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THE EFFECT OF USING GAP FILLERS ON ORAL EXAMINATIONS OF PREP-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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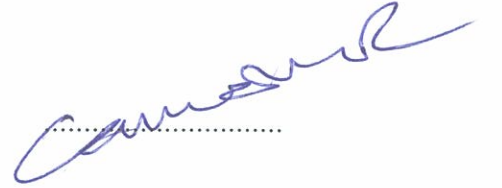
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BOŞLUK DOLDURUCU KULLANIMININ HAZIRLIK ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KONUŞMA SINAVLARI ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ
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ÖZ

İngilizce öğrenenlerin karşılaştığı en büyük problemlerden biri konuşma becerilerinin geliştirilmesidir. Öğrencilerin konuşma becerilerini geliştirmeye çalışan öğretmenler olarak, takip edecek birçok yol ve kullanacak birçok metot bulabiliriz. Boşluk doldurucu öğretimi de bu yol ve metotlardan biri olarak düşünülebilir. Bu amaçla, çalışmada hem nicel hem de nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanıldı. Bu çalışmada 20 hazırlık öğrencisi (10 deney, 10 kontrol grubu) ve üç boşluk doldurucu öğretim oturumu yer aldı. Örneklemin seçiminde öznel olduğundan dolayı, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanıldı. Araştırmanın nicel kısmında, sözlü sınav başarılarına ilişkin boşluk doldurucu öğretilen ve öğretilmeyen öğrenciler arasında bir fark olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmak amaçlandı. Nicel veriler öğrencilerin sözlü sınav sonuçlarından elde edildi ve SPSS v24'te çıkarımsal istatistik (Eşleştirilmiş örneklem t-testi ve bağımsız örneklem t-testi) ile analiz edildi. Sonuçlar, çalışmanın deney grubu ile kontrol grubu arasında anlamlı bir farklılık oluşturmadığını göstermektedir. Çalışmanın nitel kısmına gelince, ilk olarak, sözlü sınav sırasında deney grubundaki öğrenciler tarafından en çok hangi boşluk doldurucuların kullanıldığını bulmak amaçlandı. Veriler, sözlü sınav görüntü kayıtlarından elde edildi. Sözlü sınavların görüntü kayıtları araştırmacı tarafından dinlendi ve öğretilenler arasından kullanılan boşluk doldurucuları not edildi. Sonuçlar "Biliyorsunuz", "Düşüneyim" ve "Sanırım" ın öğrenciler tarafından en çok kullanılan boşluk doldurucular olduğunu göstermektedir. İkinci olarak, öğrencilerin boşluk doldurucuları öğrenme hakkındaki görüşleri yazılı geri bildirim formlarıyla alınmış, Nvivo yazılımı v12'de tematik içerik analizi yapılarak analiz edildi. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin boşluk doldurma öğrenimini beğendiklerini ve onları öğrenme konusunda olumlu hisleri olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Konuşma becerilerinin geliştirilmesi, Boşluk Doldurucu, Sözlü Sınav

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest problems that learners of English have faced is improving their speaking skills. As teachers, while trying to enhance their speaking skills, we can find many ways to follow and many methods to use. Teaching gap fillers can be considered to be one of them. For this purpose, the study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This study employed 20 prep-school students as participants (10 students in experimental group and 10 students in control group) and three gap filler teaching sessions. Purposive sampling method was used since it is subjective regarding the selection of the samples. Within the quantitative side of the study, it was aimed to reveal whether there is a difference among students who were taught and not taught gap fillers regarding their success in an oral examination. The quantitative data were obtained from students` oral examination results and analyzed by means of inferential statistics (Paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test) on SPSS v24. The results show that the study did not yield any significant differences between the experimental and control group. As for the qualitative side of the study, firstly it was aimed to find out what gap fillers were mostly used by the students in the experimental group during the oral examination. The data were obtained from video recordings of oral examinations. Video recordings of oral examinations were listened by the researcher and the used gap fillers among taught were noted. The results show that "You know", "Let me think" and "I guess" were the gap fillers mostly used by the students. Secondly, students` views on learning gap fillers were received by means of written feedback and analyzed by conducting thematic content analysis on Nvivo software v12. The results show that the students appreciated learning gap fillers and had positive feelings towards learning them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a complex process which involves the improvement of four main skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening, and requires improvement in their sub-skills, too. Among these skills, speaking is considered the most important one in our lives and it is the most challenging skill to develop. Even when people speak in their native language, they may have hard times in explaining themselves from time to time, so it is natural for a second language learner to have problems with speaking. While speaking, the difficulties that the learners have may source from the use of first language, worrying about making mistakes and lack of vocabulary. All these difficulties may prevent the learners from showing what they know or expressing what they actually want to say. Specifically, lack of vocabulary knowledge of the learners may cause not to express themselves truly. The students may learn lots of vocabulary items by themselves, but they may not know how to hesitate, how to clarify themselves or how to get time while planning their next utterance. All the words, which are named 'gap fillers', are uttered naturally while speaking in native language. However, in second language, the students should be exposed to the context where these words are used to learn these vocabulary items or a source which represents a model such as a teacher using these words while giving lecture or interacting with students. Therefore, it may be difficult to learn these fillers if the students are not aware of their usage. Therefore, the students may have difficulty while speaking because of the fact that they do not know how to hesitate, how to clarify themselves or how to buy time in the second language. Especially, during oral examinations that students have to perform in the target language, if they do not know how to deal with the factors affecting their speaking skills, they cannot make progress. As teachers, we should increase their awareness about the strategies and show a helpful way to

provide them with ways to overcome their problems that they face during speaking, to be specific, during the oral examinations. Thus, teaching gap fillers and increasing students` awareness in this issue may provide an improvement in their oral proficiency.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Several studies have shown the importance of using discourse markers as a part of pragmatic competence. According to Thomas (1983), pragmatic competence is defined as an effective way of communication and it is stated that it includes knowledge beyond the level of grammar. Pragmatic competence should be embedded in learning and teaching process of a foreign language. Regarding this, discourse markers are inseparable parts of pragmatic competence and have a vital role in language learning and teaching. According to Müller (2004), speakers who are the non-native ones use discourse markers more frequently than native speakers. The reason why they might use the discourse markers more often may be explained by pauses during their speech and also the amount of hesitation.

Showing different ways of reducing the length of pauses and hesitation in speaking or how to hesitate and how to clarify the words in a second language has been neglected as a part of teaching second language. Some students may overcome this problem by exposing themselves to the target language outside the classroom by doing several practice such as watching films, listening to music or chatting with friends from other nations. In that way, they may acquire how to hesitate, what to say when they hesitate, or how to clarify themselves in target language. While the number of the students who expose themselves to the language is a few, most of the students do not have an awareness of using discourse markers, specifically, gap fillers. According to Nakatani (2005), it is very important to raise students` awareness about this issue to improve their speaking skill when they encounter a problem in communication and have a problem in fluency. Teaching gap fillers in this sense has a vital role in students` learning of a second language and has an effect on their speaking performance. Therefore, this study will suggest a better understanding of the contribution of teaching gap fillers to students` academic success in an oral examination.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Clark & Fox Tree (2002) claimed that fillers have a place in speaker`s vocabulary and serve as a tool of communicative function (p. 97). Due to the fact that using gap fillers has an effect on learners` oral communication in second language, there is a necessity to teach fillers to improve L2 learners` speaking skill and to contribute to their academic success. For this purpose, the study tries to find the answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there any significant difference among the students who were taught "gap fillers" and the ones who were not taught "gap fillers" regarding their success in an oral examination?

RQ2: What are the most frequently used gap fillers by the students during the oral examination?

RQ3: What are the students` views on learning 'gap fillers' to improve their speaking skills?

1.4. Importance of the Study

Discourse markers were studied by many researchers. However, specifically, 'gap fillers' were studied by just a few researchers. As discussed in introduction part of the research, teaching gap filler may have an important role in learning English. When the studies related to discourse markers conducted in Turkey were examined, it can be concluded that studies on fillers and especially on their teaching in second language are not to our knowledge. It is an inevitable fact that non-native speakers show hesitation a lot while they are speaking in L2. Moreover, they have difficulty when they need to clarify themselves. Not knowing or finding correct words or phrases to use in such kind of situations make them influent. If hesitation and long pauses are unavoidable things for the second language learners during their speech, to teach them how they can hesitate, how they can clarify themselves and how they can gain time to think during the speech in a more native-like way would seem sensible, and would have an effect on their speaking performance. Therefore, their teaching is quite important. By investigating the relationship between knowing gap fillers and showing a better performance in an oral examination and by examining the students` views on learning gap fillers in their teaching context, it is believed that pedagogical implications can be concluded, the importance of teaching gap

fillers in an English as a second language context can be understood better, and suggestions can be made according to findings of the study.

1.5. Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that the participants in this study answered the questions in written feedback forms sincerely and honestly.

1.6. Definitions

Discourse Markers: Discourse markers are words and phrases used to mark boundaries in a conversation or in a speech between one topic and the next (McCarthy & Carter, 2007).

Gap Fillers: Fillers are discourse markers that speakers use when they think, hesitate or clarify their words during their speech.

Oral Examination: It is an oral test including an examiner and an examinee and assessing the performance of examinee.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the detailed background information to the study by focusing on the general framework of the study. Brief information about the role of speaking skill in language learning will be introduced. The factors affecting speaking skill will be discussed by highlighting using gap-fillers. In the sequel, the ways of how to improve speaking skill will be explained. Finally, speaking assessment will be mentioned.

2.2. The role of speaking in language learning

Communication is one of the most crucial elements of human nature. As human beings, we communicate verbally and non-verbally to meet our needs and to understand the world around us as a whole. In traditional perception, language is changing the codes of one language to another and "if the language learning program focuses on the code, then it models a theory of language in which the relationship between two languages is simply a matter of code replacement, where the only difference is a difference in words" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009, p. 17). When it is seen as a communication tool and a creation of meaning, "language is a system of communication that enables humans to exchange verbal or symbolic utterances" (Burgin, 2016, p. 404). All people "regardless of their age, have already acquired at least one language" (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 36); however, as human beings` needs are not satisfied just by their mother tongue, the need of learning other languages has emerged.

Learning a language is a challenging and a difficult process involving the improvement of the four main skills to be competent in target language. Among those main skills, some researchers think speaking as the most challenging skill because of the fact that it is closely

interrelated to other areas (Grainger, 2000; Hall & Austin, 2004). Shumin (2011) claims that to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing the grammatical and semantic rules. This statement can be proven by the fact that in Turkish context where the foreign language learners of English do not have opportunities to speak English out of the classroom although they are taught the grammatical rules to a certain extent. For this reason, foreign language learners need guidance to be competent in speaking skill and to have and to enhance their confidence while learning it. "Learners very often need the guiding and motivating attitude of their teachers so that they can be aware of which directions to follow or what steps to leave behind to be competent in speaking and to improve their self-confidence" (Yavuz, 2017, p. 47). If we, as teachers of foreign language, want our students to communicate in the target language and to develop their speaking skill, then we have to take this fact into consideration and design our teaching according to their needs to be able a guidance in line with this fact.

