To my dearest husband, İSKENDER ŞENTÜRK
To my whole family

TEACHERS'AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FLOW IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

The Graduate School of Education
of
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of
Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Bilkent University
Ankara

June 2010

BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

June 28, 2010

The examining committee appointed by the Graduate School of Education for the thesis examination of the MA TEFL student

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS'AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FLOW IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

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June 2010

This study was designed to investigate the degree to which flow occurred in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses and examined teachers' and students' perceptions about the existence of flow experience in speaking courses. The study was conducted over a two-week period with 163 elementary level university students and their eight instructors of English in eight different speaking classes at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School. Designated speaking tasks were class discussion, role-play, language games, interview, information-gap, problem solving, picture narration, and storytelling.

Data were collected through the administration of a questionnaire to measure students' affective responses to tasks after each designated task, a short survey on teachers' perceptions about each task and interviews with these eight teachers about their perceptions about flow theory, their flow experiences in their lessons and the degree to which students experience flow in the activities. Student means were used to investigate the motivational potential of tasks. Data were further analyzed using

ANOVA tests in order to explore the differences in the experience of flow among the eight different activities.

The qualitative and quantitative analyses indicated that flow exists in language classes; however, there is a significant difference among each task. The findings revealed that the class discussion activity produced more flow for both teachers and the students, whereas the information-gap activity resulted in more apathy. Results also showed that there is a significant relationship between the type of the activity and affective engagement in terms of students' perception of task control, task appeal, focused attention and challenge. Overall the analysis showed that when activities included the four dimensions of flow, the students were more likely to perceive flow. The findings also revealed that teachers could facilitate the flow experience for students by developing tasks that might lead to flow. Lastly, the findings showed that an interactional pattern of group work produced significantly better results.

Key Words: Flow, flow experience, affective engagement / affective response, task

ÖZET

İNGİLİZ DİLİ ÖĞRETİMİNDE KONUŞMA DERSLERİNDE KULLANILAN AKTİVİTELER ÜZERİNDEKİ FLOW ETKİSİ

Ak Şentürk, Burcu

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Bölümü

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Haziran 2010

Bu çalışma, İngilizce konuşma derslerinde sekiz farklı aktivitede öğrencilerin ne ölçüde "flow" etkisi yaşadığını incelemiştir. Çalışma Zonguldak Karaelmas Üniversitesi İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu'nda sekiz farklı alt düzey konuşma sınıfında öğrenim görmekte olan 163 öğrenci ve bu sınıflarda konuşma dersi vermekte olan sekiz farklı İngilizce okutmanının katılımıyla 2009-2010 Eğitim-Öğretim yılı sonbahar döneminde iki haftalık sürede gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada kullanılan aktiviteler tartışma, drama, dil oyunları, mülakat, bilgi , sorun çözme, resim anlatımı ve hikaye anlatma.

Veriler her aktivite sonrasında öğrenciler tarafından doldurulan anketler, öğretmenlerin aktiviteler hakkında algılarını ölçmeyi amaçlayan anketler ve öğretmenlerle flow teorisi, ve öğrencilerin aktivitelerde hangi ölçüde "flow" yaşadığını belirttikleri mülakatlar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Öğrenci ortalamaları aktivitelerin ne derece motive edici olduğunu araştırmak için kullanılmıştır. Veriler

sekiz aktivite arasında farklılık olup olmadığını anlamak amacıyla ANOVA testi kullanılarak incelenmiştir.

Nitel ve nicel analizler “flowun” dil sınıflarında mevcut olduğunu fakat aktiviteler arasında önemli farklılıklar olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuçlar tartışma aktivitesinin öğretmenler ve öğrenciler açısından daha çok “flow” yarattığını, aksine bilgi aktivitesinin daha çok kayıtsızlık yarattığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Sonuçlar ayrıca gösterdi ki aktivitelerle öğrencilerin duygusal motivasyonu arasındaki ilişkiyi öğrencilerin aktivite üzerindeki kontrolü, aktivitenin ilgi çekici olması, öğrencilerin konuya odaklanması ve güçlük seviyesi etkilemektedir. Analizler, eğer aktivite dört “flow” boyutunu içeriyorsa, öğrencilerin “flow” yaşama olasılığını artırmakta olduğunu da göstermiştir. Ayrıca sonuçlara göre öğretmenler “flow” yaşamayı sağlayıcı aktiviteler hazırlayarak öğrencilerin “flow” yaşama olasılığını artırabilirler. Son olarak sonuçlar gösterdi ki grup çalışması yapıldığında sonuçlar belirli şekilde değişmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: “Flow”, flow deneyimi, duygusal motivasyon, aktivite

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a thesis was an enjoyable, but admittedly a demanding journey for me. Throughout this way to success, I had a number of people beside me whose encouragement and assistance I would not ignore. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor Visiting Prof. Dr. Kimberly Trimble for his continuous support, expert guidance, and patience throughout the study. He provided me with assistance at every stage of the process and always expressed his faith in me.

I would like to thank all the faculty members of MA TEFL Program, the director of MA TEFL Program Assist. Prof. Dr. Julie Matthews-Aydınlı for her supportive assistance, Assist. Prof. Dr. JoDee Walters for her encouragement, invaluable feedback and expert academic guidance throughout the study. She has inspired me in so many ways and has endured with me throughout the whole process, and Assist. Prof. Dr. Philip Lee Durrant for his assistance and profound help in managing SPSS calculations. It was a great pleasure to meet them, benefit from their experience, and work together during the hard times. I would also like to thank my committee member, Prof. Dr. Claire Martin, for her contributions and positive attitude.

I owe much to the director of the Preparatory School of Zonguldak Karaelmas University, Okşan Dağlı, for her support and encouragement. I am thankful to the Rector Prof. Dr. Bektaş Açıkgöz and the Vice Rector Prof. Dr. İhsan Toroğlu, who gave me permission to attend this program.

I owe special thanks to my dearest colleague, Nuray Okumuş, for motivating me all the time and supporting my study. I would also thank my colleagues at Zonguldak Karaelmas University, Ulaş Koçak, who introduced "Flow Theory" to me, and Esra Saka, Demet Kulaç, Bahar Bıyıklı Koç, Nihan Güngör, Belgin Öztürk, Suna Sezer, Nurdem Elif Çolak and Fisun Çelik, for participating in my study. I also thank all the participant students for their appreciated performance.

Special thanks to my dearest MA TEFL classmates Özgül Özönder and Arzu Koçak, for their friendship, help, and encouragement throughout the whole process. I believe none of us would have been able to persevere in our efforts during this challenging process and leave with such sweet memories if it had not been for the wonderful, and hopefully, long-lasting friendship we developed over the year. I truly enjoyed their company and will long remember the good times we had together. Without them, it would be impossible to finish this tiring, and demanding process.

Last but not least I would like to extend my thanks to my friends, and my whole family for their incessant support, understanding and forbearance throughout the study, and for believing in me. Without their support, it would have been very difficult for me to survive throughout this long and challenging, yet rewarding process with such ease. Finally, I would like to express my endless love and gratitude to my husband, İskender Şentürk. He always made me feel close to him during my most difficult days here even if he was sometimes thousands of miles away from me.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Flow theory investigates the quality of subjective experiences during total engagement in an activity. Since these subjective experiences are characterized by feelings of interest, enjoyment and satisfaction, they are referred to as 'optimal experiences' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is one aspect of the affective dimension of human motivation. According to flow theory, an individual is thought to reach peak or optimal experiences when the conditions necessary for flow are embedded in the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997b; Egbert, 2003). Although flow experiences have been extensively studied in the context of sports, art and computer games (Csikzentmihalyi, 1997), the relationship between flow experience and language learning is a relatively new area of inquiry. Existing research does suggest that a flow-like experience can be captured in language classrooms, and that contextual factors such as task-related variables could contribute to the occurrence of positive emotional states in learners (Abbot, 2000; Egbert, 2003; Larson, 1988). From this perspective, designing and presenting meaningful activities which promote a flow experience and support the communicative use of language in speaking lessons are helpful to promote positive emotional states in learners resulting in the development of language learning.

The purpose of this study is to examine the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses by exploring teachers' and students' perceptions about which activities promote flow. The study was conducted at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School with 163

elementary level students and eight instructors of English for the duration of two weeks in the fall semester of the 2009-2010 academic year.

Background of the Study

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the study of flow experience in the language classroom. Flow theory is described as an experiential state characterized by intense focus and involvement that leads to improved performance on a task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990). The theory posits that intrinsically motivating experiences lead to "optimal experience" identified as "flow" during total engagement in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990). According to flow theory, flow is more likely to occur during tasks which the person feels are very challenging and when s/he possesses a high level of skills in facing those challenges (Moneta, 2004). Those experiencing flow describe it as being "in the zone," "in the groove" (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), "blinking out" or "having the touch" (Abbot, 2000).

Flow theory holds that some preconditions must exist for the flow experience to occur: (a) a balance of skills and challenge, (b) intense concentration, (c) clear goals, (d) immediate feedback, (e) a sense of control, and (f) interest (Egbert, 2003). Although these flow dimensions have been more widely examined to explain the quality of subjective experience in leisure activities and work environments, flow theory has recently been extended to language education research (Abbot, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Egbert, 2003; Tardy & Snyder, 2004).

Flow theory predicts that high challenge and high skill activities lead to a state in which intrinsic motivation peaks (Moneta, 2004). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have been widely addressed in much second language learning research.

Intrinsic motivation is the tendency to engage in a task just because one finds it enjoyable and interesting, whereas extrinsic motivation is the tendency to engage in tasks because of the expectation of reward or punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). People differ in their general tendencies to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated across situations and times (Moneta, 2004). Although many activities in educational settings are extrinsically motivating, internalization and integration of the activity with one's own self can also be fostered when the learning environment is less controlling. As a result of the internalization of the activity, tasks which are not intrinsically motivating become more valuable and meaningful for people.

Flow is something individuals experience during a task, it does not occur in isolation. It depends on both individual characteristics and conditions in the environment. It may even be related to other participants in the environment (Egbert, 2003). Csikzentmihalyi (1997b) proposes that while examining flow in learning, it is crucial to investigate not only students' experiences but also teachers' experiences as well since the motivation provided by the teachers' sense of flow may be essential for effective teaching. Moreover, as flow occurs at peak moments, these moments motivate teachers in their work, shaping their classroom practices (Tardy & Snyder, 2004).

Language learners' interest, engagement in the learning process and designing motivating tasks can enhance flow experience. The research literature on the use of tasks reveals particular application of tasks in the development of oral skills (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001, cited in Willis, 2003). Since spoken language production is a difficult aspect of language learning, designing and presenting meaningful activities, which promote a flow experience, are helpful to develop communicative

competence. People report that they experience flow while they are performing activities in which they have an intense interest (Abbot, 2000). However, it is unclear in what educational contexts and during what kinds of tasks flow might occur and what effects this experience might have on learning and learners (Egbert, 2003). Although several researchers have conducted research concerning the existence of flow experiences in "educational" activities such as reading or using the computer (Abbot, 2000; Egbert, 2003; Trevino & Webster, 1992), flow has not yet been a focus of much research involving speaking activities in the language classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Flow theory has received significant attention in the field of education. A number of studies have been conducted on the existence of the flow experience in the language classroom (Abbot, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Egbert, 2003; Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy 1996; Schmidt and Savage, 1992; Tardy and Snyder, 2001), on teachers' perceptions of flow theory in lessons (Tardy & Snyder, 2004), on developing increased engagement in activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Egbert, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000a) and on the existence of flow experiences in activities such as reading, using the computer, using the internet, and writing (Abbot, 2000; Lu, Zhou, & Wang, 2009; Shin, 2006; Smith, 2005). However, no study has focused on the existence of flow experiences while performing different tasks in speaking lessons.

After completing one year of an intense English Preparatory Program, many learners complain about their lack of communicative competence. This may result in part from the fact that students may not find some of the activities

motivating in speaking courses and in other courses in general and do not participate in the courses or practice enough. In order to enable students to actively participate in the course, it is necessary to present meaningful activities that encourage the communicative use of language. This study aims to examine teachers' and students' perceptions about the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School.

Research Questions

1. What are students' perceptions concerning the types of activities that promote flow in speaking lessons?
2. What are teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities that promote flow in speaking lessons?
3. To what degree do different speaking activities promote flow?

Significance of the Study

The mastery of speaking skills is a priority for many language learners. In respect to non-native speakers, fluent, accurate and pragmatically effective use of the target language is the desire of L2 learners; that is, learners generally desire to speak without excessive hesitation and fragmentation, without making too many errors. The learning process thus must focus on accuracy and fluency in speech production and in order to develop these aspects, flow has been proposed as a way to create an atmosphere in which students are presented meaningful activities which may promote a flow experience, have a relation to the real world and promote the use of

language communicatively in the classroom. Although some research exists on the existence of flow in the language classroom specifically during a variety of activities such as reading, using the computer, using the internet, and writing (Abbot, 2000; Egbert, 2003; Shin, 2006; Smith, 200), there is no study that focuses on the existence of a flow experience while performing different tasks in speaking courses.

At the local level, the results of this study will benefit language teachers, enabling them to choose appropriate flow-promoting activities that help students actively engage in speaking courses and gain communicative competence. Also, in the curriculum renewal processes, practitioners may design the syllabus by including tasks, which promote the experience of flow more. This study may also help those who are designing the speaking course syllabus in my institution by providing a useful framework for shaping their criteria in choosing and evaluating tasks. Finally, as the instructors at Zonguldak Karaelmas University Compulsory Preparatory Program are planning to write a speaking course book, this study may be a basis for it.

Key Terminology

Flow: Csikszentmihalyi (1988) uses the term ‘flow’ to describe the psychological state of people at moments of optimal experience when they are totally absorbed in what they are doing.

Affective Engagement/Affective Response: Due to the liberal definition of flow adopted in this study, the term ‘flow’ has been used interchangeably with affective engagement and affective response to refer to an experience similar to flow.

