

Confidence Building Strategies Adopted in an EAP Speaking Course at METU and Their Effectiveness: A Case Study

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Abstract : For most language learners, mastery of the speaking skill is the proof of the mastery of the foreign language. On the other hand, the speaking skill is considered as the most difficult aspect of language learning to develop for both learners and teachers. Especially in countries like Turkey where exposure to the target language is minimum and resources and opportunities provided for language practice are scarce, teaching and learning to speak the language become a real struggle for teachers and learners alike. Data collected from students, instructors, faculty members and the business sector in needs analysis studies conducted previously at Middle East Technical University (METU) consistently revealed the need for addressing the problem of lack of confidence in speaking English. Action was taken during the design of the only EAP speaking course offered in Modern Languages Department since lack of confidence is considered to be a serious barrier for effective communication and causes learners to suffer from insecurity, uncertainty and fear. "Confidence building" served as the guiding principle in the syllabus design, nature of the tasks created for the course and the assessment procedures to help learners become more confident speakers of English. In order to see the effectiveness of the decisions made during the design phase of the course and whether students become more confident speakers upon completion of the course, a case study was carried out with 100 students at METU. A questionnaire including both Likert-Scale and open-ended items were administered to students to collect data and this data were analyzed using the SPSS program. Group interviews were also carried out to gain more insight into the effectiveness of the course in terms of building speaking confidence. This presentation will explore the specific actions taken to develop students' confidence based on the findings of program evaluation studies and to what extent the students believe these actions to be effective in improving their confidence. The unique design of this course and strategies adopted for confidence building are highly applicable in other EAP contexts and may yield similar positive results.

Keywords : confidence, EAP, speaking, strategy

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