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The Role of Topic-Based Virtual Speaking Club on Turkish Adult EFL Learners' Emotional Attitudes Towards Speaking in English

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ABSTRACT

English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in Turkish schools from primary to high school levels. However, a significant proportion of classroom time is devoted to grammar instruction, leaving less opportunity for speaking practice and hindering learners' ability to effectively develop their speaking skills. Considering this complication, this research explored the role of a 5-week long topic-based Virtual Speaking Club on Turkish adult EFL learners' emotional attitudes towards speaking in English in a group of people. Participants consisted of 20 adult Turkish EFL learners across Turkey and meetings were held via online conferencing platform. The data were collected through an online open-ended questionnaire and reflection papers received before and after the study. The findings of this

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research indicated that after participating in the virtual topic-based speaking club, the majority of participants' thoughts and emotional attitudes on speaking in English changed positively, self-confidence levels increased, levels of anxiety decreased, observed to become more self-reliant and confident to speak in videoconferencing platform, and improved their speaking skills. Additionally, participants had positive viewpoints regarding the idea of a Virtual Speaking Club.

Keywords: *Virtual Speaking Club, EFL Learners, Attitudes, Speaking Skills*

ÖZ

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL), ilkokuldan liseye kadar Türk okullarında öğretilmektedir. Ancak, sınıf zamanının önemli bir kısmının dilbilgisi öğretimine ayrılması konuşma pratiği için daha az fırsat bırakmakta ve öğrencilerin konuşma becerilerini etkili bir şekilde geliştirmelerini sekteye uğratmaktadır. Bu durumu göz önünde bulundurarak, bu araştırma, 5 haftalık konu temelli bir Sanal Konuşma Kulübünün İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen bir grup yetişkin Türk öğrencinin üzerindeki İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik duygusal tutumlarının rolünü araştırmıştır. Katılımcılar, Türkiye genelinde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen 20 yetişkin Türk öğrenciden oluşmuştur ve seanslar online konferans platformu aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler, çevrimiçi açık uçlu bir anket ve çalışmadan önce ve sonra alınan yansıtma kağıtları aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, sanal konu temelli konuşma kulübüne katıldıktan sonra, katılımcıların çoğunluğunun İngilizce konuşmaya ilişkin düşüncelerinin ve duygusal tutumlarının olumlu yönde değiştiğini, özgüven düzeylerinin arttığını, kaygı düzeylerinin azaldığını, video konferans platformunda konuşma konusunda kendine güvenenin arttığını ve konuşma becerilerinin geliştiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca katılımcılar Sanal Konuşma Kulübü fikrine olumlu bakmışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Sanal Konuşma Kulübü, EFL Öğrencileri, Tutumlar, Konuşma Becerileri*

1. Introduction

In the field of English language teaching, teaching language skills to the learners is very important. Teaching speaking skills are more challenging and a bit more valuable than teaching other skills, though. Depending upon the ages and levels of the students, the teacher uses different methodologies, techniques, and activities. However, in Turkey, especially in public schools, teaching speaking is underestimated. Therefore, most of the learners do not improve themselves and do not have positive attitudes towards speaking in English with self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm. According to Banks and Woolfson (2008),

“low self-perception of achievement and negative attributions are both associates of low self-esteem” (p. 49). As it states that when the learners have low achievement, their motivation decreases, as well. Attitudes of learners are very critical in terms of increasing their motivation to speak in the English language with self-confidence. To change their attitudes towards speaking in English, different approaches and education modes are carried out. In Turkey, due to the pandemic and quarantine period, all students, workers, and businesspeople were exposed to distance online education in terms of EFL context. Young adult and adult learners can effectively use online applications and modify their way of learning. As they have experience in this mode of education, adult learners’ attitudes -regarding self-confidence and motivation towards speaking in English can be effectively improved and changed positively. Forming a safe speaking environment is vital for the learners to increase their motivation and attitudes, especially emotional attitudes towards speaking in English (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Adult learners need to be surrounded by English-speaking environments to inspire and motivate themselves in terms of expressing and clarifying their ideas and feelings on various topics. Thematic programs which look at different topics by teaching speaking skills through a topic-based syllabus are very appropriate for this aim and learning process. Materials and engagement are also pretty important key points to contribute to the emotional attitudes of adult EFL learners. As the online speaking process provides different digital tools, the learners can improve their learning autonomy, as well. There are various apps that allow virtual speaking sessions such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, etc. Zoom, a synchronous videoconferencing tool, can promote language learning as well as motivate learners. As studied in some researches, Zoom can have a positive influence on learning outcomes as learners can have the chance to engage in synchronous verbal discussions. Similarly, they got positive attitudes as a result of having conversations in L2. It showed that online interaction with others can decrease anxiety levels (Martin, 2021).

The goal of this study is to determine and understand the role of the topic-based online speaking club on Turkish adult EFL learners’ emotional attitudes towards speaking English in a group of people.

2. Literature Review

There are various scientific studies on difficulties and concerns of EFL students in speaking skills. While some of them are related to teachers, others are related to students themselves. For example, teachers are not planning effective speaking activities, design learner-centered classes, and leave enough time for practicing speaking skills. Students, on the other hand, do not have

positive attitudes towards learning English, prefer using their mother tongue, are anxious about making mistakes, and cannot access enough resources as well as people to practice their speaking skills. Apparently, internal and external factors can result in low performance in L2 speaking skills (Soomro & Farooq, 2018).