Task: A task can be described as any activity that engages learners in the learning process and that has the overall purpose of improving their language abilities, from simple mechanical exercises to more complex activities (Breen, 1987; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the problem and key terminology that will recur throughout the thesis have been presented. The next chapter is the literature review, which presents the relevant literature on flow theory, followed by speaking as a language skill, fluency practices, different speaking tasks and the experience of flow in different speaking activities. The third chapter is the methodology chapter, which explains the participants, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis of the study. The fourth chapter elaborates on the data analysis by presenting the tests that were run for analyzing the data and the results of the analyses. The last chapter is the conclusions chapter, which includes the discussion of the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This research study seeks to investigate the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses by exploring teachers' and students' perceptions about which activities promote flow. This chapter provides background on the literature relevant to the study beginning with an introduction to the concept of flow. This will be followed by an investigation into the relation of flow theory to self-determination theory. Intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation will be examined in relation to flow theory. Then, the conditions that must exist for flow to occur will be explored. Next, a review of flow theory in language learning contexts and research revealing the measurement of flow will be discussed. Speaking as a language skill will also be examined. Lastly, fluency practices, different speaking tasks and the experience of flow during different tasks will be investigated.

Flow Theory

Flow theory is described as an experiential state characterized by intense focus and involvement that leads to improved performance on a task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990). The theory posits that intrinsically motivating experiences lead to "optimal experience" identified as "flow" during total engagement in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990). When in the flow state, people are absorbed in an activity, their focus of awareness is narrowed, they lose self-consciousness, and they feel in control of their environment (Rettie, 2001).

While experiencing flow, the person feels that the task at hand is very challenging and s/he is functioning at his or her fullest capacity. Flow experiences

are characterized by feelings of enjoyment, interest, happiness and satisfaction. Therefore, flow theory postulates that "autotelic" people who engage in an activity for their own sake even when the task is perceived as difficult or dangerous experience flow more frequently and more intensely than others. The perfect balance between the challenges afforded by the activity and the individual's available skills are believed to contribute to this optimal experiential state. Those experiencing flow describe it as being "in the zone," "in the groove (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), "blinking out" or "having the touch" (Abbott, 2000).

Flow theory holds that the intrinsically rewarding experience leads people to "higher levels of performance" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 74) which result in exploratory behaviors and constant repetition of the activity (Trevino & Webster, 1992). Csikszentmihalyi suggests that in this way, flow contributes to optimal performance and learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997b; Egbert, 2003; Larson, 1988). Flow researchers have found that some preconditions must exist for flow experience to occur: (a) a balance of skills and challenge, (b) intense concentration, (c) clear goals, (d) immediate feedback, (e) a sense of control, and (f) interest (Egbert, 2003). Although these flow dimensions have been more widely examined to explain the quality of subjective experience in leisure activities and work environments, flow theory has recently been extended to language education research (Abbott, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Egbert, 2003; Tardy & Snyder, 2004). Csikzentmihalyi (1993) points out that "almost every activity has the potential to produce flow" (p. 189). In fact, studies investigating flow in everyday life have revealed that flow experiences are reported more frequently in work and study than in leisure activities. Prior to the discussion of the conditions that are conducive to

flow, a broader analysis of sources of human motivation and inherent psychological needs with regard to self-determination theory would be helpful in giving deeper insight into flow and activities that might activate its occurrence.

The Relation of Flow Theory to Self-Determination Theory

According to Deci, Vallerand, Pelleter and Ryan (1991), there are three types of personal needs, which lead to motivation. They are competence (attaining various external and internal outcomes), relatedness (developing secure and satisfying connections in social environments), and autonomy (regulating one's own actions). Satisfaction of any of these three needs enhances motivation. When people satisfy their needs, they are self-determined. Deci et al. (1991) classify motivation into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Within the context of self-determination theory, Csikszentmihalyi's flow experience is described as "the archetypical intrinsically motivated experience" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 155). Although it is intrinsic motivation that plays the key role in these theories, a thorough analysis of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is necessary in order to understand the complex phenomenon of human motivation, emotion and affective experiences, and their implications for learning environments.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is the willingness to engage in an activity because of the enjoyment derived from the activity itself. Ryan and Deci (2002a) describe this engagement in the task as "for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56). If people are intrinsically motivated, they act for interest or

enjoyment. Intrinsically motivated learners exhibit voluntary interest in learning to satisfy the innate needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Succeeding in an activity over and over leads to self-confidence, doing activities with peers enables learners to feel relatedness, and making personal choices and having control over them make them autonomous (Schneider, 2001).

In order to achieve self-determination, learners need optimal challenges, autonomy and sources of arousal in their learning environments (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985). When students are presented with enjoyable, interesting and challenging activities, they are thought to have an inherent curiosity toward discovering things that interest them (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Van Lier, 1996). Therefore, this aroused interest motivates students for further discovery and learning. When students' interest and intrinsic motivation are enhanced, it is believed that the learning process will become an enjoyable and rewarding experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Schiefele, 1991).

Intrinsic motivation further improves the quality of learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pintrich, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Van Lier, 1996). If learners are intrinsically motivated, they approach activities as opportunities to explore new ideas. Activities that offer learners a context of autonomy, optimal challenge and feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction encourage learners to look for further opportunities for learning. Results obtained from a study conducted by Pintrich (1989) support the relationship between intrinsic motivation and better performance where intrinsically motivated learners outperformed those whose motivation was extrinsic.

Extrinsic Motivation

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsically motivated individuals perform an activity to achieve external rewards, such as grades, or to avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan; 1985 as cited in Alperer, 2005). The activity itself does not motivate those learners, but they are motivated by the factors that lie outside the activity. As students' participation in extrinsically motivating tasks is not self-rewarding, their interest in and enjoyment of the activity decreases (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and they are affected by external factors.

Since students are not generally intrinsically motivated, their involvement in tasks is largely influenced by external demands. Even though extrinsic motivation is characterized as less favorable than intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can also promote learning. Self-determination theory suggests that extrinsic motivation can vary depending on the extent to which the action is internalized (Deci, Eghrari, & Leone, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b). When activities are internalized, they become more valuable and meaningful for learners. In other words, performance on the task varies depending on the extent to which learners internalize behaviors and exhibit autonomous and extrinsic motivation. A closer look at the conditions that are associated with flow could establish a clearer framework for exploring flow in educational settings.

Conditions of Flow

Flow theory holds that some preconditions must exist for flow to occur:

a) a balance between challenge and available skills

b) focused attention and intense concentration

c) a sense of control

d) learner interest (Csikzentmihalyi , 1997; Egbert, 2003)

Other conditions of flow might include “clear task goals,” “immediate feedback on the task,” “a deep sense of enjoyment,” “a lack of self-consciousness,” “ awareness,” and “the perception that time passes more quickly” (Egbert, 2003).

The balance between challenge and skills is considered as one of the most important conditions among the factors that contribute to the emergence of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997a; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Z. Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Egbert, 2003; Tardy & Snyder, 2004; Van Lier, 1996; Wilkinson & Foster, 1997). Learners enjoy a task if they feel their available skills and the challenges offered by the task are in balance. This balance leads to success on the task and the learner is motivated to perform a more challenging task and to use the skills s/he gained from the previous experiences (Csikzentmihalyi, 1997; Egbert, 2003). Hektner and Csikzentmihalyi (1996) note that “in order to maintain the enjoyment of flow, people must continually engage in new challenges to match their increasing skills, and they must perfect their skills to meet the challenges” (p. 4). If the task is more challenging or less challenging than the learners’ intellectual capacity, flow is replaced by boredom or anxiety.

Brown (1994) clarifies the meaning of anxiety stating that “it is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry” (p. 141). If the task is complex and if it is more challenging than the level of the learners’ skill, it can be a source of anxiety because students may doubt their own abilities or

wonder if they will succeed. According to Davies (1981), extreme tension is disruptive and often disabling, so anxiety deprives the learner of the skill.

The original flow model shows the results of the challenge and available skills balance and "is based on the ratio of the quantity of subjectively experienced challenges to the quantity of subjectively felt skills" (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 252). According to this model, when the offered challenges are far beyond an individual's capabilities, the subjective experience will be that of anxiety. When skills are greater than opportunities for using them, then people experience boredom. Thus, optimal experience, which is represented by the diagonal channel in Figure 1, can only be predicted when opportunities and skills are in perfect balance.

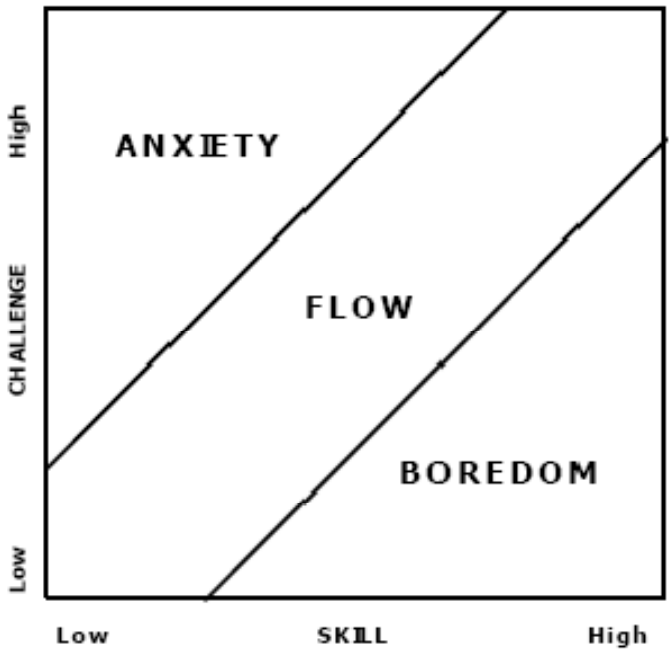

Figure 1- The original flow model (Adapted from (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 259)

The Flow Model is used in many studies measuring optimal experiences in daily life. It illustrates that flow occurs when there is a balance between the available skill of the students and the challenge of the activity. If the challenge is higher than the available skills, anxiety occurs and if the activity is less challenging, students get bored during the activity.

The second condition for flow is focused attention and concentration. Many second language acquisition studies have emphasized the important role of attention in learning (Crookes & Schmidt as cited in Van Lier, 1996; Schmidt as cited in Egbert, 2003; Skehan, 1998). According to Egbert (2003), "focus in Flow Theory is characterized by intense concentration and automaticity" (p. 504). When full concentration in the task is followed by flow, the activity becomes an intrinsic reward. While much research has emphasized conscious attention to language, many subjects who have reported experiencing flow expressed that "unintentionally focused attention" was essential for the occurrence of flow (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Egbert, 2003).

The third precondition for flow is learner control. Abbott (2000) states that "autonomy-supporting environments," even in school, promote flow more than controlled environments and tasks. The inherent need for self-determination motivates individuals to seek and engage in new challenges, which is essential for the occurrence of flow (Egbert, 2003). This sense of control or autonomy is essential in language learning since it contributes to motivation in language learning (Egbert, 2003).

Learner interest is the fourth dimension of flow. Since flow theory is concerned with intrinsic motivation, learner interest has received attention in flow. It has been revealed that topics that are of interest to learners are positively correlated with engagement, enjoyment, and focused attention (Abbott, 2000; Schiefele, 1991). Interest that leads to flow could result from tasks that are meaningful to learners and that are authentic (Egbert, 2003).

Finally, in order to achieve complete involvement in a flow experience, goals should always be clear and feedback should be immediate (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Almost any kind of feedback can be beneficial, provided it is logically related to a goal (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Enjoyment is an important component of a flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) states that "enjoyable events occur when a person has not only met some prior expectations or satisfied a need or desire but also gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do and achieved something unexpected" (p. 46). Next, when an activity is absorbing, a person does not consider any other irrelevant stimuli (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). When a person needs to cope with the challenges of a situation, that person's attention is completely absorbed by the activity. As a result, as Csikszentmihalyi (1991) points out, one of the most universal features of optimal experience takes place: "people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing" (p. 46). A dancer describes how she feels when a performance is going well:

> "Your concentration is very complete. Your mind is not wandering, you are not thinking of something else; you are totally involved in what you are doing. Your energy is flowing very smoothly. You feel relaxed, comfortable, and energetic" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p. 53).

Finally, one of the most common descriptions of optimal experience is that "time no longer seems to pass the way it ordinarily does" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p. 53). People's concentration on the activity is so intense that time passes without any awareness of it having passed. Hours pass like minutes; in general, most people report that time passes much faster (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). All in all, all these elements are essential in language learning since they contribute to motivation in language learning (Egbert, 2003).

Flow in Language Learning

The focus of flow studies is to find out the quality of subjective experience that causes intrinsically motivating behavior (Alperer, 2005). Researchers have conducted both theoretical and empirical research concerning the existence of flow in educational settings in relation to the conditions associated with flow. These studies have indicated that there is a relationship between learners' emotional state and cognitive functioning (Larson, 1988; MacIntyre, 2002). The investigation of flow theory in language classrooms has shed light on the importance of autonomy-promoting contexts, motivating tasks and teacher roles in promoting flow in learners (Alperer, 2005).

The autonomy-supportive context is emphasized in research studies exploring flow in language classes. In autonomy-supportive contexts, learners are observed to function with increased intrinsic motivation and greater task engagement that are likely to be accompanied by feelings of interest, enjoyment, satisfaction and pleasure (Abbott, 2000; Larson, 1988; Tardy & Snyder, 2004). Examining the concept of flow and the conditions associated with flow, it may be claimed that

learning environments in which learners are given autonomy and control over tasks seem more likely to create flow experiences (Abbott, 2000; Larson, 1988).

Designing tasks that support the conditions for optimal arousal can also enhance flow-supportive learning environments (Egbert, 2003). Tasks in which there is a balance between students' abilities and task demands, which are interesting or motivating, which have clear goals and which are followed by explicit feedback are likely to enhance positive emotional experiences. Such tasks also sustain students' concentration on the task, increase their level of engagement, and consequently, help learners perform better.

In addition to designing motivating language tasks that might facilitate flow, the role of the teacher is also important in language classrooms. Teachers themselves can be influential in promoting learner motivation by exhibiting interest and involvement in their work, thereby providing a model for students (Csikzentmihalyi, 1997; Tardy & Snyder, 2004). In their study Tardy and Snyder (2004) claim "if flow occurs at peak moments, it is likely that these are the moments that motivate teachers in their work, possibly shaping their practices" (p. 119). Thus, they also reveal that teacher motivation and learner motivation are closely related and if the teacher is engaged in flow, it is more likely that the learners will be, too.

