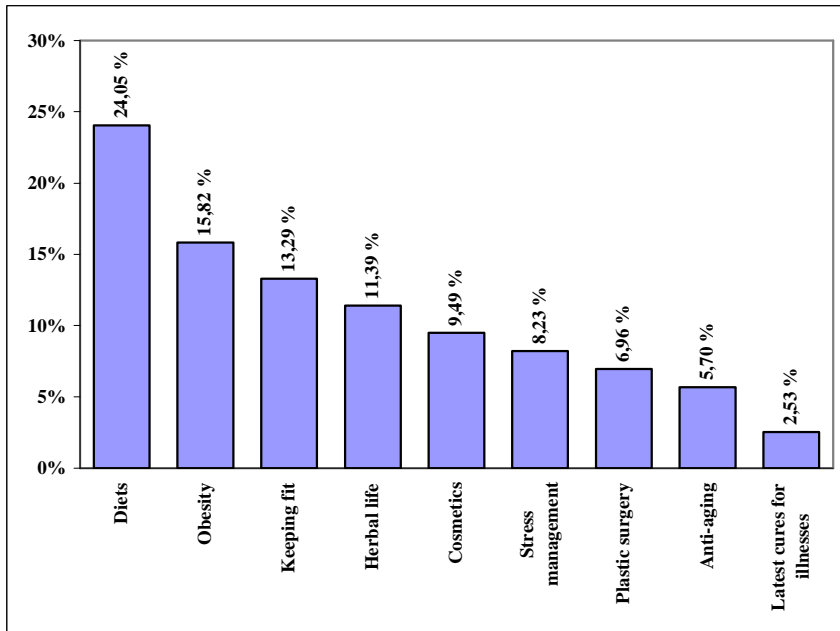
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Figure 4.19: Subtopics under health and beauty and how preferred they are

4.1.20. WORK & BUSINESS
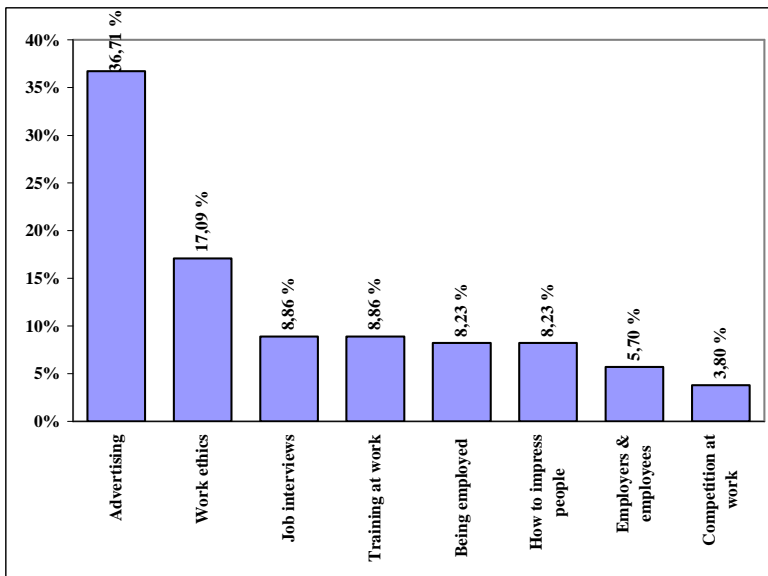
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Figure 4.20: Subtopics under work and business and how preferred they are

Of the eight sub-topics under the major title "work and business", advertising" is the most popular with 36 percent. "Work ethics" is also

chosen by 17 percent of the respondents and other subtopics are chosen comparatively.

4.1.21. GENERAL ISSUES
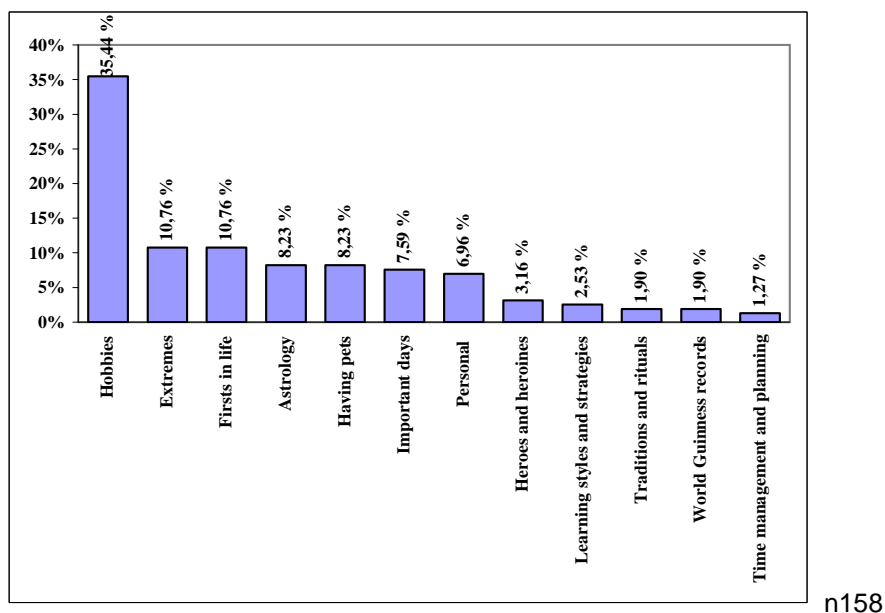
Figure 4.21: Subtopics under general issues and how preferred they are