Speaking skill needs the simultaneous use of many different abilities and each of these abilities develops at different rates. When the process of speaking is analyzed, it is possible to discuss that the speaker needs to make use of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (assuming that the speaker responds to oral stimuli). Çakır (2008) presents a problem encountered by students when they try to speak:

> "In speaking, the problem is not always directly related with language competence. Students simply do not know how to present and develop a topic. The knowledge on presenting a subject will enhance their communicative competence. It will be surprising to see students confidently conversing on a subject if they have an adequate practice on general subjects." (2008: p. 1408)

As teachers, we should give importance to providing opportunities for the students to use the target language on general subjects. To be more competent and fluent, the students should put the knowledge into action. In spoken context, the learner does not manage only with knowledge, but also s/he should be capable of forming the knowledge and adjust her or his contribution to the immediate situation. This includes using the knowledge and making quick decisions for the situations encountered.

Hoekje and Williams (2006) assume that there are a few components underlying an effective speaking. They claim that the learner should know both how to interact with others in different situations and relationships and how to form and use linguistic knowledge. According to Canale and Swain (1980), to be competent in speaking skill, the learner should have grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic

competence, and strategic competence, which show the functional aspects of communication;

a. Grammatical Competence: Grammatical competence is the ability to recognize and produce the distinctive grammatical structures of a language and to use them effectively in communication**.** It includes the knowledge of words and sentences that are the crucial key of conveying meaning for second language learners.

b. Discourse Competence: As it is mentioned above, to be competent in speaking, just having grammatical competence is not enough alone, the learner should have discourse competence as well. In a broad sense, discourse competence means using language in social context. There are two main aspects of discourse competence: cohesion and coherence (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995). Cohesion refers to using linking expressions, such as conjunctions or adverbial phrases, to make a connection between ideas. A coherent text is one that makes sense. This concept includes indicating relationships, such as cause-effect and problem-solution, between ideas or events.

c. Sociolinguistic Competence: Sociolinguistic competence requires that users of the target language need to know what is expected in terms of social and cultural context. Learner should have knowledge such as making appropriate comment, asking questions and responding during a conversation.

d. Strategic Competence: Last but not least, Schrier and Berns (2006) state "strategic competence is the ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules".

2.3. The Factors Affecting Speaking Skill

More than knowing grammatical and semantic rules of a language is essential to learning how to speak the language. Learners need to know how native speakers use the language in a context where structured interpersonal exchange takes place and many factors interact. Thus, English as a foreign language learners have difficulty in speaking the target language fluently and appropriately. To provide a path for students to be competent speakers of English, as teachers it is necessary to figure out factors that affect students` speaking performance. In this way, we can help them overcome problems in learning speaking. Learners' speaking performance can be affected by factors like performance conditions,

affective factors, listening skill, topical knowledge and feedback during speaking tasks (Tuan & Mai, 2015).

The first factor is related to performance conditions. A speaking task is performed by the students under various conditions which include limited time, planning, the amount of support and the quality of performance. Speaking performance is affected by these performance conditions (Nation & Newton, 2009).

The second factor is pertinent to affective factors such as motivation, confidence and anxiety. Graham and Oxford (2006) stated that the affective side of the students is counted as one of the most important factors while learning a language. Krahnke and Krashen (2006) say that the success in second language acquisition is related to different affective variable, but three main categories have been taken into consideration while examining most of those studies and they are motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.

The third factor is listening skill. According to Doff (1998), speaking skill cannot be developed unless the learners improve listening skill as they are interrelated to each other. In order to have a successful and a meaningful conversation, the learner must understand what is said to him or her. In a dialogue, speakers have two roles: speaker and listener. Shumin (2011) stated that when students talk, other student responds after the listening process. In other words, students cannot reply if they don't understand what is asked or what is told. It can be concluded that listening is related to speaking very closely.

The fourth factor is topical knowledge which is described as the knowledge structures in long-term memory (Bachman & Palmer, 2013). To state it in other words, topical knowledge stands for the knowledge that speakers have in terms of related topical. According to Bachman and Palmer (2013), topical knowledge has a vital role and a great effect on students` speaking performance.

The fifth factor is about the feedback during speaking activities. Many learners look for the necessary feedback on their speaking performance from their teacher. According to Harmer (2003) learners` performance is assessed by the teachers according to the stages of the lesson, the tasks, and the type of mistakes made by the learners. Harmer (2003) stated that instructors should not correct their students' mistakes directly because of the fact that it breaks the flow of the speech or conversation and it can destroy the aim of the speaking task. Baker and Westrup (2003) asserted that if instructors always correct the students, this situation make them demotivated and afraid of making mistakes and talking. It has been

recommended that learners' mistakes should be corrected in a positive way by the instructors and the students should be more supported while they are speaking.

Mahripah (2014) asserts that foreign language learners' speaking skill is affected by some specific linguistic components of language such as phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and factors depending on psychology including motivation and personality. Because of the fact that English is not a phonetic language, pronunciation of English words are different from their spellings. Words having similar spellings are sometimes pronounced in a different way because of the contexts surrounding them like tenses and phonemes that come after them. The learners of English may be affected that linguistic component and they sometimes have difficulty in producing the English words, which may lead confusion.

In addition to all the things mentioned above, the structure of English language can be noticed and applied by means of grammatical competence, which is an important factor for fluency (Latha, 2012). The knowledge of words and sentences should be known by EFL learners. If they have this competence, they may understand the division of words into sounds and different stress in a sentence. Native speakers express what they like without having any problems because the rules of the language are known. If they have difficulty in saying some words, patterns or concepts, other ways can be used. They may make some mistakes in terms of syntax but these mistakes do not affect the meaning of the sentences to be expressed and this doesn't cause serious problems for the listeners to understand them. But the mistakes non-native speakers make are the ones that change the meaning of utterances they want to express and can cause some problems for their understanding (Mahripah, 2014).

The fear of speaking English is very closely related to some personal traits such as anxiety, shyness, and fear of making mistake or risk taking. Speaking a language occasionally results in anxiety which causes despair and a fair of failure for language learners (Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar 2011). According to Woodrow (2006), the oral performance of English speakers is negatively affected by anxiety. Adults are trying to be very careful about making errors during the speech. According to them, errors are hints showing a kind of unawareness which can prevent them from speaking English in front of other people.

There are some studies related to the factors affecting speaking skill. Park and Lee (2014) studied whether there was a connection among second language learners' anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking performance. One hundred and thirty two Korean learners participated in the study. The results showed that students' anxiety level had a negative impact on their oral performance.

Boonkit (2010) conducted a study about the factors increasing the development of learners' speaking skill. The results obtained from this research revealed that speakers' anxiety can be decreased with the use of appropriate activities for speaking skill. The results showed that choosing topics freely made the participants feel more comfortable, convinced speaking English, and increased the speaking confidence among EFL learners.

Tanveer (2007) studied the factors causing anxiety for learners in learning speaking skill and the impact of anxiety on target language communication. The gained results showed that learners` language learning and performance abilities were stopped by the feeling of stress and anxiety. In this research, it was stated that the learners' speaking performance is lowered by the high anxiety.

Furthermore, during language learning process, speakers may have difficulty in explaining themselves even when speaking native language. Based upon this situation, it is so accepted that a second language learner has problems with the language, which can be accepted as a factor affecting the performance in speaking skills. Thus, learners may sometimes get demotivated in the process of speaking. According to Ur (2010), there are four main reasons which affect the learners` performance in speaking:

1. Inhibition: Learners are worried about making mistakes and they fear of being criticized.
2. Nothing to Say: Learners do not have motivation to express themselves easily and they have long pauses while speaking.
3. Low or No Participation: The classroom is dominated by some learners and other learners speak very little or not at all.
4. Use of Mother Tongue: Teachers and learners use too much L1 to express themselves more easily or to solve the problems quickly if they share the same mother tongue.

In addition to all these reasons, according to Khidhir (2015), learners` speaking performance is affected in a bad way by the problem of lack of vocabulary knowledge. Some learners, even if they are eager to speak, cannot maintain the conversation as a result of lack of vocabulary. Moreover, Rabab'ah (2013) shares the same idea and states "Many

learners lack the necessary vocabulary to get their meaning across, and consequently, they cannot keep the interaction going" (pp. 123-129).

Another factor is that students have difficulty in creating the meaning and responding. According to Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013) "issues stressed by this research may become 'inputs' for the creating meaning and responding practice where communicators possibly are faced with difficulties in self-expression and understanding of others to deliver their meaning in an L2 context" (p. 20). Moreover, Al Jamal (2013) says that speaking performance is also affected by large class numbers, not focusing on speaking, absence of motivation and mother tongue usage. Especially, mother tongue usage affects the speaking performance highly. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) asserts that there are two main reasons why if students don`t have enough information or knowledge about the topic asked by the teacher, they tend to speak their mother tongue. Another reason is that the application of mother-tongue is very natural for learners to use. If the learners are not reinforced and encouraged to speak in English by their teachers, learners will automatically use their mother tongue to explain something to their classmates.

Consequently, the use of first language, worrying about making mistakes, which is an important factor causing demotivation and lack of vocabulary result in speaking difficulty. As a result of these reasons, learners have lack of motivation and they do not give enough importance and attention to speaking skill.

2.4. Improving Speaking Skill

English speaking activities should be used by the teachers to motivate learners to study and speak in English, and learning classroom environment should be increased (Oradee, 2013). Teachers should use funny discussions and motivate students to talk about their daily or popular interests. Students' participation in discussion can lead other students to actively take part in negotiation, so students can become surprised about their ability and intelligence (Celce-Murica, 2001).

Wang (2014) suggests some ways for teachers who want to increase English speaking in their classrooms. Firstly, he suggests a pleasant learning environment. Oral activities which are the cooperative ones, funny stories, games, etc. are consisted by such an environment. The first step can be taken in motivating students to speak in English. Secondly, he recommends teachers to be a friendly, creative and an enthusiastic teacher.

To achieve it, the teachers should take equality between themselves and students into consideration. The teacher should create new oral activities such as competitive debates, creative speeches, discussions, role plays, etc. by boosting their students` motivation for the usage of the target language. In that way, learners' willingness to communicate in class, using the target language can be improved by the teacher and their interest and enthusiasm towards the target language can increase itself. Thirdly, teachers should present different meaningful and intercultural materials. The interest of the learners towards the language may be promoted with the use of such kind of materials. Many meaningful intercultural materials should be presented by the teacher to energize students in oral tasks. Lastly, teachers should support learners` autonomy. Students` self-determination can be supported by increasing learner autonomy. Teachers can provide autonomy by giving informative feedback and giving more chance learners to set their own goals in their learning.

In addition to those, it is presumed that learner's oral proficiency is affected by anxiety and self-restriction. Anxiety, which is stated above as an affective factor blocks the learning process (Arnold & Brown, 1999). It is emphasized that if learners feel much nervous, they become tongue-tied or lost which completely affect their achievement in foreign language classroom (Zhang & Jia, 2006). When a speaker does not continue the conversation, s/he get stressed and this situation causes hesitation and disfluency resulting in long pauses while speaking. Basically, hesitations are pauses which differ in length and which are usually left filled. Hesitations occur when the some words are needed to use or when next utterance is forms by the speakers. Speakers do this by stretching sounds, repetitions or fillers (Rieger, 2003). As for another basic concept, disfluencies; they can be described as phoneme which leads interruption of the flow of speech.