Even though there are studies that cover the role of virtual classes or videoconferencing on speaking skills, there is no research that studies the role of the topic-based Virtual Speaking Club on Turkish adult EFL learners' emotional attitudes toward speaking in English. Hamouda (2020) investigated the effect of virtual classes on Saudi EFL students' speaking skills and their attitudes toward the use of virtual classes. Findings showed that virtual classes were beneficial in helping to improve speaking, pronunciation, and listening skills. Additionally, virtual learning classes were useful, easy, convenient, enjoyable, interesting, and helpful. Besides, it encouraged students to speak more, reduced their fear of speaking in front of others, and made them feel more confident to engage in discussions. Similar findings by Alshahrani (2016) revealed that students had positive attitudes toward the use of videoconferencing in speaking workshops, as they got the opportunity to involve in authentic dialogues and express their thoughts in L2. A positive impact of enjoyment and enthusiasm in speaking English was found. Canals (2020) also pointed out that through virtual exchanges, learners got motivated to learn the language, had positive thoughts about working with other learners, had more self-confidence while speaking, overcame shyness and insecurity, and made new friends.

Al-Jarf (2021) revealed that speaking activities during online courses were beneficial and effective in terms of improving speaking skills, self-confidence, relaxation, and new teaching experiences. Additionally, conversation clubs improve the knowledge of participants who are motivated to improve themselves and interested in overcoming their mistakes while speaking in English. It enables English learners to make new friends while practicing speaking skills, as well (Mosquera Ordoñez & Villafuerte Holguín, 2021). They create an opportunity to practice speaking in a natural context and provide a sense of community, which helps learners to practice their speaking skills and improve their fluency (Risma, 2021). This view is supported by Riyadini (2022), who argues that the Speaking Club provides sufficient activities to improve the speaking skills of the majority of participants and confidence in speaking in English along with numerous opportunities to speak in various contexts. Finally, Speaking Clubs can be a helpful practice outside of classroom instruction (Willis & Willis, 2007).

In terms of students' attitudes regarding the use of videoconferencing in a classroom, a study found that most students believe videoconferencing improves communication skills, interaction, and motivation. However, not all students are good at technology. Insufficient instruction and maintaining learners' interest can be the drawbacks of videoconferencing technology (Martin, 2005, as cited in Candarli & Yuksel, 2012). There are also studies on the relationship between videoconferencing and language learning. For instance, students can learn about their language learning strengths and weaknesses through the feedback provided in videoconferencing settings. Thus, enhance their academic performance (Chen et al., 2005, as cited in Martin, 2021). Additionally, in regards to the connection between the use of videoconferencing and students' anxiety levels, Awaliyah and Irianti (2022) observed that the interaction process was helpful in giving the anxious students more confidence to speak in English and take part in the learning process. With the use of videoconferencing technology, students can lessen their speaking fear in English class. However, some students experienced anxiety and embarrassment because of their limited language proficiency and weak internet connections, as well.

In light of these findings, it is safe to say that using virtual exchanges like virtual classes, online videoconferencing speech workshops, and Speaking Clubs have the power to leave positive impacts on EFL learners' attitudes, motivation, and speaking skills. However, as mentioned above, there is a gap in the literature regarding the role of the topic-based Virtual Speaking Club on Turkish adult EFL learners' emotional attitudes toward speaking in English. Therefore, this research paper aims to fill this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was carried out on the basis of a multiple case qualitative study to determine and understand the role of topic-based online speaking club on Turkish adult EFL learners' emotional attitudes towards speaking English.

3.2. Participants

In order to recruit participants, an online application form was shared both on social media and through instant messaging apps. The participants that took place in this study were 20 adult male and female Turkish EFL learners. The age range of the participants was between 20 and 45. They live in different parts of Turkey such as Istanbul, Hakkari, Izmir, and Karabük. Most of the participants were college students, but there were some participants who work as a businessperson, nurse, chemical engineer, and designer. They had no con-

nection to each other, as well. The participants had B1 level English competency in speaking. Most of the participants shared that they did not attend any speaking club before, except for a few of them. The participants' view of speaking in English was positive from the beginning, and they were happy to have conversations and answer the questions in an enthusiastic way.

3.3. Setting

This research and data collection is based on online communication tools as we did not want to limit this speaking club to the people who live in Istanbul only. The platform that the meetings were held was the Zoom application. Zoom is a communication application that provides video and audio conference, telephone system, chat, and webinar services through devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Since it was thought that it would be suitable for every participant, the meeting time of the speaking club was determined as 6:00 p.m. every Saturday. The speaking club had different topics such as life, media, technology, education, and sports.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

For the data collection part of this research, an online open-ended questionnaire form was created in Google Forms -before the study- and a reflection paper -after the study- was asked from participants. The questionnaire was adapted from Martin's research that published as "Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions of the Use of Synchronous videoconferencing to Develop their Speaking Competence" in 2021, which investigated similar research questions as this research paper. The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions. The data that was collected is used to determine the emotional attitude changes of the participants towards speaking in English.

3.5. Procedure

Firstly, an announcement was published on both social media and WhatsApp to find participants for the speaking club. Information about participants such as phone number, e-mail address, age, country, city, English proficiency, and profession were collected with the help of an online contact form that was created on Google Forms. Next, an online open-ended questionnaire form was created to get information about participants' thoughts, emotions, and attitudes towards speaking in English and the Virtual Speaking Club before attending the speaking club. In the light of gained data regarding the participants' thoughts and emotional attitudes before attending the speaking club were understood and evaluated. The speaking club's topic-based syllabus formed depending upon the data collected, as well. The meetings were about

1 to 2 hours long and each session had different main topics such as life, media, technology, education, etc. The teacher-researchers in this study acted as facilitators, participated in discussions, and used prompts (e.g. questions, photos, videos, etc.) sometimes throughout the speaking club sessions. After the 5-week-long speaking club, data about the participants' thoughts and emotional attitudes were collected again with an online questionnaire. Additionally, reflection papers about explaining feelings, emotions, attitudes, experiences, and comments were collected from the participants.