Of the twelve sub-topics under the major title "General issues", "hobbies " has ranked the highest with 35 percent. "Extremes", "firsts in life" and "astrology" are also other popular topics among students.

4.2 Results of the Interview

Student interview is composed of two parts. The first part includes results based on the categories of the qualitative data analyses, which are divided into three major themes following Dörnyei and Otto's process model of motivation: choice motivation (pre-actional stage), executive motivation (actional stage) and retrospective motivation (post-actional stage.) In the second part, a comparison will be made through open ended questions seeking students' reflections about the syllabus followed in the first ten weeks and the proposed theme-based syllabus followed in the last five weeks.

Choice Motivation

According to the results of the interview, twenty one of the interviewees started learning English in the second or third year of elementary school. All of these students started learning English at relatively early age because they went to private school. Others started learning English at sixth grade and surprisingly there is no difference between their proficiency levels. None of the interviewees could give a proper answer to the question about their main goal when they started learning English. It is probably because of the age level they receive English courses:

> English was not different from physical education course for
> me. It was funny and enjoyable. I was expecting to play game
> all the time and have fun. What kind of aim can I have at that
> age? (R3)

On the other hand, most of the interviewees identify the prep school year as the period in which they set concrete goals. They need to pass prep school proficiency exam, so they unintentionally identify their goals in the parallel of this exam. Three students also stated that the medium of instruction is English at Atılım University, thus, they need to have a certain proficiency level to follow departmental courses. The number of these students is not enough to generalize this aim for all students and it is possible to say that interviewees usually set their goals considering daily circumstances.

> Prep school was a waste of time. My main aim was passing
> proficiency exam and coming to the department. I can learn
> English after I graduate from university. (R21)

When interviewees are asked about their goals for now, it is obvious that they are aware of the importance of learning English. All of the interviewees stated that they want to be equipped with all the necessary skills to communicate in English. Probably, the reason of the change in their perspective is their expectations since they noticed that they need to have a

certain proficiency level and perform certain activities to be successful not only at school but also in business life.

> I think I cannot find a good job without good TOEFL score.
> Diploma is not enough itself. (R1)

TOEFL is frequently mentioned by the students during the interviews. It is obvious that they have modified their goal of learning English considering the conditions. Therefore, it seems that their main aim is to be able to perform four language skills at the highest possible level.

However, there is an obvious contradiction between their aim and attitude towards English. The interview results confirm that considerable number of students have negative attitude towards English language. Sixteen students stated that they would not have chosen an English medium university if they had had a chance. Moreover, twenty-one students confessed that they would not try to learn English if it was not necessary to find a job.

> I have never been successful in English courses. It is
> always a big problem for me. English courses are like a
> torture for me. (R17)

The utterance above may be a bit exaggerated, but it is necessary to say that most of the students have similar opinions about English and this is mainly because of the feeling of being unsuccessful. Half of the interviewees stated that they were neutral or positive towards English when they started to learn, but their attitude turned into a "hate" after the series of failures in exams or in classroom activities.

Executive Motivation

As regards with language learning effort, it is necessary to emphasize that the picture is not promising. All of the informants stated that they do not make enough effort to improve their English. It is also obvious when their proficiency level is examined since they only focus on passing the class or

getting high mark rather than being fluent at international level. While some of the respondents confessed that they had never studied English, some stated that they studied hard in preparatory class since English was the only course they were supposed to pass. In brief, most of the students are exam-oriented students and this situation prevents them from improving their English. If they receive a mark sufficient for passing the class, they do not need to make extra effort to improve their English. It is obvious that standards applied in the institution are not sufficient to equip students with the necessary skills at international level because eighty five per cent of the participants will be able to get enough mark to pass the class even though they are not enough for global standards.