There are several studies showing how to overcome speaking difficulties and improve learners` speaking skill. Tsou (2005) examined the effectiveness of instruction in oral classroom participation on improving speaking skill. He chose seventy tertiary students from the freshman English class. He divided them into two groups. There were 35 students in each group. Students attended two hours each week with their EFL instructor. As treatment tool debates were used to encourage more oral participation and to increase students` motivation. For data collection, preliminary tests and an oral test were used. The findings showed that students speaking proficiency improved. At the same time, their attitudes towards class became more positive.

Junaidi (2011) evaluated whether critical debate technique can improve the speaking ability of the second year students or not. Thirty one second year students were included in the study. There were twenty one females and ten male students. Respondents provided quantitative and qualitative data for the study. The findings of the study showed that critical debate technique has a positive effect on students' speaking skill. Furthermore, it is confirmed that students` motivation and interest can be increased with the help of critical debate technique and students' critical thinking can also be promoted.

Wang (2014) conducted a study with Chinese EFL learners and he stated that they have some problems in speaking English because of the fact that their speaking competence may be affected by three factors: cognitive, linguistic and emotional. Regarding this, the purpose of the research was to increase learners' oral proficiency. To do this, the researcher evaluated three vital models of teaching English speaking, and then suggested an educational method within four steps for four stages: pre-speaking, while-speaking, post-speaking and extension activity. Before speaking, students must be provided with sufficient information, vocabulary and strategies to decrease their fear and stress. While speaking, if the aim is to increase learners` fluency, they should be given enough time. After speaking, for the development of speaking accuracy, learners should be provided with opportunities to understand the appropriate use of language. Finally, extra practice is necessary to enhance the use of language because learners are assisted by task repetitions to improve in speaking English.

Khosravani and Khosravani (2014) suggest that the effect of reading short stories has an impact on EFL learners speaking skill. The researchers carried out the study on 172 teachers. In these classes, learners read the stories, summarized them and then they answered the classmates' questions for the next session. The result showed that learners were assisted to increase their independent English learning and improve their speaking skill by short stories.

Azadi, Aliakbari and Azizifar (2015) suggest that one of the most significant discussions on speaking is to convey the messages to the others, and the ability to communicate effectively is necessary. To improve speaking ability, classroom interaction has an important role. In accordance with this purpose, the effect of teaching speaking strategies and learners' gender on developing speaking skill were studied. They carried out this study with 30 intermediate language learners and post-test and pre-test design were used to analyze the research questions. The results revealed that the classroom interaction provided

improving the learners' speaking skill and gender doesn't have an effect on their speaking performance. Organizing the classroom according to students` interaction and promoting conversation between them can be thought as a good way of increasing classroom interaction.

2.4.1. Discourse Markers

Wiese carried out a study showing that L1 and L2 production have different process, and claimed that L2 speakers need more time is needed by L2 speakers to plan their speech than L1 speakers because L2 speakers have less automatization (as cited in Khojastehrad, 2012, p. 10-21). It shows that hesitation happens to the speakers who are non-native more often than the native ones. Therefore, EFL learners need to be encouraged to speak bravely and smoothly, which may be possible by means of using discourse markers which are defined as vocabulary items providing boundaries in conversation (Fung & Carter, 2007). In literature, various terms have been applied to refer to discourse markers as can be seen in Table 1 where Yang (2011) lists the terminology variations of discourse markers:

Table 1

Terminology Variations of Discourse Markers

Label	Example
backchannels/backchannel cues	Verschuren, 1999
continuatives	Trillo, 1997
cue words	Horne et al, 2001
discourse markers	Östman, 1981; Schiffrin, 1987
discourse signalling devices	Polanyi & Scha, 1983
discourse connectives	Blackmore, 1987, 1988
discourse operators	Redeker, 1990, 1991
discourse particles	Goldberg, 1980
Fillers	Brown & Yule, 1983
gambits	Keller, 1979
linguistic markers	Redeker, 1991
model particle	Waltereit, 2001
pragmatic expressions	Erman, 1992
pragmatic devices	van Dijk, 1979
pragmatic formatives	Fraser, 1987
pragmatic markers	Fraser, 1988
pragmatic operators	Ariel, 1994
pragmatic particles	Östman, 1995
semantic conjuncts	Quirk et al, 1985
sentence connectives	Halliday & Hasan, 1976
utterance particles	Luke, 1990

As Fung and Carter stated (ibid), discourse markers are used when a new topic is opened or conversation is closed and when the speaker have the same opinion with the interlocutor or disagrees, and etc. It is possible to provide a meaningful speech with the use of discourse markers. In that way, the speakers may fill the pauses and maintain the conversation. Thus, they may get less stressed and be more open to improving themselves in terms of speaking skill.

It is so clear that teaching how to hesitate in speaking has been a neglected part of teaching second language. As Crytal and Davy (1979) emphasized (cited in Khojastehrad, 2012, p.10), learning how to hesitate is very first thing of learning a language. In this regard, teaching is a crucial issue for such a learning. Some smart students try to expose themselves to the language outside the classroom with the help of different activities such as talking to friends from other nations, watching English subtitled movies or shows, listening to music. In that way, they can acquire many aspects of language which provide a natural speech like knowing how to hesitate or how to clarify the things wanted to say, but all these things are done just by a few number of students. However, some of the students are not aware of using or even hearing a discourse marker. According to Nakatani (2005, p.78), it is important to underline the necessity of raising learners' awareness about strategies which are used to improve their speaking skill when they face with a problem during conversation or in a context where they have to use the target language.

2.4.2. Functions of Discourse Markers

According to Castro (2009), discourse markers have two main pragmatic functions as textual and interpersonal. The functions and types presented below:

Table 2

Textual Functions and Types of Discourse Markers

Textual Functions	Types
To initiate discourse, including claiming the attention of the hearer	Opening Frame Marker
To close discourse	Closing discourse markers
To aid the speaker in acquiring or relinquishing the floor	Turn-takers (Turn givers)
To serve as a filler or delaying tactic used to sustain discourse or hold the floor	Fillers (Turn keepers)
To indicate a new topic or a partial shift in topic	Topic switchers
To denote either new or old information	Information indicators
To mark sequential dependence	Sequence/relevance markers
To repair one's own or others discourse	Repair markers

Table 3

Interpersonal Functions and Types of Discourse Markers

Interpersonal Functions	Types
Subjectively, to express a response or a reaction to the preceding discourse including also back-channel signals of understanding and continued attention while another speaker is having his/her turn	Response / reaction markers Back channel signals
Interpersonally, to affect cooperation or sharing, including confirming shared assumptions, checking or expressing understanding, requesting confirmation, expressing difference saving face (politeness)	Cooperation-agreement marker Disagreement marker Checking understanding markers

2.4.3. Gap Fillers

As shown in the table, fillers are a subcategory of discourse markers which help speaker open or close a topic, take turn in a speech, denote information, check understanding, show agreement or disagreement, gain time to think, hesitate in a correct way and express a response. The first researchers who studied on fillers, specifically on *Uh* and *Um*, were psycholinguists. Maclay & Osgood (1959), Goldman-Eisler (1961), linguist Stenström (1990), Kjellmer (2003), Gilquin (2008), who are the ones conducting corpus-based studies on this topic, state that they are *filled pauses* (cited in Tottie, 2011, p.174). Clark & Fox Tree (2002) called them *fillers* while Corley & Steward (2008) referred to them as

hesitation disfluencies. The definition or categorization of fillers is seemingly a vague issue. However in this study, the term "*gap filler*" will be used.

A few lucky people have the ability to speak fluently without hesitation. However, for some people, words like 'um,' 'er,' and 'I mean,' are a common part of the language. Linguists have said those who use fillers are probably being more conscious of who they are talking to and what they are saying. Sometimes, the speakers might be racking their brain for the right words because they are having a mind-blank or they have been asked a particularly difficult question. In situations like these, the speakers can use gap fillers to make their speech more fluent, to have time to think, and to evaluate their answers instead of using long and silent pauses. Equally, the speakers might just signal that they have something to say, and their brain just hasn't caught up yet. Gap fillers are discourse markers that are used by the speakers when they think and/or hesitate during their speech. Clark and Fox Tree (2002, p. 97) assert that fillers have a communicative function since they have a place in speaker's vocabulary knowledge. However, gap fillers are not the actual message in a conversation by itself. They have just the role in helping the meaning. On the other hand, Clark and Fox Tree (ibid) state that a variety of interpersonal messages can be conveyed by the help of fillers. In addition, Swerts (1998, p. 468) underlines that fillers have some positive sides and stated that spontaneous speech which can be provided with the help of filler usage is often a better communication means than read speech. Thus, it can be concluded that a speaker can improve his or her speaking skill by the help of fillers which have a role in speaker`s fluency and the continuity of the speech.

2.5. Assessment of Speaking Skill

Speaking is a complicated skill in which the speaker is supposed to use different abilities such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension simultaneously. Moreover, some contextual and interactional factors need to be considered. Accordingly, testing speaking has its own difficulties; however, every effort should be made to pay as much attention in the assessment of speaking skill as the other language skills. According to Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012):

> "… we test in order to give the learners a sense of achievement, to end their dissatisfactions and frustrations, to foster learning through diagnosing the problematic areas, to enhance learning by making the learners aware of the course objectives, to adjust the learner's personal goals, to give promotion, and to show the effectiveness and efficiency of instruction, etc. Tests may gauge the teacher's ability and, in general, they serve a two-fold instructional purpose: as a guide to the learners, and as a guide to the teacher." (2001: p. 9- 10)

Weir (2005) states that to determine learners` oral communication, they are supposed to take part in direct spoken language activities. There is no longer interest in testing whether learners just know how to make sentences in the abstract: learners are supposed to perform relevant language tasks and adapt their speech to the circumstances, to make decisions under time pressure, to implement fluently, and to make any necessary adjustments as unexpected problems arise.

Heaton (1990; 88) summarizes the issue of testing speaking with these words:

> "Testing the ability to speak is a most important aspect of language testing. However, at all stages beyond the elementary levels of mimicry and repetition it is an extremely difficult skill to test, as it is far too complex a skill to permit any reliable analysis to be made for the purpose of objective testing. Questions relating to the criteria for measuring the speaking skills and to the weighting given to such components as correct pronunciation remain largely unanswered. It is possible for people to produce practically all the correct sounds but still be unable to communicate their ideas appropriately and effectively. On the other hand, people can make numerous errors in both phonology and syntax and yet succeed in expressing themselves fairly clearly. Furthermore, success in communication often depends as much on the listener as on the speaker: a particular listener may have a better ability to decode the foreign speaker's message or may share a common nexus of ideas with him or her, thereby making communication simpler. Two native speakers will not always, therefore, experience the same degree of difficulty in understanding the foreign speaker."

Weir (1990; 73) puts emphasis on the communicative aspect of speaking skills by saying:

> "Testing speaking ability offers plenty of scope for meeting the criteria for communicative testing, namely that: tasks developed within this paradigm should be purposive, interesting and motivating, with a positive washback effect on teaching that precedes the test; interaction should be a key feature; there should be a degree of intersubjectivity among participants; the output should be to a certain extent unpredictable; a realistic context should be provided and processing should be done in real time. Perhaps more than in any other skill there is the possibility of building into a test a number of the dynamic characteristics of actual communication".