Studies on flow in language classrooms suggest that flow does exist in language classrooms (Abbott, 2000; Egbert, 2003; Larson, 1988; Tardy & Snyder, 2004; Wilkinson & Foster, 1997) and teachers can contribute to the occurrence of flow states in learners by designing flow-promoting activities. The research conducted on how flow is promoted and which methods are suitable for measuring flow experiences give a better understanding of flow in language classrooms.

Measurement of Flow

Empirical research on flow is a demanding task because of the complex nature of the phenomenon (Massimini & Carli, 1988 as cited in Alperer, 2005). Flow is not easy to measure because of the fact that it is a "subjective experience." Most of the studies attempting to analyze flow focus on the optimal balance between challenge and skills. Researchers try to explain this affective experience by examining individuals' available skills and the extent to which the challenges offered in the activity match these skills (Alperer, 2005). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) was the pioneering researcher to conduct research on the experience of flow in daily experience. This research was later fine-turned by Massimini and Carli (1988). In recent years, Wilkinson and Foster (1997) and Egbert (2003) applied flow theory to language learning with a special focus on language learning tasks.

The Flow Model is used in many studies measuring optimal experiences in daily life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Early studies were largely based on data collected from interviews or questionnaires that measure flow. Although such methods are valuable for research into subjective experiences such as flow, they are limited by their reliance on self-reports, and so may run the risk of being inaccurate or incomplete (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Therefore, a more comprehensive tool that could measure flow more spontaneously and more accurately was needed. It was in the mid 1970s that the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) was first used in flow studies (Alperer, 2005). The ESM consisted of electronic pagers and a questionnaire booklet distributed to respondents. Respondents were sent signals to their pagers at random times of the day and they were asked to fill out a form and answer questions in their booklets whenever they

received a signal. In this way, participants recorded descriptions of their emotional states instantaneously and the investigators were able to collect more systematic data (Alperer, 2005).

The Experience Sampling Method aims to observe natural occurrences. Subjects concentrate on the inner experience that was ongoing at the moment of the beep and immediately write down in a notebook or given questionnaires the feeling they have in their inner world. Then, subjects meet the investigators for an "expositional interview" which is designed to help the subject provide a true description of the sampled experiences. The investigator then surveys all of those moments of experience and identifies their prominent characteristics. According to the flow theory, there should be a correlation between individuals' emotional states during task engagement and the balance between challenges and skills. However, this theoretical assumption was not supported by the results obtained from numerous ESM analyses (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Contrary to the predictions that the investigators made, a balance between challenges and skills hardly correlated with positive emotional states. The researchers were also puzzled by the unexpected results and they tried adapting the ESM (Alperer, 2005).

In subsequent years, Massimini and Carli (1988) elaborated on Csikszentmihalyi's original flow model and proposed an explanation for the unpredicted results in ESM studies. Massimini and Carli (1988) claimed that "flow experience begins only when challenge and skills *are above a certain level*, and are in balance" (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 260). Previous ESM work had assumed a person to be in flow in every instance the challenge-skill balance was maintained, even when the two items were scored zero. Their new

hypothesis was that flow could not occur when either the challenges or the skills were below a standard level regardless of their perfect balance. This new model predicted that only high-skill, high-challenge combinations would result in flow, while a balance between the two variables below the mean would lead to apathy (Alperer, 2005). The various ratios between the individuals' Standardized challenge and skill scores in Massimini and Carli's (1988) eight-channel flow model are pictured in Figure 2.

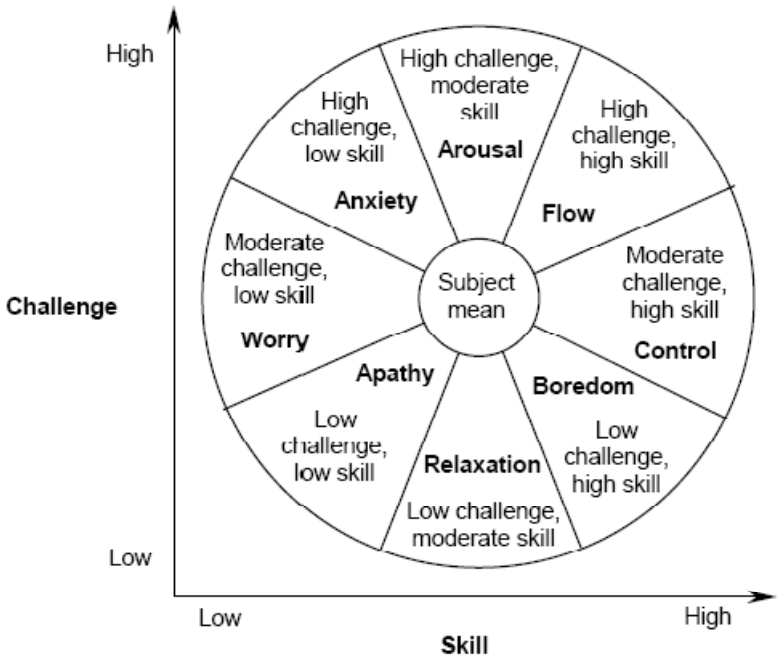

Figure 2 – Massimini and Carli's model for the analysis of the optimal experience (Massimini & Carli, 1988)

The centre of the diagram represents the average level of an individual's weekly challenges and skills, with the segments representing relative positions of skill and challenge (Pace, 2000). This new model was operationalized in a number of ESM studies in later years. A study conducted with Milanese teenagers, for example,

matched the theoretical expectations that "when challenges and skills were both high, respondents were concentrating significantly more than usual, they felt in control, happy, strong, active, involved, creative, free, excited, open, clear, satisfied, and wishing to be doing the activity at hand" (Massimini & Carli, 1988, p. 271). Subsequently, a study comparing the quality of experience in the flow channel between Italian and American students revealed similar results concerning the challenge-balance although there were differences in subjects' responses to flow due to cultural factors (Carli & Massimini, 1988).

Flow theory has also been investigated in foreign language classrooms by Egbert (2003). She not only focused on the balance between challenges and skills, as most previous studies had done, but she also analyzed flow experience in relation to the four basic conditions that induced its occurrence: a balance between challenge and skills, focused attention, interest and a sense of control.

In her study, Egbert investigated the kinds of tasks that produced a more positive affective response, using both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. First, she collected background information about participants' personal and educational backgrounds. Then, a perceptions questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire included 14 items in Likert-scale format, which reflected challenge, attention, interest and control. The questionnaire was adapted from Webster, Trevino, and Ryan (1992, as cited in Egbert, 2003). Observations during learners' involvement in tasks and follow-up interviews including stimulated recalls compensated for the subjectivity of the questionnaire. Samples of participants' products were also collected for a more thorough examination of task processes.

At the analysis stage, the number of participants experiencing flow for each individual task was calculated. Although the results did not illustrate specific task characteristics that supported flow, the implication of this study is that flow experience in learners could be triggered by developing flow-promoting tasks. The findings also validated the measurements used in the study and confirmed the reliability of using surveys in measuring flow (Alperer, 2005).

Overall, while some studies have focused more on the assessment of flow in daily experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990; Massimini & Carli, 1988), investigations into flow in language learning environments (Egbert, 2003) have provided new opportunities for research into the affect of activities on different language skills.

Flow Activities

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1991) "what makes an activity conducive to flow is that it is designed to make optimal experience easier to achieve" (p.72). The activity has rules that make learners learn the necessary skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, and they make control possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). They also facilitate concentration and involvement by making the activity as distinct as possible from the everyday routine. Different activities such as games offer opportunities to encounter ordinary experiences in four different ways (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). *Agon* includes games whose main feature is competition; *alea* is the games of chance; *ilinx* is the name of the activities that adjust consciousness by "scuffling" ordinary perception; and *mimicry* is the group of activities in which people create alternative realities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1991), every flow activity, whether it involves competition, chance, or any other dimension of experience shares the same feature: “It provides a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushes the person to higher levels of performance” (p. 73).

Language Skills

Learning a new language means developing skills that allow you to process what other people say in another language and to communicate what you want to say (Brown, 1994). There are four major skills in a language, which enable learners to understand and to use the language. These major skills are categorized into two parts: receptive and productive skills.

Harmer (2001) states that “receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the meaning they see or hear” (p. 199). Reading and listening are under this category. According to Edge, in ELT everybody admits the necessity of providing learners with meaningful language input. If language teachers help their students to develop their receptive skills, they will have the chance to learn the target language in a better way (1993).

Speaking and writing are productive skills in which learners produce the language. Harmer states that while students write or speak as a part of a language learning process, they can experiment with the target language and they can use it actively (2001, p. 249). Nevertheless, Bailey and Savage (1994) state that “speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills” (p. vii).

Richards (2008) states that learners evaluate their success in language learning and the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how competent they are in communication. He adds that one of the important problems in foreign-language teaching is to prepare learners to use the language, and thus enable them to enhance their speaking skills. How this preparation is done, and how successful it is, depends very much on teachers' performance in the lessons.

Speaking as a Language Skill

Nunan (2000) points out that for most people mastering the speaking skill is the most vital issue of learning a foreign or second language. He adds that learners' success is evaluated by their consideration as to how they can carry out a conversation in the target language. However, as it is very difficult to enhance students' speaking skills, it is crucial for teachers to encourage students to participate in speaking lessons and practice. To enable this, teachers may provide instruction that enhances students' intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation as much as possible by providing interesting, well-designed flow promoting activities. Slavin (1988) identified four techniques that can be used to enhance the intrinsic motivation of learners.

Whetting students' appetites for knowledge

If learners are convinced that the topic which they are about to study is of a great importance, learning it can really matter, and they will have a real 'aim', which is not a reward provided by the teacher, but learning itself, they will be more intrinsically motivated.

Maintaining curiosity

Teachers use a variety of activities and materials to arouse and maintain students' curiosity, so their interest in the lesson will be maintained.

Providing interesting and varied presentation modes

Using one kind of material or teaching different things in similar ways can easily become boring for students, and should be avoided. For this reason, alternating techniques and methods or activities and materials can be extremely helpful to address learners.

Presenting meaningful activities which promote the Flow experience

Learning a foreign or second language can be a challenging process. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to present meaningful activities to promote flow in their lessons. Since flow is strongly related to intrinsic motivation, if students are intrinsically motivated and if there is a balance between their skill and the challenge, they may experience flow, which will lead them to participate in the lessons and practice more, resulting in the improvement of their communicative competence.

From Controlled to Free Practice

One of the important issues to take into consideration while designing intrinsically motivating activities is deciding on the suitable structure of the activity. Eckard (1981) states that "the effective teaching of conversation skills requires the appropriate structuring of speaking activities". If the activity is too controlled, it may

bear little resemblance to real conversation; there is also the possibility that if it is too unstructured, it will merely provide occasions for students to exchange grammatical utterances. To avoid both of these extremes, teachers should match the conversational material to the proficiency level of the learners and present conversational activities that allow and encourage students to react orally (Eckard, 1981). At the same time, however, these activities should provide sufficient control to keep the verbal exchange from wandering aimlessly. Speaking activities can be categorized as controlled, semi-controlled, and free (Eckard, 1981). The degree of control refers to the amount of structure that the teacher imposes on an activity.

Controlled conversation

In controlled conversation activities, the directions are very explicit, and the material to be used is presented in the form of a script, thus leaving few choices for the students to make. However, the activity is not completely controlled since the students always have alternative responses to choose from (Eckard, 1981).

Semi-controlled conversation

With semi-controlled conversation activities, the directions are less explicit, and the material is presented in such a way that students have a number of choices to make as to vocabulary, structure, content, and manner of presentation. These choices determine exactly what ideas, information, or feelings are exchanged and how they are communicated (Eckard, 1981).

Free conversation

In free conversation, the teacher exerts the least amount of control, gives few -if any- instructions, and encourages the students to express their own ideas or opinions about a topic. Even free conversation has some restrictions. The teacher is always free to interject ideas or adjust the direction of the conversation (Eckard, 1981). Rather than practicing accuracy, free conversation activities generally aim at practicing fluency.

The Role of the Teacher and the Students in the Conversation Class

The success of classroom conversations depends on establishing clear roles for the teacher and the students (Eckard, 1981). If neither the teacher nor the students know their roles, they may be uncomfortable as they do not know what is expected of them. Black (1970) indicates that in such cases, either (1) the teacher waits patiently for the students to speak, while the room is filled with a very noticeable silence, or (2) the teacher simply keeps talking until the students have something to say. In neither case is conversation taking place.

The teacher's role

Eckard (1981) points out that "conversation in a second language is a skill, and like all other skills, it requires instruction and practice" (p. 18). It is the teacher's responsibility to give instruction and provide opportunities to practice in the class. To provide the instruction, the teacher should choose the type of conversation activity that is most appropriate for his or her students, explain the activity, and ensure that each student participates in the activity and answers the questions (Eckard, 1981).

No matter which conversation activity is chosen, the teacher should give students time to develop conversation skills. At first the students may be reluctant to participate in various activities that require them to use the bits and pieces of language they have learnt and to produce their own coherent statements or questions (Eckard, 1981). If students are to develop conversation skills, however, they must be given time and opportunities to speak, and the teacher must speak very little.

The students' role

As the teacher's role as a dominant figure changes in a communicative classroom, more emphasis is placed on the students as active participants and learners (Eckard, 1981). By engaging in conversation activities, they must move from the passive role of note-taker and listener to the active role of speaker-listener-respondent (Eckard, 1981). Instead of answering with a pattern drill, the students are expected to use English in a realistic manner. They must know or learn how to communicate in English. At this point, in conversation activities, the teacher, as conversation facilitator, should assist the students in communicating what they want to say.

With continued participation in the classroom conversation, however, most students begin to accept their role as active participants, and frequently request that more class time be allowed for conversation. They develop a strong sense of accomplishment in knowing that they are now able to use 'real' English in the classroom. To give a chance to students to use real English in the classroom, teachers can use several different speaking activities which promote communicative competence.

Conversation Activities

Role-play

Eckard (1981) describes role-plays as "a type of skit in which learners assume the identity of individual characters in a given situation and engage in a conversation that reflects the personality, needs, and desires of characters they are asked to portray" (p. 20). Although role-play may involve some acting, the emphasis is on the verbal interchange rather than on actions. Role-plays differ from the traditional classroom dialogue in that they encourage participants to develop genuine conversation skills by requiring them to listen carefully and by allowing them to choose one among several possible responses rather than by dictating a specific response (Eckard, 1981).