3.6. Data Analysis

This research is based on a qualitative research study with multiple case study method. The data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and reflection papers before and after the Virtual Speaking Club. Main themes and codes were developed by evaluating and analyzing the responses in this research (See Table 1).

There are six main themes of this research along with particular codes to every theme. The researchers categorized them into two different processes: before and after the study. Depending upon the themes and codes formed by the responses of the participants to open-ended questionnaires and reflection papers, all data were analyzed to clearly interpret them as well as to adequately structure the findings of this research.

Table 1. Themes, Codes, and Interpretations

THEMES	CODES	INTERPRETATIONS
Emotional Attitudes Towards Speaking English	<p>Before the study Nervous Fear Depending on setting Comfortable depending on topic</p> <p>After the study Self-reliance Relaxed Ambition Confident</p>	Through the study, the participants' emotions and attitudes towards speaking in English were changed in a positive way when it was compared to the answers before the study.
Level of Self-Confidence	<p>Before the study Enough Confident depending on the topic Moderate</p> <p>After the study Developing skills but not enough getting better over time and practice Feeling more confident in daily life but not in business life</p>	Through the study, participants' self-confidence was in a positive direction with some supportive points but not entirely good for every situation.
Anxiety Level	<p>Before the study Not so bad Feeling nervous depending on the topic High anxiety level</p> <p>After the study Less stressed Excited and focused Less anxious More relaxed</p>	Through the study, participants' anxiety levels decreased, and some other positive feelings came to light when it was compared to the findings before the study.
Using Videoconferencing Tools	<p>Before the study Advantageous Efficient Effective Not feeling comfortable</p> <p>After the study Communicating No barriers Increased self-reliance Useful Time-saver Thinking face-to-face way is more effective</p>	Through the study, the majority of participants' ideas about using videoconferencing tools were in a positive direction. It was seen that a minor negative idea was stable before and after the study.

<p>Level of Confidence and Anxiety Through Videoconferencing Tools</p>	<p>Before the study Being not very good Feeling independent and confident Feeling better Moderate Not feeling anxiety Not feeling comfortable After the study More self-reliance Feeling better More confident Decreased nervous feelings More relaxed Less stressed Less nervous</p>	<p>Through the study, the majority of participants' self-confidence levels through videoconferencing tools increased, and anxiety levels decreased when it was compared to the findings before the study.</p>
<p>Virtual Speaking Club</p>	<p>Before the study Advantageous Very useful Feeling curious and excited Pretty good Reasonable After the study Beneficial More practice with unfamiliar people Time-saver Effective Helpful Good experience Not worrying about making mistakes</p>	<p>Through the study, participants' ideas and attitudes towards the Virtual Speaking Club were completely in a positive direction.</p>

4. Findings

This section contains a thematic analysis of form transcriptions taken from the online open-ended questionnaire before and after the study along with a reflection paper. Additionally, a description regarding the frequency of words shared by participants was included through two different word clouds. In order to look for patterns and create categories, codes were assigned, as well (See Table 1).

4.1. Word Frequency of Questionnaire Form Before the Study

The researchers of this research used a word cloud generator website (Zygomatic) to arrange words that were shared by participants in questionnaire form before the study. It displays the frequency by the size of words from the transcription data of answers. The word cloud is presented down below (Figure 1).