The most problematic area of speaking skill tests is making decision on the criteria to evaluate oral communication. To determine whether the learners have the ability to communicate accurately and effectively is one of the main aim of speaking skill test. Unfortunately, these tests demand a great amount of time to apply and score. However, two main sets of assessment criteria may be adopted by the examiners in speaking exams: a scale of overall or global competence, and a scale of competence in specific sub-skills of speaking which include discourse management, interactive communication, grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Burgess, Harlow, and Longman (2005) express that: "Discourse management involves the ability to control language over more than a single utterance, and to 15 express ideas and opinions in coherent, connected speech" (pp. 105-108). The examinees should not be expected to be fully fluent by the examiners, but it is significant that the examinees should

go on speaking despite some hesitation and searching for words. "Interactive communication is the ability to engage in conversation or discussion. The main skills of interactive communication are appropriate turn-taking, initiating, and responding at the required speed and in the correct rhythm" (pp. 105-108). The range and accuracy of the grammatical and lexical forms used by the examinees may also be assessed by the examiners. As it is a speaking test and not a grammar or a vocabulary test, the speaking skills of the examinees should be more concentrated by the examiners. "Pronunciation is assessed in all speaking exams, in relation to both production of individual sounds and control of prosodic features (stress, rhythm, and intonation)" (2005, pp. 105-108).

To have appropriate criteria for the assessment is necessary in order to test speaking skills of the learners. To create an effective assessment criteria, it is important to consider micro and macro skills of speaking. According to Brown (2004), micro skills of speaking includes "producing smaller chunks of language such as phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, and phrasal units" and macro skills of speaking includes "larger elements such as fluency, discourse, function, style, cohesion, nonverbal communication and strategic options". Brown (2004, pp. 142-143) describes micro speaking as follows:

- Producing differences among English phonemes and allophonic variants,
- Producing chunks of language of different lengths,
- Producing English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonation contours,
- Producing reduced forms of words and phrases,
- Using an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purposes,
- Producing fluent speech at different rates of delivery,
- Monitoring one's own oral production and using various strategic devices – pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking – to enhance the clarity of the message,
- Using grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms,
- Producing speech in natural constituents: in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breathe groups, and sentence constituents,
- Expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms,
- Using cohesive devices in spoken discourse.

On the other hand, macro skills of speaking are described by Brown (2004, p. 142-143) as follows:

- Appropriately accomplishing communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals,
- Using appropriate styles, registers, implicate, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversation rules, floor-keeping and –yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations,
- Conveying links and connections between events and communicating such relations such as focal and peripheral ideas, events and feelings, new information and given information, generalization and exemplification,
- Conveying facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language,

- Developing and using a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you.

2.5.1. Speaking Test Scales

While a speaking performance is assessed, how well the examinees can speak the language is shown with scores which are tested by using some criteria and are indicated mostly by numbers. Luoma (2004) states that "one way to elicit the construct of speaking ability for a certain context is through a scoring rubric which informs test users what a test aims to measure" (p. 54). Rating scales are the instruments that show the difference between good and weak performances and can be described as the series of statements that express what each score means from lowest to highest.

Scoring that is based on criteria specific to the particular testing context should be paid attention while ensuring validity and reliability of a speaking performance test. Clapham and McNamara (2006) indicates that "a scoring rubric can affect the speaking assessment, as there may be an interaction effect between the rating criteria and the examinees' performance" (p. 36). The kinds of speaking skills that the tasks require is described by rating scales, so there is a direct relation between scales and the tasks used. Hence, careful examination of how rating scales have a relation with speaking performance should be regarded in order to decide whether the speaking assessment is fair or not (Kim, 2006). There two types of scales which can be used for assessment: Holistic and analytic scales.

According to Terry and Hughes (2006), holistic scales which are sometimes named as impressionistic scoring, include the assignments of a single score to a performance based on an overall impression of it. These kinds of scales are practical for making decision because the raters are supposed to give only one score. Moreover, being simple and being fast are the greatest advantages of holistic scale (O'Sullivan, 2008).

On the other hand, analytic scales aim to get the examinees' performance on various aspects of communication. Luoma (2004) describes them as: "Analytic scales contain a number of criteria, each of which has descriptors at the different levels of the scale. The scales forms a grid, and the examinees usually get a profile of scores, one for each of the criteria" (p.68). As a separate score for each of a number of aspects of the performance is required, there are more details about the examinee`s speaking skill. Terry and Hughes (2006) state some advantages of such kind of scales. First, the problems of sub skills in individuals are revealed as this type of scale contains more details. Secondly, with the help

of this type of scale, the raters are put in a position that they have to think and assess many aspects of performance which may be ignored. Thirdly, since the raters have to give a number of scores, the test generally tend to be more reliable. In contrast to these factors, the time that takes long to use these scales can be counted as a disadvantage.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the overall methodology employed in the present study. It starts with a description of the research design. After, research questions are listed. Then, setting and participants are introduced in detail. Data collection tools, data collection and analysis procedures are explained.

3.2. Research Design

The main aims of this study are to reveal whether there is a difference among students who were taught and who were not taught gap fillers regarding their academic success in an oral examination, what gap fillers are used most commonly by students during the oral examination and what students think about learning gap fillers to improve speaking skill.

For these purposes, the researcher used embedded design which is a type of mixed method research. This design allowed the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, which made possible for researcher to gain insights about the various aspects regarding the study. As the quantitative part of the study was the most important data type in the study and the qualitative part had a supportive role in the study, embedded design was employed by the researcher (Creswell & Clark, 2007). As the quantitative data of the study, the researcher used the results of the students who took two oral examinations at different times. For the qualitative part of the study, the researcher received written feedback from the students who were exposed to treatment to gain more insights about the study. To detect what gap fillers were used most commonly by the students during the oral examination, video recordings of oral examination were listened by the researcher and most used gap fillers were noted.

For the quantitative part of the study, quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group pretest- posttest design was employed because the dependent variable of the study (the experimental group) was manipulated. The results of the students in experimental group were measured once before the treatment was implemented and once after the treatment was implemented. The participants in experimental group were chosen from the researcher`s class because of time limitation and easy access to the sample. The participants in control group were not randomly assigned to their groups and unlike an experimental research, there were two pre-existing factors, which were the similar general academic average and similar first oral examination results of participants. Furthermore, the researcher employed a non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest design because the aim of the researcher was to create pairs having similar first oral examination grade and similar general academic average to take the exam (posttest) together. This way, both control group and experimental group could meet the requirement of having particular pre-existing factor which was mentioned above (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

For this study, it was impossible to create random groups of participants since the objective of the researcher was to make students in experimental and control group pair and to make them have the same exam. In other words, the researcher wanted to create a control group having similar academic background and having similar first oral examination grade. In that way, the researcher could see whether the treatment would have an effect on experimental group or not. As stated by Cook and Campbell (1979), the quasi-experimental research design could be used to demonstrate whether an educational treatment would prove effective or not in a particular area of study.

Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) state that quasi-experimental studies are quite important since they are more practical to conduct, having less ethical limitations, easy to generalize, appropriate regarding the policy of schools and institutions, and much easier to conduct in particular institutions where researchers could design them according to their programs and curriculum. In this study, quasi-experimental design was employed because it was more applicable for the exam style of the researchers` institution.

All in all, in quasi-experimental research, employing non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest design, it could be demonstrated whether teaching gap filler (independent variable and treatment) would have an effect on the success of the students in experimental group (dependent variable) in an oral examination (measurement). To see the difference among students who were taught gap fillers (experimental group) and who were not taught gap

fillers regarding their success in the oral examination, the researcher examined the difference between the first and second oral examination results of two groups. To support the correctness of this idea, the researcher examined and compared the scores showing students` success in discourse management. The independent variable in this study was gap filler teaching to the students in researcher`s class about how to get time for thinking, how to hesitate, and how to clarify words. On the other hand, the dependent variable was the results of the students who were exposed to treatment in the second oral examination.

Table 4

Non-equivalent Control Group Pretest-Posttest Quasi-Experimental Design of the Study

Groups	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental Group* 10 Students chosen from the researcher`s class	The results of the first oral examination	The results of the second oral examination (Dependent Variable)
Non-equivalent Control Group 10 students chosen according to their general academic average and first oral examination	The results of the first oral examination	The results of the second oral examination

* Participants in the experimental group were exposed to treatment. Teaching 'gap filler' is independent variable (treatment) in this study.

The qualitative part of the study aimed to gather broader insights about what students thought about learning gap fillers and whether they thought they would use these gap fillers in an oral examination or not. For this purpose, to reveal the students` view on learning gap fillers, the researcher received written feedback forms from the experimental group. To analyze the inputs from the students, thematic analysis was used. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as the identification of themes and patterns extracted from a set of data. During the transcription process, it enables a researcher to capture significant themes or viewpoints related to research questions and the objective of the study. To sum up, thematic analysis would provide valuable themes and information for the researcher in order to reflect strong outcomes from the dataset.

In addition, to find out what gap fillers among the ones taught were most used by the students during the oral examination, the video recordings of oral examination were listened by the researcher and the most common used gap fillers by the students were noted by the researcher. All recordings were listened by the researcher for a second time for checking.

3.3. Research Questions

This study aims to find answers for three main research questions.

RQ1: Is there any significant difference among the students who were taught "gap fillers" and the ones who were not taught "gap fillers" regarding their success in an oral examination?

RQ2: What are the most frequently used gap fillers by the students during the oral examination?

RQ3: What are the students` views on learning gap fillers to improve speaking skill?

3.4. Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in Department of Foreign Languages of a foundation university, in 2019. The curriculum in English Preparatory Program (EPP) at this institution is a 9-month non-modular program which offers courses to students at three levels; Alpha (Beginner-A1), Bravo (Elementary-A2) and Charlie (Pre-intermediate-B1). All students, upon registration to the university, are required to take the English Proficiency Exam (EPE) and based on their performance on EPE, they either start their degree programs or are placed in one of the three levels in the EPP.

In this study, the participants were chosen among Alpha level students who were around the age of 18. The treatment was applied to all the students in researcher`s class. However, only ten of them (5 male- 5 female) were chosen from the researcher`s own class and assigned to the experimental group. There are several reasons why these students were chosen. The main reason is because of the fact that the students in experimental group were required to attend all of the three gap filler teaching sessions and these 10 students attended the sessions regularly. The other reasons why these students were chosen are easy accessibility and researcher`s time limitation.

Ten students (4 male and 6 female) were chosen from the other Alpha level classes according to their general academic average and their first oral examination results. The study employed purposive sampling method because the focus of the researcher was to create two equal groups of students who have similar general academic average and similar first oral examination results. Both groups of students were applied the same preparatory program and they studied the same course book (New Language Leader). At the same time, the students in two groups were supported with the same extra-curricular materials prepared by the instructors in test office. Also, the students were assigned the same speaking-writing tasks and the same online homework.

Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2014) state that purposive sampling method, which is a type of non-probability sampling, has some shortcomings to researchers since it is a subjective selection of the samples. Therefore, it may not represent the whole population of the researcher's area of study. However, as the researcher's limitations are inability to find a larger size of samples, sufficient time, and sufficient number of samples with similar general academic average and similar first oral examination result, the researcher decided to employ purposive sampling method as it permitted her to eliminate such limitations while conducting the study. Among the types of purposive sampling, the researcher decided to use homogenous sampling since the design of the study required including samples with similar backgrounds (Sharma, 2017) such as general academic average and oral examination results.