Students cannot engage successfully in role-play until they understand what is expected of them since some students may be reluctant at first to perform in English in front of their teacher and their classmates. In setting up a role-play, the teacher should therefore explain the given situation or provide the students with a written description of it. For low-level students, the teacher may have to go over some of the possible utterances that would grow out of the situation and repeat them, emphasizing the pronunciation (Eckard, 1981).

Interview

The interview is another free conversation activity. Olsen and Gosak (1978) suggest two ways of conducting interviews. In the first, students question a classmate, who gets up in front of the class, about his or her family, friends or opinions on a particular issue. A second way to conduct interviews is to pair the

students off and let them interview each other about a particular topic. This activity can be used on the first day in an intermediate or advanced class as an icebreaker. Partners then introduce each other to the class, using the third person singular.

Topics for interviews should be chosen for their level of interest to the students. What starts out as a question-and-answer session between two students may end up as a class discussion (Eckard, 1981).

Class discussion

Eckard (1981) states that "discussions are similar to conversations in that both are dependent upon social interaction" (p. 36). In both cases, someone must speak, and at least one other person must listen and respond. Students need linguistic as well as communicative skills to participate in the discussion. For that reason, the use of discussions in the language class can aid language learners in improving their conversational skills.

Good discussions seldom occur spontaneously. Generally, they have to be planned and carefully guided. Folland and Robertson (1978) maintain that much of the success of a classroom discussion or conversation depends on the teacher, not on the students. For that reason they suggest some steps for the teacher who wants to stimulate a successful class discussion: (1) arrange chairs to facilitate discussion, (2) introduce a topic and an outline, (3) nominate the first student to introduce the problem or issue, (4) guide the group in keeping the discussion going, and (5) ensure that all students participate.

Although the teacher does much to plan and initiate the discussion, the students conduct the actual discussion. The teacher serves as an adviser, a catalyst, or

a guide by asking leading questions, suggesting a change of topic if necessary, prompting words and structures, or correcting mistakes (Eckard, 1981).

Problem-solving

Knowles and Sasaki (1980) state that:

> "a language is best learned in the process of using it – not that a language is first learned and then used…By using a language we mean the communication of meaning, accurately and comfortably, not just the correct manipulation of linguistic forms and sounds" (p. ix).

While students' attention is on solving the problem or accomplishing the task, they are actually engaging in meaningful communication with one another and practicing conversation skills.

For problem-solving activities, the students are divided into groups and they are given a problem situation. For example, they are told that they have survived a plane crash in a desert with some tools and limited survival rations, and they must decide what they should do. As students work in groups, it promotes their learning. Shaw (1976) clarifies that students in groups learn faster than individuals. Students working in groups tend to take more risks and are not as intimidated as they might be in a traditional classroom setting, because while the groups are working, the attention of the teacher or of the class is not focused on any one student.

Storytelling

Using stories in the language class is another way of encouraging students to talk. Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they know, or they may create their own stories. Storytelling promotes creative thinking. It helps students express

their ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, containing the characters and setting. Students can also tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call on a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher enable students to practice speaking, but also draw the attention of the class (Eckard, 1981).

Picture narration

Pictures can be used for a variety of purposes (for example, to teach or review grammatical structures, pronunciation, vocabulary) and with different levels. Students usually find the use of pictures to be fun and interesting. For low-level students, pictures provide a focal point that is tangible, nonverbal, and not as threatening as the printed word might be (Eckard, 1981). For all students, moreover, picture activities can lead to conversation. As they share their ideas, they are set to embark on lively interaction. The teacher's silence at this point can lead to even more student talk (Eckard, 1981).

Communication games

One useful strategy to encourage language learning is using communication games. Communication games are principally based on the information gap. In order to complete the task, the students have to use the target language. Finding differences or similarities, describing and arranging, story construction and poem reconstruction are several examples of communication games. Games are important in language classrooms since they motivate learners, lower their anxiety and provide opportunities for real communication (Eckard, 1981).

Information-gap

In information gap activities, the teacher gives the students different pieces of information and asks them to complete a task by exchanging information. These activities are enjoyable because the students try to complete their knowledge and while doing so, they can communicate.

The important characteristic of information gap activities is that each student is given only part of the information and they should complete the missing part. Because of this, they must cooperate with their friends and share their information by speaking or writing to each other. This means that all students engage in the activity (Eckard, 1981).

The Experience of Flow in Speaking Activities

After completing one year of an intensive English preparatory program, many learners complain about their lack of communicative competence. This may result in part from the fact that students may not find some of the activities motivating in speaking courses and in other courses in general and do not participate in the courses or practice enough. One important way to address this problem and to enable students to actively participate in the course is to present flow promoting activities that encourage the communicative use of language. Flow promoting activities share several important features like (a) a balance between challenge and available skills, (b) focused attention and intense concentration, (c) a sense of control, and (d) learner interest (Csikzentmihalyi, 1997; Egbert, 2003). If students experience these features in the language lessons, they participate in the activities more willingly; therefore, they practice language and finally enhance their communicative competence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature on flow theory, its relation to self-determination theory, conditions and measurement of flow, and flow in language learning contexts were reviewed. Speaking as a language skill and different activities used in speaking lessons were also discussed. The next chapter is the methodology chapter, which reports on the participants of the study, the instruments used to obtain data, the data collection procedures and the data analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigates the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses and examines teachers' and students' perceptions about the existence of the flow experience in speaking courses.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
2. What are teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
3. To what degree do different speaking activities promote flow?

This chapter will provide information about the participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Participants & Setting

The study was conducted at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School. The participants were 163 elementary level students and eight instructors of English. The students were from eight different classes. Students who fail the proficiency test must attend the one-year preparatory school of English before studying in their department. In the 2009/2010 academic year there were three levels of students, intermediate, lower intermediate, and elementary, which were determined according to the results of the placement test conducted at the beginning of the school year. There were 83 female students and 80 male students. The age range of the participants was between 17 and 19 years of age. Each class had a different instructor for their speaking courses and the entire participant teachers had at least five years of experience in teaching. While deciding on the

classes, the classes' success rate and the willingness of their speaking teachers to participate in the study were taken into consideration. Because the study was carried out with elementary level students in the fall semester, classes' success rates were taken into consideration. Furthermore, as eight different classes participated in the study, to be consistent, the classes whose success rates were similar were chosen.

The classes, participated in the study were the most successful classes of the 33 elementary level classes according to their second mid-term exam results, which was given at the end of the fall semester. Four mid-term exams were carried out in 2009-2010 academic year: two in the fall semester and the other two in the spring semester. Table 1 gives information about classes.

Table 1- Information about classes

Class	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**Success**
D22	10	10	20	1
D3	10	10	20	2
D4	10	10	20	3
D8	10	9	19	7
D9	10	9	19	8
D6	11	11	22	9
D11	12	10	22	10
D2	10	11	21	11

Students are exposed to 30 hours of English every week. They have their primary English course for 16 hours. In addition to that, they have two-hour writing, two-hour speaking and two-hour video courses in which they learn to produce language. In addition to all these courses, they have eight hours of laboratory classes which provide students the opportunity of self-study. Students can listen to the reading passages in a native person's voice, or check their answers while doing grammar exercises or pronunciation exercises on computer. It is compulsory for the students to attend 70 percent of these classes. At the end of the year, the students must pass the final exam in order to be certified by the prep school. Students who fail this exam can enter their departments, but they cannot take the vocational English course in the departments in the third and fourth year. In order to take these lessons and graduate, students must take and pass the proficiency test that is conducted at the beginning of each school year.

Instruments

A perception questionnaire to measure students' affective responses to tasks, a short survey on teachers' perceptions about each task and interviews with these eight teachers about their perceptions about flow theory, their flow experiences in their lessons and the degree to which students experience flow in the activities were the three instruments which were used to collect data in this study.

First, the perception questionnaire (see Appendix A for questionnaire sample) was the main instrument which was used to collect data in this study. This questionnaire was administered during the two weeks of this study, immediately after the completion of each designated task. The questionnaire was designed to measure

students' perceptions of their flow experiences concerning the tasks they were engaged in. The perception questionnaire which was used in this study was taken directly from Egbert's (2003) study, which investigated flow in language learning. In her study, she had adapted this questionnaire from another questionnaire used in computer-mediated environments by Webster, Trevino and Ran (1993, as cited in Egbert, 2003). She adapted the questionnaire by changing the content from computer-focused items to learning tasks and by adding two more items to the original scale. No changes were made related to the structure of the items. The reported alpha reliability of Egbert's adapted perception questionnaire was measured at $\alpha = .88$ which shows that it is reliable.

Egbert's (2003) questionnaire consists of 14 items, which reflects the four-faceted framework of flow including the dimensions of challenge, attention, interest, and control. The items in the questionnaire are associated with each of four flow dimensions of interest (2, 9, 10, and 12), control (3, 4, 8, and 11), focus (6, 7, and 14) and challenge (1, 5, and 13). The alpha reliability of the interest scale was measured at $\alpha = .61$, the control scale was measured at $\alpha = .50$, the fun scale was measured at $\alpha = .81$, and the challenge scale was measured at $\alpha = .86$ which shows that the scales were generally reliable.

Participants responded to each item on a seven-point Likert scale, which provides the respondents with 7 possible responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Two open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire to see students' reasons why they liked the activity or they did not like the activity. As the students are elementary level students, in order to prevent possible language interference during implementation, the original questionnaire,

written in English, was translated into Turkish through a back translation process (see Appendix B for a sample of the translated questionnaire). First, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish by the researcher and then a colleague in the MA TEFL program at Bilkent University and another colleague at ZKU were asked to translate the Turkish version into English. By comparing the back translation received from the colleagues with the original questionnaire, the researcher made the necessary changes to the Turkish version of the questionnaire. Before administering the first questionnaire, an informed consent form that provided students with general information about the study and the questionnaire was given (see Appendix C for a sample of the consent form). Students were ensured that participation in this study was voluntary and their responses would be kept confidential.

In order to ensure the comprehensibility and clarity of the translation, the translated version of the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a class consisting of 22 elementary level students. This pilot group was chosen because the success rate and the student profile in this group were similar to those of the experimental group and also their teacher was willing to participate in the study. The pilot participants were encouraged to ask any questions about the items that were not clear and report any problems in understanding the questionnaire. In response to the pilot students' questions, comments, and feedback, the format of the questionnaire and the wordings of some items were changed to minimize comprehension difficulties.

Instructors were also given questionnaires (see Appendix D for the sample teacher questionnaire) after each task to measure their perceptions about the extent to which students experienced flow during each task. The teacher perception

questionnaire was adapted from Egbert's (2003). The items in the Egbert's questionnaire were rewritten for teachers.

Lastly, the third instrument that was used for data collection in the study was the semi-structured interview (see Appendix E for a sample interview). The instructors of these eight classes were interviewed to understand their perceptions and attitudes about flow after completing the activities they were supposed to do in their classes. The questions on the semi-structured interviews were adapted from Tardy and Snyder (2004). In Tardy and Snyder's study, the aim was to examine EFL teachers' flow experience at work. There were two questions in the original interview. They gave three quotations about flow which were examples of people describing their own experiences of flow. Then, they asked whether the participants had ever had such an experience in their lives and asked to describe it. As the researcher's aim was similar in this study, she used the same questions, but she changed the quotations to include educational experiences. Then, she added three more questions examining teachers' perceptions about the students' experiences of flow in these activities. Oral interviews with the teachers were conducted at the end of the two-week treatment. First, the teachers were provided with the description of flow and then asked about their attitudes towards flow in their lessons. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated for data analysis soon after.

The difficulty of measuring a complex construct such as flow has been acknowledged by motivation and flow researchers (Carli & Massimini, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Egbert, 2003). However, questionnaires have been widely used in measurements of flow in different areas, and these studies have revealed the use of questionnaires to be reliable data-collecting tools for exploring subjective

experiences such as flow (Carli & Massimini, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Egbert, 2003; Wilkinson & Foster, 1997). In this study, the perception questionnaire used by Egbert (2003) was the main instrument for gathering data about students' affective responses during task engagement because it had been used in a similar way in Egbert's study.

Speaking Activities

The researcher prepared eight different activities which include a sample of role-play, interview, class-discussion, problem-solving, story-telling, picture narration, communication games, and information-gap activities (see Appendix H for activities). These activities are described as "a goal-specific, meaningful, and purposeful endeavor that is self-contained" (Egbert, 2003, p. 508). These tasks were selected and distributed according to the focus of each unit across the speaking course syllabus. Table 2 gives the task descriptions.

Table 2 -Task descriptions

Task	Type	Organization	Process
1	Role-Play	Small groups	Students are assigned different roles about a controversial issue.
2	Discussion	Whole group	Students discuss one of the given ideas about money in their groups by showing their arguments to support their opinions.
3	Information-Gap	Small groups	Students try to find out what Dan bought for his big date. They ask their partner for the missing information.
4	Storytelling	Individual and small groups	Students make up stories by using the cards they chose.
5	Interview	Pair work	Students conduct an interview of a pop group.
6	Communication Games	Small groups	Each group has a different TV show. The teacher has a remote control and channel hops during the activity.
7	Problem-Solving	Small groups	Students try to solve a problem they are given.
8	Picture-Narration	Small groups	Students narrate pictures they are given.

Each class had two different activities and two classes performed the same activities. For instance, while D8 and D9 had the same role-play and interview activities, D3 and D4 had the same story-telling and picture narration activities. The activities were

conducted over a period of two weeks. In the first week, activities number 1, 3, 5, and 7 were presented and in the second week activities 2, 4, 6, and 8 were completed by two different classes. Table 3 below describes the speaking activities.