When it comes to the question of what kind of language strategies students use to improve their language competence, the picture is not promising again. More than half of the students could not name any strategies. Others identified watching movies in English, surfing on the internet, reading books and watching foreign broadcasts. However, these are generally passive activities and not sufficient for maintaining their level of competence rather than improving. Only two students expressed that they tried to learn new words from foreign language input and improve their speaking skills through video conversation on the internet.

In spite of the passive and unproductive approach they have, all of the learners stated that they want to improve their English. Ironically, eighteen of the respondents are planning to improve their English after they graduate from university instead of the school where the medium of instruction is English.

> My aim is getting the highest grade I can. I know my English is
> not enough, but I can improve it after I graduate from university. I
> am planning to go abroad and enroll in an English course. (R3)

Only five of the respondents studied another foreign language apart from English, but none of them can identify it as "learning" since they

received a limited education for a short period of time. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about any affect of another language on their English level. In the same way, thirteen of the students have been to an English speaking country before, their main aim was travelling and they did not need to use English all the time. Only one student stated that he went to Malta for English education for six months but he could not stay so long due to accommodation problems. However, he stated that spending three months in Malta affected his self-confidence in positive way. To my surprise, seventeen of the interviewees have foreign acquaintances and they can communicate with them in English. Probably, some keywords and daily expressions are enough for them to express themselves. They are generally positive about their foreign friends and they believe that their friendship is also good for their English. Furthermore, the students do not have any prejudge for British and American cultures in general.

The interviewees had rather negative view about language learning at the university. They harshly criticized the efficiency of the English classes at the university and identify the poor English instruction as the main cause of their low proficiency level. They were dissatisfied with the insufficient language practice in class and boring topics, materials, methodology and instructors.

> We are supposed to read many texts, write many paragraphs, learn many new words. But we cannot use them in our departmental courses. This is useless. It would be better if our departmental courses and English courses were parallel. (R8)

Another student criticized the materials and methods used in English classes.

> I am not interested in most of the reading and writing topics in the classes. Therefore, I cannot motivate myself. Is it so difficult to find an interesting material for the class? Instructors

always ask us to speak in the classroom, but how can I speak
about the subject I do not know? (R11)

These responses can give an idea about students' low motivation level in English courses. Students are not willing to learn and improve English and there is not enough or correct effort made by the institution. It is not possible to find motivated, eager and prepared students to learn English all the time and extra effort can be necessary to attract this kind of students. Otherwise, neither students nor instructors motivate themselves and learning fails. It is obvious from students' responses for the question of how they motivate themselves to learn English. Unsurprisingly, twenty four students replied that main source of their motivation is their exam mark.

I always study if I did not get good mark in the previous exam.
When I get high mark, I think that my English is enough and study
for departmental courses.

This exam-oriented approach reveals that fear of mark increases their motivation to some extent. On the other hand, more than half of the interviewees also stated that they need to learn English in order to find a job after they graduate from university. This number also should be more than twenty, but it should be underlined that the students are so pragmatic and aim at saving the day al the time.

When it comes to the factors increasing their motivation, it can be said that they do not have clear expectations in their minds. Subjects related to their departments, classroom activities using audio-visual aids, funny teachers, up to date topics, computer-based activities are the most frequently identified factors increasing their motivation. On the other hand, they believe that boring subjects and attitude of teachers are the factors that decrease their motivation.

There are many interesting things around us. There are new
inventions, wars, scandals and technological developments. We
never talk about them in the class. Iraq war started at night, and

we talked about the negative effects of smoking in class in the morning! (R9)

Materials is also another factor decreasing their motivation. Nineteen of the interviewees stated that they would like to use another book if they had a chance to choice.

Retrospective Motivation

When students are asked about their successes, they all expressed external incentives such as high marks and good exam results. Getting high mark like AA or BA was regarded as a great success by many of the respondents. Apart from marks, some students mentioned applause and acknowledgement from teachers as the successes in their English learning history.

If I can express myself when a teacher asks my opinion
about a certain subject, I feel happy because I can do it.

(R25)

Following foreign broadcasts and being able to communicate with foreigners are also considered as success by students.

I have a friend from Ireland and we sometimes have voice-
chat with her. On day, I asked her opinion about my English.
She told me that she can understand me very well. I am glad
for that. (R3)

I sometimes watch movies without subtitle and I can understand
more than half it. This makes me happy. (R11)

When it comes to failures, ten of them remembered prep school year because six of them spent two years in prep school and four of them could only pass prep school after summer school. They see the prep school as a waste of time even though most of them are still need some basic points covered at prep school.