Table 5

Participants of the Study

Gender	Experimental	Control
Female	5	6
Male	5	4

The students were all non-English majors, specializing in the following academic subjects:

Table 6

Departments of Pairs of Students

Student Pairs*	Experimental Group	Control Group
Pair 1	Aircraft Engineering	Computer Engineering
Pair 2	Aircraft Engineering	Electrical and Electronic Eng.
Pair 3	Aerospace Engineering	Industrial Engineering
Pair 4	Aerospace Engineering	Computer Engineering
Pair 5	Aviation Management	Computer Engineering
Pair 6	Aviation Management	Logistic Management
Pair 7	Aviation Management	Aviation Management
Pair 8	Logistic Management	Electrical and Electronic Eng.
Pair 9	Electrical and Electronic Eng.	Electrical and Electronic Eng.
Pair 10	Mechanical Engineering	Aviation Management

*For the second oral examination, the students from experimental and control group were assigned in pairs to take the exam together.

3.5. Data Collection Tools

To be able to answer the research questions, a mixed method research design was employed by the researcher. This research aimed to reveal the difference among the students who were taught gap fillers and the ones who were not taught gap fillers regarding their success in an oral examination (RQ1: Is there any significant difference among the students who were taught "gap fillers" and the ones who were not taught "gap fillers" regarding their success in an oral examination?). For the quantitative part of the study, the researcher used the results of students' first and second oral examinations. For the qualitative part of the study, the researcher attempted to explore insights and experiences of students regarding the treatment, which was about learning and using gap fillers (RQ2: What are the most frequently used gap fillers by the students during the oral examination?, RQ3: What are the students` views on learning gap fillers to improve speaking skills?).

3.5.1. Results of Student Oral Examinations

The researcher collected the quantitative data through the results (First oral examination results: pre-test, second oral examination results: post-test) announced on the students` system. The results were organized in an Excel table where results of the students from experimental and control group were listed according to the code (e.g. S1EG, S2CG, etc.) given by the researcher.

3.5.2. Feedback Forms and Video Recordings of Student Oral Examinations

On the other hand, this study aims to find answers to what gap fillers were most frequently used by the students in experimental group during the oral examination. Thus, the researcher video recorded their second oral examination (post-test). Video-recordings were listened to by the researcher and used gap fillers produced by the students were noted by looking at a list including the gap fillers taught during three sessions (See Appendix A). In this way, qualitative data were obtained. The students were informed about that their video recording would be used for the scope of this study and their identity would be kept confidential.

Lastly, the researcher tried to reveal students` view on learning gap fillers (RQ3: What are the students` views on learning gap fillers?). For this purpose, qualitative data were obtained through students` written feedback forms (See Appendix B) which were collected after each gap filler teaching session. The questions in feedback forms were written in students` native language, Turkish and the students were asked to write their opinions and answers in Turkish because of the fact that the students may not be able to express themselves in English freely and comfortably since lack of competency in the target language. The questions in the feedback form collected after the gap fillers teaching sessions are listed as follows:

1. What is the most important thing that you have learned in this lesson? Please, explain.
2. Where and how can you use the things that you have learned? Please, give specific examples.
3. How do you think the things that you have learned will help your academic success?
4. Are there any points unclear about this lesson? What do you want to be done differently in the next lesson?

The students were informed that their information would be kept confidential and they were asked not to write their names on feedback forms. Furthermore, it was explained that their participation was based on voluntariness and they had the choice to reject the participation (See Appendix D).

3.6. Procedure

The study was carried out in 5 weeks and 3 days. Before conducting the study, the participants were given opportunity to choose not to participate in the study and asked to

read and sign consent form (See Appendix D). Some of the students were absent at different times during gap filler teaching sessions, so this situation was taken into consideration while forming experimental group. All sessions were video recorded.

Week 1: The students took the first oral examination. The results of this examination were used as pre-test in this study.

Week 2: At the very beginning of the week, the researcher had a brief pre-interview with the students in experimental group to learn whether they had awareness about gap fillers or not. After recognizing that they had no awareness about learning and using gap fillers intentionally, the researcher gave a feedback form (See Appendix C) to students to gain a deeper insight about students` opinion about the oral examination and their feelings during the oral examination and to decide on which categories of gap fillers would be helpful for them. The students were asked to write their opinions in their native language, Turkish. The feedback form consisted of 5 questions as below:

1. During the oral examination, how do you feel? In which areas do you have difficulty?
2. What kind of strategies do you use to feel more secure? Are there any extra activities to do better? If yes, exemplify.
3. What do you do when you cannot answer or hesitate?
4. Do you say something when you hesitate or recap the topic? If yes, what do you say?
5. Do you say something while trying to get time for thinking? If yes, what do you say?

The researcher aimed to categorize the target gap fillers with the help of the answers received from the students via feedback forms. After examining students` answers, the researcher decided to divide gap fillers into three categories. While opting for the categories, the researcher consulted several experienced teachers in the institution and experts. At the end of the consultation, three categories were agreed on. These are gap fillers used for getting time for thinking, hesitation and clarifying. According to students` opinions and needs, the researcher designed three lessons including explicit teaching of gap fillers via power point and activities to support and to practice the usage of gap fillers (See Appendix E).

Week 3: The researcher implemented the first gap filler teaching session in her own course hour. She used a PowerPoint presentation and taught gap fillers used for getting time for thinking explicitly. As an activity, the researcher asked students to write down a question on a piece of paper and fling the paper down. One by one, students chose a paper and

answered the question written on it by trying to use gap fillers when needed. At the end of the session, the researcher received feedback from the students about the session to learn their opinions about learning gap fillers. Also, the researcher gave an assignment to students and she asked them to talk about the assigned picture for 2 minutes and try to use gap fillers when needed. Also, the researcher asked them to record their voice while talking about the picture and send their recordings via e-mail. In that way, the researcher tried to provide a context in which the students could practice the gap fillers learned. The researcher chose picture description activity as an assignment due to the fact that there is a similar section in the oral examination.

Week 4: At the very beginning of the 4th week, the researcher checked the assignments and gave oral feedback to students. After that, the researcher implemented the second gap filler teaching session in her own course hour. She used a PowerPoint presentation and taught gap fillers used for hesitation. As a follow-up activity, the researcher prepared "Talk for a minute activity", but she asked the students to talk for just 30 seconds. In this activity, there were letters and the students were asked to choose a letter. When they chose a letter, they were shown a topic under the letter and asked them to talk about the topic for 30 seconds by using gap fillers if needed. Before starting the activity, the researcher gave a handout which included the target gap fillers for that session. At the end of the session, the researcher received feedback from the students about the session to learn their opinions about learning gap fillers. Also, the researcher gave an assignment to students and she asked them to talk about different topics and try to use gap fillers. These topics were determined by the researcher in accordance with the curriculum. Also, the researcher asked them to record their voice while talking about the topics. The researcher chose topic selection activity as an assignment due to the fact that there is a similar section in the oral examination.

Week 5: At the very beginning of the 5th week, the researcher checked the assignments and gave oral feedback to students. Then, the researcher implemented the third gap filler teaching session in her own course hour. She used a PowerPoint presentation and taught gap fillers used for clarifying their words. As a follow-up activity, the researcher asked students to work in pairs and gave them a handout including interview questions to be asked for the evaluation of the term because the last session were held at the end of the term. The students got prepared in allocated time and then they asked questions to their partners. While answering their partner`s questions, they tried to use gap fillers when

needed. At the bottom of the page, there was a table showing all gap fillers taught during three sessions. At the end of the session, the researcher received feedback from the students about the last session to learn their opinions about learning gap fillers (See Appendix B).

After the teaching sessions, the researcher chose 10 students from her class all of whom attended all three sessions regularly in order to decide the experimental group. After deciding the experimental group, the researcher paired them with the students in control group which was created according to their general academic average and first oral examination results from other classes that did not receive any treatment on gap fillers at the institution. The students with similar general academic average and first oral examination results were paired to take the second oral examination together within Testing Office and administration`s knowledge.

The paired students took the second oral examination. While assessing the oral proficiency of the students in experimental and control group, the researcher did not take part. All students were assessed by other instructors at the institution by addressing to the spoken assessment grading criteria which has an analytic scale (See Appendix F). Before taking the examination, the students in control group were informed about video recording and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix D). The students were video recorded while taking the exam.

3.6.1. Oral Examination Procedure

The oral examination assesses students` grammar and vocabulary usage, their discourse management and pronunciation. The oral examination includes two terms: "juries" and "sets". Juries are the pairs of instructors who invigilate the exam. According to the number of the students to take the exam, the administration decides on the number of the juries. In this study, 4 pairs of instructors were juries. Sets are the sections of the oral examination in which students are selected in pairs according to their names, surnames or randomly. For each set, students are grouped as Student 1 and Student 2. In this study, the students were chosen from the students in researchers` class because of their accessibility and time limitation as experimental group (Student 1) and students in other classes according to their general academic average and their score belonging to the first oral examination as

control group (Student 2). The students who had similar general academic average and similar first oral examination score were paired.

All questions, pictures and topics for the exam are prepared uniquely for each set and each student in the set beforehand by the Testing Office, so it is not up to the examiners to ask different questions, show different pictures or topics. In the speaking exam, each jury conducts the same set at the same time.

The exam consists of three parts. These parts are:

1. Warm-up and Introduction Part: The warm up section of the exam aims to put the candidates at ease with some general questions to help the examiner find out more about them and to help the candidates feel comfortable. In this part, students introduce themselves and answer a warm-up question. As mentioned above, the questions are prepared before the exam for each student.

2. Picture Description Part: The aim of this stage is to describe a picture in detail and to encourage discussion about the picture to be described. Every candidate will talk about his/her own picture within the allocated time. When the first student stops talking, the interlocutor lets the other student comment on the same picture in one or two sentences.

3. Topic Selection Part: The aim of this stage is to encourage discussion around the set topic and as is normally the case with discussions, the interlocutor may not deal with every question and may ask questions which do not appear on the list as long as they are not off topic. In this part, there will be no student interaction. Every candidate will talk about his/her own topic within the allocated time. When the first student stops talking, the interlocutor lets the other student comment on the same picture in one or two sentences.

Speaking exams are graded by two interlocutors in a jury. Each invigilator grades the students by addressing to the criteria for the exam (See Appendix F). Then, the average of the points given by the two instructors is given as the final grade of the student.

3.7. Data Analysis

Quantitative data of the study were analyzed by means of inferential statistics (Paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test) on SPSS v24. The researcher had to satisfy the requirements of applying a t-test for the study. Descriptive statistics of both groups' pre-test and post-test results revealed that both groups were normally distributed and had

no outliers. Furthermore, applying a t-test was favored by the researcher as the sample size of the study was small (n=20) (Gerald, 2018), which might result in problems while conducting a z-test because there might be generalization problem and Type I error. However, using a t-test was more logical as it could diminish Type I error (Allen, 2017).