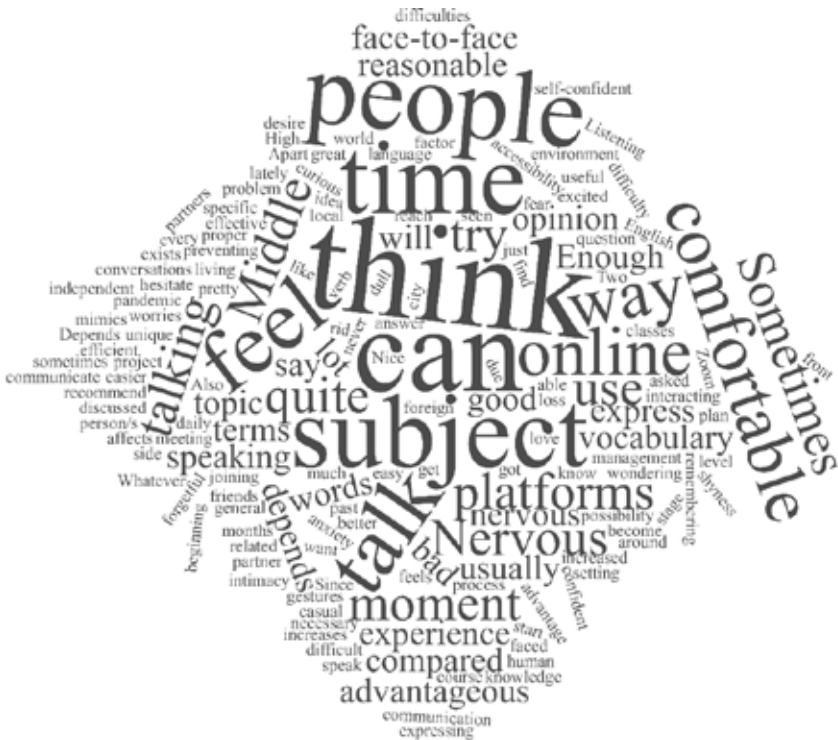


Figure 1. Word Cloud

The researchers found a high frequency of words containing “people”, “subject”, “nervous”, “talk”, “time”, “think”, etc. These words indicate participants’ thoughts regarding emotional attitudes toward speaking in English, level of confidence and anxiety, the use of a videoconferencing tool (Zoom), and the Virtual Speaking Club itself before participating in the topic-based Virtual Speaking Club. The frequency of these words implies that the majority of participants possessed nervous emotions, had speaking anxiety because of the possible subjects of speaking, and had issues with being able to speak in time-synchronously-.

4.2. Word Frequency of Questionnaire Form After the Study

Same with the previous word cloud generator website, the researchers of this study automatically arranged the words from participants' questionnaire form answers after the study. This word cloud demonstrates the frequency by the size of words from the transcription data of answers, as well. The word cloud is presented down below (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Word Cloud

This time, the researchers discovered a high frequency of words comprising “confident”, “speaking”, “Zoom”, “practice”, “comfortable”, “better”, etc. Moreover, the frequency for the word “nervous” was detected to be much smaller in comparison to the previous word cloud. After participating in the topic-based Virtual Speaking Club, participants' answers about their thoughts and emotional attitudes towards speaking in English, using the videoconferencing tool (Zoom), and regarding the Virtual Speaking Club itself changed positively.

4.3. Emotional Attitudes Towards Speaking in English

In the questionnaire forms before the study, participants' answers revealed that almost all of them had negative attitudes in terms of speaking in English. A few of them also highlighted their problem with limited vocabulary knowl-

edge which causes them to get nervous. Additionally, some participants stated that the changes in emotional attitude depend on the setting and the topic of discussions.

Excerpt 1: *“Since I think that my vocabulary has become quite dull lately, I am faced with the fear of not remembering the necessary words related to the subject I plan to talk about. Apart from this subject, I feel comfortable while speaking.”* (P2)

“In casual conversations, I am usually comfortable if a specific topic is not being discussed. I’ve had a lot of experience with speaking over the past few months. Sometimes when I can’t think of the verb I want to use while talking about a subject, I get nervous and I hesitate to use the same words all the time.” (P6)

By analyzing the questionnaire form answers, on the other hand, the researchers observed that participants’ emotional attitudes changed positively after participating in the Virtual Speaking Club. They stated that their self-reliance increased thanks to being able to practice speaking in English. Similarly, they mentioned feeling more relaxed and ambitious. Some of them pointed out how others influenced their attitudes to speaking in English, as well. However, one of the participants shared that he was feeling more relaxed if he has some previous knowledge about the topic.

Excerpt 2: *“I feel more self-confident now because practicing with people I don’t know made me feel more comfortable.”* (P1)

“If I have the information about the topic, I feel more self-reliant while talking English.” (P4)

4.4. Level of Self-Confidence

Participants’ level of self-confidence before the Virtual Speaking Club was noticed to be moderate according to their answers in the questionnaire before the study. Some of them again had issues such as being nervous which was associated with the topic of conversation, limited vocabulary knowledge, etc. One of the participants, however, shared that she overcome feeling shy in the past and was ready to speak regardless of the topic.

Excerpt 3: *“If my experience on the topic is proper or I have time to think, I am confident; but sometimes I have difficulty in expressing myself due to the problem with my vocabulary.”* (P2)

“In the beginning, I got rid of that shyness that exists in every human

being. Whatever the subject is, I can say that I am at the stage where I will try to talk.” (P6)

After the Virtual Speaking Club, most of the participants’ self-confidence levels were observed to increase according to their viewpoint. However, some of them stated that they still need some practice. By practicing with the Virtual Speaking Club, feeling more confident in terms of daily discussions was emphasized, as well.

Excerpt 4: “I think my speaking skill is getting better day by day. I think it will continue as I practice.” (P2)

“For business life, I still do not think that I am good at speaking. However, I feel more confident for daily conversation.” (P4)

4.5. Anxiety Level

Researchers detected that participants had moderate to high anxiety levels according to the questionnaire answers before the study. While some participants’ anxiety levels were correlated with their prior knowledge of the discussion topic and the people in front of them, others’ were not being able to answer a question in that synchronic moment. Apart from these, a participant stated that his relationship with the people he is talking have an effect on his anxiety level, as well.

Excerpt 5: “Sometimes I feel nervous, but this usually depends on my knowledge of the subject I am talking about and the person/s in front of me.” (P2)

“It worries me that I will never be able to answer a question asked me about any subject at that moment.” (P6)

After analyzing questionnaire answers, the researchers found that all participants progressed and their level of anxiety decreased while speaking in English both in face-to-face context and virtual context when they completed the Virtual Speaking Club.

Excerpt 6: “Now I feel less anxious and stressed.” (P6)

“I used to feel more stressed while speaking in English with multiple partners face to face. Now, I am better.” (P5)

4.6. Using Videoconferencing Tools

In questionnaire answers before the study, the videoconferencing tools were accepted as advantageous, efficient, and effective to have conversations in Eng-

lish, interacting with people, and practicing speaking skills by the majority of participants. Most of the participants gave emphasis to the benefit that comes with videoconferencing tools such as accessibility and saving time. Nevertheless, a minority of participants stated that videoconferencing tools come with some difficulties and they do not feel comfortable while using them, as well.