Table 3-Speaking activities

	Class	Task
WEEK I	Class 1 (D3)	Task 1: Role-Play
	Class 2 (D11)	Task 3: Information-Gap
	Class 3 (D8)	Task 5: Interview
	Class 4 (D2)	Task 7: Problem-Solving
	Class 5 (D4)	Task 1: Role-Play
	Class 6 (D22)	Task 3: Information-Gap
	Class 7 (D9)	Task: 5 Interview
	Class 8 (D6)	Task 7: Problem-Solving

	Class	Task
	Class 1 (D3)	Task 2: Class Discussion
	Class 2 (D11)	Task 4: Storytelling
	Class 3 (D8)	Task 6: Communication Games
WEEK II	Class 4 (D2)	Task 8: Picture Narration
	Class 5 (D4)	Task 2: Class Discussion
	Class 6 (D22)	Task 4: Storytelling
	Class 7 (D9)	Task 6: Communication Games
	Class 8 (D6)	Task 8 : Picture Narration

After conducting the pilot study, the researcher prepared the activity files of the instructors which consisted of the instruction for the activities, the materials to be used in the activities, the requirements, the procedure with the steps the instructors should follow (see Appendix I for instructor guidelines) and student consent forms. These were given to the instructors.

Data Collection Procedures

The purpose of the study was determined in late September. The design of the study, along with the participant instructors of English at ZKU, where the pilot study and the actual study would be conducted, was determined in November. After that, permission for carrying out the pilot study and the actual study in the participant instructors' classes was received from the coordinator of the English Language Preparatory School. The time frame of the study, which was designed according to the schedule of the language school, was prepared in December.

On December 31, the Turkish translation of the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a class of 22 elementary level students. This pilot group was chosen because the success rates and the student profiles in this group were similar to those of the experimental group. The participant teacher was also willing to participate in the study. The respondents gave feedback on the comprehensibility of the items in the questionnaire and changes were made accordingly.

Also, on January 4, a meeting was held with the course instructors. The teachers were given an orientation on the administration of the perception questionnaire. The perception questionnaire would be administered to the participants after each designated task during the treatment period. While students answered their questionnaires, the instructors would also fill in the teacher perception questionnaires. It was emphasized that the perception questionnaires of the students and the teachers would be administered immediately after the task was completed in order to collect more reliable data. It was also decided with the teachers that it would be better if the task descriptions and number of participants who responded to the questionnaire were recorded systematically in the teacher perception questionnaire. A list of guidelines was prepared for the instructors to assist them with the procedures to be followed during the study. All the documents and materials needed for the study were compiled in a folder and the teachers were introduced to an easy-filing system to collect, organize and record the data. Before that meeting, a list of tasks to be covered in the course was also negotiated and prepared with one of the instructors. The tasks were selected from the speaking activity files that are used by the instructors for speaking courses.

The designated tasks for this study included a sample of role-play, interview, class-discussion, problem-solving, story-telling, picture narration, communication games, and information-gap activities. During the sessions, students had only one task to complete. Over the course of the study, students were engaged in two designated tasks.

After determining the task types with the instructors, the study started on January 4, 2010. On the same day, the teachers gave an orientation about the study to the students. The orientation included information about the purpose and duration of the study, and the procedures for completing the perception questionnaire. Then, the teachers explained the aim of the study to the students and emphasized the importance of marking all the items in the questionnaire and giving honest responses. Then, they distributed consent forms to the students, and all the students willingly agreed to participate in the study and signed up the forms.

After instructors finished conducting their activities and the questionnaires, the instructors of these eight classes were interviewed to understand their perceptions and attitudes about flow after completing the activities they were supposed to do in their classes. Oral interviews with the teachers were conducted at the end of the two-week treatment on January 20. The interview was accompanied with a consent form that provided detailed information about the purpose of the study, the participants' rights and the contact information of the researcher in case of questions that could arise after the interviews. During the interview, first, teachers were provided with the description of flow and then asked about their attitudes towards flow in their lessons. The interview protocols were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated for data analysis soon after.

The files were collected from the instructors at the end of the second week after all instructors finished conducting their activities and perception questionnaires. Students' and teachers' responses to the perception questionnaires were entered using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.05). The data entry started in the third week of January and continued until March. The treatment lasted for two weeks in total.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was composed of both qualitative and quantitative data collected from multiple administration of the perception questionnaire. The data collected from both the pilot and the actual study were statistically analyzed using SPSS 11.05. Before running any statistical tests on the data, negative items in the questionnaire (3, 4, 10, and 12) were reverse scored.

At the analysis stage of the actual study, first, the averaged mean scores for each task were calculated and ranked. By examining the mean scores of the highest ranking and lowest ranking tasks, the tasks which stimulated the highest level of flow-like experience and which resulted in apathy across participants were determined. Teachers' perception questionnaires were also analyzed to see their perceptions about the degree to which flow occurred in each activity.

The qualitative data collected from the interviews with the instructors were also analyzed. In order to analyze the interviews they were transcribed, and then the basic themes in these interviews were identified. The interviews with the instructors revealed their perceptions and attitudes about flow. After transcribing the relevant parts of the interviews, these parts were translated into English by the researcher

since some of the interviews were originally conducted in Turkish according to the participants' preferences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, information about the methodology of the study was presented with reference to the research questions. The section covered information about the participants of the study, instruments used, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The next chapter explains the data analysis procedures and presents the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses and to examine teachers' and students' perceptions about the existence of flow experience in speaking courses.

The study examined the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
2. What are teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
3. To what degree do different speaking activities promote flow?

This study was conducted with the participation of 163 elementary level students from eight different classes and eight instructors of English at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School. There were eight different activities, one from each of the following types: role-play, interview, class-discussion, problem-solving, story-telling, picture narration, communication games, and information-gap activities. They were taken from the speaking activity file used at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Preparatory School. Each class had two different activities and two classes performed the same activities (see Table 2 for task descriptions).

This chapter presents findings on the overall flow promoting appeal of speaking activities. The data for this study consisted of quantitative and qualitative data which were collected through the administration of a questionnaire to measure students' affective responses to tasks after each designated task, a short survey on

teachers' perceptions about each task and interviews with these eight teachers about their perceptions about flow theory, their flow experiences in their lessons and the degree to which students experience flow in the activities. The 14-item student perception questionnaire was designed using a seven-point Likert scale. The positive statements in the questionnaire were assigned values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The negative items in the questionnaire (3, 4, 10, and 12) were reverse coded before running any statistical tests. Items in the questionnaire were also examined for internal consistency and the Cronchbach's alpha reliability coefficient was measured at .88. The alpha reliability of the interest scale was measured at $\alpha = .61$, the control scale was measured at $\alpha = .50$, the fun scale was measured at $\alpha = .81$, and the challenge scale was measured at $\alpha = .86$.

The responses to the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The 10-item teacher perception questionnaire was designed using a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items in the questionnaire were analyzed and the alpha reliability of the adapted perception questionnaire was measured at $\alpha = .88$. Finally, the qualitative data collected from the interviews with the instructors were also analyzed. In order to analyze the interviews they were transcribed, and then the basic themes in these interviews were identified. The interviews with the instructors revealed their perceptions and attitudes about flow. After transcribing the relevant parts of the interviews, these parts were translated into English by the researcher since some of the interviews were originally conducted in Turkish depending upon the participants' preferences.

To investigate the overall flow inducing potential of the designated tasks in this study, individual item scores for the 16 questionnaires were averaged for each participant in order to calculate mean values for each task. First, means for the eight tasks for all students were rank ordered and analyzed for their flow promoting impact. Then, a one-way ANOVA test was run to compare different speaking activities and students' affective responses to tasks. When significant results were revealed in the ANOVA test, Tukey's HSD was used for post hoc analysis in order to determine the location of the reported differences.

The analyses of data obtained from the questionnaires will be discussed in detail under the four sections below. The first section will begin with a presentation of the overall motivational impact of tasks by comparing flow and apathy results based on the mean scores for each task across all students. This will be followed by the discussion of the analysis of the impact of different activities to promote flow using one-way ANOVA results and Tukey's post hoc results. The purpose of the next section is to present the effects of four flow dimensions –task control, focused attention, interest and challenge on students' perception of flow experience in different activities. Finally, the analyses of the open-ended questions will be discussed in the last section.

Quantitative Data

Analysis of questionnaires

The quantitative data for this study was gathered through a motivation questionnaire. This instrument was administered to all students and teachers immediately after their completion of each designated task. The aim was to measure the flow promoting potential of these tasks. The analysis of the data gathered from

the questionnaires shed light on the first research question which examines students' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons. The questionnaire reflects four flow dimensions: control, focus, interest and challenge. Questions 3, 4, 8, 11 addressed control, questions 6, 7, 14 were concerned with focus, questions 2, 9, 10, 12 were about interest and questions 1, 5, and 13 dealt with challenge. Table 4 shows the analysis of the student questionnaire in terms of four flow dimensions.

Table 4-Flow dimension scales on student questionnaire

Flow Dimensions	Questions	Content
Control	3	I felt that I had no control over what was happening during this task
	4	When doing this task I was aware of distractions.
	8	This task allowed me to control what I was doing.
	11	During this task, I could make decisions about what to study, how to study it, and/or with whom to study.
Focus	6	This task was fun for me.
	7	I would do this task again.
	14	I would do this task even if it were not required.
Interest	2	This task was interesting in itself.
	9	When doing this task, I was totally absorbed in what I was doing.
	10	This task bored me.
	12	When doing this task, I thought about other things.
Challenge	1	This task excited my curiosity.
	5	This task made me curious.
	13	This task aroused my imagination.

Instructors were also given questionnaires after each task to measure their perceptions about the extent to which students experienced flow during each task.

In order to explore which task stimulated the highest level of a flow-like experience in participants; first, responses to individual items on the questionnaire were averaged for all participants. Based on the averaged mean scores, the means for each task for all students and for teachers were computed separately. Table 5 presents the mean scores of all tasks from student and teacher perception questionnaires.

Table 5-Mean scores for each task for all student and teacher questionnaires

Task	**Students Mean**	**Sd**	**Teachers mean**
Task 1 Role-Play	5.01	.92	5.50
Task 2 Class Discussion	5.40	.89	6.00
Task 3 Information-Gap	4.59	.92	3.75
Task 4 Communication Games	5.07	.93	5.00
Task 5 Interview	4.76	.83	5.25
Task 6 Storytelling	5.07	1.11	5.75
Task 7 Problem Solving	4.94	1.01	5.60
Task 8 Picture Narration	5.00	1.16	4.50

Note. Sts mean: Sd: standard deviation
(The seven possible Likert scale answers were as follows: strongly agree= 7, moderately agree=6, agree slightly=5, not sure=4, disagree slightly=3, moderately disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.)Figures in red: the highest score among tasks, Figures in purple: the lowest scores among tasks

Table 5 shows the means for all tasks from student and teacher questionnaires. Since only two teachers answered the questionnaires for each task, standard deviations for teacher questionnaires were not given. Task 2, which was class discussion, had the highest scores for both students and teachers and, Task 3, the information gap activity, had the lowest scores for both students and teachers.

To analyze the overall flow promoting potential of all tasks, participants' average mean scores on each task were rank ordered. Table 6 and 7 illustrate the ranking of all tasks based on the average mean scores of student perception questionnaires and teacher perception questionnaires. Since only two teachers answered the questionnaires for each task, standard deviations for teacher questionnaires were not given.

Table 6-Ranking of tasks according to average mean scores of student questionnaires

Rank	Task	N	Task Means	Sd
1	Class Discussion	36	5.40	.92
2	Communication Games	38	5.07	.89
3	Storytelling	38	5.07	.92
4	Role-Play	33	5.01	.93
5	Picture Narration	41	5.00	.83
6	Problem Solving	37	4.94	1.11
7	Interview	35	4.76	1.01
8	Information-Gap	37	4.59	1.16

Note. N: number; sd: standard deviation
(The seven possible Likert scale answers were as follows: strongly agree= 7, moderately agree=6, agree slightly=5, not sure=4, disagree slightly=3, moderately disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.)

Table 7-Ranking of tasks according to average mean scores on teacher perception questionnaires

Rank	Task	Task Means
1	Class Discussion	6.00
2	Communication Games	5.75
3	Problem Solving	5.60
4	Role-Play	5.50
5	Interview	5.25
6	Storytelling	5.00
7	Picture Narration	4.50
8	Information-Gap	3.75

Note. M: mean
(The seven possible Likert scale answers were as follows: strongly agree= 7, moderately agree=6, agree slightly=5, not sure=4, disagree slightly=3, moderately disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.)

The mean value for the highest ranking task (class discussion) was calculated as 5.40 for students, and the lowest ranking tasks (information-gap, interview, problem-solving) had mean values of 4.59, 4.76, 4.94 for students. It is interesting to note that the mean scores for all of the activities were above the mid-point of 4.00. The reason for this may be because of the fact that all tasks that were chosen were selected because they were thought to be especially engaging.

According to the teacher perception questionnaires, the task creating the highest level of flow was class discussion with a mean score of 6.00 and the lowest ranking task was the information gap activity with a mean score of 3.75.

After examining the mean scores of all activities, the questions in the student perception questionnaires were also analyzed in terms of the four flow dimensions. The mean scores of each flow dimension (control, focus, interest, challenge) were also calculated (see Table 8). Class discussion, the highest ranking task, had the highest mean scores on three of the four flow dimensions. However, the information-gap activity (for two flow dimensions: 3.79 for control and 4.22 for challenge) and the interview (for four flow dimensions: 4.88 for control, 4.65 for focus, 4.60 for interest, and 4.96 for challenge), the two lowest ranking tasks had lower scores than the cut-off point 5.00. The cut-off point for the scales was 5.00. This cut-off point was determined since it represents “agree” on the Likert-scale. Table 8 shows the overall means of all scales for each task.

Table 8-Mean scores of four Flow dimensions for each task

	Control	**Focus**	**Interest**	**Challenge**
Class Discussion	**5.35**	**5.58**	5.31	**5.29**
Communication Games	4.85	5.32	5.19	4.76
Storytelling	5.17	5.42	5.07	4.49
Role-Play	4.81	4.98	5.05	5.19
Picture Narration	4.68	5.37	5.25	4.70
Problem-Solving	5.03	5.23	5.44	4.86
Interview	4.88	4.65	4.60	4.96
Information-Gap	3.79	4.96	5.08	4.22

The class discussion activity, the highest ranking task, was a whole class activity with a mean value of 5.40 for students and 6.00 for teachers and had the highest scores for three of the four scales: 5.35 for control, 5.58 for focus, and 5.29 for challenge. However, the information-gap activity (for two flow dimensions: 3.79 for control and 4.22 for challenge) and the interview (for four flow dimensions: 4.88 for control, 4.65 for focus, 4.60 for interest, and 4.96 for challenge), the two lowest ranking tasks had lower scores than the cut-off point 5.00.