Firstly, independent samples t-test was conducted in order to determine whether any of the groups showed any statistical difference in their post-test results (second oral examination). A paired samples t-test was also conducted so as to find out if there was any significant difference between the two groups (experimental and control) by comparing their pre-test and post-test results. The objective of this test was to examine whether the treatment had a significant impact on the results of experimental group compared to the control group.

One of the purposes of the study was to reveal the students` views on learning gap filler. For this reason, qualitative data obtained from students` written feedback was analyzed by conducting thematic content analysis on Nvivo software v12 (See Appendix G). Main themes were determined by the researcher. To provide inter-reliability of the themes, experts` views were also consulted. In the light of their views, the main themes were finalized. Also, because of the fact that the students gave feedback in Turkish, a certified translator translate into English. After the transcription made by the researcher, a native speaker teacher also double-checked them.

In addition, the other aim of the study was to find out what gap fillers were used most by the students in experimental group during the oral examination. Video recordings of oral examinations were listened by the researcher and used gap fillers among taught were noted.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter. Data were collected from 20 prep-school students studying at Department of Foreign Languages in a foundation university in an attempt to find out whether there is a significant difference among students who were taught gap filler and the ones who not taught gap fillers in terms of their success in the oral examination. In addition, this research aimed to reveal what gap fillers were used most by the students during the oral examination. Moreover, students` views on learning gap fillers were attempted to be investigated. For these purposes, the results obtained from their first and second oral examination were analyzed. Also, video recordings of the second oral examination were listened and most frequently used gap fillers were noted by the researcher and written feedback forms of the students received after each treatment session were typed and examined.

4.2. Quantitative Findings and Discussion

RQ1: Is there any significant difference among the students who were taught "gap fillers" and the ones who were not taught "gap fillers" regarding their success in an oral examination?

4.2.1. A Comparison of Post-test Results between Experimental and Control Group

An independent samples t-test was conducted by the researcher so as to answer whether there was any significant difference in the post-test results of both groups. In Table 6, post-test mean scores and standard deviation values of both groups are presented.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Both Groups' Post-test Results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Experimental	10	75,00	14,405	4,555
	Control	10	63,65	17,528	5,543

As it can be seen in Table 7, the average results of students in experimental group was 75 whereas the students in control group had an average result of 63.65. It is demonstrated that the students in experimental group (treatment) obtained a higher mean score value in the post-test (2nd Oral Examination).

Table 8

Independent Samples T-test Results of Both Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval	
		F	Sig	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variences assumed	,234	,634	1,582	18	,131	11,350	7,174	-3,723	26,423
	Equal variences not assumed			1,582	17,349	,132	11,350	7,174	-3,764	26,464

An independent samples t-test was applied so as to provide statistical information about whether there was any statistically significant difference in the post-test results of experimental (*M*=75, *SD*=14.405) and control groups (*M*=63.65, *SD*=17.528); *t*(18)=1.582, p=.131. The results of the test emphasized that none of the groups were better than the other in terms of their post-test grades. According to Li and Steckelberg (2004), these results might result from the inclusion of a summative test (post-test) in the study. They reported that had a formative assessment been included in the study instead of a summative one, the groups might have produced significant differences in their post-test results. That is, the students in both groups might have focused on their results on the post-

test (2nd oral examination). Therefore, if formative assessment had been utilized, the progress of the students in the experimental group might have been seen more easily compared to the students in the control group.

4.2.2. A Comparison of Both Groups in their Pre-test and Post-test Results

The main objective of this study was to provide answers about whether the students who were taught gap fillers in a 6-week period might produce statistically different results as opposed to the ones who were not. Therefore, a paired-samples t-test was run by the researcher in order to see if results of students in pre-test and post-test phases of both groups were significantly different.

Table 9

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	66,63	20	18,466	4,129
	Posttest	69,33	20	16,665	3,726

Table 10

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	20	,768	,000

As seen in Table 9 and Table 10, both groups' pre-test (*M*=66.63, *SD*=18.466) and post-test (*M*=69.33, *SD*=16.665) results are close to each other, and the pre-test and post-test results are significantly positively correlated to one another (*r*=.768).

Table 11

The Results of the Paired Samples T-test

	Mean	SD	T	df	Sig.
Pretest-Posttest	-2,700	12,091	-,999	19	,331

As seen in Table 11, the results obtained from the paired samples t-test demonstrated that there was no statistically significant difference between pre-test (*M*=66.63, *SD*=18.466) and the post-test (*M*=69.33, *SD*=16.665) results of the students; *t*(19)=-.999, p=.331. The

results of the test demonstrated that students in the experimental group who were taught gap fillers did not show significant increase in their post-test results compared to the students in the control group who were not. In addition, the eta squared value, which is used to determine the effect size and the size of the intervention (teaching gap fillers) (Pallant, 2007), was quite small with a value of .05 (Lachenbruch & Cohen, 2006). Therefore, it could be said that the intervention of teaching gap fillers did not yield to any significant differences between experimental and control groups.

In some studies, it was argued that teaching collocations and fillers did not have positive effect on student success when the instruction was a short-term resulting in the difficulty of internalization of the content by the students. These studies also emphasized that a short presentation of the content although emphasized did not prove positive outcomes for the students' spoken performances regarding these particular aspects such as fillers and collocations. Furthermore, it was also noted that the knowledge regarding collocations and fillers delivered to students should be repeated for longer periods of time in order to acquire subtanstial increase in their oral performances (Szudarski & Conklin, 2014; Wolter & Gyllstad, 2011). Concordantly, the results of this study might have been affected by the concerns mentioned above. The students of the experimental group could have showed greater increase in their results in the post-test, which might have resulted in a significant difference from the control group.

Dörnyei (2006) also emphasized that several factors might affect the result of a study where two groups of students (experimental and control group) are compared in terms of oral competency in English. The study suggested that the condition where there is no significant difference between treatment and control group might have resulted from the length of filler and conversational strategy training, limited size of the samples, and other factors such as fluency and pronunciation in the target language. In Dörnyei's study, the training was given over a period of 6 weeks, which is similar to this study as the researcher conducted the gap-filler training in a 3-week period. In this study, teaching gap-fillers did not demonstrate a significant difference in the treatment group's post-test scores, which was the same result in Dörnyei's study where the students' English competence was not related to the instruction of conversational strategies such as fillers and conversational strategies.

Montgomery and Eisenstein (2006) report that additional exposure to English might have resulted in the increased student results of the control group in the post-test. This situation

could provide foundations for this study as the results of the students in the control group had also showed an increase in the post-test. Montgomery and Eisenstein also suggested that the students' being aware of that they were participating in a study related to teaching gap-fillers might affect the overall performance of students' spoken performances (Nakatani, 2005). Similarly, in this study, the students in the experimental group might have had the same experience and their results might have increased due to the findings of the above-mentioned study.

Prakash (2017) reports that teaching conversational strategies such as fillers proved to be effective for students in dealing with their communication problems during their speeches. The students who took part in the experimental part of this study showed similar performances as Prakash's study. Video recordings showed that the students of experimental group attempted to use gap fillers they learned in the 3-week training. Although the study did not yield any significant differences between the experiment and control group, the researcher was able to see that the students in the experiment group made use of particular gap fillers the researcher taught in the training sessions. In addition, O'Malley et al. (2006) reported that teaching conversational strategies such as fillers had a significant effect on students' oral performances in a speaking task.

Unlike the results of this study, Nakatani (2005) investigated the effect of oral communication strategies taught to a group of Japanese learners of English by creating a treatment where students were taught discourse markers and a control group with no training. In the study, it was revealed that the students who were trained about discourse markers and conversational strategies had significantly improved their oral examination results as opposed to the ones who did not have any training.

4.3. Qualitative Findings and Discussion

RQ2: What are the most frequently gap fillers that students tend to use during the oral examination?

All video-recordings of oral examination for each student were listened to by the researcher to find out what gap fillers were used mostly by the experimental group. The researcher took notes of the used gap fillers while listening to the recording. All recordings were listened for a second time to double check. While doing this, the use of gap fillers in

the right place was not taken into consideration. All gap fillers taught are shown in Table 12:

Table 12

The Categories of Taught Gap Fillers

The category of gap fillers	Taught gap fillers
Getting time for thinking	Well
	So
	You know…
	How can I say this,
	Anyway, the point is…
Hesitation	Let me think
	To be honest
	It`s difficult to say
	In a way,…
	It`s on the tip of my tongue
Clarifying	I guess
	It`s a kind of…
	What I am trying to say
	I mean
	What I mean

Table 13

The Numbers of Fillers Used to Get Time for Thinking

Students	Well	So	You know	How can I say	Anyway, the point is
S1EG	1	2	1		
S2EG	1		1	2	
S3EG	1		4	1	
S4EG		2	1		
S5EG				1	
S6EG		1		1	
S7EG					1
S8EG					
S9EG	2			1	
S10EG		1			

Table 14

The Numbers of Fillers Used for Hesitation

Students	Let me think	To be honest	It`s difficult to say	In a way	It`s on the tip of my tongue
S1EG	1				
S2EG	1				
S3EG					
S4EG		1			
S5EG					
S6EG	1				
S7EG	2				
S8EG	1				
S9EG	1			1	
S10EG	2				

Table 15

The Numbers of Fillers Used for Clarifying

Students	I guess	It`s a kind of	What I`m trying to say	I mean	What I mean
S1EG	2	1		2	
S2EG	1	1			
S3EG			1		
S4EG			1		
S5EG	2				
S6EG	1				
S7EG	3				
S8EG		1			
S9EG	3				
S10EG					

As a result, among gap fillers used for getting time for thinking, *"well"* and *"so"* were used 5 times, *"you know"* was used 7 times, *"how can I say"* was used 6 times, and *"anyway, the point is…"* was used just once. *"You know"* can be counted as the most commonly used gap filler to buy time for thinking by the students. It may be because of the fact that "you know" is used by the speakers of English in many contexts such as movies, reading texts in course books or during classes.

Among gap fillers which were taught for the purpose of showing how to express hesitation when needed, *"let me think"* was used 9 times, *"to be honest"* was used just once, *"it`s difficult to say"* was used 2 times and *"in a way"* was used just once as well. *"It`s on the tip of my tongue"* was not used or preferred by the students and it may be because of the fact that this phrase is a little difficult to remember or to say. While teaching gap fillers the

teacher should choose the ones that are easy to remember. As a result, most commonly used gap filler under this category was found to be *"let me think"*.

Lastly, among gap fillers used to clarify ideas, *"I guess"* was used 12 times, *"it`s a kind of"* was used 3 times, *"what I`m trying to say"*, *"I mean"* and *"what I mean"* were used 2 times. *"I guess"* became the most preferred and used gap filler to clarify ideas. The reason why the students used this gap filler mostly may be because of easiness to remember and similarity to *"I think"* which is generally known and heard often by the students.

RQ3: What are the students` views on learning gap fillers to improve speaking skill?

Written feedback forms received at the end of each gap filler teaching session were typed by the researcher. Because the students provided feedback in Turkish, a certified translator translated them into English. The data was analyzed by conducting thematic content analysis on Nvivo software v12. The themes were "contributions of gap filler learning to the students" and "usage areas of gap filler".

When the students were asked to write their opinions about learning gap fillers, they provided the following:

"Gap fillers will be beneficial in terms of oral proficiency."