Excerpt 7: *“I think it is very advantageous in terms of both time management and accessibility. I use it and recommend it to my friends.”* (P2)

“Of course, it has some difficulties compared to face-to-face, but I can say that it is advantageous in general.” (P6)

Parallel to answers in the questionnaire before the study, the majority of participants again considered videoconferencing tools as advantageous while communicating with others. The researchers also analyzed that videoconferencing tools like Zoom are accepted as accessible, time-saver, and not limited by any barrier such as time and place, once again. In addition, videoconferencing tools are accepted as helpful to increasing self-confidence by the participants. However, one of the participants shared that she considers face-to-face communication more effective than virtual videoconferencing tools.

Excerpt 8: *“Organizing national and international video conferences in terms of time, place, economic, social and cultural aspect are very beneficial. It even allows the person to get rid of his/her lack of self-confidence.”* (P2)

“Video conversation tools such as Zoom are very useful to easy access and organize. I think, we can easily connect and talk.” (P4)

4.7. Level of Confidence and Anxiety Thorough Videoconferencing Tools

Regarding the level of confidence and anxiety through videoconferencing tools, participants had mixed stances from severe to assertive before participating in the Virtual Speaking Club. One of them, for instance, pointed out the potential limiting factors that take place in videoconferencing tools such as not being able to see the facial reactions of others, although she does not have severe anxiety.

Excerpt 9: *“I feel very independent and self-confident. If I have an opinion, I try to express it in the most reasonable way, which increases my desire to speak. Listening to the other side effects it in the same way.”* (P2)

“There isn’t much of an anxiety factor for me. I love interacting with people that I don’t know in a local or foreign language. Two people can start

talking at the same time online. Sometimes it can be difficult because the gestures and mimics of the people around cannot be seen moment by moment.” (P6)

According to post-questionnaire transcriptions, on the other hand, it was noted that after the Virtual Speaking Club, participants become more self-reliant and confident. Similarly, most of them pointed out the positive effect of Zoom on their anxiety regarding speaking in English through these kinds of video-conferencing tools.

Excerpt 10: “Online platforms used to make me more nervous in terms of doing anything in a foreign language. However, after this speaking club, I think my anxiety has decreased a lot.” (P6)

“Before, I thought that Zoom is more stressful than face to face. However, I feel more confident now.” (P5)

4.8. Virtual Speaking Club

All participants had positive viewpoints regarding the idea of a Virtual Speaking Club. The answers in the questionnaire before the study were similar to each other. The Virtual Speaking Club consented as something which can be advantageous and effective. Some participants shared their excitement about the concept of a Virtual Speaking Club, as well.

Excerpt 11: “I think it is quite reasonable to be online in terms of preventing time loss. Also, the possibility of meeting people not just people living in the same city but from all over the world is a unique advantage, in my opinion.” (P6)

“I am excited and wondering the process.” (P4)

Corresponding with questionnaire answers before the study, participants' views on the idea of the Virtual Speaking Club itself remained positive after completing the Virtual Speaking Club, as well. Some participants praised the advantages that come with being in a virtual context such as saving energy and time while joining and practicing speaking skills at home instead of going out. One of the participants also drew attention to some weak spots of the Virtual Speaking Club related to the interactive atmosphere.

Excerpt 12: “It is so helpful. In this way, I could practice with other people. Zoom is an available application for everyone. It is so useful.” (P5)

“Some additions could be made to make it more interactive. It was useful, but there were shortcomings.” (P2)

As it is mentioned before, participants were asked to write a reflection paper about the experience they had in general in their mother tongue -Turkish- at the end of the Virtual Speaking Club. The researchers carefully translated them into English and proofread them. All participants' views regarding the speaking club experience were positive. Their reflections were parallel with their answers in the post-questionnaire, as well. The Virtual Speaking Club helped participants to practice and improve their speaking skills a bit more, feel more confident, and connect with other people through a videoconferencing tool while speaking about daily life topics.

Excerpt 13: *“The English speaking club was a good experience for me. In general, the chosen speaking topics were good topics... It was very beneficial for me when you helped me with the words that I did not know and had difficulty pronouncing. No matter how difficult it is to speak English, I was comfortable while trying to express myself since you assisted...”* (P6)

“I felt very good throughout the speaking club project. I usually do not hesitate while speaking in English but the problems I have are due to my lack of vocabulary... This prevented speaking fluently and demotivated me... With this project, I came to the conclusion that minor mistakes can be ignored or implicitly conveyed so that the conversation continues without delay... Mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, etc. can be made while speaking in English, but with this project, I have experienced once again that this can be overcome with practice...” (P2)

Table 2 below shows the key points and a summarized version of the findings.