Failing in the prep school was the biggest failure in my education. I was really sad and angry. I had to spend another year, but it did not give me anything. My English is still insufficient! (R17)

The interviewees who failed in prep school stated that they considered giving up learning English. However, this means more than quitting English since they have to leave university in that case; so, they continued to attend classes. This stage can be considered as one of the basic sources of their low motivation because they have seen learning as a compulsory duty rather than necessary skill.

As regards fulfillment of language learning goals, it can be concluded that they have not reached their goal yet. They would like to learn English in a level required for business life and they need to use English in global level. However, none of them believe that their current level is enough to be employed by a big company. Moreover, some of them are quite pessimistic about leaning English.

I think English will remain as a big problem for me as long as I live. I do not like English. I hope to work in an area where I do not need English. (R7)

Some respondents stated that they have modified their goals after coming to department.

I had had high expectations like getting a good Toefl score, but I have already forgotten this aim since it is not possible to do it here. I do not think that this university takes me anywhere real my goals. I only want to get high marks and graduate from university with good GPA. (R23)

Second part of the interview includes questions regarding the differences between the syllabus used in the first ten weeks and used in the last five weeks. The former one is used in all sections of the course during the semester. The latter is a theme-based syllabus developed considering

the results of student interest survey and it was used during five weeks in one section of the same course.

The first question in this part was about the topics that attract student's attention during the first ten weeks. The topics covered in this period were related to gender issues, work and business, issues in education, psychology and health. Interviewees had generally negative attitudes towards the topics studies during this period since they did not find the mentioned topics interesting. Moreover, they believe that they do not have enough background information about these topics.

> I cannot remember exactly, but it is probably the third time I have read a text about studying abroad in my English learning history. Everything is the same. It does not attract me, and only my body is there during the class hour. (R7)

It seems that none of the students are happy with the topics and this situation leads to negative attitudes towards the course. Most of the students come to the classes in order not to fail due to absenteeism. And they do not participate in any kind of activities in the class. Boring topics also prevent them from concentrating on the course and they think that the course is totally a waste of time. However, even though the text is boring, there are still some points that they can get in that course because their proficiency level is not so high. Unfortunately, they miss useful points in the course due to ineffective topics.

Developing a negative attitude towards English is another negative effect of these topics on students. Some students stated that they could not motivate themselves even though the topic of that day was interesting.

> The course was totally boring for me because everything we read or wrote was boring. One day, or instructor brought us a reading text about Nostradamus. It was really   interesting for me and I read it quickly. After reading, the instructor asked us to discuss whether Nostradamus was a prophet or liar. Actually, I had many

things to say, but I could not speak because I had not participated in any discussion during the term. It was bad for me. (R19)

As it can be understood from the utterance above, once students develop a negative attitude towards the course at the beginning, it is quite difficult to improve the situation no matter how much effort instructors make.

As regards the proposed theme-based syllabus applied in the last five weeks of the term, it is obvious that interviewees have positive feelings. All of the students stated that topics covered in this period were quite different from the previous weeks and they were surprised about it. To my surprise, all of the respondents were also included in the interest survey conducted at the end of the first semester but none of them noticed that proposed theme based syllabus had been prepared considering the result of that survey. They were happy about the change, but more than half of them thought that it was too late.

I think last five weeks were more enjoyable. I think, our instructor saw how bored we were and decided to change the topics, but it was too late. The course would have been more effective if the instructor had organized our classes around these topics. (R8)

Even though some students thought that it was too late for the change, it is obvious that some students developed positive attitude towards the course. It can be understood from their comments that they started to think English as a concept that they can integrate with other parts of their life. For example, one of the respondents stated that writing a paragraph describing the common myths in Turkish culture is the most enjoyable thing that she did in all English courses so far. Apart from this, many respondents gave positive feedback for the project asking students to prepare an advertisement about an innovation for language teaching.

Other reason for the positive feedback of respondents to the five – week theme based syllabus is that they have background information about the topics. Since the former syllabus prepared according to the results of interest survey, it is natural that they have something to say about the topics. They are more interested, feel secure and they can integrate themselves into the course easily.

> There is a big difference between them. In the first ten weeks, the topics were either boring or strange for me. I did not want to participate in some activities or I could not participate in them because I did not have anything to say. On the other hand, I think technology neither boring nor strange for me. (R10)

All the feedback from respondents leads to the conclusion that the theme-based syllabus affected students' learning in a positive way since it is more effective, enjoyable, and fruitful for students. Even if it was limited, it could change their point of and students started to think that English courses could be more enjoyable. It is obvious that if such a syllabus was used during a whole semester, it would be more effective and help students to develop positive attitude towards English.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.0 Presentation

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the theme-based syllabus designed considering students' interests is a positive factor in increasing student motivation in Introduction to Communication Skills Course. This chapter discusses the conclusions which have been drawn from the results and interpretations of the findings. The conclusions are presented in line with the research questions. The chapter finishes with the implications some suggestions for future research.