"Gap fillers will provide me to speak more fluently and professionally."

"Our oral examination score may increase with the help of gap fillers. Also, we can speak more professionally in our daily talk."

"Gap fillers will make my speech more effective."

"While talking to foreign people, I can use gap fillers in order to speak fluently."

"Gap fillers are beneficial for us to speak more fluently in an oral examination."

"Learning gap fillers will help me speak more fluently and hesitate less."

"Learning gap fillers will make me more confident, so I may easily handle with speaking English and it will have an effect on my academic success positively."

"I can prepare myself for the context during an interactive dialogue thanks to gap fillers."

"I can use gap fillers during oral examination or in any other academic situation. I believe I seem more professional with the help of them."

"We become more fluent and we do not stuck with ideas with the help of gap fillers. Also, gap fillers help us be more self-confident."

"Gap fillers make my second language seem as if my mother tongue. Therefore, I can improve myself academically."

"I can improve my English by learning more structures like these gap fillers."

"Learning and using gap fillers will affect my academic career in a better way in which I can be more self-confident thanks to speaking more fluently."

The answers of the students show that the students think that knowing gap fillers will make their speech more fluent and more effective. In this way, they may improve their academic skills and academic success because of the fact that they fill the gaps and hesitate less, which reduce stress and help them feel more comfortable and confident during an oral examination. According to Woodrow (2006), the oral performance of English speakers is negatively affected by anxiety. Also, Krahnke and Krashen (2006) say that a variety of affective variables are related to success in second language acquisition, and most of those studies have been examined under three categories: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. If students feel less stressed, their academic success may increase accordingly. Also, students stated that learning more structures or phrases like the gap fillers taught may help them improve their English. Mahripah (2014) asserted that foreign language learners' speaking skill is affected by some specific linguistic components of language such as phonology, syntax or vocabulary. Learning gap fillers may contribute to their vocabulary knowledge. Besides all these, the students think that knowing and using gap fillers will make their speech more professional and as if their mother tongue. Aşık and Cephe (2013) state that:

> "Discourse markers may provide non-native learners of English gain nativeness in a foreign language in spoken or written discourse. This feeling of nativeness will help learners feel comfortable while learning another language. Through discourse markers in spoken discourse, the naturalness of talk can be attained and in writtten discourse, the text gains a higher level of coherence."

Moreover, according to Moreno, O`riordan and Chambers (2006, p. 99), using discourse markers help learners sound more authentic in L2 speaking.

According to the students` answers related to usage area of gap fillers, their views as in the followings:

"I can use these gap fillers that I have learned in my future presentations and speeches."

"Gap fillers will especially be useful to my oral examination. Also, I can use them in my daily talk."

"I can use the things that I have learned in an oral examination or while talking to foreign people."

"I think that I can use gap fillers to explain myself better if I have a job interview."

"We can use gap fillers any time we speak English."

"Learning gap fillers will help us speak fluently and without hesitation during any interview, presentation or when we go abroad."

"For example, I learned how to get in track when I hesitate during speaking. We can use these gap fillers during oral examination and during our daily life."

"In everyday speeches or in an oral examination, when I have difficulties in speaking, I can use these gap fillers."

"I believe I can easily answer the questions that are asked in an interview or in any other formal occasion thanks to gap fillers."

As a result of these responses, the students think that they can use gap fillers during an oral examination, in presentations, in a job interview or in any other formal occasion, in daily talk, while interacting with foreigner, when they hesitate or try to gain time to think. In short, they stated that they can use gap fillers any time they speak English.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a summary of the research. In this sense, summary of the study including aims, data collection and analysis procedures, and results of the study is reported briefly. Then, with regard to the results of the study, implications are exhibited. Finally, limitations of the research are described and suggestions for further research are stated.

5.1. Summary of the Study

There are many strategies used to increase students` oral proficiency. Discourse markers are one of the strategies used for the purpose of increasing students speaking performance. McCarthy and Carter (2007) expressed that there is no reason why discourse markers should not be included in teaching issue, in contrast, they should be taught because they are lexically simple and very beneficial items. The teachers wishing to provide a deeper insights in the target spoken language have to decide the status of discourse markers in their classroom (ibid) because of the fact that the spoken language is closely about the discourse markers. For this purpose, this study aimed to investigate whether the students who were exposed to gap filler teaching session had higher grades than the ones who were not exposed regarding their oral examination. Also, this study aimed to find out which gap fillers among taught were used most during the oral examination and students` views on learning gap fillers. In line with the purposes of the study, purposive sampling method was used and quantitative and qualitative data were collected from preparatory school students at a foundation university. For quantitative data collection, oral examination pre-test and post-test results of the students in experimental and control group were used. Quantitative data of the study were analyzed by means of inferential statistics (Paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test) on SPSS v24. The researcher had to satisfy the requirements of

applying a t-test for the study. Descriptive statistics of both groups' pre-test and post-test results revealed that both groups were normally distributed and had no outliers. For qualitative data analysis, the data obtained from students` written feedback was analyzed by conducting thematic content analysis on Nvivo software v12. Main themes were determined by the researcher. To provide inter-reliability of the themes, experts` views were also consulted. In the light of their views, the main themes were finalized. Also, for another qualitative data analysis, the video-recordings of second oral examination used as post-test were listened by the researcher. The researcher took notes of the used gap fillers while listening to the recording. All recordings were listened for a second time to double check. While doing this, the use of gap fillers in the right place was not taken into consideration.

The findings have revealed that there was no a meaningful increase in the results of the students who were exposed to gap fillers teaching sessions compared to the ones who were not exposed. However, positive feedback was received in the matter of learning gap fillers. The students expressed that learning gap fillers may be beneficial to them in their academic life, daily talk, in class spoken performance and oral examination. They stated that they may feel more comfortable while speaking English by using these gap fillers taught. Also, they opined that they may reduce their stress during an oral examination to prevent long pauses and hesitation with the help of gap fillers. As Kormos and Dénes (2004, p. 160) cited, even native speakers often hesitate in some certain situations. If this situation is taken into consideration, it would not be wrong to say that hesitation of the ones who are not native is so natural. The students expressed that they would like to keep on learning gap fillers. It shows that teaching gap fillers may be a part of teaching how to speak in a foreign language. Another finding of the study showed that during the oral examination, for each category, most used gap fillers were *"you know"*, *"let me think"*, and *"I guess"*.

5.2. Limitations

The present research has a number of limitations. First of all, though the preparatory school students were chosen with purposive sampling technique and the sample included limited number of students, the results cannot be generalized to all preparatory school students in Turkey because data were collected solely from a foundation university where the researcher have been working due to its accessibility and time limitation. As it is a

quasi-experimental study, there are two groups: experimental and control group. The students in control group may have heard or learned some specific gap fillers from their teachers or outside of the classroom and may have used these gap fillers in the second oral examination.

5.3. Pedagogical Implications

This study has yielded some pedagogical implications in terms of language learning and teaching. The results belonging to qualitative part of the study showed that preparatory school students at the foundation university where this study was conducted think that learning gap fillers may benefit in terms of academic success, future life situations such as job interview, daily talk, being successful in oral examinations or feeling better and recuing anxiety in oral examinations. Thus, teaching gap fillers should be embedded to curriculum of the university where this study was conducted. Eslami-Rasekh (2005) asserted that teachers should be responsible for teaching pragmatic aspects of a language. Accordingly, discourse markers, to be specific, gap fillers are in this pragmatic part, and they should be taught. Within the light of the results, teaching gap fillers can be embedded to speaking lessons and the importance of learning gap fillers can be highlighted. In this way, students` awareness towards learning gap fillers to improve their speaking skills can be increased at the beginning of their learning process.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Research

There are many studies related to discourse markers. Also, there are lots of studies conducted on the specific fillers about their usage and preference by the natives or non-natives. However, there is a gap in the literature about teaching gap fillers. Further research might investigate whether teaching gap fillers has an impact on students` other skills or their improvement. Teaching gap filler sessions can be implemented in a longer process. Moreover, it can be investigated whether the students can use gap fillers in a context correctly or not. Besides all these, it can be studied whether knowing and using gap fillers decrease duration of hesitation or not.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: The List Used to Check Which Gap Fillers Were Used

S					
Getting Time For Thinking	Well	So	You know…../You See….	How can I say this	Anyway, the point is…
Hesitation	Let me see/Let me think	To be honest	It`s difficult to say	In a way……	It`s on the tip of my tongue
Clarifying Words	I guess	It`s a kind of…	What I am trying to say	I mean	What I mean

APPENDIX B: Questions in Student Feedback Form Received After Gap Filler Teaching Sessions

1. Bugün öğrendiğiniz en önemli şey neydi? Açıklayınız.

2. Bu öğrendiklerinizi nerede/nasıl kullanabilirsiniz? Örneklendiriniz.

3. Bu öğrendiklerinizin akademik başarınıza nasıl faydası olacağını düşünüyorsunuz?

4. Bu dersle ilgili net olmadığını düşündüğünüz bir konu var mı? Bir sonraki derste neyin farklı yapılmasını istersiniz?

APPENDIX C: Questions in Feedback Form Received Before Gap Filler Teaching

Session

Sevgili Öğrenciler,
Aşağıdaki sorulara fikirlerinizi açıkça belirttiğiniz ve detaylı cevaplar vermenizi rica ediyor, bu çalışmaya olan katkılarınızdan dolayı şimdiden teşekkür ediyorum.

Konuşma sınavları esnasında:

1. Kendinizi nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Zorlandığınız alanlar nelerdir?

2. Kendinizi daha güvende hissetmek için nasıl bir yöntem izliyorsunuz? Bunun için yaptığınız ekstra çalışmalar var mıdır? Varsa lütfen örneklendiriniz.

3. Cevap veremediğinizde ya da duraksadığınızda ne yapıyorsunuz?

4. Tereddütte kaldığınızda ya da konuyu toparlamak istediğinizde bir şey söylüyor musunuz? Cevabınız evet ise, ne gibi cümleler kuruyorsunuz?

5. Düşünmek için zaman kazanmaya çalışırken bir şey söylüyor musunuz? Cevabınız evet ise, ne gibi cümleler kuruyorsunuz?

6. Cevaplarınızı tekrar ve daha açık ifade etmek istediğinizde bir şey söylüyor musunuz? Cevabınız evet ise, ne gibi cümleler kuruyorsunuz?

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu araştırma, Gazi Üniversitesi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü'nde yüksek lisans yapmakta olan Sabahat Boztunç tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu çalışmanın katılımcılarını Türk Hava Kurumu Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Bölümü`nde hazırlık eğitimi alan öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır.

Bu araştırmaya katılımınızı onayladığınız takdirde çalışmanın katılımcısı olacaksınız. Çalışma süresince ve sonrasında kimlik bilgileriniz araştırma dışındaki hiç kimseyle izniniz dışında paylaşılmayacaktır. Bu çalışma kapsamında elde edilecek olan bilimsel bilgiler sadece araştırmacılar tarafından yapılan bilimsel yayınlarda, sunumlarda ve eğitim amaçlı çevrimiçi bir ortamda paylaşılacaktır. Toplanan veriler, isiminiz ve kimliğiniz gizli tutulacaktır.