Table 2. Key Points and Summarized Findings

FINDINGS

Word Frequency of Questionnaire Form Before the Study	<p>The researchers found a high frequency of words containing “people”, “subject”, “nervous”, “talk”, “time”, “think”, etc.</p> <p>These words can imply that the majority of participants possessed nervous emotions, had speaking anxiety.</p>
Word Frequency of Questionnaire Form After the Study	<p>The researchers discovered a high frequency of words comprising “confident”, “speaking”, “Zoom”, “practice”, “comfortable”. better etc.</p> <p>After participating in the topic-based virtual speaking club, participants’ thoughts and emotional attitudes changed positively.</p>
Emotional Attitudes Towards Speaking in English	<p>It is observed that negative emotions and thoughts are replaced with positive ones.</p>
Level of Self-Confidence	<p>By practicing with the virtual speaking club, self-confidence levels increased.</p>
Anxiety Level	<p>Researchers found that participants had moderate to high anxiety levels according to the questionnaire answers before the study.</p> <p>After analyzing questionnaire answers after the study, the researchers found that all participants progressed positively, and their level of anxiety decreased.</p>
Using Videoconferencing Tools	<p>Mostly, videoconferencing tools were considered as something that advantageous before and after the study.</p>
Level of Confidence and Anxiety Thorough Videoconferencing Tools	<p>Participants had mixed stances from severe to assertive before participating in the virtual speaking club.</p> <p>After the virtual speaking club, participants become more self-reliant and confident.</p>
Virtual Speaking Club	<p>All participants had positive viewpoints regarding the idea of a virtual speaking club.</p>
Reflection Papers	<p>Participants practiced and improved their speaking skills a bit more, felt more confident, and connected with others through a videoconferencing tool while speaking about daily life topics.</p>

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to determine and understand the role of the topic-based Virtual Speaking Club on Turkish adult EFL learners' emotional attitudes towards speaking in English. This research is important in terms of seeing that when people are given a chance to practice speaking, which is one of the most critical points of learning a foreign language, they develop emotional attitudes towards speaking English. As a result of this research, it was observed that the participants had a positive experience and viewpoint during the Virtual Speaking Club in general. They seemed to feel more self-reliant and comfortable expressing themselves and discussing their thoughts in L2, and the positive atmosphere encouraged them to speak the language. Similarly, their self-confidence levels and anxiety levels were observed to positively change. The majority of participants' attitudes towards the use of videoconferencing tools were positive, as well. These findings show that when people who have insecurities or limited experience/vocabulary knowledge start practicing speaking in English instead of absconding, they can overcome the negative emotional attitudes and improve their English no matter how small it is. So, the more they practice the more they feel better. Similarly, using Zoom for the speaking club was useful since all of the participants had access to it. Thanks to these aspects, their experiences and emotional attitudes turn out positive in general at the end of the day.

A similar result was also seen in the research conducted by Alshahrani (2016) with an online videoconferencing speech workshop. Using L2 in an authentic environment had a positive impact on participants in the study. Additionally, the research conducted by Canal (2020) has the same findings with this research that through virtual interactions, participants got motivated to learn the language, had positive thoughts about working with other learners, had more self-confidence while speaking, overcame shyness and insecurity, and made new friends. Therefore, the results that were found in this study corroborate with previous research.

6. Conclusion

Before the Virtual Speaking Club, the majority of participants' confidence and anxiety towards speaking in English were negative. At the end of the study, it was analyzed that there were positive improvements in the participants' emotional attitudes towards speaking in English. This study also revealed the improvement that participants had with using videoconferencing tools. It also revealed that even though there is a debate on whether online education, online courses or clubs are beneficial or not, it can be declared that there are still

positive improvements on emotions by an online speaking club regardless of scope. So, these speaking clubs can be helpful to improve confidence, get rid of shyness, reduce anxiety, and also indirectly can help participants to fix their grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation.

7. Implications

This qualitative research study conducted with multiple case study method clearly infers the fundamental points of the structural framework that the study has. Based on the data analysis, the emotional attitudes and self-confidence level while speaking in English, the anxiety level while speaking in English, using videoconferencing tools such as Zoom which is the online platform used in this study as a setting, confidence level of the participants through videoconferencing tools, anxiety level of the participants through videoconferencing tools, and the attitudes of the participants towards virtual English speaking club were clearly and effectively handled during the study to understand and evaluate the participants' changes in emotional attitudes. Therefore, the findings demonstrated that both emotional changes of the participants and their attitudes towards speaking English via an online platform positively improved and the participants showed satisfaction of being in this speaking club. The videoconferencing tools were also valuable and useful for the participants. The speaking club was observed to contribute to the participants' attitudes towards the videoconferencing tools while speaking English and changed emotional attitudes towards speaking English with self-reliance and self-confidence. The one important implication of this study is that the maintainability of similar projects as speaking clubs can be conducted with the help of a topic-based syllabus and a comfortable online setting which is one of the fundamental components of this project.

8. Limitations and Future Studies

Despite the successful carrying out of this research study with completely maintained structures and components, there have been some limitations. One of them was the decreasing number of participants in the study. The term "participant loss" clearly explains the situation. Although all participants filled out the open-ended questionnaires before the study, their number decreased when the speaking club project officially started. Another limitation was the limited time of the Zoom application, which was the setting of the study. Occasionally, the 40-minute time period on Zoom did not let the meetings go on without damaging the flow of conversations. This made some meetings challenging. One more limitation was that apart from using open-ended questionnaires and reflection papers, other tools such as voice recordings or short videos could be

used to see the changes and improvements of emotional attitudes of the participants more effectively.

In the light of the data analysis and findings of this research, similar projects and further studies to elaborate, develop concepts and goals of the current study can be conducted by considering the different points and required improvements that this study clarifies. For example, with the help of extra diverse topics like moral dilemmas, cultural differences; longer time period such as monthly or yearly meetings instead of weekly meetings; and via different online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meets. Turkish EFL learners can improve their speaking skills, perceptions, and attitudes with the help of different instruments or materials such as literature, films, story critics and some debates about particular titles or topics. In order not to encounter some possible problems such as participant loss, the concept and the methodology of the project should be thoroughly constructed. Additionally, for different participant groups such as Turkish young EFL learners, speaking club projects via games and storytelling can be carried out. As mentioned before, future studies can search this topic with using different ways like a task-based approach including the emotional attitude differences between genders by having a homogeneous participant group.