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the themes students would like to focus on in Introduction to Communication Skills Course?

After the quantitative analysis of the student interest survey, it is obvious that technology is the most popular topic among students. We live in a century of innovation and teenagers are those who can adjust themselves to new technology easily. Thus, they would like to receive an English instruction including texts, tasks and activities related to elements of technology. According to the results of the interest survey, the internet is the most popular item under technology title. It is clear that the internet means more than an innovation for them and they are always eager to talk about it. It is not only pleasure but also necessity for them since they need to keep track of innovations on the internet in order to become a member of this technology society.

Another popular topic among students is travelling. This finding is not surprising since young people are generally energetic and curious about what happens in other parts of the world. Since the participants of the

interest survey are private university students, their socioeconomic conditions let them go holiday regularly. Thus, holiday is the most popular topic under the title of travelling. It is clear that going holiday means more than relaxing for them and they see going holiday as a sign of social status. In brief, travelling and holiday choices are the reflection of students' high living standards.

Another popular topic among students is mysteries of the world. It is natural that human being has always been curious about mystery. UFOs is the most popular subtitle under this topic and it may be due to the mystery whether UFOs exist or not. Since there are controversial ideas about this subject, they are eager to study topics regarding UFOs.

Addictions is another popular topic among students. However, when the subtitles of addictions are examined, it is clear that students are not interested in classical addiction such as smoking, alcohol or drug. Most of the male students are interested in addiction of computer games since nearly all of them spend many hours on computer games everyday. On the other hand, shopping addiction is another popular subtitle. Especially female participants are fond of shopping and they describe themselves about shopaholics. In brief, the responses to this item in the survey reflect the results of gender differences.

Unsurprisingly, sports is another topic that students are interested in according to interest survey. Issues in sports are the topics that they have background information since most of them follow at least one popular sports organization regularly. Popular sports is the theme that they would like to focus on under this title since they are always exposed to popular sports activities due to mass media.

The mentioned topics above are the five most popular topics among students and they are used while designing a five-week theme-based syllabus. Apart from them, arts, famous people, humor and relations can also be labeled as popular topics. However, topics like gender issues,

political issues, work and business, psychology and cultural issues are not preferred by students. It is clear that students' preferences directly reflects the features of their age-group, habits, socio-economic conditions and lifestyles.

5.1.2. Research Question 2: Is theme-based syllabus prepared considering students' interests a positive factor in increasing student motivation in Introduction to Communication Skills course?

After the implementation of the theme-based syllabus designed for that specific classroom, students' responses to interview questions reveal that there is a clear and noticeable increase in student motivation. Most of the interviewees had positive attitudes towards the topics studies during five weeks and they tried to participate in class activities more frequently.

The first reason of the success of the theme-based syllabus in increasing student motivation is up to date and interesting topics. Students do not prefer topics such as health issues, work and business and psychology because these topics are not as attractive as technology, sports and travelling. They do not have serious health problems at that age and they do not want to deal with texts about the heart attack. On the contrary, they want to have texts which they deal with in daily life. As it was discussed in the second chapter, the most powerful argument for the popularity of theme-based syllabus is its providing a natural setting for language learning and learners tend to focus on topics that they can experience in real life (Met,1991). Thus, thanks to a shift of topics from heath problems to technology in the proposed syllabus, students developed intrinsic motivation to participate in the course.

Apart from being interesting, the topics in the theme-based syllabus are not the repetition of a common topics in all coursebooks. In other words, the topics are not cliché for them. Nearly all of the coursebooks contain similar topics and students have to study same topics in their language learning journey. Thus, they lose their motivation. However, when they see

that some new themes can be presented in a course, they can develop positive attitude towards the course and their motivation increases.

Another reason of the success of theme-based syllabus is the fact that students have background information about the topics. As it was mentioned in the literature review part, theme-based syllabus enable teachers to build the teaching on the background knowledge of learners (Genesee,1994). Since the syllabus was designed considering the results of the interest survey, most of the students have something to say about the topics studied and course can be built on their background knowledge. Therefore, they feel secure and powerful during the course and this situation leads to high level of motivation.