A one-way ANOVA test was run in order to explore the differences in the experience of flow among the eight different activities. Table 9 illustrates the mean values of the overall affective responses of students on the questionnaires to tasks on a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 9 illustrates the results of ANOVA test.

Table 9-ANOVA results for all tasks

	Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**Sig.**
Class Discussion	14.03	7	2.084	.045
Communication Games	278. 99	290		
Problem Solving	293. 02	297		

ANOVA test results (Table 9) point out that there is a significant difference among different activities (p<. 045). The post-hoc test reveals that the bottom three activities which were problem-solving, interview and information-gap are significantly different from the class discussion activity (p<. 002) and the top three activities which were class discussion, communication games and storytelling are significantly different from the information gap activity (p<. 002). There is a significant difference between the first activity, which is class discussion and all the other activities (p<. 004). There is no significant difference among the activities in the middle which are role-play, and picture narration.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data for this study was gathered using two kinds of instruments. The first set of instruments comprised open-ended questions in Part B of the student questionnaires. The second set of instruments were semi-structured interviews held with teachers. The results of open-ended questions and the interviews

will be presented in this part according to recurring comments from each task and the comments from the open-ended questions that match with those in interviews.

Analysis of open-ended questions in student questionnaires

The respondents to the questionnaire were asked to write their responses in the space provided for each question. The responses to these open-ended questions range from short phrases (the most common response) to sentences. The responses for each open-ended question were analyzed by coding the data and identifying sub-categories into which they fell. Table 10 presents the information about the open-ended questions and the number of responses given for each question.

Table 10-Open-ended questions

The Questions		**Missing Responses**	**Responses Received**
1. This task was fun for me because	298	61	234
2. This task was boring for me because	298	217	78

While analyzing the responses, it was noticed that the second question was not answered by the majority of the participants whereas the first question was answered by most of the participants, which suggests that generally students liked all the activities. In the process of the qualitative data analysis, it was found that there are some recurring comments about flow promoting characteristics of the activities in the open-ended questions and these comments match the teachers' comments in their interviews. The answers students gave to the open-ended questions are presented under several headings. Table 11 shows the responses to the open-ended questions.

Table 11-Student responses to open ended questions used in student questionnaires

The activity was fun because…	Number of respondents	The activity was boring because…	Number of respondents
Fun	62	Lack of communicative competence & English Knowledge	15
Practice Speaking	41	Not creative	20
Group work	30		
Different from course-book	14		
Informative & interesting	15		

Positive responses

Fun

One of the recurring comments about the reasons why students liked the activities was that it was fun. A significant number (62) of students who responded to this question from eight different classes indicated that they found the activities enjoyable or fun. One student mentioned:

> We had fun all together, and since we tried to speak English, it was beneficial.(Student 1)

Another student also stated that:

> Since my friends and I liked the activity, we had a lot of fun. (Student 2)

Practice speaking

The other most commonly made comment was related to students' chance to practice speaking. Many respondents (42) thought the activities were creative and allowed them to practice their speaking skills. As they liked the activities, they wanted to participate in the activity which resulted in practicing speaking and vocabulary development. Furthermore, as the activities required students to be creative and produce language, they had the chance to use the language structures they had previously learnt. One of the students commented:

> It was an activity which enabled us to improve our speaking skill and our imagination. I enjoyed it a lot and laughed a lot. (Student 3)

Another student also mentioned the same issue:

> While trying to speak English, I laughed a lot and my creativity improved. (Student 4)

Group work

In the open-ended questions, one of the most commonly mentioned aspects of the activities was the chance to share ideas and personal experiences. Students found working in groups very motivating because this type of activities the meant sustained feeling of engagement during the task completion process. Moreover, students also mentioned that they enjoyed working in groups and sharing their ideas with their friends. One of the students commented:

> Preparing a project with a group was very beneficial and funny. (Student 5)

Another student indicated the same issue:

> Group activities are really beneficial. Sharing ideas in English was really entertaining. (Student 6)

Since they had the chance to prepare their products with their friends in their groups and share their ideas during preparation, they believed that they benefited from it. Not only did it enhance their interpersonal skills, but it also enabled them to express themselves in their groups and prepare a good quality product with their friends. They also had fun while working with their friends. As one student commented:

> Group work activities are generally entertaining and informative.(Student 7)

Being different from course book

In the open-ended questions, some students (14) agreed that these activities were different than the ones in their course books. A cursory look at the speaking book used by students provides some context for understanding these comments. The text does not provide a large number of speaking activities, but is loaded with many listening activities. For example, in Unit 3, the title of the unit is "I'll have pizza, please". Eight sections of the unit are listening and only two are speaking. In the first speaking section, students learn three expressions to ask about what is on a menu in a restaurant. Then, in the second part, by looking at the menu, they ask the waiter to explain what those dishes are. Their responses are limited to only forming sentences. In the other speaking section, they learn three more phrases to ask for and express opinions about food, and afterwards they use these phrases to ask their friends' opinions about the given food. However, they only form separate sentences in this part, as well. In speaking exercises in another unit, Unit 5, students are required to put the words in the correct order. In another example again from the same unit, the students are shown how to ask about services by giving an example, then they form

their questions by using the same structure with different verbs. Verbs are also given in each question. Therefore, students do not produce anything new, but only reproduce the structure and repeat it.

Since the book does not present a variety of speaking activities which enable them to express themselves well, but mostly gives mechanical speaking activities, students stated that the activities used in the study were different from their book. One of the students commented:

> The activity was better than the ones in the speaking course book. (Student 8)

Another student mentioned the same issue:

> We got very bored in speaking lessons, so this activity was like a remedy after these lessons. We had fun. (Student 9)

Students' comments about how the task activities are different from the ones in their books may be reflecting this lack of opportunities to practice speaking. Furthermore, speaking activities in their book are mostly mechanic exercises in which students are required to rewrite sentences or fill in the blanks. They do not produce language; they do not use their creativity or perform different roles as they were asked to do in the task activities they studied. For the most part, these activities do not seem to reflect any of the four flow dimensions: control, focus, interest or challenge. It is not surprising, then, that, students found these activities were different from the ones in their speaking course books. One student indicated that:

> Speaking lessons are really very boring, doing these kinds of activities is entertaining, we should do it more frequently. (Student 10)

Informative and interesting

The other most commonly made observation was related to these tasks being informative. During the analysis of qualitative data, it was noted that students made lots of similar comments about how they learnt new vocabulary items and practiced daily use of language. They stated that they learnt new vocabulary items while performing those tasks. They also learnt the use of daily language with different phrases and vocabulary. One student indicated a specific structure he learnt:

> I learnt how I could form questions in daily language. (Student 11)

Another student made a similar comment:

> I learnt how I could do shopping, which phrases I could do while shopping. We learnt a lot of new words. (Student 12)

In the open-ended questions, one of the most commonly mentioned aspects of the activities was their content. The majority of the students responded positively to the activities to a great extent because they found the topics of the activities very current and these tasks addresses their interests.

As can be inferred from all these comments, these activities were highly flow promoting for the students and they were able to describe these flow promoting characteristics in their own words.

Negative responses

Lack of communicative competence and English knowledge

In the open-ended questions, one of the most commonly mentioned negative aspects of these activities were difficulties students had because they lacked communicative competence. Several students explained that they did not like the

activities because they lack communicative competence to express themselves well in English. The quotation below is a good example:

> I got really bored because I don't know English well. (Student 13)

Another student mentioned the same issue:

> Since I cannot speak English well, I could not express myself well and we could not do anything. (Student 14)

They also pointed out that they did not have enough vocabulary knowledge to express their ideas. One student indicated this by commenting:

> Sometimes, I couldn't find the suitable word and I couldn't express myself well. (Student 15)

Lack of opportunities for creativity

Students mentioned that one of the negative aspects of the information gap activity was that it was not creative. As students were already given the information and were asked to exchange it with the other group, they were not asked to produce anything new. Students noted that they did not find it challenging or interesting. Students also indicated that they did not have control over the activities and they were not curious about it. One student mentioned that:

> It was not interesting, we weren't active. We did not do anything else rather than asking and answering questions. (Student 16)

In talking about the same issue, another student commented:

> I did not like doing the same things all the time. It was not creative, it only asked for the answers for the blanks. (Student 17)

Analysis of the interviews with teachers

Section three in this chapter presents analysis of the qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers. This section presents the

answer to the second research question which seeks teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities that promote flow in speaking lessons. The speaking instructors of these eight classes were interviewed to understand their perceptions and attitudes about flow after completing the activities they were supposed to do in their classes. Oral interviews with the teachers were conducted at the end of the two-week treatment. First, they were provided with the description of flow and then asked about their attitudes towards flow in their lessons. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated for data analysis soon after. As Seidman (1998) suggests, some themes and categories were searched for and identified by the researcher while analyzing the interviews. These themes were suggested by the questions asked of the teachers and the common points that they focused on in the interview. In order to keep the confidentiality of the participants, all the participants' ideas will be referred to by their pseudo names throughout this chapter.

Flow promoting characteristics of the activities

The analysis of the responses to the interviews revealed seven main categories regarding the characteristics of flow promoting activities. The categories that emerged were interest, fun, opportunities to speak and engaging topic, divergence from the textbook, group work, challenge, and creativity.

Interest

A great majority of the respondents said that their students experience flow at times of high interest and involvement in the activity. When this interest and involvement were not present, they did not experience flow. Özlem expressed this idea by saying:

> If the task is a bit difficult, but interesting and manageable, if they are interested in the activity, they experience flow.

She went to say:

> I could observe flow when they are really interested in the subject, and know a bit they can do it.

Another teacher commented in a similar vein:

> Students concentrate more when the activity is interesting for them. (Dilara)

As can be seen from teachers' responses, flow tended to occur when students were more personally interested in the activity.

Fun

Some teachers thought that students were more likely to experience flow when the activity was fun for them. Özlem pointed out this by saying:

> They had the same kind of restaurant role-play and they really enjoyed it. They brought plates, meals and soup into the classroom and it was really enjoyable for them and I had the feeling that they wanted to do it, and they did it. And I could observe flow.

Practice speaking

Most teachers stated that their students liked those activities since they enabled them to practice speaking. They also pointed out that as they were bored with doing grammar exercises or doing listening, as their speaking book requires, these activities gave them the chance to speak in English, and practice their speaking skills. One teacher responded:

> They definitely do not want grammar exercises, they want to talk, they want interesting speaking activities.(Şenay)

Another teacher mentioned the same thing:

> It (flow experience) happens a lot during speaking activities, they try to speak, but they get bored during grammar activities. I prefer speaking activities if I want to feel flow. (Sevil)

Some of the teachers said that since the topics were real life like and interesting, students were more eager to participate. Özlem said:

> They were eager because you know they can use it in real life, because it was like attending a course, enrolling in a course or interview and we had, there was a secretary in the company, so they could use it in real life maybe.

Another teacher emphasized the same point by saying:

> The content of the activity promotes flow. For example the first activity was a problem solving activity. These specific problems were very similar to those our students experience in their lives, so they put themselves in the shoes of the character and try to solve the problem and since they saw that they can use daily expressions while solving those problems I mean they saw they can use language well, they experience flow more. (Mine)

Also, another teacher reiterated the same point by saying:

> The activity itself promotes flow. For example class discussion activity was about money, everybody had something to say about money.(Bengü)

Being different from speaking course book

All teachers stated that their students were bored with the activities in their speaking course books. They indicated that this was a reason for which the students found these activities motivating. Their speaking course book is loaded with listening activities. Speaking parts are presented like grammar exercises, and the book is organized so that activities are presented in the same way and in the same order. Teachers also stated that, after some time, students got accustomed to the activities in

their book and they found the classes monotonous. Teachers also stated that students liked the activities since they were different from the book. Some example extracts from the responses are as follows:

> Doing these activities after doing the exercises in the book really drew their attention. They were really lost in the activity. (Şenay)

She also added:

> When compared to the course book, sometimes giving this kind of activities really motivates students, they find it interesting, and it enables the flow of the lesson. While doing the exercises in the book, there can be some students who do not listen or participate, but everybody listened to this activity, everybody was willing to participate.

Another teacher raised the same issue by saying:

> Having this activity after doing the activities in their course book is like a remedy for them. (Sevil)

She went on to say:

> While using the course book, lessons were monotonous, all activities were the same kind, students got used to them, they are not like they were before, they were better before, they participated willingly before, but they got accustomed to the activities now. Therefore, we need to use these kinds of activities in our lessons sometimes. I think it will be more beneficial.

Another teacher responded in a similar way:

> They are not happy with the book I guess, they do not like it. (Dilara)

Also, another teacher mentioned the same thing:

> Although the students' level is good, they got bored while they are doing the activities in their book, but they are more creative when they write dialogues or performing different activities. They even added some parts to the activities you gave. They preferred both activities to book. (Bengü)

As it is clearly seen from the teacher interviews and the students' answers to the open ended questions, both students and teachers express that students do not like the activities in their course book since they are more likely to be grammar exercises and focused upon listening. Also, they state that students do not produce language, they do not express themselves in English and they cannot use their creativity, as all activities are the same in the course book, which tends to promote listening and grammar. Therefore, students and teachers think that all activities were flow promoting since they are different from their course book.

Group work

Some of the teachers pointed out that students liked working in groups. They said that when students share their ideas with their friends, they enjoyed the activity more and they got pleasure from it. Rather than working alone, students prefer working in groups. As one teacher noted:

> Everybody was willing to participate and they all like group work activities. They perform something with their groups, they use their creativity.(Şenay)

Another teacher made a similar comment:

> Group work, producing something together, using their creativity are all flow promoting characteristics. When they achieve something as a group, they get happy and go on. (Sevil)

As seen from the teacher responses, like students, teachers also believe that when students work in groups, when they share their ideas and exchange information, they are more eager to participate in the activity and practice more.

Challenge

Some of the teachers stated that, when the activity is challenging, and there is a balance between students' existing skills and the challenge, flow is more likely to occur. Özlem expressed this point by saying:

> Actually, maybe challenge is the right word here. If they, if it is a bit difficult, but it is interesting and manageable, flow is more likely to occur.