Conflict of interests: The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Form (Bilingual)

Form
Q1. How do you feel while speaking in English? TR: İngilizce konuşurken nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
Q2. How would you describe your level of confidence with your English speaking skills? TR: İngilizce konuşma becerilerinize olan güven seviyenizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
Q3. How would you describe your level of confidence with your English speaking skills while using videoconferencing tools (such as Zoom)? TR: Video konferans araçlarını (Zoom gibi) kullanırken ki İngilizce konuşma becerilerinize olan güven seviyenizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
Q4. How would you describe your anxiety level while speaking in English with multiple partners face-to-face? TR: Birden fazla partnerle yüz yüze eşzamanlı olarak İngilizce konuşurken ki kaygı seviyenizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
Q5. How would you describe your anxiety level while speaking in English via videoconferencing tools (such as Zoom) with multiple partners synchronously? TR: Birden fazla partnerle eşzamanlı olarak video konferans araçları (Zoom gibi) aracılığıyla İngilizce konuşurken ki kaygı düzeyinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
Q6. What do you think of the use of videoconferencing tools (such as Zoom) to have conversations in English, interact with people, and practice speaking skills? TR: İngilizce sohbet etmek, insanlarla iletişim kurmak ve konuşma becerileri pratiği yapmak için video konferans araçlarının (Zoom gibi) kullanımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
Q7. What do you think about the virtual English-speaking club? TR: Sanal İngilizce konuşma kulübü hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

Konu Tabanlı Sanal Konuşma Kulübünün Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenen Yetişkin Türk Öğrencilerin İngilizce Konuşmaya Yönelik Duygusal Tutumlarındaki Rolü

Geniş Özet

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, Türkiye’de ilkokuldan lise son sınıfa kadar öğretilmektedir. Eğitim hayatımızın büyük bir bölümünde İngilizce dersi alsak bile, zamanın büyük bir kısmı konuşmaktan çok gramer kurallarına harcanmakta ve dezavantaj haline gelmektedir. Öğrenenler pratik yapma şansı bulamadıkları için konuşma becerilerini etkili bir şekilde edinemiyorlar. İnsanlar okul hayatlarında ve/veya iş hayatlarında İngilizce konuşamama konusunda güvensizlik duyabiliyorlar. İngilizce öğretimi alanında, öğrencilere dil becerilerinin öğretilmesi çok önemlidir. Yine de konuşma becerilerini öğretmek, diğer becerileri öğretmekten daha zorlayıcı ve biraz daha değerlidir. Öğrencilerin yaşlarına ve seviyelerine bağlı olarak, öğretmenler farklı metodolojiler, teknikler ve etkinlikler kullanır. Ancak Türkiye’de, özellikle devlet okullarında, konuşma becerileri öğretimi hafife alınmaktadır. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin çoğu kendilerini geliştiremez, özgüven, motivasyon ve İngilizce konuşmaya karşı olumlu tutumlara sahip olamazlar. Başarı düşük olduğunda motivasyonlarının da düştüğü gözlemlenmektedir. Öğrencilerin tutumları, İngilizceyi özgüvenle konuşma motivasyonlarını artırmak açısından çok kritik bir noktadır. İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik tutumlarını değiştirmek için farklı yaklaşımlar ve eğitim biçimleri uygulanmaktadır. Rahat bir konuşma ortamı oluşturmak, öğrencilerin motivasyonlarını ve tutumlarını, özellikle de İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik duygusal tutumlarını artırmak için hayati önem taşır (Ryan ve Deci, 2017). Yetişkin öğrencilerin, çeşitli konularda fikirlerini ve duygularını ifade etme, açıklama açısından motive olmaları için İngilizce konuşulan ortamlarda bulunmaları gerekir. Konuşma becerisini konu temelli bir müfredatla öğretmek farklı konulara bakan tematik programlar, bu amaç ve öğrenme süreci için çok uygundur. Eşzamanlı bir video konferans aracı olan Zoom, dil öğrenimini teşvik etmenin yanı sıra öğrencileri motive edebilir. EFL (Yabancı Dil olarak