The results of this study show similarities with other studies carried out in different contexts. All of the studies discussed in the second chapter reached to the conclusion that theme-based syllabus has positive influence on student motivation. For instance, the research carried out by Olgun (2004) at Middle East Technical University reflects nearly the same conclusions with this study. Moreover, the research conducted by Song (2006) also reached to the conclusion that thematic instruction affects student motivation negative way. Results of other researches presented in literature review part also strengthen the idea that theme-based syllabus is a positive factor in increasing student motivation.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the theme-based syllabus affected student motivation in positive way. Although extra effort is still necessary to attract more students, five-week thematic instruction could help many students to develop positive attitude towards the course.

5.2. Implications for Future Research

Little research has been done to investigate the influence of themes on motivation. However, after the preference of ever increasing numbers of academic institutions to use theme-based syllabus one would expect more

research to be carried out on this subject. Subsequent researches may focus on common issues such as various factors affecting an individual2s motivation, how they integrate and affect each others, whether there is a difference between the initial motivation involved in learning something and the motivation to sustain learning and strategies that teachers adopt to influence motivation. Further research can also be extended to other components of curriculum such as how instruction relates themes to objectives or whether thematic instruction affects methodology.

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Student Interest Survey

Dear Students

We are currently conducting a research on the present ENG 111 Introduction to Communication Skills Course which is taught at the first year of Atılım University Departmental English Language Studies Unit. As a participant of this course, you are requested to answer the following checklist. You do not need to write your names. The information you provide will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Seçkin Can

PART A:

Rank the following main topics below as follows:

1. boring   2. neutral   3. interesting

TOPICS			YOUR SCORE		
A.					

EARTH MATTERS			1	2	3
Global warming	Ecology	Acid rain			
Recycling	Endangered species	Rain forests			
Natural beauties	Natural disasters	Accidents			
	Globalization	Urbanization			

Hunger		
Increasing population	Refugees	World peace
Nuclear weapons	War	Land mines

B.

ISSUES IN EDUCATION		1	2	3
Public or private education	Educational Policies and trends	Study abroad		
University life	Problems in education	Education through internet		

C.

ISSUES IN TECHNOLOGY		1	2	3
Advantages and disadvantages of technology	Life in the future	Space and galaxies		
Robots versus humans	The internet	NASA		
Artificial intelligence	Latest strange inventions			

D.

ARTS		1	2	3
Literature	Poem	Music		
Famous people in the art world	Visual arts	Pop art		

Modern vs. classic art	Fashion	Cinema

E.

ISSUES IN SPORTS		1	2	3
Olympics	Extreme sports	Popular sports		
World sport records	Outdoor / indoor sports			

F.

CULTURAL ISSUES		1	2	3
Culture shock	Popular culture	Youth culture		
Different cultures in the world	Acculturation	Assimilation		
Losing the cultural identity	Anthropology	Americanism		

G.

GENDER ISSUES		1	2	3
Equality between men and women	Gender differences	Men and women stereotypes		

H.

ADDICTIONS		1	2	3
Drug addictions	Alcoholism	Smoking		

Gambling	TV addiction	Computer games
Chocolate	Food	

I.

HUMOR			1	2	3
Famous humorists	Black humor		Comedians		
Caricaturists	Comedy series (sitcoms)		Comedy movies		

J.

HOT ISSUES			1	2	3
Human cloning	Abortion		Euthanasia		
Terrorism	Mass media and its effects		Captial punishment		
Cheating on your partner	Satanism		Sexual choices		
Abuse (child, partner)	Sentence / fine				

K.

HISTORICAL ISSUES			1	2	3
Turning points in history	World wars		Mythology		
Important civilizations of the past	First humans		Seven wonders of the world		

L.

POLITICAL ISSUES		1	2	3
Administration systems	United Nations		European Union	
History of politics	Trends in politics			

M.

MYSTERIES OF THE WORLD		1	2	3
Bermuda triangle	Secret of pyramids		Secret of mummies	
UFOs	Reincarnation		Ghosts	
Amazing survival stories	Mediums, fortuneteller, etc		Evil eye	
Atlantis				

N.

FAMUS PEOPLE		1	2	3
Famous actors / actresses	Sportsmen/ women		Scientists	
Famous people's lifestyles	Inventors		Their biographies	
Holloywood	Paparazi		Price of being famous	

O.

RELATIONS			1	2	3
Getting married	Getting divorced		Having a baby		
Internet couples	Generation gap		Parents & children relations		
Neighbours	Best friends		Colleagues		
Social relations	Unusual people				

P.

PSYCHOLOGY			1	2	3
Personality types	Phobias		Dreams		
Obsessions	Regrets		Likes / Dislikes		
Self-help (NLP,tai chi, reiki, yoga)	Personal problems		Personal achievements		

R.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT			1	2	3
Types of crimes	Serial killers		Attacks		
Assassinations	Getting armed		Punishment or remedy?		

Q.