Bu çalışmaya katılım gönüllük esasına dayalıdır. Üç ders ve bir konuşma sınavı süresi saatince sürecek bu uygulamada yer alan hiçbir aşama, kişisel rahatsızlık verecek nitelikte değildir. Ancak herhangi bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz, uygulamaları nedenini açıklamaksızın yarıda bırakıp araştırmadan çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda vermiş olduğunuz bilgilerin araştırmacı tarafından kullanılması ancak sizin onayınızla mümkün olacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak ve yanıtlanmasını istediğiniz sorularınız için araştırmayı yürüten Sabahat Boztunç ile (E-posta: snboztunc@thk.edu.tr) iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Bu araştırma kapsamında gereken uygulamalarda yer alacağımı biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum. Çalışma süresince video kaydı ve ses kaydı alınacağını ve fotoğraf çekileceğini biliyorum. Videolar ve fotoğrafların bilimsel makaleler, akademik sunumlar ve çevrimiçi bir eğitim ortamı dışında kesinlikle kullanılmayacağını biliyorum.

Projeye katılmak istiyorum	Evet / Hayır
Fotoğraf ve videolarımın araştırma amaçlı kullanımına izin veriyorum	Evet / Hayır
Fotoğraf ve videolarımın aşağıdaki görsellerde kullanılabilecektir:	
Çevrimiçi Eğitim ortamda	Evet / Hayır
Raporlar, makaleler, ilgili haberler gibi görsel ve yazılı materyallerde	Evet / Hayır

Ad Soyad:.......................
Katılımcının İmzası: ....
Tarih ....
Teşekkürler,
Sabahat N. Boztunç
....

APPENDIX E: The Slides Used to Teach Gap Fillers and Activities Used to Practice in the Classroom

Slides Used in Lesson 1

Picture Description Activity Assigned as a Homework After Lesson 1

Slides Used in Lesson 2

DO YOU FIND ONLINE HOMEWORK USEFUL?

* WELL... THEY ARE EFFECTIVE. IN A WAY, THEY ARE HELPING US LEARN BETTER.

IN A WAY...

* IF YOU USE «IN A WAY», YOU MEAN THAT ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT COMPLETELY TRUE, IT IS TRUE TO A LIMITED EXTENT.

DO YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF «CONDITION»?

* IT'S ON THE TIP OF MY TOUNGE... WELL... IT MEANS A PARTICULAR STATE THAT SOMEONE OR SOMETHING IS IN.

IT`S ON THE TIP OF MY TOUNGE

* YOU WANT TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HESITANT.

Let me see/Let me think

To be honest

It's difficult to say

In a way

It's on the tip of my tongue

whatever YOU DO, DO IT GOOD.

Slides Used in Lesson 2
Topic Selection Activity Assigned as a Homework After Lesson 2

Topic 1

BEING A STUDENT

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of being a student?
- Which one is more fun for a student: high school or university? Why?
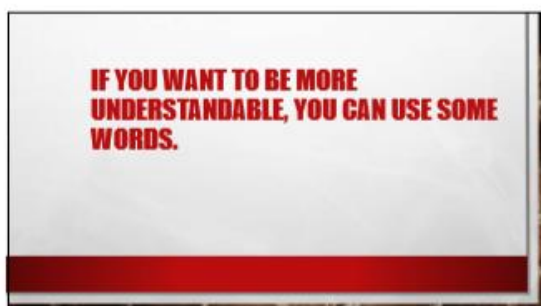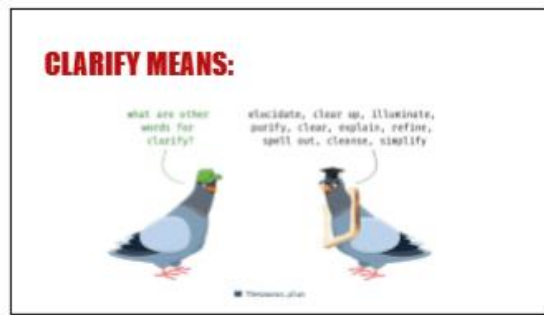
Topic 2

CRIMINALS

- Why do people become criminals?
- What kinds of bad things do criminals do?

Topic 3

JOBS

- What is your dream job? Why?
- Which jobs are famous in your country? Why?

Slides Used in Lesson 3

Activity Used to Practice in Lesson 3

What word would you use to describe this term?

What have you achieved this term?

What has changed for you since the beginning of this term?

Where did you have difficulties this term?

What will you remember about this term?

If you could relive this term again, what would you do differently?

What are you doing for the holiday?

Do you have any next term decision? (eg. I'm going to exercise more)

Getting Time For Thinking	Hesitation	Clarifying Your Words
Well,….. / So,…….. You know,………./ You see,……….. How can I say this…. Anyway, the point is…	Let me see / Let me think To be honest,……… It`s difficult to say, ………    In a way, ….    It`s on the tip of my tongue	I guess,……. It`s a kind of……. What I am trying to say,… I mean…. What I mean….

APPENDIX F: Spoken Assessment Grading Criteria and Spoken Assessment Marking Sheet

SPOKEN ASSESSMENT GRADING CRITERIA

Bands	Grammar&Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation
5	*Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. *Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	*Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. *Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organization of ideas. *Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers	*Is intelligible. *Intonation is appropriate. *Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.
4	Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.		
3	*Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. *Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	*Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. *Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. *Uses a range of cohesive devices.	*Is intelligible. *Intonation is generally appropriate. *Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. *Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.
2	Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.		
1	*Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. *Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	*Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. *Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. *Uses basic cohesive devices.	*Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.
0	Performance below Band 1.		

SPOKEN ASSESSMENT MARKING SHEET

JURY NO	ID	STUDENT NAME & SURNAME	1.Gr&Voc. 5/4/3/2/1	2.Dis.Man. 5/4/3/2/1	3.Pronun. 5/4/3/2/1	Total 15	1st Marker Conv. 100	2nd Marker Conv. 100	Average 100	Conv.	
1	1									1	7
2	1									2	13
3	1									3	20
4	1									4	27
5	1									5	33
6	1									6	40
7	1									7	47
8	1									8	53
9	1									9	60
10	1									10	67
11	1									11	73
12	1									12	80
13	1									13	87
14	1									14	93
15	1									15	100

- The grading criteria used in this study is adapted from Cambridge University.

APPENDIX G: Nvivo Report

Coding Summary By File
Written Feedback
30.07.2019 19:27

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
Document						
Files\\All Written Feedback						
Node						
Nodes\\Contributions to the students						
	No	0,3244	21			
				1	SN	30.07.2019 18:57

I learned how to speak fluently without hesitation and the things I have learned provided fluency and coherency in a speech.

| | | | | 2 | SN | 30.07.2019 18:58 |

Gap fillers will be beneficial in terms of oral proficiency.

| | | | | 3 | SN | 30.07.2019 18:58 |

Gap fillers will most probably contribute to my oral examination.

| | | | | 4 | SN | 30.07.2019 18:59 |

Gap fillers will provide me to speak more fluently and profesionally.

| | | | | 5 | SN | 30.07.2019 18:59 |

Our oral examination score may increase with the help of gap fillers. Also, we can speak more professionally in our daily talk.

| | | | | 6 | SN | 30.07.2019 18:59 |

Gap fillers will my speech more effective.

| | | | | 7 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:00 |

While talking to foreign people, I can use gap fillers in order to speak fluently.

| | | | | 8 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:00 |

Gap fillers are beneficial for us to speak more fluently in an oral examination.

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
				9	SN	30.07.2019 19:04

I believe learning and using gap fillers will affect my grades in a better way.

| | | | | 10 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:04 |

Learning gap fillers will provide me to speak English more professionally.

| | | | | 11 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:06 |

Learning gap fillers will help me speak more fluently and hesitate less.

| | | | | 12 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:07 |

I have an idea about how to fill the gaps when I need to pause during a speech.

| | | | | 13 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:07 |

Learning gap fillers will make me more confident, so I may easily handle with speaking English and it will have an effect on my academic success positively.

| | | | | 14 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:08 |

Learning and using gap fillers can make me more fluent in an oral examination.

| | | | | 15 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:09 |

I can prepare myself for the context during an interactive dialogue thanks to gap fillers.

| | | | | 16 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:09 |

I can use gap fillers during oral examination or in any other academic situation. I believe I seem more Professional with the help of them.

| | | | | 17 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:09 |

We become more fluent and we do not stuck with ideas with the help of gap fillers. Also, gap fillers help us be more self-confident.

| | | | | 18 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:09 |

We can speak in a more eager way because gap fillers make our speech more fluent. It improves our academic success.

| | | | | 19 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:10 |

Gap fillers make my second language seem as if my mother tongue. Therefore, I can improve myself academically.

| | | | | 20 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:10 |

I can improve my English by learning more structures like these gap fillers.

70

Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
				21	SN	30.07.2019 19:10

Learning and using gap fillers will affect my academic career in a better way in which I can be more self-confident thanks to speaking more fluently.

Nodes\\Usage Area of Gap Fillers

	No	0,3081	20			
				1	SN	30.07.2019 18:58

I can use the things I have learned in my future presentations and speeches.

				2	SN	30.07.2019 19:02

Gap fillers will especially be useful to my oral examination. Also, I can use them in my daily talk.

				3	SN	30.07.2019 19:02

We can use gap fillers in an oral examination to prevent hesitation.

				4	SN	30.07.2019 19:01

Our oral examination score may increase with the help of gap fillers. Also, we can speak more professionally in our daily talk.

				5	SN	30.07.2019 19:01

I can use the things that I have learned in an oral examination or while talking to foreign people.

				6	SN	30.07.2019 19:03

I think that I can use gap fillers to explain myself better if I have a job interview.

				7	SN	30.07.2019 19:03

While talking to foreign people, I can use gap fillers in order to speak fluently.

				8	SN	30.07.2019 19:03

Gap fillers will make my speech more effective in an oral examination. Indeed, I think I can speak better in a daily talk.

				9	SN	30.07.2019 19:03

I can use gap fillers in a job interview.

				10	SN	30.07.2019 19:04

I can use gap fillers in an oral examination and job interview.

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Classification	Aggregate	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
				11	SN	30.07.2019 19:04

We can use gap fillers in an oral examination and daily talk and also to practise our speaking skills.

| | | | | 12 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:06 |

We can use gap fillers any time we speak English.

| | | | | 13 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:06 |

Learning gap fillers will help us speak fluently and without hesitation during any interview, presentation or when we go abroad.

| | | | | 14 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:07 |

I believe learning and using gap fillers help me during my school life.

| | | | | 15 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:07 |

I can use gap fillers while getting time for thinking in an oral examination.

| | | | | 16 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:08 |

We can use gap fillers when hesitating during oral examination.

| | | | | 17 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:08 |

 We can use gap fillers during oral examination and while speaking with a native speaker. Actually, we can use them every moment we speak English.

| | | | | 18 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:08 |

For example, I learnt how to get in track when I hesitate during speaking. We can use these gap fillers during oral examination and during our daily life.

| | | | | 19 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:10 |

I believe I can easily answer the questions that are asked in an interview or in any other formal occasion thanks to gap fillers.

| | | | | 20 | SN | 30.07.2019 19:10 |

In everyday speeches or in an oral examination, when I have difficulties in speaking, I can use these gap fillers.

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GAZİLİ OLMAK AYRICALIKTIR...