İngilizce) öğrencilerinin konuşma becerilerindeki zorlukları ve endişeleri üzerine çeşitli bilimsel çalışmalar mevcuttur. Hamouda (2020), sanal sınıfların Suudi EFL öğrencilerinin konuşma becerileri ve sanal sınıfların kullanımına yönelik tutumları üzerindeki etkisini araştırdı. Bulgular, sanal sınıfların konuşma, telaffuz ve dinleme becerilerini geliştirmede faydalı olduğunu gösterdi. Ek olarak, sanal öğrenme sınıfları yararlı, kolay, kullanışlı, eğlenceli, ilginç ve faydalıydı. Ayrıca, öğrencileri daha fazla konuşmaya teşvik etti, başkalarının önünde konuşma korkularını azalttı ve tartışmalara katılma konusunda kendilerine daha fazla güvenmelerini sağladı. Alshahrani'nin (2016) benzer bulguları, yabancı dili otantik bir ortamda kullanan katılımcılar üzerinde olumlu bir etki yarattı. Canals (2020) ayrıca sanal etkileşimler yoluyla öğrencilerin dili öğrenmek için motive olduklarına, diğer öğrencilerle çalışma konusunda olumlu düşüncelere sahip olduklarına, konuşurken daha fazla özgüvene sahip olduklarına, utangaçlık ve güvensizliğin üstesinden geldiklerine ve yeni arkadaşlar edindiklerine dikkat çekti. Al-Jarf (2021), çevrimiçi kurslar sırasında konuşma etkinliklerinin konuşma becerilerini geliştirme, özgüven, rahatlama ve yeni öğretim deneyimleri açısından faydalı ve etkili olduğunu ortaya koydu. Ayrıca konuşma kulüpleri, kendilerini geliştirmek için motivasyonu olan ve İngilizce konuşurken yaptıkları hataların üstesinden gelmek isteyen katılımcıların bilgilerini geliştirmekte. Ek olarak, İngilizce öğrenenlerin konuşma becerileri pratiği yaparken yeni arkadaşlar edinmelerini de sağlıyor (Mosquera Ordoñez & Villafuerte Holguín, 2021). Konuşma Kulüpleri doğal bir ortamda konuşma pratiği yapma fırsatı yaratır ve konuşma akıcılıklarını geliştirmelerine yardımcı olarak bir topluluk duygusu sağlar (Risma, 2021). Bu görüş, Konuşma Kulübünün konuşma becerisini ve İngilizce konuşmaya olan özgüveni geliştirmeye yardımcı olduğunu ve çeşitli konularda konuşmak için sayısız fırsat sağladığını savunan Riyadini (2022) tarafından da desteklenmektedir. Son olarak, Konuşma Kulüpleri, sınıf eğitimi dışında kullanılabilir faydalı bir uygulama olabilir (Willis & Willis, 2007). Bu bulguların ışığında, sanal sınıflar, çevrimiçi video konferans konuşma atölyeleri ve Konuşma Kulüpleri gibi sanal iletişim kurmanın, EFL öğrencilerinin tutumları, motivasyonları ve konuşma becerileri üzerinde olumlu etkiler bırakma gücüne sahip olduğu söylenebilir. Ancak, konu temelli Sanal Konuşma Kulübü'nün İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk yetişkin öğrencilerin İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik duygusal tutumları üzerindeki rolüne ilişkin literatürde bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma makalesi bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, çoklu durum nitel araştırmasına dayalı olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar Türkiye genelinde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen 20 yetişkin Türk'ten oluştu ve toplantılar Zoom uygulaması üzerinden gerçekleştirildi.

Bu araştırmanın veri toplama kısmı için Google Forms'ta çevrimiçi açık uçlu bir anket formu oluşturuldu ve katılımcılardan bir geri bildirim yazısı istendi. Anket, Martin'in 2021'de "EFL Öğrencilerinin Konuşma Yetkinliklerini Geliştirmek İçin Eşzamanlı Video Konferans Kullanımına İlişkin Algılarını Keşfetmek" başlıklı araştırma makalesi ile uyarlandı ve 7 sorudan oluşuyor. Toplanan veriler, katılımcıların İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik duygusal tutum değişikliklerini belirlemek için kullanıldı. Konuşma Kulübü seansları yaklaşık 1 ila 2 saat sürdü ve her oturumda yaşam, medya, teknoloji, eğitim vb. konular konuşuldu. 5 hafta süren konuşma kulübünün ardından veriler çevrimiçi açık uçlu bir anket ve geri bildirim kâğıdı aracılığıyla toplandı. Bu çalışmanın bulguları çoğunlukla olumluydu. Bulgular, Sanal Konuşma Kulübü'nden önce katılımcıların İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik özgüvenlerinin ve kaygılarının çoğunluğunun olumsuz olduğunu gösterdi. Çalışmanın sonunda, katılımcıların İngilizce konuşmaya yönelik duygusal tutumlarında olumlu gelişmeler olduğu analiz edildi. Sonuçlar çoğunlukla olumlu olsa da bazı sonuçların, bazı katılımcılar için yeterli olmadığı gözlemlendi. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda katılımcıların video konferans araçlarını kullanmakla elde ettikleri gelişmeyi de ortaya koydu. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma bir Sanal Konuşma Kulübüne katılmanın önemli olduğunu da gösterebilir. Ayrıca, çevrimiçi eğitim, çevrimiçi kurslar veya kulüpler yapmanın yararlı olup olmadığı tartışılrsa da, kapsamı ne olursa olsun çevrimiçi konuşma kulübü ile duygular üzerinde olumlu gelişmelerin olabileceği ortaya çıktı. Dolayısıyla, bu konuşma kulüpleri özgüveni artırmaya, utangaçlıktan kurtulmaya, kaygıyı azaltmaya yardımcı olabilir ve dolaylı olarak katılımcıların dilbilgisini, cümle yapılarını ve telaffuzlarını düzeltmelerine yardımcı olabilir. Benzer bir sonuç Alshahrani (2016) tarafından çevrimiçi video konferans konuşma atölyesi ile yapılan araştırmada da görüldü. Yabancı dili otantik bir ortamda kullanmak, araştırmaya katılanlar üzerinde olumlu bir etki yarattı. Ek olarak, Canal (2020) tarafından yapılan araştırma, sanal etkileşimler yoluyla katılımcıların dili öğrenmek için motive olduklarını, diğer öğrencilerle çalışma konusunda olumlu düşüncelere sahip olduklarını, konuşurken daha fazla özgüven sahibi olduklarını, utangaçlıklarını yendiklerini ve yeni arkadaşlar edindiklerini ortaya çıkarttı. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada bulunan sonuçlar önceki araştırmaların sonuçları ile uyumludur.