TRAVELLING			1	2	3
Transportation	Holidays		Tourism		
Traveling light	Alternative holidays		Package tours		
Entertainment in tourism					

R.

HEALTH & BEAUTY			1	2	3
Keeping fit	Diets		Obesity		
Plastic surgery	Latest cures for ilnesses		Herbal life		
Stress management	Anti-aging		Cosmetics		

T.

WORK & BUSINESS			1	2	3
Job interviews	How to impress people		Employers & employees		
Competition at work	Training at work		Work ethics		
Being employed	Advertising				

U.

GENERAL ISSUES			1	2	3
Firsts in life	Hobbies			Having pets	

Astrology	Extremes	Heroes and heroines
Important days	World Guinness records	Traditions and rituals
Time management and planning	Learning styles and strategies	Personal

Part B

In this part choose your most favorite subtitle from each main title **ONE**

ONLY:

a. Earth Matters: _____

b. Issues in Education: _____

c. Issues in Technology: _____

d. Arts: _____

e. Issues in Sports: _____

f. Cultural Issues: _____

g. Gender Issues: _____

h. Addiction: _____

i. Humor: _____

j. Hot Issues: _____

k. Historical Issues: _____

l. Political Issues: _____

m. Mysteries of the World: _____

n. Famous People: _____

o. Relations: _____

p. Psychology: _____

q. Crime and Punishment: _____

r. Travelling: _____

s. Health: _____

t. Work and Business: _____

u.General Issuess: _____

v. Other _____ (any topic that you have

a burning desire to study which is not mentioned in the present list)

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED SYLLABUS

LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	INTEGRATED
WEEK 1: TECHNOLOGY identifying true & false statements listening for specific information	self-expression in a discussion environment	scanning for specific information skimming	writing an explanation paragraph	preparing an advertisement about high –tech products.
WEEK 2: TRAVELLING listening for specific information and filling in the blanks	describing a place	comparing different sources of information	writing a description paragraph	writing a letter describing the holiday place

	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	INTEGRATED
WEEK 3 **MYSTERIES OF THE WORLD**	listening for specific information and filling the blanks	inform someone else on a specific topic	scanning and skimming vocabulary reference	writing comments by using given data	writing a paragraph describing the common myths in Turkish culture
WEEK 4 **ADDICTIONS**	listening for specific information	self-expression in a discussion environment inform someone	making inferences from a specific context skimming and scanning	writing a descriptive paragraph on a specific issue	preparing a short presentation about the ways of stopping addiction

LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	INTEGRATED
note taking

listening for specific information | making descriptions

acting out a dialogue | identifying the steps of certain process

referring to a specific vocabulary from a text | writing the rest of the text according to given sentence | writing a paragraph about including strategies to be successful in Olymipcs |

WEEK 5: ISSUES IN SPORTS

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

STUDENT INTERVIEW FORM

Date:

Start:

Finish:

Dear participant,

I work as an instructor at Atılım University Departmental English Language Studies Unit. I am collecting data about the effectiveness of the syllabus used in "Introduction to Communication Skills" course which you have taken in this semester. Your participation will help me to collect data about the effectiveness of two different syllabus used during this semester. This is an academic study and your name will not be mentioned in any part of the study. All information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Background information:

Sex:

Department:

Age:

Questions: (Part 1)

1) When did you start learning English?

2) What was your main goal when you started learning English?

3) What concrete language learning strategies do you have?

4) Do you like English language?

5) Why is it important to you to speak English?

6) When you started learning English, what difficulties did you expect to encounter?

7) What other foreign languages are you learning/had you learned?

   a) Do they have any effect on your English?

8) Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?

9) Do you have native English acquaintances? What do you think about them?

10) What do you think about British/American cultures in general?

11) How do you motivate yourself to learn English?

   a) What increases your motivation?

   b) What decreases you motivation?

12) What were you major successes in your English learning history?

13) What were you major failures in your English learning history?

   a) Have you ever considered giving up learning English?

14) Have you reached your initial goal you set when you started to learn English?

   a) Have you changed this goal while learning English?

15) What kind of language learner are you?

16) Do you think that time you spend for learning Emglish is enough?

17) Are you planinng to improve your English?

   a) If you are planning, what will you do?

PART 2:

1) Did the topics studied in this course during the first ten weeks attract your attract your attention? Which topics attract your attention most? Which topics did not attract your attention?

   a) If the topics had attracted you attention, what kind of positive affects had these topics had on you?

   b) If the topics had not attracted you attention, what kind of negative affects had these topics had on you?

2) Did the topics studied during the last five weeks attracted your attention?