Another teacher emphasized the same point by saying:

> Choosing the right activity is important. If they feel that the activity is interesting and challenging for them leading them to do something new, they pay more attention and they concentrate more. (Dilara)

As teachers mention, there should be a balance between the available skill of the students and the challenge. If the activity is more challenging than the existing skills, students think that they cannot manage it, so anxiety occurs and students feel apathy instead of flow. Or, if the activity is less challenging than the available skills of the students, students get bored and they feel apathy.

Creativity

Most teachers think that students should be free to express themselves and use their creativity in speaking activities. When they find the topic interesting, and use their imagination, they are more focused on the activity. One teacher said this in this way:

> When they work in groups, they are more eager to participate. They use their imagination and share it with their friends in the group. (Şenay)

Another teacher mentioned the same issue:

> They used their creativity in the second activity, they liked it more. While working in groups, they produce something together, they use their imagination, their creativity and share it with their friends.(Sevil

Another teacher responded in the same way:

> While doing storytelling activity in the second week, they used their creativity while making up stories by using the pictures. Since they used their creativity during the activity, they were very happy. (Dilara)

Yet another teacher made a similar comment:

> While writing dialogues or doing activities, they are more creative, they even added some parts to the activities you gave, they changed the instructions, they assigned roles, they liked it a lot.(Bengü)

As is seen from teacher responses, students are more eager to participate in the lesson and are more likely to experience flow, if they have the chance to produce language, and if they use their creativity. When the topic is interesting for them and when it arouses their creativity, students focus on the activity more and are more curious about the topic. Therefore, it leads them to be involved in the activity.

What prevents Flow in the activities?

The analysis of the responses to the interviews revealed two main categories regarding the characteristics of flow preventing activities. The categories that emerged were lack of sufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge and uninteresting topics.

Lack of enough vocabulary and grammar knowledge

All teachers stated that lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary prevents flow. Since students do not know a variety of vocabulary items or all grammar topics, they are not self-confident. They do not want to participate in the lesson as they think that they will not be able to express themselves well. Another

point was the level of support students needed to participate in the activity. Teachers said that since they could not help all students, it prevents flow. One teacher expressed this in the flowing way by saying:

> When they lack the necessary vocabulary items to accomplish the task, they ask a lot of questions. I try to help all of them, but when I can't do it, they cannot express themselves well. (Şenay)

Mine emphasized the same point. She noted:

> There can be problems related to students' lack of necessary vocabulary knowledge. Students want to feel themselves as free as possible, but when they cannot use the vocabulary as they want, flow does not occur.

These responses by teachers are consistent with the students' answers to the open-ended questions. As may be remembered, students did not experience flow when they were not able to express themselves well because of lack of communicative competence, vocabulary knowledge and grammar knowledge. Even if they knew what do, they did not feel comfortable if they could not use the right words or if they could not express what they wanted to say.

Topic

Some of the teachers pointed out that students are not eager to participate when the topic is not interesting to them. Bengü expressed this point by saying:

> If the topic is not interesting for the students, they get bored easily.

This is similar to student comments where they mentioned that, if they do not find the topic interesting, they do not want to participate in the lesson.

Discussion of Flow and Activities

In order to investigate the overall flow conducing potential of the designated tasks in this study, individual item scores for the 16 questionnaires were averaged for each participant in order to calculate mean values for each task. Then, means for the eight tasks for all students were rank ordered and analyzed for their flow promoting impact. (See Tables 6 &7)

As seen from tables, the mean value for the highest ranking task (class discussion) was calculated as 5.40 for students and 6.00 for teachers, and the lowest ranking tasks (information-gap, interview and problem solving) had the mean values of 4.59, 4.76, and 4.94 for students. Moreover, the class discussion activity, the highest ranking task, had the highest mean scores for three of the four flow dimensions whereas information-gap activity and the interview activity, the lowest ranking tasks, had lower mean scores than the cut-off point 5.00. (See Table 8)

Class discussion

Class discussion was the highest ranking task, with a mean score of 5.40 for students and 6.00 for teachers. Eckard (1981) states that "discussions are similar to conversations in that both are dependent upon social interaction" (p. 36). In both cases, someone must speak, and at least one other person must listen and respond. Students need linguistic as well as communicative skills to participate in the discussion. For that reason, the use of discussions in the language class can aid language learners in improving their conversational skills. Since students often do not participate in the lessons and frequently complain about their lack of

communicative competence at the end of the year, class discussion activities can be good source of practice.

In addition, in order to enable students to participate in the lessons, speaking activities should have several flow promoting characteristics. First of all, the topic should be motivating. If students are interested in the topic, they participate in more. Secondly, activities should have high levels of the four flow dimensions: control, focus, interest and challenge. As seen from the table, the most flow conducing activity in this study has the highest mean scores for three of the four flow dimensions. Table 12 shows mean scores for each dimension.

Table 12-Flow dimension means for class-discussion activity

	Control	**Focus**	**Interest**	**Challenge**
Discussion	5.35	5.58	5.31	5.29

This task satisfied many of the conditions for flow: participants had control of their topics and timing, were able to focus on the activity, and were encouraged to become interested in the activity by virtue of newness to this class and its authenticity. Furthermore, as students mentioned in their questionnaires, the activity was enjoyable for them, and it enabled them to use their creativity. In addition, they stated that working in groups motivated them, enabling them to share their opinions with their friends and be self-confident when they see they can speak English well. They indicated that:

> It was an activity which enabled us to improve our speaking skill and our imagination. I enjoyed it a lot and laughed a lot. (Student 18)

Another student commented in the same way:

> The activity was enjoyable. Not only did it improve my imagination but it also enabled me to remember new vocabulary items. (Student 19)

Teachers mentioned in the interviews that the nature of the activity was also flow promoting. Discussing an interesting topic in English is motivating for students. Also, the preparation activity was also enjoyable for the students. To introduce the topic, they listened to a song about money and they talked about it. Therefore, before discussing it in their groups, they shared their ideas with the whole class. One teacher mentioned that:

> While writing dialogues or doing activities, they are more creative, they even added some parts to the activities you gave, they changed the instructions, they assigned roles, they liked it a lot. (Bengü)

All in all, control, focus, interest, challenge, topic and the nature of the activity were the characteristics that promote flow in this type of activity.

Communication games

Communication games were the second highest ranking task with the mean score of 5.07 for students and 5.75 for teachers. Communication games are principally based on the information gap. In order to complete the task, the students have to use the target language. Games are important in language classrooms since they motivate learners, lower their anxiety and provide opportunities for real communication.

Common themes students stated about the communication game activity were that it was enjoyable, and informative. Students mentioned that they learnt new

vocabulary items and they shared their ideas with their group members. One student indicated that:

> Group activities are really beneficial. Sharing ideas in English was really entertaining. (Student 20)

Furthermore, two flow dimensions: focus and interest were above the cut-off point of 5.00 which shows why it was the second highest flow promoting task. Table 13 shows mean scores for each dimension.

Table 13-Flow dimension means for communication-games activity

	Control	**Focus**	**Interest**	**Challenge**
Com. Games	4.85	5.32	5.19	4.76

Teachers pointed out in the interviews that students liked this activity since the topic was interesting and they liked working in groups. One teacher commented that:

> Everybody was willing to participate and they all like group work activities. They perform something with their groups, they use their creativity. (Şenay)

However, at least one teacher also mentioned it would be better if students had not have problems related to the lack of vocabulary knowledge:

> There can be problems related to students' lack of necessary vocabulary knowledge. Students want to feel themselves as free as possible, but when they cannot use the vocabulary as they want, flow does not occur.(Mine)

Role-play, storytelling, picture narration

Role-play, storytelling, and picture narration activities were moderate flow promoting activities. All these activities except for the role-play activity, share a common point. For all these activities, the mean score on the challenge dimension is lower than the cut-off point (See Table 12). Also, for the role-play activity, the control dimension is lower than the cut-off point. All tasks were interesting for the students and in all activities, students focused on the activity. Students stated that they found these activities easy, so the challenge dimension is low for these activities. Furthermore, they thought that the activities did not provide them with opportunities to use their creativity in these activities since they are more controlled than the class discussion activity. One student's comments reflect this sentiment:

> It was not interesting, we weren't active. We did not do anything else rather than asking and answering questions. (Student 21)

Table 14 shows mean scores for each dimension.

Table 14-Mean scores for three moderately Flow-producing activities

	Control	Focus	Interest	Challenge
Role-Play	4.81	4.98	5.05	5.19
Storytelling	5.17	5.42	5.07	4.49
Picture Narration	4.68	5.37	5.25	4.70

Therefore, it can be concluded from students' and teachers' responses that if the activity does not include all four flow dimensions in higher levels, and if it is too controlled, students are less likely to experience flow during the activity.

Information-gap, interview, problem-solving

Information gap, interview, and problem-solving activities were the lowest ranking tasks, with the mean score of 4.59, 4.76, and 4.94 for students. Also, they had lowest mean scores for the flow dimensions: the information-gap activity (for two flow dimensions: 3.79 for control and 4.22 for challenge) and the interview (for four flow dimensions: 4.88 for control, 4.65 for focus, 4.60 for interest, and 4.96 for challenge). Table 15 shows the mean scores for each dimension.

Table 15-Flow dimension means for three least flow promoting activities

	Control	**Focus**	**Interest**	**Challenge**
Information-Gap	3.79	4.96	5.08	4.22
Interview	4.88	4.65	4.60	4.96
Problem-Solving	5.03	5.23	5.44	4.86

In information gap activities, the teacher gives the students different pieces of information and asks them to complete a task by exchanging information. Since it is more controlled, and students keep asking the same questions to each other, they did not experience flow. One of the teachers stated:

> Students did not experience flow in information-gap activity because they said that they got bored from asking the same questions by using the same structure all the time and filling the blanks. They find the activity easy and more controlled. They did not have the chance to use their creativity and express themselves. They did not have control during the activity, so they did not focus on it. (Dilara)

Students also mentioned in their answers to open-ended questions that the activity was not creative and interesting and since it was too controlled, they did not have control during the activity. Furthermore, they said that they got bored from doing the same thing throughout the activity, using the same structure and asking the same question. They also said that the activity was easy for them. For the interview activity, the students did not find it interesting and challenging. All four flow dimensions were lower than the cut-off point which shows that students thought they did not have control over the activities, they did not find it interesting, and they did not find it challenging.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the flow promoting potential of tasks by investigating the effects of different characteristics of different tasks on students' affective responses during task engagement. In order to measure participants' affective responses, a perception questionnaire was administered for the 8 designated tasks used in this study.

A one-way ANOVA test showed that there is a significant difference among each activity in terms of flow promoting characteristics. The findings further suggested a significant difference in students' affective engagement when interactional pattern during task completion was group, individual and whole-class.

Also, the findings showed that flow was more likely to occur if four flow dimensions are met in the activity.

Lastly, open-ended questions and teacher interviews showed that there are several additional characteristics of flow promoting activities besides four flow dimensions like a deep sense of enjoyment, creativity, supporting self-confidence, being informative, working in groups, enabling student to practice speaking.

The next chapter is the conclusions chapter which discusses the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and areas for further research.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study investigated the degree to which flow occurred in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses and examined teachers' and students' perceptions about the existence of flow experience in speaking courses.

The study examined the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
2. What are students' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?
3. To what degree do different speaking activities promote flow?

The study was conducted over a two-week period with 163 elementary level university students and their eight instructors of English in eight different speaking classes at Zonguldak Karaelmas University English Language Preparatory School. Designated speaking tasks were class discussion, role-play, communication games, interview, information-gap, problem solving, picture narration, and storytelling. While some tasks were completed in groups, others required participants to operate individually or in whole-class arrangement.

This chapter includes the findings and discussion, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

Findings and Discussion

This section will answer the research questions of this study and discuss the findings in the light of the relevant literature.

Research Question 1: What are students' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions concerning the types of activities to promote flow in speaking lessons?

Research Question 3: To what degree do different speaking activities promote flow?

These research questions are answered by looking at the quantitative and qualitative data which were collected through the administration of a questionnaire to measure students' affective responses to tasks after each designated task, a short survey on teachers' perceptions about each task and interviews with these eight teachers about their perceptions about flow theory, their flow experiences in their lessons and the degree to which students experience flow in the activities.

The mean scores of each task and the results of ANOVA tests revealed that flow exists in language classes, however there is a significant difference among each task. As in Schmidt and Savage's (1992) study of Thai English learners and Egbert's (2003) study of Spanish English learners, flow seemed to occur in Turkish classroom investigated in this study. Moreover, the findings suggested a significant difference in students' affective responses to tasks when the interactional pattern during task completion was group, individual and whole-class. The findings further revealed a significant relationship between the type of the activity and affective engagement in terms of students' perception of task control, task appeal, focused attention and

challenge. Overall the analysis showed that when activities included the four dimensions of flow, the students were more likely to perceive flow. This finding supports Egbert's (2003) and Kasap's (2005) study by indicating that the four flow dimensions can index both the flow experience and students' motivation. The findings also support Egbert's (2003) study by suggesting that teachers can facilitate the flow experience for students by developing tasks that might lead to flow. The findings in this section will be discussed in relation to the descriptive and inferential statistics presented in the data analysis chapter. The explanations for the activities to promote flow versus apathy results will be the focus of the first section. Possible reasons for the significance of the differences obtained from ANOVA test will be discussed next. Finally the nature of the flow-promoting activities will be discussed.

Flow versus Apathy Results

In order to investigate the overall flow conducing potential of the designated tasks in this study, individual item scores for the 16 questionnaires were averaged for each participant in order to calculate mean values for each task. Then, means for the 8 tasks for all students were rank ordered and analyzed for their flow promoting impact. The mean value for the highest ranking task (class discussion) was calculated as 5.40 for students and 6.00 for teachers, and the lowest ranking tasks (information-gap, interview, and problem-solving) had the mean values of 4.59, 476, and 4.94 for students. Moreover, class discussion activity, the highest ranking task, had the highest mean scores for three of the four flow dimensions whereas information-gap activity and the interview, the lowest ranking tasks, had lower mean scores for the flow dimensions: the information-gap activity (for two flow dimensions: 3.79 for

control and 4.22 for challenge) and the interview (for four flow dimensions: 4.88 for control, 4.65 for focus, 4.60 for interest, and 4.96 for challenge).