3) Did the topics covered in the last five weeks helped you to develop a positive attitude towards the course? If yes, which topics? Why?

4) Do you have any background information about the topics covered during the last five weeks?

a) If you have backgrond information, did it have any negative of positive effect on you?

b) If you do not have ackground information, how did it affect yur learning?

5) In your own point of view, what are the differences between the topics covered during first ten weeks and last five weeks?

a) In what way did these differences affect your motivation?

b) In what way did these differences affect your learning?

Interview Questions (Turkish)

ÖĞRENCİ MÜLAKAT FORMU

Tarih:

Başlangıç:

Bitiş:

Sayın katılımcı,

Atılım Üniversitesi İngilizce Servis Dersleri Koordinatörlüğünde okutman olarak görev yapmaktayım. Bu dönem almış olduğunuz "Introduction to Communication Skills" dersinde uygulanan izlencenin etkinliği hakkında veri toplamaktayım. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız dönem içerisinde uygulanan iki farklı izlencenin etkileri hakkında bilgi toplamama yardımcı olacaktır. Bu tamamen akademik bir çalışmadır ve isminiz hiçbir aşamada kullanılmayacaktır. Mülakat boyunca vereceğiniz her türlü bilgi gizli tutulacaktır. Katkılarınız için teşekkür ederim.

Kisisel Bilgiler:

Cinsiyet:

Bölüm :

Yaş:

Sorular: 1. BÖLÜM

1) İngilizce öğrenmeye ne zaman başladınız?

2) İngilizce öğrenmdeki temel amacınız nedir?

3) İngilizce öğrenmek için kendi geliştridiğiniz stratejileriniz var mı?

4) İngilizceyi seviyor musunuz?

5) İngilizce konuşmak sizin için neden önemli?

6) İngilizceyi ilk öğrenmeye başladığınızda hangi zorluklarla
   karşılaşmayı bekliyordunuz?

7) İngilizcede başka bildiğiniz yabancı diller varmı?

   a) Eğer varsa İngilizce öğrenminize katkısı oldu mu? Nasıl?

8) Daha önce İngilizce konuşulan bir ülkede bulundunuz mu?

9) Anadili İngilizce olan arkadaşınız var mı? Onlar hakındaki görüşleriniz
nelerdir?

10) İngiliz ve Amerikan kültürleri hakkındaki genel düşünceleriniz
nelerdir?

11) İngilizce öğrenmek için kendiniz nasıl motive ediyorsunuz?

   a) Motivasyonuzu neler arttırır?

   b) Motivasyonunuzu neler düşürür?

12) İngilizce öğrenme sürecinizde en büyük başarılarınız nelerdir?

13) İngilizce öğrenme sürecinizde en büyük başarısızlıklarınız nelerdir?

a) Hiç İngilizce öğrenmeyi bırakmayı düşündünüz mü?

14) İngilizce öğrenmeye başlarken koyduğunuz hedefe ulaşabildiniz mi?

a) Öğrenme süreci devam ederken bu hedefinizde değişiklik yaptınız mı?

15) İngilizce öğrenimi konusunda kendinizi nasıl niteleyebilirsiniz?

16) İngilizce öğrenmeye ayırdığınız zaman sizce yeterli mi?

17) İngilizce seviyenizi yükseltmek için çalışma yapmayı planlıyor musunuz?

a) Eğer planlıyorsanız, ne gibi çalışmalar yapacaksınız?

2. BÖLÜM

1) Bu derste ilk 10 hafta boyunca işlenilen konular ilginizi çekti mi? Hangi konular en çok ilginizi çekti? Hangi konular en az ilgilinizi çekti?

a) Eğer ilginizi çektiyse, bunun size ne gibi pozitif etkileri oldu?

b) Eğer ilginiz çekmediyse, bunun ne gibi negatif etkileri oldu?

2) Bu derste son 5 hafta boyunca işlenilen konular ilginizi çekti mi?

3) Son 5 hafta işlenilen konular derse karşı pozitif tutum geliştirmenize katkı sağladı mı? Eğer sağladıysa, hangileri sağladı? Hangileri sağlamadı? Neden?

4) Son 5 hafta işlenilen konularla ilgili daha önceden bilginiz var mıydı? Varsa hangileri ile ilginiz vardı?

    a) Varsa size pozitif ya da negatif etkisi oldu mu?

    b) Yoksa öğrenmenize nasıl etkileri oldu?

5) İlk on hafta işlenilen konularla son beş hafta işlenilen konular arasındaki farklar sizce nelerdir?

    a) Bu farklar dersteki motivasyonunuzu hangi yönde etkiledi?

    b) Öğrenmenizi hangi yönde etkiledi?