The findings revealed that the class discussion activity produced more flow for both teachers and the students, whereas the information-gap, the interview and the problem solving activities resulted in more apathy. However, none of the activities resulted in complete apathy among students since all activities were chosen among the best activities of the speaking file in Zonguldak Karaelmas University speaking office. Therefore, it can be assumed that all activities were good examples of their type. Also, there is a close relationship between the mean scores of each activity and the mean scores of each flow dimension. The higher the mean scores for each dimension, the more flow promoting the activity is. This finding supports Egbert's (2003) study by indicating that the four flow dimensions can index the flow experience.

The findings for students and teachers were the same for the most flow conducing activity, which was class discussion, the second highest flow promoting activity, which was communication games, the fourth flow promoting activity, which was role-play, and the least flow producing activity, information-gap. It suggests that the results are consistent and reliable.

Eckard (1981) states that students need linguistic as well as communicative skills to participate in the discussion. For that reason, the use of discussions in the language class can aid language learners in improving their conversational skills. The findings of the current study supports that class discussion activities are good source of practice, enabling learners to experience flow (Eckard, 1981; Florez, 1999;

Folland & Robertson, 1978; Knowles & Sasaki, 1980; D. Nunan, 1989; D. Nunan, 2000; Reuben, 1999; J. C. Richards, 2008; Schneider, 2001).

The reason that the class discussion activity was the most flow producing may be that using activities like class discussion in class encourages active learning, as well as collaboration, and interactivity (Eckard, 1981; Florez, 1999; D. Nunan, 1989; Reuben, 1999). Also, the class discussion activity might have created higher levels of emotional arousal because the channel of communication involved tactile modes and the task allowed for dynamic interaction among participants (Dörnyei, 2001b). Furthermore, because students were required to express their thoughts in English effectively, and they successfully did it, they may have perceived this activity as relevant and of value to their future needs (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Z. Dörnyei, 1994; Pintrich, 1989; Woolfolk, 1993). All of these may have resulted in the class discussion activity being regarded as flow producing by the learners and the teachers.

Communication games were the second highest ranking task with the mean score of 5.07 for students and 5.75 for teachers. As Eckard (1981) suggests, the current study seemed to indicate that games are important in language classrooms since they motivate learners, lower their anxiety and provide opportunities for real communication. Through well-prepared communicative activities such as class discussion and communication games, teachers can encourage students to experiment and innovate with the language, and create a supportive atmosphere. This will contribute to their self-confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Z. Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Wilkinson & Foster, 1997). Using games in class encourages active learning, as well as

collaboration, and interactivity (Reuben, 1999). The findings revealed that most flow promoting tasks were group activities.

Group work activities yielded significant positive results during task completion in this study. The reasons for the strong impact of interactional pattern on overall affective engagement and on the flow dimensions can be linked to the influence of peer collaboration and active involvement, and opportunities for task control and focused concentration. Learning situations which grant students opportunities to interact with each other, which enable them to share responsibility and learn from each other, and which encourage the active involvement of all participants are believed to enhance learner motivation (MacIntyre, 2002; D. Nunan, 1989; J. Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Robinson, 2002; Tudor, 2001). The interactive and supportive nature of group work tasks might have caused students to perceive these tasks as stimulating.

The literature also provides evidence for the contribution of dynamic classroom interaction on motivational processing and co-construction of task-motivation (Dörnyei, 2002). This process-oriented approach recognizes the importance of peer influence on learners' motivational disposition towards the task when the activity provides opportunities for cooperative work. If one of the task participants is highly motivated in a group activity, it is likely that this person will affect the motivation of other participants. This study showed that group work tasks resulted in the most positive affective responses. Because group work supposedly enabled students with different levels of motivations to interact, it might have caused relatively unmotivated learners to become more motivated owing to the co-constructed nature of task motivation. Tasks including group work may also have

resulted in significant differences in affective responses because they gave students a sense of control and enhanced their concentration. When learners are provided with a sense of responsibility and when they perceive themselves as the controllers of their behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a), they become more self-determined, and thus more autonomous. The results also show that group activities enhanced learners' focused attention to greater degrees. Even in a classroom environment where many distracters exist, learners seem to be more focused when they have clearly defined roles (Z. Dörnyei, 2001b), such as in group tasks.

The information gap activity, the interview, and the problem-solving activities were the lowest ranking tasks with a mean score of 4.59, 4.76, and 4.94 for students. Also, the information gap activity and the interview had lower mean scores then the cut-off point of 5.00 for the flow dimensions: the information-gap activity (for two flow dimensions: 3.79 for control and 4.22 for challenge) and the interview (for four flow dimensions: 4.88 for control, 4.65 for focus, 4.60 for interest, and 4.96 for challenge). Although they are popular in textbooks, students did not respond favorably to them in this study.

The reason for the information-gap activity being one of the least flow conducing activity could be related to task challenge. If students felt that the task was not challenging enough or that it offered challenge that was beyond their available skills, it may have produced boredom or apathy among participants (Abbott, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1988, 1990, 1997a, 1997b; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Egbert, 2003; Massimini & Carli, 1988; Wilkinson & Foster, 1997). It is likely that for the information gap activity, the students felt the task was not challenging enough. The optimal balance between challenges and skills is essential for students to perceive

control over the activity and find it appealing. Since optimal challenge is closely related to intrinsic motivation, it is possible that students did not experience flow as the activity did not match their available skills and was not interesting for them, which is also attributed to the significant correlation between flow and task appeal.

The Characteristics of Flow Promoting Activities

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data showed that flow promoting activities share several important features like (a) a balance between challenge and available skills, (b) focused attention and intense concentration, (c) a sense of control, and (d) learner interest. These findings are consistent with previous research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997b; Egbert, 2003). If these four flow dimensions are met in the activity, students are more likely to experience flow.

According to students' answers to the open-ended questions, in addition to the dimensions discussed above, there are other aspects of flow promoting activities. These include a deep sense of enjoyment, creativity, self-confidence, interesting topic, and being informative. Several students indicated that the topic should be interesting and informative, and the activity should create self-confidence and enable students to practice speaking and use their imagination to be more flow conducive.

Finally, the analysis of the teacher interviews showed that flow promoting activities have other characteristics. Specifically, being fun, interesting, practice speaking, working in groups, challenging, focus, being real life like, being different from book, and topic and creativity emerged from the analysis. As seen from Table 10, the characteristics of flow promoting activities are the same for students and for

teachers. Therefore it can be concluded that flow promoting activities share several important features like:

1. a balance between challenge and available skills;
2. focused attention and intense concentration;
3. a sense of control;
4. learner interest;
5. enjoyment;
6. creativity;
7. supporting self-confidence;
8. being informative;
9. working in groups, and
10. enabling students to practice speaking.

These results imply that if students have control in the activities, if they focus on the activity, if the activity is interesting and if the students are curious about the activity, they may experience higher levels of flow. Also, if students produce language, and share their opinions, it may affect their affective responses during task engagement in different ways.

If these characteristics are met in an activity, students are more likely to experience flow; and participate in the lessons and improve their communicative competence.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study are consistent with the propositions of flow theory (Abbott, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Egbert, 2003) concerning the impact of learners' perception of task appeal and control. When tasks are interesting and enjoyable, and they provide students with a sense of control, they are perceived as more flow promoting. Ultimately, different activities support the experience in varying degrees. The findings also indicate that the higher the observed opportunities for flow on the four flow dimensions, the more likely it is that participants would perceive flow on the questionnaire. This finding suggests that the four dimensions can index the flow experience.

The study shows that it is worth encouraging dynamic interaction in language classes in order to promote students' affective engagement. The findings also suggest that teachers can facilitate the flow experience for students by developing tasks that might lead to flow. For example, the current study shows that class discussion activities are the most flow promoting activity among the others. Therefore, teachers can include class discussion activities in their classes. The second flow promoting activity is communication games as they are good sources of meaningful communication in courses. In speaking courses, teachers can present different communication games to make students participate in the lesson and practice speaking more. Although information gap activities, interviews, and problem-solving activities are popular in textbooks, students did not respond favorably in this study. Therefore, rather than using information-gap activities or interviews, teachers can choose role-play activities which is the fourth most flow promoting activity for teachers and students. This, in turn, may direct students

towards more intrinsically motivated learning. The results have further implications for including interactive group activities in educational contexts in order to promote affective engagement. Group activities may involve students more in the learning process and give them a sense of responsibility and ownership, which can possibly support the internalization of behaviors.

The findings of this study also indicate that, although participants' perceptions of flow differ, the patterns of flow across tasks are relatively similar and that one can, therefore, talk about tasks that that support flow. Such tasks are also those that are supported by current SLA theory and research.

This study may also have implications for course design in educational instruction. The findings from the study can assist syllabus designers and material developers in setting criteria for choosing and evaluating learning tasks. While they could include more class discussion activities and communication activities in the syllabus, they could use information-gap activities or interviews less. For teachers, they may include activities that this study find as flow promoting, like class discussion activity. Teacher training programs may also benefit from the findings of this study and emphasize the importance of presenting different activities that may lead to flow experience in their classes to enhance learner motivation. Adopting a learner-centered approach and developing autonomy-supportive learning environments can further be accepted as an educational policy at both local and national levels. Learners can be included more in decision-making processes, even in issues concerning assessment. Thus, students' motivation and interest in the subject matter can be enhanced and they could exhibit more positive attitudes towards language courses.

Limitations of the Study

The study had certain limitations in examining different tasks to promote flow. The limitations of this study resulted from the absence of different level students, duration of the study, the inability of the researcher to observe the implementation of the treatment, the deficiency of qualified qualitative data, the novelty affect, and the nature of tasks.

The study was conducted with 163 elementary level students in eight different sections of speaking course. Rather than comparing student affective responses across different groups, this study explored the differences in responses to different tasks in the same level of students. The results showed that the elementary level students were engaged in more positive emotional states during the class discussion activity in comparison to the other activities. However, since there was no other level of students, whether the same tasks when implemented in different groups would produce similar results is unknown.

The length of the study was short, which is an important limitation of the study. The time given for the implementation of the tasks was limited to two weeks. Over a longer period of time, the researcher could have had the opportunity to implement the same task type more than once. This might have given more reliable results related to the impact of presentation variables on different aspects of language production.

Due to time constraints, the researcher could not implement the study herself, but the participant teachers were given a list of the guidelines on how to implement the tasks. Students' involvement in and concentration on the tasks, whether process disruptions occurred, and if there were unpredictable obstacles or

supports for flow were not observed. Additionally, collecting qualitative data from one-on-one interviews with the students at the end of each task could have given more insight into the impact of each task on their affective responses, which would have gone beyond the few phrases provided on the open-ended questions. Collecting qualitative data could also have provided explanations for the activities which promoted flow to a great extent and which produced less flow in anomalous cases.

The novelty affect was another limitation of the study. Since students generally do the activities of the book, which they find very boring, doing different activities may lead them to react more positively to these activities. If the same types of activities were presented after students got used to them, the results may be more reliable.

The tasks used in this study were another limitation of the study. There were eight different tasks and two classes did the same two activities. However, there was the possibility that some tasks, by their nature, were more appealing for students. Therefore, they might have resulted in positive responses irrespective of the four flow dimensions.

Future Research

Drawing on the findings and limitations of the study, suggestions for future research can be made. Interesting areas of research might include investigations into the effect of flow on language learning outcomes, a longitudinal study on different tasks that could enhance affective engagement with support from qualitative data, and a detailed study focusing on one task with different topics.

First of all, the results of this study show that different tasks promote the flow experience to different degrees. Flow theory recognizes the contribution of flow experiences to optimal performance and learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Egbert, 2003; Larson, 1988). The current study, however, did not address language outcomes except by assuming that when students are in flow, learning is occurring. Therefore, future research may wish to focus on exploring the relationship between flow and language outcomes.

Future research can also be directed toward a longitudinal investigation of other tasks that could enhance affective engagement, with support from qualitative data. Since the current study examined class discussion activity, communication games, role play, interview, storytelling, picture narration, information gap and problem solving activities, a similar study can be done with the focus of exploring the flow experience in other speaking tasks. It could also be interesting to conduct a study examining the experience of flow in different activities in different skills.

Furthermore, since there was a limited number of intermediate level students and pre-intermediate students, the study could not be carried out with different proficiency levels. Therefore, future research can be done with three different proficiency levels, investigating the differences in the perception of flow experience among different proficiency levels on the same activity. Moreover, one type of task could also be examined in detail in three different proficiency levels to understand whether the nature of the activity or other aspects promote flow. For instance, in three different levels, only the role-play task could be investigated. Qualitative data might be particularly helpful for exploring these issues.

The current study focused on the four flow dimensions previously found to have the strongest effect on students. An important issue to examine in future studies could be the other task characteristics that support conditions of flow, such as, goals, attention, feedback, or teacher and learner roles also mentioned by Egbert (2003). Each of these task characteristics can affect learners' engagement in and performance on tasks in different ways. These studies can ultimately lead to a better understanding of the motivational influence of specific classroom variables and the mediating effects of these variables on language learning and performance. Future investigations on these issues can also provide more insight when they are supported with qualitative data. Interviews and self-reflections can provide valuable information about the implications of such task features on student affective engagement.

Because the findings additionally support the use of group work in classrooms as a motivational tool, the dynamic co-construction of task motivation (Z. Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998) can be an interesting research area. The extent to which peers influence each other's motivation in group tasks and how the dynamic interplay of the task participants' motivation affects learner engagement and performance can provide valuable contributions to the literature. Moreover, studies in this direction can analyze both the ideal number for group size to enhance task motivation and contextual and social factors that influence learners' actions and motivation.

Conclusion

This study investigated the degree to which flow occurs in different kinds of tasks in speaking courses and to examine teachers' and students' perceptions about the existence of flow experience in speaking courses. The results showed that there was a significant difference in student affective engagement in different tasks. While the class discussion was the most flow promoting activity according to both teachers and students, the information gap activity was the least flow conducing one. These results imply that the activities that contributed to increased interest, fun, challenge, and a greater sense of control over the activity are essential for enhancing autonomous learning and greater motivation. This study also showed that group work activities resulted in more positive affective engagement. Moreover, tasks completed individually and in groups encourage more dynamic interaction and active participation in the classroom, and therefore, contribute to increased interest in learning and more intense concentration.

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